



Innovations in Journalism: Educating the MMJ

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Abstract

Social media transformed television news, and stakeholders most impacted are journalists educated prior to the emergence of the multimedia journalist (MMJ). Technology is woven into the very fabric of daily lives. We use our smart phone alarm to awake in the morning, Facebook for breaking news, calendar to review our daily schedule, instant message or text for colleagues, friends and family, and access entertainment anywhere there is a Wi-Fi signal. Information is instantaneously available, and news is only as far away as the time it takes to snap a smartphone picture and upload it. Social media impacts the workload of television journalists, and use of social media triggers concerns for quality and accuracy of content. Results from this study highlighted a need to understand a changing business model, the potential for news to go wrong, and the rise of multimedia journalism.

The MMJ covers both the broadcast and digital sides of media, operating as a solo reporter who shoots, edits, and reports [1]. Interview responses related to the topic of the MMJ. Study participants expressed concerns about doing more work with less time and compensation. They drive to assignments thinking about how to share on social media and produce stories. They wonder where the future lies for their position, and if MMJs were the answer [1]. Journalism degree plans should now reflect the demands and needs of the MMJ. The traditional journalism degree plan cannot focus only on broadcast journalism, but should also include digital media, specifically social media. Educators should consider courses encompassing a scope of broadcast/digital media and communication theories to help future MMJs understand various communication models and television as a business, particularly media management. This article presents curriculum to develop the next generation of empowered, capable, ethical MMJs.

Keywords: multimedia journalist, education, innovation.

Introduction

This article emerged from the 2016 dissertation research conducted to explore how social media influenced the workload of 10 television journalists/photojournalists from the southwestern region of the US. Utilizing the Moore and Benbasat [2] instrument based on Everett M. Rogers' [3] Diffusion of Innovations theory, and following up with in-depth interviews, produced results that indicated digital media is a priority driven by employers and the audience. Journalists were required to share stories in progress on Facebook and Twitter before they worked on stories airing on television. Social media is used to promote stories and engage viewers [4]. Management saw an opportunity to elevate station brand, stay connected to loyal viewers [5], and concentrate more on quantity rather than quality of content [6].

Based on the dissertation titled *Breaking Television News: Is Social Media Coverage You Can Count On?*, this article explains how innovations in journalism changed the business model, opened doors to the possibility of news gone wrong, and created the rise of the MMJ. The issue now is how to educate the MMJ.

Changing Business Model.

The days of waiting for the 5, 6, and 10 o'clock evening newscasts are long gone. Social media allows viewers to watch news at their own convenience, from anywhere, anytime using a smart phone, tablet, or laptop computer. Social media enables viewers to watch while commenting, sharing and posting on social networking sites [7]. TV stations no longer influence viewers when and how to watch the news [8]. Technology influences viewers, driving how news is gathered, disseminated, and consumed [9]. This

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eventually changed the business model. Before social media, a television reporter and photojournalist produced, wrote, shot, and edited a news story, collaborating on how to approach an angle and broadcast it in the most compelling way [10]. Twenty-first century journalists say social media disrupted the process and broke up the team.

Using a mixed methods approach, results showed social media encouraged the promotion of stories and viewer engagement. Digital devices gave television journalists capability to shoot videos selfie-style and post their stories on Facebook or Twitter [11]. Management realized reporters could become their own photojournalist [1] therefore increasing story content and eliminating photojournalists. With a smart phone and the right applications, reporters recorded themselves, edited content to their liking, and shared with their audience [12], receiving immediate feedback from viewers [7]. Results from the 2016 dissertation revealed management saw social media as a valuable tool in storytelling and engagement, emphasizing a priority in digital presence. This shifted the television journalist's focus to send out a tweet before getting the story right.

News gone wrong.

Dissertation participants expressed worries about accuracy, quality, and the degree to which credibility was impacted by mistakes. O'Sullivan [13] stressed journalists run the risk of hastily posting, tweeting, and sharing information during breaking news situations. Many participants admitted to waiting for more details before launching information on Facebook or Twitter, even if management demanded being first. Participants believed being second with right information was better than being first with wrong information. Some confessed to pushing social media to the side to perfect live shots and reports.

