

# Newspaper Training Editors Guide

Collected Wisdom of the Sages

BY JAMES C. CLARK

## Table of Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Foreword .....                                   | 2  |
| Introduction .....                               | 3  |
| Setting Up a Training Program .....              | 5  |
| A 12-step program .....                          | 7  |
| Newsroom managers survey .....                   | 8  |
| Topics for training seminars .....               | 10 |
| The proposal .....                               | 11 |
| The questions .....                              | 12 |
| Planning a training session .....                | 13 |
| Training seminar checklist .....                 | 14 |
| Route 66 .....                                   | 15 |
| Don't forget human resources .....               | 18 |
| Starting a newsroom library .....                | 19 |
| Sources .....                                    | 20 |
| Grammar hotlines .....                           | 24 |
| Setting up brown bags .....                      | 25 |
| Brown bag ideas that work .....                  | 25 |
| Training to do job reviews .....                 | 26 |
| Exercise: Ethics issues .....                    | 28 |
| Exercise: Reducing clutter .....                 | 29 |
| Exercise: Interviewing sources & listening ..... | 30 |
| Exercise: Dealing with quotations .....          | 31 |
| Exercise: Using the senses .....                 | 32 |
| Exercise: The silent interview .....             | 33 |
| Appendix A Contributors .....                    | 34 |
| Appendix B Jay Rosen on change .....             | 35 |
| Appendix C Steve Smith on training .....         | 44 |

## Training: Please try this at home



**Félix Gutiérrez**

Formal training for journalists already on the job was an alien concept in most newsrooms until recent years. Occasionally someone would be shipped off for a two- or five-day seminar, or a coach would be brought in for a few days. Then life would settle back to its usual deadlines and routine.

“No Train, No Gain: Continuing Training for Newspapers in the 1990s,” a 1993 study by The Freedom Forum, indicated news people hungered for more and were beginning to do something about it. One newsroom after another started to designate someone—usually an editor with several other responsibilities—to be in charge of training. There was, however, very little training or convening for the training editors.

So, under the aegis of The Freedom Forum, training editors got together and helped train themselves. The conferences were organized by “No Train, No Gain” editor Brian Buchanan, before he assumed his current title of managing editor/online for The Freedom Forum website, Free! ([www.freedomforum.org](http://www.freedomforum.org)). For the past five years, the

training editor conferences have produced a treasure chest of useful, inspiring ideas and wisdom that are now being used in newsrooms across the United States.

In the following pages, fledging training editors can find plans for launching, organizing and conducting training sessions as well as suggestions for training topics and specific exercises. We hope you will find it useful and will let us know if you have ideas or suggestions that could be helpful to others.

Thanks to training consultant Jim Clark for assembling the information and writing the report; to Pacific Coast Center editor and program director Beverly Kees for convening the annual meetings in recent years and for the introduction and editing of this report; to Brad Hill for designing the report and photography; to Bill Knowland for photography, and to the nation’s training editors who provided the inspiration. And, a very special thank you to the training editors who have participated in the annual meetings and who generated the ideas in this report.

**Félix Gutiérrez**  
Senior Vice President and  
Executive Director  
The Freedom Forum Pacific Coast Center



# A Survival Guide

by Beverly Kees

Newspaper training editors are hard-working, committed, inventive and generous with their ideas.

“There is no other group like the training editors,” said Tom Silvestri, director of news synergy and newsbank editor for Media General, Inc. “Where else could you find a group of competitive, analytical people who encourage their colleagues to steal their ideas—actually feel bad if you don’t.”

So we stole their ideas to bring you this report.

The ideas came from a series of conferences that grew out of a 1992-1993 Freedom Forum survey of American newspaper journalists. The survey was reported in “No Train, No Gain: Continuing Training for Newspaper Journalists in the 1990s.” It was not a happy picture. Nearly all journalists said they wanted training. Only 14 percent said their newsrooms offered training on a regular basis.

Traditional newsroom training was on-the-job and sink-or-swim. Formal training programs were slow to develop, although other businesses were recognizing the importance of regular training to meet a faster-changing world.

Jay Rosen, New York University associate professor of journalism, provided the text for the 1998 gathering of training editors—a talk he had made to a committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (see Appendix B for the full text). After working with and observing newspaper people for several years, he offered six observations:

1. You have trouble changing. Perhaps my most obvious lesson.
2. You have taught yourselves not to learn. In a variety of interesting ways.
3. You resist challenge from the outside. Having been “resisted” myself, I know what this is like.
4. You decline to challenge yourselves and your elite.
5. You’ve become a herd of independent minds. A pattern we need to analyze.
6. You’re losing the thing you love, which is journal-



Beverly Kees

ism.

“There’s nothing in the Constitution that says journalism must endure. It’s entirely possible for the thing as we know it to disappear, even as ‘freedom of the press’ remains secure. And while that prospect is floated now and again, the weight of it is not, I think, fully appreciated,” Rosen said.

A training editor’s lot is not an easy one.

To assist editors in meeting some of the goals outlined in “No Train, No Gain,” the first training editors conference met in Arlington, Va., in 1994, led by The Freedom Forum’s Brian Buchanan. Buchanan also led the 1995 conference in the First Amendment Center in Nashville and the 1996 conference in Oakland. In 1997, the conference moved to The Freedom Forum Pacific Coast Center in San Francisco, where it has continued to be held each year. The core of each conference has been training editors sharing ideas, advice and training exercises with each other.

The Freedom Forum also launched a listserv for newspaper training editors so they could swap advice and counsel throughout the year. One of the remarkable things about the group, said Dick Hughes of the *Salem Statesman-Journalist*, is “they are collegial rather than competitive.” Like the Internet pioneers who worked almost in isolation, training editors, who usually work alone on training in their newsrooms, create a synergism when they combine forces.

Adell Crowe, assistant to the editor of *USA TODAY*, surmised from conversations during and around formal conference sessions that training has changed. In a letter that we carry around and quote three or four times a week, she wrote:

“One of the bar conversations (there were many) I participated in centered on the fact that everyone’s training program has grown over the five years we’ve been gathering. People who joined us only a year or two ago to get ideas about how to start training now have roaring programs. And maybe even more significant is that for many in the room, training is no longer an add-on to our other responsibilities, but has become our primary job. . . . A survey this year would show far different feelings about training. We trainers still have a long way to go, but we’ve improved newsrooms across the country and it wouldn’t have happened without the support of The Freedom Forum.”

Another vertebra in the backbone of the training



editor conferences (did we mention creative writing exercises?) is Jim Clark, training consultant and writer formerly with *The Orlando Sentinel*. A highlight of every conference is the idea swap, irreverently led by Clark and Stan Allison of the *Los Angeles Times*. Every participant in the conference is asked to bring one training idea that the others can take home and put into practice. Each person is then awarded a

tacky—but cherished—prize.

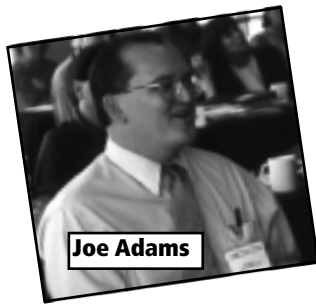
For most training editors, the preparation for the job is a memo from the editor saying: “You are now in charge of the newsroom training program.” In the following pages, Clark has pulled together ideas from the conferences to help training editors devise programs that aid the newsroom in achieving its goals and staff members in improving basic skills, learning new ones and preparing for the next steps in their careers. We hope you find the information useful.

*Beverly Kees was a reporter and section editor for the Minneapolis Star and assistant managing editor for the Minneapolis Tribune. She then became executive editor of the Grand Forks (N.D.) Herald, editor of the Post-Tribune in Gary, Ind., and executive editor of The Fresno (Calif.) Bee. She joined The Freedom Forum Pacific Coast Center in 1994, after nine months as a Freedom Forum Visiting Professional Scholar at the First Amendment Center at*



**Larry Welborn with pencil and Jim Clark with laptop computer - tools spanning the centuries of communication technology - take notes at the 1996 training editors conference in Oakland.**





**Joe Adams**



**Stan Allison**



**Sue Burzynski**

## Setting Up a Training Program

There's no magic way to establish a training program, and no formula that will guarantee success. But there are some basics. Successful programs have four basic requirements.

1. **TARGET:** They advance the goals and mission of the newspaper.
2. **SUPPORT:** They have the support of the top editors and budgets. They are built into the structure and the culture of the newsroom.
3. **TRANSACTIONS:** They focus on creating new training transactions.
4. **SUCCESS:** They improve the people, the process and the product. A good program, like a good journalist, constantly grows and learns.

Here's a checklist of the things that fall under those four categories. See how many your newsroom can claim and figure out how to accomplish the rest.

| <b>Target</b>     | <b>Support</b>           | <b>Transactions</b> | <b>Success</b>           |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| (the vision)      | (the buy-in)             | (the teaching)      | (the learning)           |
| Mission statement | Top editors              | One-on-one          | Lifelong learning        |
| Goals             | Coordinator              | Coaching            | Better newspaper         |
| Annual plan       | Best journalists         | Workshops           | Community support        |
| Standards         | Training budget          | Conferences         | Fun, prizes              |
| Style book        | Evaluations by employees | Newsletters         | Staff retention up       |
|                   |                          | Training libraries  | Program that gets better |
|                   |                          | Brown bags          |                          |

The aim is not just to offer classes that the local community college can offer, but to create a learning system that delivers results, namely a better paper produced by people who continue to grow.

**The Keys:** Have a target, get support, focus on the teaching and you'll have a good chance of success.



**Félix Gutiérrez welcomes training editors to the Pacific Coast Center**

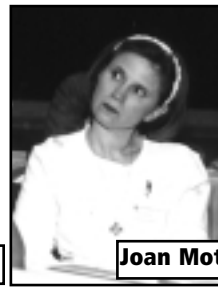




**Jackie Kerwin**



**Nancy Conner**



**Joan Motyka**



**G. Cleveland Wilhoit**

## A 12-step program

“Great training programs do more than teach journalists the latest computer codes,” said Eric Newton, co-author of “No Train, No Gain” and now managing editor of the Newseum, who devised this 12-step program. “They help us discover the stream of creativity deep inside. Great training encourages leadership, communication, hard work and enthusiasm. When those same qualities are used to establish a training program, its success is guaranteed.

“Leadership, openness, diligence and enthusiasm create great training. So loosen up. Write a song or a skit. Have a little fun. Tap your own potential.”

### 1. Get ideas early and often.

What does the staff *need* to know? What are the newsroom goals for the coming year? What new equipment is coming? And that’s just the beginning. Here’s the most important part: What do the journalists *want* to know? The most popular topics are ethics, writing, privacy, libel, management, reporting, editing, computer-assisted reporting, government/politics, freedom of information and the environment. But interests vary from job to job, place to place, person to person. Send out a questionnaire. Do it well in advance, in February, for example, for a seminar series that summer. A 20 percent response on a voluntary questionnaire is good; 50 percent is great. Filling out a form is as much fun as cleaning out the refrigerator. So do something nice for the first person who turns it in.

### 2. More research.

Who is doing state-of-the-art work in your region – or in the nation, if money is no object? It’s important to find trainers who are not only good at what they do, but real students of the craft. A pecking order that worked for one newspaper with a tight budget: national figures who happen to be in town; regional experts from outside the paper; retired former greats; professors who recently have worked in newsrooms, and in-house experts. It can be a worthwhile exercise for the editor or publisher to give a seminar, on the market if nothing else. Poynter, API, IRE, IJE and others are offering more and more traveling training in writing, computers, diversity. Be alert.

### 3. Now, design the program.

Make sure your boss supports the plan, and gives you a budget, even if it’s only for sodas and cookies. Schedule the

seminars in a regular rhythm – no more than one a week, no fewer than one a month. Try to set them up for the same day, same time, same place. Good times are Fridays at lunch, or paydays. Nail a training bulletin board to the wall.

Take signups for all events all the time. Make sure the room is big enough. And cool enough.



**Eric Newton**

### 4. Prepare the presenters.

Tell them about your market, your staff, your plans. Send them free newspapers from the day they agree to do the seminar until they tell you to stop. Encourage them to bring detailed handouts. Tip sheets – like “The 12 steps of setting up a training program” – are hoarded. Reading lists are popular. Give your on-staff presenters enough company time to prepare. Distribute some material in advance. The more visual the presentations, the better. The more interactive, the better. Advocate fun.

### 5. Advertise.

Promote the seminar-of-the-week with wild, Mac-generated signs on all the newsroom doors. Put the schedule in newsletters and on bulletin boards. Talk about it at the news meetings. If your seminars are voluntary, make sure key people know which ones you hope they will attend.

### 6. Invite folks from outside the newsroom.

Ask some of your production people to come to the photography seminar. Ask the advertising folks to come to the ethics seminar. Invite the newspaper’s circulation managers to the deadline writing seminar. Ask students and





**Arlene Morgan**



**Perry Flippin**



**Debbie Wolfe**



**Evelyn Hsu**

professors from local colleges to come to some of your seminars. Invite a few radio and TV folks. Be the hub of a local training network.

### **7. Go yourself.**

If you don't attend seminars, you set a bad example—and miss a chance to learn. You won't know what was said, what was asked, whether it was a good session. When you go, though, behave yourself. A. Give the speaker an enthusiastic introduction. B. Don't interrupt the presentation. C. Ask only one question. D. Step out during part of the Q&A so staff members can ask questions when you aren't there. E. Return to lead a round of applause at the end. In other words, don't dominate.

### **8. Tape them.**

Video is best. Cassettes are next-best. Put the tapes together into a new training library. Assign one person at each seminar—an editorial writer or one of the newspaper's music or film critics?—to write a synopsis of the presentation. Put these blurbs together into a catalogue to advertise your new training library. Add seminar handouts to the library, as well as books, magazines and databases. Find a quiet reading room to put it all in. Promote it ruthlessly. Walk in there from time to time and surprise the studious journalist there with baseball or opera tickets.

### **9. Ask for critiques.**

Don't trust only your trusted advisers. Listen to the staff. Do a closing questionnaire. The results may surprise you. Remember how people felt when thinking about return

visits or new presenters. Bring people back by popular demand. Post the results of the before and after questionnaires. Talk about it at the water cooler.

### **10. Thank people.**

Send each presenter a copy of the session video. Thank the staff for attending. Give bonuses to the staff member who attended the most seminars—like a year's free subscription to America On-Line, where motivated staff members can learn so much they become self-training.

### **11. Use the new knowledge.**

Encourage seminar-goers to use what they've learned. An example: Give everyone who attended the freedom of information seminar two days within the following month to prepare and file a request for public records. Keep the momentum going. Start in-house awards for good work. Schedule follow-up training seminars. Training is not a one-shot deal.

### **12. Track the results.**

It can be hard to measure how seminars help people. That's why many newspapers don't do them. Each year, ask people how they have used the information from last year's seminars. Be aware of subtle changes in quality, morale, leadership and self-confidence. Get some testimonials. Tell people, for example, how many of those public records requests resulted in good stories. Let the staff know how the seminars helped them succeed. Pat yourself on the back for a job well done. Smile, soak it all in and then go back to Step One.





Candace Page



Dolf Els



Daisy Harris



Adell Crowe

# Newsroom Managers Survey

1. Did you have any management training before becoming a newsroom supervisor?  
YES\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_

2. If the answer to Question 1 is yes, what kind of training did you have?

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3. Have you had any management training since becoming a newsroom manager?  
YES\_\_\_ NO\_\_\_

4. If the answer to Question 3 is yes, what kind of training have you had?

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5. How much interest do you have in training and development sessions on the following topics:

INTERESTLEVEL (check one)

|                              | High | Moderate | Low | None |
|------------------------------|------|----------|-----|------|
| Time management              | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Coaching writers             | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Building leadership skills   | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Motivating others            | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Providing feedback           | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Diversity issues             | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Stress management            | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Communication skills         | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Performance evaluations      | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Problem-solving              | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Critical thinking            | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Team building                | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Working as a management team | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |

6. How much interest do you have in training in the following technical topics?

INTERESTLEVEL (check one)

|                                | High | Moderate | Low | None |
|--------------------------------|------|----------|-----|------|
| Project story editing          | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Editing on deadline            | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Coaching before writing begins | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Editing during writing process | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |
| Photo/graphics planning        | ___  | ___      | ___ | ___  |

7. How often would you like to participate in in-house training/development sessions if they were available?  
Weekly\_\_\_ Monthly\_\_\_ Twice a month\_\_\_ Not interested\_\_\_

(cont.)



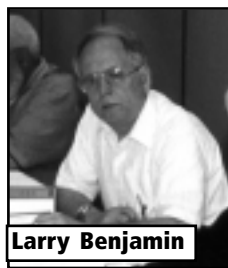




**Charles Richardson**



**Cindy Stiff**



**Larry Benjamin**



**Trisha O'Connor**

**SURVEY (cont.)**

8. When is the best time of day for training for you?

Mornings\_\_\_ Afternoons\_\_\_\_\_ Evenings\_\_\_

9. What day of the week is the best day for training for you?

Monday\_\_\_ Tuesday\_ \_ Wednesday\_\_\_ Thursday\_\_\_ Friday\_\_\_ Saturday\_\_\_ Sun-  
day\_\_\_

10. As a manager, how often, if ever, have you felt ill-equipped to handle a situation with a subordinate?

Often\_\_\_ Seldom\_\_\_ Sometimes\_\_\_ Never\_\_\_

11. Your gender: Male\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_

12. How long have you been a manager?

Under one year\_\_ 1 to 5 years\_\_ 6 to 10 years\_\_ 11 or more\_\_\_

13. Were you a manager before you came to this paper?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

14. What part of being a manager have you found most difficult?

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15. Would you be interested in being part of a newsroom managers discussion group, where newsroom supervisors could bounce problems and ideas off each other?

Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

16. What other areas of training would be helpful for you?

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17. What other areas of training do you think would be helpful for others in the newsroom?

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18. Please feel free to add any additional comments.

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# Topics for Training Seminars

**Before starting a training program,  
survey staffers to find out what they want.**

**[please check 10 subjects]**

- Writing leads
  - Story organization
  - Interview techniques
  - Confrontational interviews and crisis interviews
  - Phone techniques
  - Libel law, plagiarism, privacy, copyright
  - Using FOIA
  - Understanding the nut graf
  - Centerpieces
  - What you should know about graphics
  - What you should know about photos
  - Pitching stories for other sections
  - Getting and using quotes
  - Deadline awareness and responsibility
  - Ethics
  - Going off-the-record: why? when? pratfalls
  - Developing sources
  - Fairness
  - Getting the most out of a tagline
  - Transitions
  - Metaphors
  - Writing descriptively
  - Carpal tunnel and other typing injuries
  - Using the data base
  - Taking full advantage of our library
  - Getting your stories on the wires
  - Working with the news desk
  - Career development
  - Writing short
  - Making the most of your beat
  - Generating story ideas
  - Attribution
  - Covering:
    - Politics
    - Courts
    - Cops
    - Environment
    - Business
    - Sports
  - Rewrites
  - Accepting good editing
  - Understanding the business and production departments
  - Team reporting
  - Literary devices
  - News judgment
  - Working the data base
  - Self-editing
  - Strong verbs
  - Extraneous words, phrases
  - Writing without bias
  - Story lengths
  - Significant details
  - Narrative style
  - Writing with the senses
  - Taking readers to the scene
  - Enriching your vocabulary
  - Writing news features
  - Elements of feature writing
  - Elements of hard news
  - Avoiding cliches, stereotypes
  - Profiles
  - A touch of humor
  - Writing a column
  - Making technical things clear
  - How to write reviews
  - Specialty writing
  - How to package a story/ideas
  - OTHER [be specific]
- 



# The Proposal

To sell the program, you need a training proposal. Here is a sample:

## Recommendation

Establish a newsroom education program, with emphasis on developing journalism skills, expertise in key subjects and knowledge about our readers.

## What we want to achieve

Continuous learning as a newsroom ethic, more front-line expertise, opportunities for people to develop.

## What we'll do

- Create a full-time newsroom trainer to teach and coordinate education programs.
- Ensure that the trainer is an accomplished journalist, teacher and administrator.
- Develop a newsroom orientation program that includes training on teamwork, the newspaper's mission, reader needs and interests, and regional and community knowledge.
- Require all full-time professionals to attend at least one continuing-education program each year.
- Establish training programs linked to each of the newsroom's goals for the year.
- Set annual training goals for individuals and teams.
- Establish a culture of feedback and critiques, both written and informal.

## Transition training

To ensure a smooth transition to our new culture, newsroom people will need training in teamwork, coaching, leadership and dealing with change. That training will include the following:

- A seminar for everyone on the dynamics and pressures of change, how to ease the transition.
- Start-up training for top-level managers in teamwork, coaching, leadership and reader awareness.
- Education for team leaders and design coordinators on the integration of visual and verbal content.
- A seminar for team leaders on coaching.
- Training for pilot teams.
- Training for people in the reader- and customer-service department.



# The Questions

After the program has been sold to management, it's just as important to sell it to the staff. Their support is vital. Here are some questions you can anticipate. Some papers have distributed memos answering the questions in advance.

- Why are we starting a training program?
- Who is it for?
- Is this some sort of remedial thing for people who are weak or have problems in certain areas?
- How many seminars are being offered?
- Who determined what the seminars would be?
- When do the sessions start?
- How were instructors chosen?
- Most of us know the instructors. Won't that get boring?
- Are the seminars elective or mandatory?
- How often will seminars be offered and when?
- What if I have a task to do at the time of my seminar?
- Who might be in a seminar with me?
- So, just what can I expect from a typical seminar?
- How do I sign up?
- How will I know if I got into the sessions I wanted?
- How will you rate the success of the seminar?



**Brian Buchanan, oddly but appropriately garbed, leads a session on teamwork.**



# Planning a Training Session



**Adell Crowe revs the crowd at the Oakland training editors conference in 1996.**

There's no way to guarantee that your training session will be a success, but here are some basics that will put it on the right track.