Collaboration of the traditional reporter-photographer team was disappearing. TV journalists were given assignments using company-issued smart phones and tablets to capture selfie videos from the scene for both digital and television news. Technology gave television journalists the skill to work solo, but meeting deadlines pushed quality to the side.

The rise of the MMJ.

Throughout the research, participants unveiled the term MMJ. They described how social media's presence in television news gave way to the rise of the MMJ, a solo reporter who shoots, edits, and reports [1] for both broadcast and digital media. This business model is widely accepted in most TV newsrooms because it puts more employees on the streets producing more content, elevating the station's presence, and reducing costs in downsized newsrooms.

Participants confirmed social media affected workload by taking on multiple roles. One journalist mentioned, "we're no longer just reporters... we're no longer just photographers. We're doing it all" [14]. The MMJ business model concerned a photojournalist who stated, "if you would take two people an hour and a half to do something, it is now going to take one person three hours" [14]. Today's journalism degree plan should reflect the demands on the MMJ by including courses in broadcast journalism, digital media, social media, communication theories, media management, and ethics. A sample MMJ degree plan should include courses such as those listed and described in Table 1.

Table 1
Multimedia Journalism degree plan and course descriptions

Introduction to Mass Communications	to	Mass	History of media from traditional journalism, to digital and social media.
Writing and Storytelling for Television News	for		Basics of writing quality stories; how to effectively use images and sound in storytelling for television news.
Live News Reporting for Television	for		Methods to deliver live reports and information in the event of breaking news, feature reporting, or general assignment.
Video Production			Studio production roles with hands-on experience and teach how each



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component collaborates in producing a television newscast.

Photojournalism	A comprehensive study on the artistry of photojournalism, the purpose of this course is to give future MMJs the tools to know the main functions of the video camera, gain lighting, and composition skills, and create professional visual storytellers.
Editing	Editing systems and styles that include the importance of pacing, use of natural sound, soundbites, and music.
Social Media: Research and Newsgathering	How social media is used to research, gather, and disseminate news.
Writing for Social Media	Techniques of effective writing for social media, how to promote one's story, and grab the attention of viewers when given limitations.
Digital Media	History of digital media from websites to social media; how to write for this innovation.
Public Speaking	Speeches – campaigns, state of the unions, commencement, and eulogies. The art of public speaking and learn skills on audience engagement.
Persuasion	Theories of persuasion, and an examination of attitude and behavior changes.
Media Literacy	An analysis of fact or fiction, looking into today's news headlines and news environment especially in using social media.
Media Law	Law and policy in relation to media, analyzing regulations, privacy, censorship, and free speech.
Media Ethics	The principles of ethical standards and practice in television and digital news.
Media Management	The importance of Nielsen ratings, revenue, sales, and their relationship with content.
Communication Theories	Theories explaining the processes of communication, focusing on communication models.
Interpersonal Communication	A discovery of one-on-one communication in social settings, in relationships, and in conflict.
Non-Verbal Communication	An examination of interaction through non-verbal communication channels.
Intercultural Communication	A study of cultural similarities and differences in verbal and non-verbal communication channels.
Organizational Communication	A look into organizational communication theories, examining effective communication strategies in-group settings.



Electives or concentrations in Sports Reporting, Business and Finance Reporting, Investigative Journalism, Health and Science Reporting, and International Journalism can be included. Journalism involves interdisciplinary areas and the mentioned courses help enhance the skills of the multimedia journalist.

Discussion

Social media is part of the news experience. Since publication of the dissertation, *Facebook Live* has been allowing users to engage followers in a live event. TV journalists report from the scene without the use of additional apps, directly reaching Facebook followers. Participants believed the MMJ is a product of social media and management's inclination to save money, invest in new technology, and cut costs in personnel. The MMJ is the solution to adding more content with fewer resources, but some believe it created a jack-of-all-trades employee who is master of none.

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