1. Outline the course content.
2. State the overall goal of the course and relate it to journalism. Use examples that have meaning for the people in the current class.
3. Give examples of how each skill learned is useful to journalists.
4. If there are key concepts that must be learned, make sure they are repeated several times during the session.
5. Interact by asking questions.
6. Have exercises for staffers to do.
7. Give examples of how other staffers are using the information in their jobs.
8. Provide sources for further independent learning.
9. Provide a handout that can be used for future reference.
10. Follow up after the session to see if staffers are using the information.



# Training Seminar Checklist

Seminar Title/Date \_\_\_\_\_

- Reserve conference room
- Arrange for refreshments
- Select/confirm presenters
- Meet in advance with presenters
- Send out electronic notices
- Send out voicemail notices
- Post notices on newsroom bulletin boards
- FAX/distribute seminar notices to bureaus
- Create list of seminar applicants
- Send confirmation notices to applicants
- Send advance query to applicants
- Arrange audio visual aids
- Research/copy/distribute supporting materials
- Prepare feedback form
- Distribute feedback form at end of training session
- Tabulate and distribute feedback
- Thank you notes to presenters



# Route 66

## The 66 best ideas we've heard for getting your training program on the road.

1. **Survey the staff.** Find out what the folks in the newsroom want to learn. Make the survey as broad as possible. Then, try to meet all the needs.

2. **Roll the cameras.** Make sure to videotape all speakers for future use. You will build a library of great speakers.

3. **Share the knowledge.** When a staffer goes to a seminar, workshop or conference, invite him/her to give a brown-bag talk to staffers. Also, duplicate any handouts and share them with others.

4. **Get it on tape.** Make audio tapes of speakers to give to staffers. They are great for playing in the car while out on stories.

5. **Start a library.** Start a library of writers and editors. You can start by asking for contributions from staffers. Put it in the middle of the newsroom so that everyone can use it.

6. **Read newsletters.** Get on the mailing list for newspaper newsletters. They provide a stream of great ideas. The Freedom Forum can provide more information.

7. **Look for skills at home.** Conduct a skills assessment of the staff. It's a way to find a wealth of talented teachers for newsroom training.

8. **Get a commitment.** Ask managers to commit a certain number of hours for newsroom training. See it as a form of tithing for newsroom training.

9. **Hunting for gerunds.** Try a grammar scavenger hunt. Create teams from the copy desk and launch a scavenger hunt to find the correct answers to grammar problems. Give prizes to the winning team.

10. **Building teamwork.** Create teams to create a front-page layout. Combine photographers, reporters, line editors and copy editors to design a front page. It shows everyone how tough the job is, the balance required to turn out a good page and the art requirements. Try it with all

departments.

11. **Create a newspaper.** Using a wide range of staffers, come up with a new newspaper. Decide what you would cover, how extensive the coverage would be and the play of stories. Then compare it with what you are doing now and see how coverage could be improved.

12. **Give copy editors a turn.** A session for reporters by copy editors. Let the copy editors discuss the problems they see most frequently and how reporters can prevent them. It also gives the reporters a chance to learn some of the problems of the copy desk.

13. **Ethics of photo editing.** Conduct a seminar on the ethics of editing photographs in the computer age. Make sure it is open to all staffers to let everyone know what is permissible and what is not.

14. **Pass the popcorn.** One of the best ways to draw staffers is to offer entertainment. Newspapers have found that showing clips from newspaper movies [*The Front Page*, *All the President's Men*] not only entertains but gives a great starting point for discussions on newspaper ethics and rules of coverage.

15. **What are the rules here?** At nearly all newspapers, reporters and editors believe there are both written and unwritten rules about what gets covered, what doesn't get covered and how it gets covered. Have top editors meet with staffers to set the record straight.

16. **Not that mistake again!** The world's greatest errors. Copy desk staffers talk with reporters and line editors about the grammar and style mistakes they see time after time.

16. **Learn a new language.** Have an expert in body language meet with reporters and editors. Usually the police department has someone who is good at this, or a psychologist.

17. **Learn an old language.** It's a changing world and





a year of high school French just won't cut it. Offer on-site language classes for staffers, or strike a deal with the local community college.

18. **My mother reads my stories.** Of course everyone is reading your story. Well, perhaps not. Have the marketing department conduct a session for staffers on who is reading, what they are reading and what they want.

19. **Here's the story.** Editors can turn off reporters before the reporting begins by dictating what the story should be. Hold a seminar for editors on how to provide initial direction for reporters.

20. **That's not my job.** Many reporters believe that the graphics and art to accompany stories magically appear. Hold a session on how reporters can help artists and photographers and turn out a great package.

21. **Getting organized.** Editors discuss how to stay focused while reporting and writing the story.

22. **How do you turn this thing on?** Too often reporters and editors are assigned a computer terminal and not given any training. Make sure they know how it works.

23. **That job looks easy.** Let staffers spend a day or two working in another area of the newspaper. It can be within editorial, or a totally separate area. Spending a night putting plates on a press, or riding on a circulation truck will give any reporter or editor a new perspective.

24. **Taking a trip.** Why not write a piece for the travel section. Newspapers have travel sections and they always need copy. A brown bag lunch by the travel editor may just provide the encouragement for some great stories.

25. **Number crunching.** The world of high finance is a mystery to most reporters and editors. Sessions are offered on reading financial statements, figuring out government budgets and obligation bonds.

26. **It's in there somewhere.** Searching the Internet to make your story better. How to find what you really need and

fast. A good course will include explanations of user groups, search terms, available directories and ways to figure out the reliability of what you are reading.

27. **Computer-assisted reporting.** There's lots of information on the computer; the trick is finding it. Most newspapers divide this into two courses: beginning and advanced. Topics include finding people, downloading and searching databases.

28. **Spreadsheets [Excel 5.0] for beat reporters.** Setting up and using spreadsheets isn't just for projects anymore. The course can show how to use spreadsheets to organize notes and sources in addition to math-related functions.

29. **Asking for FOIA material.** Starting with the form letter and including what kinds of things to ask for. The course includes how to handle requests for computer-generated data.

30. **Quark.** An intensive introduction to this advanced graphics program.

31. **Adobe Photoshop.** An introduction to show you how it can help you.

32. **Introduction to Bloomberg.** Find out how to use the Bloomberg computer in preparing stories.

33. **Story budgeting.** A course designed for editors. Learn how to prepare budgets, calculate newshole space and package stories, graphics and photos.

34. **Basic Old Math.** If percentages confuse you and any math more advanced confounds you, you need a review of basic math. Includes averaging [how to figure batting averages], median and mean numbers.

35. **Introduction to Internet and Cyberspace.** An introduction to e-mail, gopher, mailing lists and the World Wide Web. Plus some special web sites just for journalists.

36. **Writing about music.** If you are interested in







**Fran Smith**



**Bill Luening**



**Rhonda Owen**



**Catharine Hamm**

writing music reviews, or just in knowing more about the subject, this course is for you. The course will examine good music writing and the various music genres.

37. **Cultivating and keeping sources.** How to create and maintain a source bank. Plus tips on keeping sources on your side and the right way and the wrong way to maintain solid contacts on your beat.

38. **The art of headline writing.** What makes a great headline. What makes a terrible headline. A hands-on session.

39. **Planning and editing projects.** Basic issues involved in doing both short-term and long-term projects. The session begins with turning daily stories into in-depth reports and includes a discussion of planning and scheduling major projects.

40. **Coaching.** Starting with a discussion of how to work with people, the course includes getting and giving honest feedback and how to motivate people.

41. **Probing financial institutions.** Designed to provide an overview of public and other records dealing with financial institutions. The course shows who has the information and how to get it.

42. **Everything you wanted to know about guns.** A local police official will explain how guns work and demonstrate their power. Also a detailed explanation of terms involving guns. The course is held at a local shooting range.

43. **Municipal finance.** How to read municipal budgets, a bond prospectus and a look at key players in municipal finance.

44. **Introduction to public records.** What is out there and what is the law about availability. Examines both state and federal open records laws.

45. **The market tour.** A three-hour tour of the area looking at the area from a business perspective. The tour includes large companies, shopping centers, sites of future development and a discussion of what is likely to happen. Led by someone from the marketing department.

46. **The neighborhood tour.** A bus tour of the city. Make

sure reporters know every area of the city, whether it's part of their beat or not. Have someone from the local historical society lead the way. The tour is especially valuable for copy desk folks who may be called upon to write about an area in a cutline or headline.

47. **Turn over a new Leaf.** An introduction to using the Leaf photo system. Designed for non-photo types who work with photographs.

48. **Libel.** A local attorney specializing in libel discusses the current status of the law. At some newspapers it is part of the orientation process for reporters and editors.

49. **Explanatory writing.** How to deal with stories that are long and complicated. Write stories to hold readers until the end.

50. **Narrative writing on deadline.** Don't let a daily deadline stop you from being a great storyteller. How to create vivid scenes, write compelling dialogue and created provocative characters.

51. **Time management.** It's crucial for those who need to get far too much done in the day. How to juggle a dozen things and stay on top of your job while meeting deadlines and keeping your desk from being cited by the health department.

52. **Myers Briggs.** How you like to look at things and how you like to go about making decisions helps determine who you are. Knowing your preferences can help you understand your strengths. The course discusses personality differences and how people interact.

53. **The visual journalist.** Photographs should not mirror the story, but should enhance and provide an added dimension for the story. Photographers discuss how to look at the story through their eyes.

54. **Performance reviews.** What they are, why we need them and how to do them. Vital for new managers.

55. **Spend the day as a photographer.** Check out the radical changes in news photography by working with a photographer for a day. And you can learn how the photographers view reporters and editors.





**Beverly Dominick**



**Phil Milano**



**Patricia Gillies**



**Bruce DeSilva**

**56. Finding experts on the internet.** A look at some of the more popular sources of information including Profnet, [www.profnet.com] which provides sources from academia and Ask an Expert [www.askanexpert.com/askanexpert] with information from both academia and business. It's designed to show reporters and editors how to find fast, reliable information.

**57. Horror stories.** A roundtable discussion of the worse mistakes senior reporters have made and what they have learned from them. A good program for young journalists.

**58. Covering a disaster.** Is the newsroom prepared for the once-in-a-lifetime story. A plane crash, violent weather or fire could send the paper reeling. Have top editors discuss their plans for disaster coverage and how it will affect the staff.

**59. Telephone interviewing.** It's becoming more commonplace. How do you prepare for a telephone interview and get the most out of it.

**60. Profile writing.** A workshop on how to research and write the perfect profile.

**61. How I wrote the story.** Brown-bag luncheons with

reporters explaining how they wrote major stories.

**62. Local history/newspaper history.** Have someone from the local historical society and someone from the newspaper discuss the history of the area and the newspaper. You would be amazed at how little staffers know about the background of their city and newspaper.

**63. Living with your laptop.** How to make sure reporters know how to use laptops on the road, communicate effectively with the office and call up information.

**64. How to shop for a computer.** Answer staffers' questions about buying, maintaining and upgrading computers.

**65. Check with the editorial board.** It's usually the editorial board that draws the big names: The governor, the senator, the bank president. Coordinate with the editorial page editor to see if any of them can stick around to do a brown-bag session with the staff.

**66. Get plenty of feedback.** Make sure you ask staffers and managers for their ideas for new sessions and thoughts on past sessions.

## Don't Forget Human Resources

**It doesn't make any sense to reinvent the wheel. Tap into company-wide training programs that may already be available, or let the folks in human resources help you set up programs they have experience with in general personnel subjects.**

**Some examples of where human resources can help.**

- 1. Sexual harassment in the workplace.**
- 2. How to do performance evaluations.**
- 3. Finding local experts to teach courses such as foreign languages.**
- 4. Managing change.**
- 5. Courses in general management.**



# Starting a Newsroom Library

Here are some basic books to help you start a newsroom library.

- *The American Heritage Dictionary.*
- *The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual.*
- *Edit Yourself* by Bruce Ross-Larson.
- *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White.
- *The Gregg Reference Manual* by William A. Sabin.
- *Webster's New World Dictionary*
- *When Words Collide* by Lauren Kessler and Duncan McDonald.
- *Woe is I* by Patricia T. O'Conner.
- *Wordson Words* by John Bremner.
- *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser.
- *The Careful Writer* and *Watch Your Language* by Theodore Bernstein.
- *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* by H. W. Fowler.
- *Fumblerules* by William Safire.
- *Grammar for Journalists* by E. L. Callihan.
- *The New Well-Tempered Sentence* and *The Transitive Vampire* by Karen Gordon.
- *Working with Words* by Brian S. Brooks and James L. Pinson.
- *The Writer's Art* by James J. Kilpatrick.
- *The Writer's Friend* by Martin Gibson.



**Paul Grabowicz of the University of California, Berkeley, Graduate School of Journalism faculty, speaks on mining the Internet for reliable information.**



# Sources

Compiled by Jack Hart of *The Oregonian*

## Anthologies and Book-Length Journalism

Benedict, Helen, "Portraits in Print." A collection of profiles.

Blais, Madeleine, "The Heart as an Instrument." Stories by the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Miami Herald* reporter.

Clark, Roy Peter, Don Fry, Chip Scanlan and Karen Brown (eds.) "Best Newspaper Writing." A collection of winners in the American Society of Newspaper Editors national writing competition. Published annually since 1979.

Cray, Ed, Jonathan Kotler and Miles Beller (eds.) "American Datelines: One Hundred and Forty Major News Stories From Colonial Times to the Present."

Harrington, Walt, "American Profiles: Somebodies and Nobodies Who Matter." Profiles by a *Washington Post* staffer.

Nalder, Eric, "Tankers Full of Trouble." The long version of the Pulitzer Prize-winning series.

Rothmyer, Karen, "Winning Pulitzers."

Scanlan, Chip, "How I Wrote the Story." Stories and story backgrounders by the staff of the *Providence Journal-Bulletin*.

Sims, Norman (ed.), "The Literary Journalists." A 1984 collection that includes John McPhee, Joan Didion and Tracy Kidder.

Sims, Norman, and Mark Kramer (eds.), "The Literary Journalists." A 1996 sequel to the original collection. This volume contains work by Tracy Kidder, John McPhee, Richard Preston and Susan Orlean.

Snyder, Louis, and Richard B. Morris, "A Treasury of Great Reporting."

Weinberg, Steve, "Telling the Untold Story: How Investigative Reporters Are Changing the Craft of Biography."

Weinberg, Steve, and Andrew Scott, "100 Selected Investigations." IRE contest entries.

Wolfe, Tom, "The New Journalism." A 1973 collection with all the usual suspects. Wolfe's lengthy introduction, a literary analysis of new journalism, is especially useful.

## Editing

Baskette, Sissors and Brooks, "The Art of Editing." A guide to basic copy editing.

Berner, Thomas, "Editing." A standard textbook, with a focus on copy editing.

Boston, Bruce (ed.), "Stet: Tricks of the Trade for Writers and Editors." This is an especially useful text for copy editors. Individual essays address clear writing, sexism, useless modifiers, etc.

Cheney, Theodore A., "Getting the Words Right: How to Edit & Rewrite." Too much of journalism consists of rough drafts. Here's a sensible guide for editors and writers who want to take it beyond that.

Clark, Roy Peter, and Don Fry, "Coaching Writers: Editors and Writers Working Together." A new book on how to incorporate the latest coaching techniques into the editor-writer relationship. Good stuff.

Hart, Jack (ed.), "Editing for Writers." An anthology of current readings on the coaching editor.

Howard, V.A. and J.H. Barton, "Thinking on Paper: Refine, Express and Actually Generate Ideas by Understanding the Processes of the Mind." This book summarizes research on the writing process. It's a fine aid to understanding what works best during the development and realization of a writing idea. And it's a great aid to editors who are trying to help writers improve.

"MLA Stylebook." The Modern Language Association's popular style guide.

Rich, Carole, "Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method." A reporting text with a twist; it integrates new ideas about collaborative efforts between reporters and writers.

Stapp, Carl Sessions, "Editing for Today's Newsroom: New Perspectives for a Changing Profession." Sensible advice that recognizes the realities of modern newsroom management.

## Language

Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual. The definitive reference for all newspapers and many magazines.

Baskett, Sissors and Brooks, "The Art of Editing." A basic guide to copy editing.

Berner, Thomas, "Language Skills for Journalists."

Bernstein, Theodore, "The Careful Writer: A Modern Guide to English Usage."

Blumenthal, Joseph, English 3200. A programmed workbook that reviews language basics.

Boston, Bruce (ed.), "Language on a Leash." Short essays on English.

Brooks, Brian, and James Pinson, "Working With Words." Basics of grammar and usage.

Bryson, Bill, "The Mother Tongue: English and How It Got That Way." A great read.

Callihan, E.L., "Grammar for Journalists."

Chicago Manual of Style. The standard for book





**Leslie Ansley**



**Dick Hughes**



**Jean Patman**



**Merv Aubespin**

publishing.

Clark, Roy Peter, "Journalism and the American Conversation." Clark explores the impact of journalistic style on American style, with particular attention to the right-branching sentence.

Dumond, Val, "Grammar for Grownups."

Economist, "The Economist Style Guide: The Essentials of Elegant Writing." A favorite of copy editors who want to go beyond basic style.

Gibson, Martin L. "Red," "The Writer's Friend." Short essays on various language issues. Useful for both copy editors and writers.

Gordon, Karen Elizabeth, "The New Well-Tempered Sentence." A guide to punctuation.

Graves, Robert and Alan Hodge, "The Use and Abuse of the English Language."

Harrigan, Jane T., "The Editorial Eye." A guide to copy editing.

Johnson, Edward D., "The Handbook of Good English." A handy reference.

Kessler, Lauren, and Duncan McDonald, "When Words Collide: A Journalist's Guide to Grammar and Usage."

Lederer, Richard, "The Miracle of Language."

Lewis, Norman, "20 Days to Better Spelling." Yes, there ARE rules. And this book has them all.

Mieder, Wolfgang, "Proverbs Are Never Out of Season: Popular Wisdom in the Modern Age."

Stoughton, Mary, "Substance & Style in Copyediting."

Strunk and White, "Elements of Style."

Tarshis, Barry, "Grammar for Smart People."

Webster's Dictionary of English Usage. An exhaustive reference work that's descriptive rather than prescriptive. Extremely useful.

### **Law, Ethics and Philosophy**

ASNE/Journalism Values Institute, "Insights on the Values." A discussion of the core values that drive American Journalism.

Black, Jay, Bob Steele and Ralph Barney, "Doing Ethics in Journalism." The SPJ ethics handbook.

Bollinger, Lee, "Images of a Free Press."

Cohen, Elliot, D., "Philosophical Issues in Journalism."

Fuller, Jack, "News Values."

Hulteng, John, "Playing It Straight: A Practical Discussion of the Ethical Principles of the American Society of Newspaper Editors."

Lambeth, Edmund, "Committed Journalism: An Ethic

for the Profession."

Manoff, Robert Karl, and Michael Schudson (eds.), "Reading the News." Fascinating essays by some of the field's top thinkers on what we really mean by "who," "what," "where" and "why."

Pember, Don, "Mass Media Law."

Sanford, Bruce, "Synopsis of Libel and Privacy."

### **History and Professional Lore**

Bates, Stephen, "If No News, Send Rumors." Anecdotes and infamous incidents drawn from the history of American journalism.

Cates, Jo, "Journalism: A Guide to the Reference Literature."

Folkerts, Jean and Dwight Teeter, "Voices of a Nation: A History of the Media in the United States."

Hohenberg, John, "The Pulitzer Prize Story II." A collection of prize-winning stories, with commentary.

Pearlman, Mickey, and Katherine Usher Henderson, "A Voice of One's Own: Conversations with America's Writing Women."

Sims, Norman (ed.), "Literary Journalism in the Twentieth Century."

Stephens, Mitchell, "A History of News."

### **Management**

American Press Institute, "How Newspapers Communicate Internally."

ASNE, "The Changing Face of the Newsroom: a Human Resources Report." One of the most significant studies of newsroom management problems ever conducted.

Giles, Robert, "Newsroom Management." 742 pages on the subject by the executive editor of the *Detroit News*.

Isaacs, A. Scott, "Untended Gates: The Mismanaged Press." The title says it all.

Katzenbach, Jon R., and Douglas K. Smith, "The Wisdom of Teams."

Miller, Edward, "The Charlotte Project: Helping Citizens Take Back Democracy."

Semonche, Barbara P. (ed.), "Mass Media Libraries: A Management Handbook."

### **Photography, Art and Design**

Chapnick, Howard, "Truth Needs No Ally: Inside Photojournalism."

Garcia, Mario, and Pegie Stark, "Eyes on the News."





**Gail Bulfin**



**Tom Silvestri**



**Yvette Walker**



**Tim Porter**

The Poynter Institute eye-track studies.  
Harrower, Tim, "The Newspaper Designer's Handbook."

### **Reporting**

Brady, John, "The Craft of Interviewing."  
Baker, Bob, "Newstinking." A guide to conceptualizing and focusing news stories.  
Cohen, Morris, "Legal Research."  
Cohn, Victor, "News and Numbers: A Guide to Reporting Statistical Claims and Controversies in Health and Related Fields." An invaluable guide to developing a healthy statistical skepticism useful for a wide variety of reporting assignments.

Cohn, Victor, "Reporting on Risk: Getting It Right in an Age of Risk." We need all the help we can get on this one—journalists regularly swallow outrageous claims about the various risks we face in modern society. Both of Cohn's books are surprisingly readable, interesting books.

Denniston, Lyle, "The Reporter and the Law."  
Douglas, John, "Mind Hunter." A guide to police and FBI criminal profiling.  
Harriss, Julian, Kelly Leiter and Stanley Johnson, "The Complete Reporter" (Third Edition). A standard reporting text.

Hartford Courant, "Community Journalism."  
Hewitt, Michael, "Travels With a Laptop: Tips and Tricks for Traveling With Your Computer."  
Huff, Darrell, "How to Lie With Statistics." This is essential reading for any reporter or editor who needs to develop a savvy skepticism about numbers.

Houston, Brant, "Computer-Assisted Reporting: A Practical Guide." This handbook even includes a computer disk with CAR exercises.  
Kessler, Lauren, and Duncan McDonald, "Uncovering the News: A Journalist's Search for Information." Effective use of the library. Data bases. Business and government documents. How to find experts. This is must reading for reporters who seldom reach beyond the local interview source for information.

Kluge, "Guide to Business and Economics Reporting."  
Metzler, Ken, "Creative Interviewing, Second Edition." The most sensible guide to the major source of journalistic information.

Meyer, Philip, "Precision Journalism." (Second Edition) The original text on using social-science methods in journalism.  
Missouri Group, "Reporting and Writing." A standard journalism-school text.

Stephens, Mitchell, and Gerald Lanson, "Writing and Reporting the News." A standard text.

Ullmann, John, and Steve Honeyman (eds.) "The Reporter's Handbook." The IRE guide to documents and techniques.  
Ullmann, John, "Investigative Reporting: Advanced Methods and Techniques."  
Weaver, Jefferson Hane, "Conquering Statistics: Numbers Without the Crunch."

### **Writing**

American Press Institute, "Effective Writing and Editing." This booklet, designed for media professionals, reviews the elements of clear writing. It contains few surprises, but it is a good review.

Baker, Bob, "Newstinking: the Secret of Great Newswriting." A guide to conceptualizing stories and making them meaningful. Available directly from Baker at 3325 Keeshen Dr., Los Angeles Calif. 90066.

Bernays, Anne, and Pamela Painter, "What If: Writing Exercises for Fiction Writers." A great stimulus to creative thinking.

Blundell, William E., "The Art and Craft of Feature Writing." *The Wall Street Journal's* Bill Blundell is one of the great feature writers of our generation. He's also a fine teacher. Not surprisingly, this book, derived from *The Wall Street Journal Guide*, is a prize.

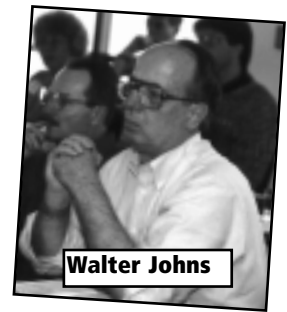
Bradbury, Ray, "Zen and the Art of Writing."  
Bridges, Linda, and William Rickenbacker, "The Art of Persuasion."

Cappon, Rene, "The Word." The AP's handbook of good writing.  
Cheney, Theodore, "Writing Creative Nonfiction." A useful guide to the literary techniques used in crafting nonfiction that goes beyond the inverted pyramid.

Cook, Marshall, "Freeing Your Creativity: A Writer's Guide."  
Franklin, Jon, "Writing for Story." A two-time Pulitzer Prize winner's formula for crafting nonfiction with a true story line.

Gunning, Robert, and Douglas Mueller, "How to Take the Fog Out of Writing." A guide to increasing readability.  
Hulteng, John, "The Opinion Function: Editorial and Interpretive Writing for the News Media."

Lanson, Gerald, and Mitchell Stephens, "Writing and Reporting the News: Second Edition."  
Maloney, Martin, and Paul Max Rubenstein, "Writing for the Media."



Murray, Donald, "Writer in the Newsroom."  
Noble, William, "Shut Up! He Explained: A Writer's Guide to the Uses and Misuses of Dialogue."  
Rivers, William, "Writing Opinion: Reviews."  
Rhodes, Richard, "How to Write."  
Rich, Carole, "Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method." A reporting text with a twist; it integrates new ideas about collaborative efforts between reporters and writers.  
Rivers, Bill, "Writing Reviews."  
Schultz, Dodi, "Tools of the Writer's Trade." Writers talk about equipment and services.

Vogler, Chris, "The Writer's Journey." Archetypal story forms and characters, as per Joseph Campbell.  
White, E.B., and William Strunk, "The Elements of Style." The traditional favorite as a guide to clear, direct writing.  
Witt, Leonard (ed.), "The Complete Book of Feature Writing."  
Yudkin, Marcia, "Freelance Writing."  
Zinsser, William, "On Writing Well." THE definitive guide to current style in nonfiction writing. This book is a must for anyone who writes or edits.



**San Francisco Examiner reporter Anastasia Hendrix gets advice on writing from coach Jack Hart.**



# Grammar Hotlines

Teaching grammar is always difficult. Here are a dozen web sites to make the job easier.

The Elements of Style: [www.cc.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/strunk](http://www.cc.columbia.edu/acis/bartleby/strunk).

Punctuation and Grammar: [www.freep.com/jobpage/academy/hart/htm](http://www.freep.com/jobpage/academy/hart/htm).

American Copy Editors Society: [www.copydesk.org](http://www.copydesk.org).

Copy Editor Links: [www.copyeditor.com/Links./html](http://www.copyeditor.com/Links./html).

The Slot: [www.theslot.com](http://www.theslot.com).

The Grammar Lady: [www.grammarlady.com](http://www.grammarlady.com).

The Word Detective: [www.users.interport.net/~words1](http://www.users.interport.net/~words1).

Grammar Hotline Directory: [www.tc.cc.va.us/vabeach.writcent/hotline.html](http://www.tc.cc.va.us/vabeach.writcent/hotline.html).

North Carolina State University Writing Lab: [www.ncsu.edu/ncsu/grammar](http://www.ncsu.edu/ncsu/grammar).

Online Grammar Resources: <http://jcomm.uoregon.edu/~kelleew/j101/links.html>.

Purdue University: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/writers/by-topic.html>.

Purdue Writing Lab Guide: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/writing-labs.html>.



< Joe Grimm leads a session on setting up a training intranet.



> Grimm thoughtfully provides a rubber mouse for each training editor. He calls out "click your mouse" several times during the presentation and the editors obediently squeeze mouse butt.





# Setting up brown bags

1. Start small. Hold one luncheon and then step back and evaluate the results.
2. Pick a time and place that is convenient for the most staffers.
3. Decide what the company will provide. There are no rules. Some papers provide a full lunch, others provide just beverages, some charge a reduced fee for a lunch and others provide nothing.
4. Decide on a length and stick to it. If the program drags, or runs longer than scheduled, reporters will start to leave.
5. Ask the staff for ideas for brown-bag sessions. Check the daily newspaper for interesting people and stories, then consider if they could be turned into brown bag luncheons.
6. Check the staff for experts. A reporter who has published a book can be a great source for a brown bag on getting published. Someone who has been to a conference or seminar can do a debriefing for the staff.
7. Promote, promote, promote. Make sure everybody knows about the brown bag. Send flyers to everyone, post notices in the newsroom and use the electronic messaging system. Then, do it all again. On brown-bag day, talk it up in the newsroom.
8. Make sure the bureaus are included. It's tougher for bureau staffers to attend, so make it as easy as possible for them. See if there are days when bureau staffers are going to be in the main office for another meeting.
9. Some sessions will draw, others won't. Don't worry about it. Do make sure that key managers attend. Their presence will help draw others.
10. Mix up the sessions. Try a field trip. Change the time. To help draw people to a session on math, one newspaper gave away inexpensive calculators.
11. Make audio and video tapes of all sessions.
12. Don't forget programs for those working at night. Try to hold some late afternoon sessions to catch folks coming to work.

## Brown-bag ideas that work

Here they are, two dozen road-tested brown bag lunch programs.

1. Build your memory.
2. Newspapers and survey research methods.
3. Publish your book (using staffers to talk about their experiences).
4. Using the Better Business Bureau to find story ideas.
5. Reaching younger readers.
6. Legal issues in electronic publishing.
7. The state's United States senator or congressman on what is happening in Washington.
8. Freedom of Information Act 101.
9. Sexual harassment workshop.
10. Math for the ignorant.
11. Stress management.
12. Page one decision-making.
13. Free-lance opportunities in the newspaper.
14. Pressroom tour.
15. Ethics and journalism.
16. High school students talk about what they want from the newspaper.
17. How to use electronic databases.
18. Lunch with the editor.
19. Lunch with the publisher.
20. Islam: Its image and the media.
21. Meeting with representatives of ethnic communities.
22. Open luncheon with the summer interns.



# Training to give job reviews

Job reviews are a pain. People don't like giving them. People don't like getting them. There is no training in the world that will make people sing happy little snatches of tune as they dance off to their job reviews. There is something about face-to-face judging and being judged that produces angst, even when the review is favorable.

What you can do is train supervisors to give job reviews competently, even-handedly and with no surprises. Training can also take supervisors through examples of their worst nightmares and how to handle them.

Following are the elements to cover in the training.

## Preparation for job reviews

1. Develop a clear idea of the responsibilities of the job and make sure the staff member knows what they are and what quality of work is expected. The staff member knows there will be an annual job review. (A six-month review is a good idea for new employees in their first year.)

2. Observe, evaluate and record performance throughout the year. Rule: Nothing can be mentioned in the job review that has not been mentioned during the year. No sand-bagging allowed.

- Keep a folder on each staff member and add to it throughout the year—copies of memos on good work and problems, clips of noticeably good or bad work, notes on conversations you have.
- Let staff members know those folders are available for them to see.
- Suggest staff members keep their own folders on their work and on the assistance they get from their supervisors. The burden is on the supervisor in the job review, but staff members have the opportunity to bring up matters for discussion as well.

3. Set up the job review appointment several days in advance. Hold the job review in a place where you will not be disturbed. Avoid public places like the cafeteria.

4. Set aside at least an hour to prepare for the job review. You need to review work over a long period, not just what you can remember from the past couple of weeks. All of your remarks should be based on specifics, to which you can refer, and not sweeping generalizations.

5. Develop an overall assessment and give it to the staff member at the beginning of the review. Otherwise the person will sit there waiting for the punch line and miss the rest of what you are saying.

## Format for the job review

1. Put the staff member at ease. Don't plunge immediately into the review. No matter what the outcome, job reviews are stressful, so recognize that. We are doing all this work to help people develop in their jobs and to make the paper better, not to play "gotcha."

2. Explain what it is you are going to do: "First I will give you my overall assessment, then we'll look at each area of performance so you'll know on what my assessment is based. Then we'll review the assessment and conclude by working out goals for the coming year to help you move toward your career goals."

3. Explain the process: "This is a discussion, not a speech by me. Join in whenever you have a comment or question. OK?" (Get a response.)

4. Get the staff member's assessment and views of how the job is going. Why were those assessments made?

5. Offer your evaluation, working in responses from the staff member as you go.

6. In each category of performance, start with positive remarks. Focus on behaviors, not your attitude toward the person. Back up general remarks with specific examples. Interview, don't just read notes.

7. Go over the staff member's career goals and discuss how the job review fits in with those goals.

8. Work out a plan with the staff member for the coming year. Get the staff member's ideas for useful courses of action. Arrange follow-up meetings, if necessary.

9. Discuss how you can be more helpful and effective as a supervisor.

10. End the interview on a positive note.

## After the job review

1. Type up a summary of the interview with copies for the editor and for the staff member. You and the staff member sign the copies before one goes to the editor.

2. The staff member is invited to attach an addendum if feeling the summary is incomplete or unfair.





**Don Campbell**



**Michael Roberts**



**Lynn Kalber**



**Marianne Chin**

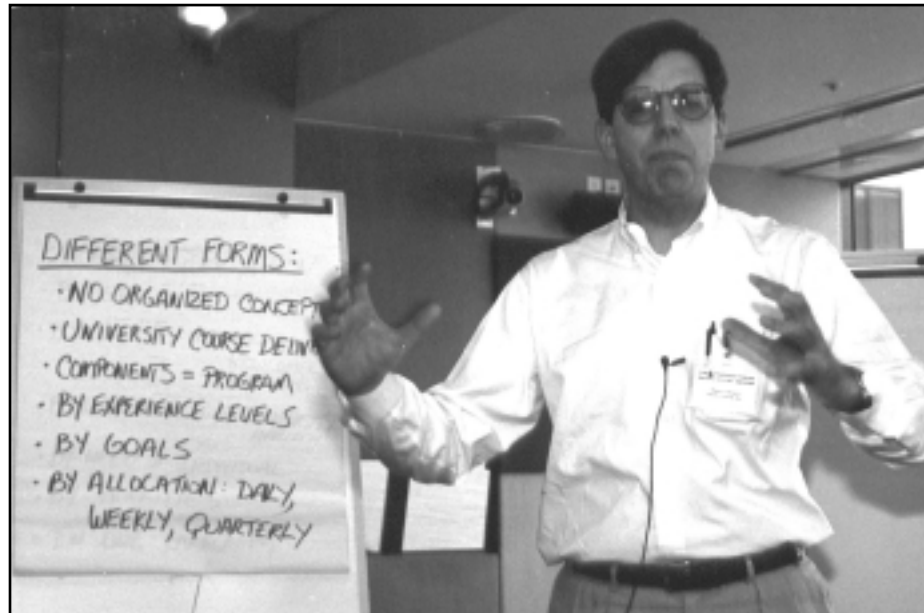
### **During the training to give job reviews**

1. Before the training session, ask each supervisor to describe the situation he or she is most concerned about facing in a job review (staff member gets hostile or never speaks up or gets emotional or shoots the supervisor). During the training, use those examples in role-playing but make sure people act out other supervisors' problems rather than their own. Discuss how well or poorly each problem was handled in the role-playing and discuss with the group how to

diffuse or improve each situation.

2. Make sure each supervisor has a checklist of the steps in a job review.

3. After the first round of job reviews, bring the supervisors together for a follow-up discussion of how the sessions are going and how to handle any problems that may come up.



**Tom Silvestri pulls together ideas from the training editors on setting up a newsroom training program.**



# Exercise: Ethics issues

Here are some real situations newspapers have confronted. Use them to generate staff discussions. Make it clear how your newspaper would handle similar situations.

1. **The situation:** Two reporters dig up a hot story about boosters making illegal payments to the players on one of the nation's biggest basketball teams. The players admit the payments in interviews. But the reporters are worried that after they write the story, the players will be under pressure to deny their statements. One possibility would be to secretly record their conversations. What would you do?

**What happened:** The reporters made the tapes. After the story appeared, the players denied making the statements until confronted with the tapes.

2. **The situation:** There are rumors that a local businessman was involved in a crime more than 20 years ago. You find out that when he was 18 and lived in another city, he shot to death his mother, father and sister. He was found incapable of standing trial and hospitalized for seven years. What would you do?

**What happened:** The major dailies in town at first refused to run the story. Then, an alternative weekly ran it and radio and television stations picked it up. Finally, one of the two major dailies did run the story.

3. **The situation:** A man in San Francisco is watching as the president of the United States walks by following a political appearance. Suddenly, he sees a woman point a gun at the president. He grabs her arm to stop her from shooting at the president. He is roundly praised and a number of flattering articles are written about him. One, in his hometown paper, reports that he is gay. He objects to the revelation and says his privacy was invaded. Was his privacy invaded?

**What happened:** The man sued the local newspaper and lost his privacy suit.

4. **The situation:** There are rumors that one of your United States senators has assaulted women on his staff. You start checking them out and find 8 women who say the senator had drugged them and then molested them. Only one of the women is willing to use her name. You hesitate going with the story. Then, you hit upon an idea. You ask each of the women to sign a statement stating that their names can be used if the paper is sued. They agree. The story runs and the senator cries foul. Would you have run the names? Was it fair to the senator?

**What happened:** The paper was initially criticized, but the criticism died down when people found out how extensive the reporting had been. The senator continued to deny the charges, but did not seek re-election.

5. **The situation:** Your newspaper is in a Navy town. One of the ships based in your town is at sea when there is a terrible explosion that kills scores of sailors. Sources tell your reporter that a particular sailor is a target of investigation. You are going to run the story, but without naming the sailor. But a television network goes with the story and uses the sailor's name. Suddenly, his name is everywhere. Do you use the name?

**What happened:** The newspaper eventually printed the name on the assumption that everyone already knew. The sailor was later cleared of any charges.



# Exercise: Reducing clutter

This one can be fun. Give staffers the paragraphs on the left and ask them to “Cut the Clutter.” On the right are some suggested ways it could be done.

## Start with this.

1. Air Force Sgt. Tom Paniccia raised another challenge to military policy, appearing on the ABC show “Good Morning America” and saying he wanted to make public his homosexuality because it would “assign a human face to the issue.”

---

2. It is anticipated that 400,000 ears total will be harvested.

---

3. The agency said data from Houston, Los Angeles, Miami and New York reflected a 30 to 40 percent increase in wholesale prices during the second quarter of this year. This is only the second time since the late 1970s that significant increases in prices of whole-sale lots have occurred, said Robert C. Bonner, administrator for the drug enforcement.

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4. WASHINGTON (AP) - The Federal Communications Commission on Thursday postponed the effective date of new rules increasing the number of radio stations allowed under a single ownership.

The five commissioners decided in an out-of-session vote to delay implementation of the regulations until they can decide whether to reconsider the entire matter. A number of requests asking that they do so have been filed, although spokeswoman Rosemary Kimball said she did not know the number.

---

5. Fitzgerald, 34, said he was prepared to die for raping and stabbing a woman in a Richmond suburb before leaving her in the woods to bleed to death.

## Can you get to here?

Another serviceman raised a challenge to the policy. Air Force Sgt. Tom Paniccia appeared on ABC’s “Good Morning America” and said he made his homosexuality public in order to “assign a human face to the issue.”

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The church expects to harvest 400,000 ears.

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---

Fitzgerald, 34, said he was prepared to die. He was convicted of raping and stabbing a woman in a Richmond suburb, then leaving her in the woods to bleed to death.



# Exercise: Interviewing sources and listening

This exercise is intended for two separate, hour-long sessions (a week or a month apart). The exercise sensitizes reporters to sources' concerns about accuracy and identifies reporters' strengths and weaknesses as a listener.

1. Break into groups of three. In each group, one person plays the role of reporter, one the role of source, and the third person should be an outside observer who takes careful notes of the interaction but does not intervene. The reporter has 15 minutes to interview the source. The reporter's assignment is to write a 350-word biographical profile of the source.
2. After 15 minutes, members of the group rotate role. The source becomes the observer, the observer becomes the reporter, and the reporter now is the source. After 15 minutes, the roles rotate for a final time. During the time between the two meetings, the group members should write their stories, being sure to make three copies.
3. At the second meeting, the three participants exchange their stories. The source reads the profile and marks errors and makes comments.
4. The source provides feedback to the reporter about the accuracy of the information. Rotate the procedure until all three members have gone through the entire process.
5. Then, have a discussion about the process. Let everyone react to playing the three roles.



**Writing coach Mary Ann Hogan looks for the sentence that connects the reader to the story.**



# Exercise: Dealing with quotations

Rewrite these paragraphs to make the quotations clear to the reader. Then have reporters read what they have come up with and discuss the possible changes.

1. Translate the political gobbledegook.

Clinton's dozen years as Arkansas governor should make him well-prepared for difficult executive decision-making, said Kansas House Speaker Marvin Barkis of Louisburg, another delegate.

"But I think that goes to the weaknesses, because some people want to get rid of politicians," Barkis said.

"Right now, to some people, the very idea of experience as a politician means you are an insider," he said. "The very things that qualify him for the job and to be a new generation national leader are the things that also hit as a negative, because he has been in government."

2. See how many words you can eliminate.

"It is in the best interest of the government . . . to clarify these events so that those responsible for the killings do not remain unpunished," Attorney General Ignacio Morales Lechuga said in appointing an opposition party member, Leonel Godoy Rangel, as special prosecutor.

3. Do people really talk this way?

"If an incumbent has a solid record of achievement, if his integrity is unquestioned, the chances are that check bouncing per se will be a less salient factor in voters' decision making," said Alan Secrest, a pollster who works for many Democratic House candidates.

"On the other hand, if he is perceived as out of touch, having 'gone Washington,' . . . it will be more difficult to slip the punch," he said.

4. What's wrong with me, Doc?

Dr. Joseph A. Bellanti, president of the American College of Allergy and Immunology, which was not involved in the study, said the results are encouraging. He suggested that future studies should be done "under conditions that are very careful."

"I think the study design was very well constructed. . . . And the results are highly suggestive that (the therapy) might work," Bellanti, an immunologist at Georgetown University Medical Center in Washington, D.C., said in an interview Wednesday.

5. Can you prune this quotation?

The Major Oak, the tree of Sherwood Forest popularly associated with Robin Hood, has been cloned through propagation by a company that hopes to offer saplings for sale.

"Our research in cloning the Major Oak ensures that if it dies we can replace it with an exact replica and, given 500 years, it will grow into an identical tree," Neal Wright, a director of Micropropagation Services, said Thursday.

Trees could be grown from acorns but they would not be genetically identical to the 80-foot-tall Major Oak, believed to be centuries old.



# Exercise: Using the senses

Too often reporters rely on just two of their senses, sight and hearing. And, in an era when many stories are done by telephone, they use just one: hearing.

This exercise is designed to encourage reporters to use all of their senses.

1. Take reporters to a nature museum, habitat or nature trail. Blindfold the reporters and let them walk in a secure area.
2. Let them touch and smell and sometimes taste if it is appropriate.
3. After about 30 minutes, remove the blindfolds and have the reporters write about the experience from the point of view of their senses of smell, taste and touch.
4. Have the reporters go back without blindfolds and see how close they came to getting it right.
5. Finally, have the reporters discuss the differences in their findings and how they came about.



**Michael Weinstein (far left), Dick Hughes and (hiding) Rodd Cayton try out a creativity exercise.**





# The Silent Interview

Break into groups of two.

Introduce yourselves.

Now, interview each other without saying a word or asking a question.

Look at each other for two or three minutes.

Ask yourself these questions:

- What kind of music does this person like?
- Where is this person likely to vacation?
- Is this person religious? If so, which religion?
- What kind of car does this person drive?
- What are this person's hobbies?
- Describe the person in terms of liberal, conservative or moderate.

Then, find out how accurate your assumptions were and have a group discussion about the implications of assumptions by journalists.



**Sandra Mims Rowe, *The Oregonian* editor, stresses the need for training in constantly changing newsrooms.**



# Appendix A

## Contributors

Scores of newsroom trainers, educators, consultants and others have contributed to this guide. The ideas for seminars and exercises have come from them. The Freedom Forum is grateful for their contributions.

|                       |                    |                    |                      |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
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| Stan Allison          | John Green         | James Mallory      | Tom Silvestri        |
| Paul Anderson         | Joe Grimm          | Christine Martin   | Fran Smith           |
| Leslie Ansley         | Félix Gutiérrez    | Felicia Mason      | J. Frazier Smith     |
| Merv Aubespain        | Deborah Gump       | Rosemary McCoy     | Michael Smith        |
| Avi Bass              | Catharine Hamm     | Kevin McGrath      | Sheila Solomon       |
| Larry Benjamin        | Randy Hammer       | Paul McMasters     | Peggie Stark Adam    |
| Peter Bhatia          | Daisey Harris      | Phil Milano        | Ellen Stein Burbach  |
| Judy Bolch            | Jack Hart          | Sandy Mims Rowe    | Carl Stepp           |
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| Brian Buchanan        | Nancy Higgins      | Michael Moschel    | Dee Dee Strickland   |
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| Lucille de View       | Yvonne Lamb        | Charles Richardson | John Wicklein        |
| Terry Dickerson-Jones | Jan Landon         | Michael Roberts    | Julie Wierzba        |
| Beverly Dominick      | Judy Lefton        | Don Rodriguez      | G. Cleveland Wilhoit |
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| G. Donald Ferree      | Wanda Lloyd        | Connie Sage        | Robert Woessner      |
| Perry Flippin         | Kate Long          | Paul Salsini       | Debbie Wolfe         |
| Patricia Gillies      | Bill Luening       | Ann Schierhorn     | Gail Workman         |
|                       | Maxine Lynch       | Michael Schwartz   |                      |



# Appendix B

## Losing the thing you love

By Jay Rosen  
New York University

*Jay Rosen is an associate professor of journalism at New York University and, since 1993, director of the Project on Public Life and the Press, funded by the Knight Foundation. This piece is adapted from remarks to an ASNE Change Committee meeting in Columbia, S.C., Nov. 15-17, 1996. It was used as the text for the 1998 Freedom Forum Pacific Coast Center training editors conference because it spoke to the problem of bringing change to newsrooms. [Reprinted with permission of Jay Rosen and ASNE.]*

The reason I wanted to be here this weekend is that this is the center of the universe for the work that I do. The people who are here, the subject matter, and the energy in the room are very much at the heart of my own concerns.

I'd like to look at your institution from the perspective of another institution—the university. As an academic, I've been circulating among you for several years, since about 1989. Based on that experience, I have some observations about change based on my position as an outsider—or a kind of inside-outsider.

Gil Thelen and Paula Ellis [of *The State* in Columbia, S.C.] talk about the newspaper as a candid friend, which I think is a wonderful metaphor, and I want to speak today as a candid friend. For the past few years I've been trying to communicate with journalism, to get inside the “mind” of the American press, as it were. It's a disturbing place to be, at times, but also a very instructive place. I've had to learn how to speak “journalism” to working journalists. I've listened to you talk among yourselves, attended your conferences, hung out with you, had drinks with you, left you with the check. And I've visited several dozen newsrooms around the country to see the struggle to change up close.

I've done this for three reasons. The first is I wanted to take seriously the criticism of the university as an ivory tower. As a journalism professor with a Ph.D., I thought it was a fair complaint that academics, especially “communication” scholars, don't always know what's going on. And I wanted to satisfy myself that I did know what was happening

in the profession. So I've spent a lot of time on airplanes over the last few years.

Second, I wanted to learn, to energize myself by seeing what happens when you try to bring a few ideas from outside the culture into the culture. And I have learned a great deal and made myself a better scholar—meaning, more informed, more in touch.

Third, I felt a sense of obligation to journalism. I think we professors ought to be contributing a lot more to the craft than we have in the past few years. It is part of our job to try to improve—not just criticize or reproduce—journalism; people in the university have not been doing enough of that. The J-school is not the asset to the profession that it should be.

I'm going to offer you, then, six lessons from my experience in circulating about your world. Before I launch into these, though, some necessary disclaimers. Please hear them. The first is that the people I most admire in the profession are in this room. Especially when I see how you and your efforts are treated by some in the profession, it makes me admire you even more. So I want that understood at the beginning, because there isn't going to be a lot of love in my talk.

Second disclaimer: There are many exceptions to everything I have to say. And if you say, “Yes, but I'm the exception,” you may be right. But I'm not going to deal with the exceptions. I'm going to deal with the rules because I think the rules can stand a little scrutiny.

Disclaimer number three: There's a lot of good work being done around the country—plenty of good, occasionally great, journalism. American journalists are now better trained, more professional and, on the whole, far more honest and ethical than during any previous era on our history. But here I'm going to focus on what's wrong because in our present predicament even good work is not enough.





**Jim Clark**



**Carolyn Bower**



**Scott Jaschik**



**Avi Bass**



**Michael Weinstein**

Fourth disclaimer: I'm aware that I am overstating the case to make a point. You can adjust for that strategy yourself, I trust.

Now, with those words of caution, let me start in. Here are my six lessons:

1. You have trouble changing. Perhaps my most obvious lesson.
2. You have taught yourselves not to learn. In a variety of interesting ways.
3. You resist challenge from the outside. Having been "resisted" myself, I know what this is like.
4. You decline to challenge yourselves and your elite. As I will explain.
5. You've become a herd of independent minds. A pattern we need to analyze.
6. You're losing the thing you love. Which is journalism. There's nothing in the Constitution that says journalism must endure. It's entirely possible for the thing as we know it to disappear, even as "freedom of the press" remains secure. And while that prospect is floated now and again, the weight of it is not, I think, fully appreciated.

First, you have trouble changing. Why? All established institutions have this problem. Think of the Pentagon, or the medical profession, or the university. But some of the problem is specific to the culture of journalism. For one thing, the craft is organized around what is sometimes called "the daily miracle" – the production routine. And it is an amazing thing. But the production miracle can also be an intellectual disaster. It makes it extremely difficult for journalists to think deep thoughts about what they do.

The routines of the profession, the attitudes and assumptions needed to get the news done, have also influenced the way you think about the news. You've borrowed the ideas and the approaches that are functional for producing

the paper, and turned them into learning styles for the entire craft. This is unfortunate because the problem of making change is different from the problem of getting the paper out.

To take a personal example, the way the craft has received the idea of public journalism is by treating it not as an idea, but as a "trend" or "controversy." Now, that's not inaccurate, nor is it unfair. There is a trend, and there is a controversy. But is that the best way to understand what the idea is about? Learning about something through the "controversy" lens is actually quite difficult. The conflicts that make for a good controversy may themselves conflict with a deeper understanding of what's at stake.

It's been said before, but it's true: You don't really know journalism until you've had it done to you. You need to be on the receiving end. When it's done to me, I'm always taking mental notes because it's a case of journalism, American-style, coming right at me. So the standard public journalism interview goes something like this:

"Professor Rosen, I'm doing a story on public journalism and I'd like to interview you."

"Fine," I say. Then I click on my mental tape recorder.

The first question is, "Could you give me a definition of public journalism?" This is a horrible question. I would tell my students in the first week, when greeted with a new or curious phenomena, don't ask for a definition of it. Instead, you should be asking yourself at the end of the interview: what's the definition? That's the conclusion of the inquiry, not the beginning.

Then the second question is, "What about critics who say..." and that's it. Reporters run down the list of charges, get my response to each one. "Thank you very much," they say. And that's the end of the interview.

Now, what is this? It's the routines of journalism limiting the learning style of the journalist. I had a reporter from the *Irish Times* in Dublin come talk to me about the same subject. He asked me at least 15 questions that no American reporter has ever asked. And the result was that he





**Yvonne Lamb**



**Dean Kahn**



**Ray Laakaniemi**



**Kate Long**

got much further into the idea.

Here's an example: He said, "In the year 2004, what would you like public journalism to be?" A simple question. But I had to think about it for the first time, right in front of him. American reporters would probably not ask it, because they'd have to credit the idea in order to ask what's it going to be like in seven years. But they can't credit the idea because they're there to report on the "controversy." So they ask about the controversy, not the idea. Buzz Merritt of the *Wichita Eagle* complains that journalists always ask him what he did that was different when they inquire about civic journalism. They almost never ask him "why?"

Part of the reason, of course, is that journalism is full of practical people who are not disposed towards conceptual work, although their work is deeply shaped by the concepts they carry around in their heads. While the practical bent is a virtue in many ways—and entirely necessary—it is also a weakness.

Consider how powerful the metaphors of sports and war are in controlling the themes of political coverage. Whether we think about them or not, these images are at work. But journalism doesn't do much reflecting on such things as "controlling metaphors" or "master narratives." There's a kind of netherworld there, where the ideas that lie behind the news report remain unexamined, while the reporting itself is subject to in-house review and outside criticism. Others have looked deeply at those metaphors and grand narratives. But they are not in conversation with the craft because they're not journalists.

Let me continue. Here's a little "research" finding of my own: 0.5 to 1.7 This range represents the average number of articles you can get editors to read before a seminar. I've calculated it from my own experience: It runs from half an article to about one-and-three-quarters articles. Anything above that is getting dicey. Peter Bhatia of *The Oregonian* will sometimes get as many as 2.0 articles because he flies all the way from Portland. But I use this whimsical "finding" to suggest there's an anti-intellectual element in the craft. It's tough to get people to read anything, especially from outside journalism. Guest speakers are brought in. And often it turns into a press conference, with little or no follow-up. The speaker leaves, the newsroom routine goes on.

There's also a very thin spirit of experiment and

collaborative learning in journalism. This is a problem in all fields, but it's especially strong in this one for a simple reason. The hierarchy of the newsroom is arranged so that all staffers are supposed to have one key relationship with the person above them, which is typically their editor. They're trying to please that person, but simultaneously they're all in competition to outdo one another and get on the front page.

That hyper-individualized management structure has broken its borders and come to characterize the learning style of the profession. Journalists don't learn from each other as often as they could. They copy each other, but they rarely constitute themselves as an on-going learning community. How many reading groups and in-house seminars do you have in your newsroom? How often do reporters learn deep lessons from each other's work? How often do editors learn deeply from reporters?

Which brings me to my second lesson. You've taught yourselves not to learn. There's a taboo in journalism surrounding a powerful question that needs to be asked and yet remains somehow foreign to the craft. It is: "What are we trying to accomplish here?" Sometimes I think the most radical move you could make in any newsroom is to force everybody to ask that question for every story they write, and everything they do daily. What are we trying to accomplish? What is the goal? What are we trying to build? What's the best outcome we can imagine? Picture a daily news meeting, with all the section fronts tacked up on the wall, where that was the key question everyone was struggling with: What are trying to accomplish here? Very different from: What's the story here?

I have a file of things people have written about my own work at home—a very entertaining folder to look through. One of the columns was from an editor in Virginia who was outraged at some of the ideas Buzz Merritt and I and others have been circulating. He thought they represented what he called "outcome-based journalism." This, he said, was a sin. It's wrong to think that whatever you write, whatever you're doing every day, is supposed to accomplish something—as opposed to simply repeating the routine. Getting the paper out. Beating the competition. Making the daily miracle happen. Is this the essence of what you're trying to accomplish? Not asking that question is one way you've taught yourselves not to learn.

Here's another. Over the past 20 years or so, women





**Jack Hart**



**Mona Hatfield**



**Dick Weiss**



**Laura Coleman**

have made inroads into the newsroom which, as you know, used to be an all-male world. But women who have come into the profession have not been able to change the very masculine culture at the heart of it. It's way too strong. Instead, they've adapted to it. They have shown they can perform well. They've earned their stripes within it, but they have not changed the emotional tenor and learning styles that are at the heart of the peer culture. It is still a male culture with women in it. It still regards the finely-tuned crap-detector as the definition of a good mind. It still places toughness above all other virtues in a good journalist. It still mystifies "news judgment" as something you either have in your gut, or don't. I'm not saying those are all "bad" things, or even exclusively male things. I'm simply questioning their unquestioned supremacy in the newsroom.

Another interesting example involves the history of minorities in the newsroom. When newspapers woke up and said, "We've got to diversify", they were saying, on the one hand, that our newsrooms are impoverished because they're missing the experiences and insights and perceptions of various minority groups that are under-represented. Whether it was women or African Americans or Hispanics or Asians or gays. So then they began to hire those people and brought them into a newsroom where it was precisely your particular experience, your own ideas, your personal perspectives, your special angle of vision that was to be bleached out of the news.

So look what happened: you introduced new people into an environment that quickly taught them that their particular contribution was to be expunged in the name of "objectivity." And every minority hired in American newsrooms in the past 20 years has had to live through this dilemma: on the one hand, I'm supposed to be offering the newsroom the richness of my experience. On the other hand, I can't be perceived as "biased," or as a cheerleader for my particular group. And I probably won't be expected to write about the things that I really care about. Here's a case where you're trying to learn by bringing new people in, but you convinced yourselves that the nature of their unique contribution is as dangerous as it is valuable. So you didn't learn as much as you might have from those hires. In effect, you had taught yourselves not to learn.

Journalism doesn't seem to value the notion of intellectual capital. Any smart business mind in America would

say that intellectual capital is as important as financial capital or the technology of the moment. It makes the world go round. And intellectual capital is how you change your organization. It's also the real value of your newsroom. If you think of the newsroom as an asset to the company, where is that asset located? It is not in the machines. It is not in the production process. It's in the minds of the people who work there. That's what they have to contribute. But intellectual capital is routinely undervalued and even eviscerated by the attitudes of the profession.

Here's an example: I was a fellow at the Kennedy School at Harvard University for a year and I got to know the Nieman Fellows there. The Nieman Fellows are very talented folks who go off to Harvard for a year and have a wonderful experience. They go through the following stages. First, they're tremendously excited. They have a whole year off with no deadlines. What could be more liberating than that?

Then Bill Kovach, who runs the Nieman Foundation (and is a very bright guy), starts bringing in the Harvard faculty and other visitors. And now the Fellows are even more excited. They're hearing from experts on the end of the Cold War, somebody who's really studied inner cities. And for the next two, three weeks, they're staggering around with how much there is to know, and with the simple fact that others have figured some of it out. They're very energized by this. Then they start attending classes and they're back to being a student again. "Wow, this is amazing. I haven't done this much reading since I left college." And they're very motivated to learn and absorb.

Then, around March they start saying, "Oh, my God. I have to go back to the newsroom!" It's not just leaving Harvard, although that's always painful. It's what they now know – and what they know they're returning to. "How can I go back to doing it the way I did it after I've learned all this stuff?"

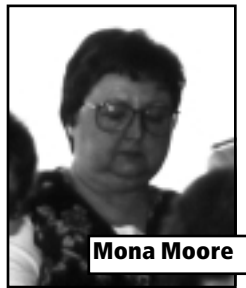
So their fellowship ends and they return to their newsrooms; and often the first conversation they have with their editor is something like this: "I'm going to put you on the Metro Desk. You'll be covering transportation." And that's it!

Here's a person who's been off learning for you, increasing her intellectual capital at some cost to the organization – either in lost time or money – and the





**Don Rodriguez**



**Mona Moore**



**Larry Welborn**



**Baylies Brewster**

reception is, “You’re on the Metro Desk.” The cost to the organization in lost learning, in eviscerated capital is huge. If you did this at Microsoft, you’d be fired. Literally. If you took one of your key employees, sent him off for a year to MIT, paid part of his salary while he was there, welcomed him back to the company, and then put him to work on some task that existed before he left, without asking him what he learned, without having him teach the rest of Microsoft what he knew, without fully debriefing him, without working his knowledge into the mind of the organization, if you took this route as a manager, you’d be shown the door. And yet this is fairly common in journalism. Why? Because the culture doesn’t value intellectual capital.

Another way in which journalists have taught themselves not to learn has to do with the poor quality of criticism that journalists receive. Most people in the profession are by now inured to a kind of criticism they regard as illegitimate. It comes from the left, it comes from the right, it comes from the business community, it comes from the Christian community, it comes from this interest group and that interest group, all complaining about “bias.” All saying you’re against us, you’re unfair, you’re only interested in the bad news, etc.

Journalists have ways of hearing this complaint without taking it very seriously. The general response is, “You don’t understand the way we work.” Which is not very responsive at all and creates, in some of your critics, a feeling of rage. Or maybe it’s: “We’re criticized for being too liberal and too conservative; too soft by some, too tough by others. Looks to me like we’re playing it right down the middle.” Ever heard that one? I have—a lot.

Now, a good deal of the blame, I think, has to do with the critics. In this country we’ve politicized press criticism in a way that’s not good for critics or journalists. But some of the problem has to do with you. You ought to see the poor quality of the criticism you get as an expression of the poor quality of criticism you invite. And if you haven’t put a lot of time and energy into inviting better critiques, then you should not be surprised when the critique you get doesn’t match your understanding of how you work.

The poor quality of press criticism is again a case of the profession’s routines coming to structure the way it learns. “Bias” criticism is actually the flip side of the intellectual dishonesty that’s an unfortunate side effect of objectivity. Journalists typically say: We don’t have an agenda. We don’t

have a perspective. We don’t have any values we’re working into the news. We don’t have anything we’re trying to accomplish. We don’t have a view of the world. We don’t have a vision of civic life or politics. We don’t have any particular mission and purpose in our news columns other than reporting the news—all that other stuff is reserved for the editorial page.

That’s what you often say to the community. The community then says, “Funny, that’s not what I see. I see judgment and values all over the place.” Then you say back to them, “Well, you just don’t understand how we work.” And they go away frustrated. Anytime people go away frustrated, that’s a mutual failure to learn. It doesn’t mean they’re right. In fact, the most vocal critics are off base in many of their criticisms. But they’re saying something to you about the way you understand them. The assumption that the critics are all biased themselves—but you’re not—gets in the way of learning from their complaints and trying to coax even better criticism from the community. Where’s the committee at work on that problem?

Now to my third point: You resist challenge from the outside. A friend of mine, James Carey of Columbia University, tells the following story about the experience of the Hastings-on-Hudson Institute, a think tank that invites various professionals in to come think about the ethics of their craft. One of the directors of the institute summarized his experience this way:

“We have doctors come to Hastings and when they leave they create journals on medical ethics; we have lawyers come and when they leave they create study groups, academic programs and sections of professional organizations devoted to the subject; we have nurses in and when they leave they create (new) professional organizations; we have social workers in and when they leave they may not do much but they at least feel guilty. But we have journalists in and journalists just leave. Nothing happens.”

“Journalists just leave.” Meaning the profession resists challenge from the outside, from other professionals, other ways of thinking. I can illustrate this in a number of other ways. A lot of other professions are rethinking what they do, based on the perception that they’re losing public confidence. Police professionals would be one example, public health professionals another. Where are the joint seminars that would allow journalists to learn from them?





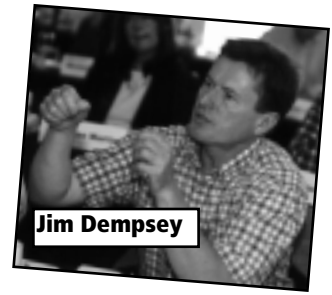
**David Green**



**Felicia Mason**



**Bill Ruberry**



**Jim Dempsey**

Where are the citizen boards that might, using the intelligence of others in the community, regularly evaluate how the newspaper is doing? It's not unheard of, but I don't find a lot of those structures in place. They wouldn't be very difficult to create, but the fear of being censored prevents journalists from getting the best possible feedback.

For all the "reader panels" I've seen, I haven't seen many creative uses of performance review. Here's one, however. I've admired the *Virginian-Pilot* in Norfolk for a lot of reasons. One of them has to do with this little story: Dennis Hartig went to speak to the League of Women Voters in Norfolk. He said, "Here's what we're trying to do. We're trying to position people as actors rather than victims...."

Unbeknownst to the paper, the League of Women Voters took him up on it. They monitored news coverage in the *Pilot* for several months to see if the paper met its goal of positioning people as actors rather than victims. And they found that in some ways the paper did well, and a lot of ways it didn't. So they produced an audit of the paper and sent it to the *Pilot*. Cole Campbell, the editor at the time, printed the results and said to the League, "Keep it up."

Impressive little incident. But how many of you are inviting from the community the kind of sustained criticism that improves upon tired complaints about bias, that helps you do your job, that engages others in the study of how the newspaper works—and that might, over time, improve people's confidence that they're being heard?

It takes a tremendous amount of time and learning and patience to talk to journalists in ways that won't get them defensive and cause them to flee. I can think of dozens of my colleagues who have very useful knowledge from the world of social science, history and criticism. But almost none of them would I send to a meeting with journalists because I know that the difficulty of translation would prevent any useful exchange from going on. Some of that is their problem: The ivory tower does exist. But part of it is your problem. "Give me three ideas I can use tomorrow," which I hear all the time, is a way of saying to an outside thinker: Do my work, not yours.

You make it rather difficult for anyone from the outside to talk to the profession without setting off your alarm bells. It took me years to cure myself of all the off-putting things that I did; and I'm not done yet, as you can no doubt hear. A lot of

that work was necessary and rather disciplining for me. But frankly, a lot of it had to do with getting around the defensive posture of the profession.

The costs of that accumulate over time. I don't know of any elected official in the country who, having had a searing experience with the press, can tell the press about it in ways a journalist will hear without thinking: just another angry politician who couldn't take the heat. What elected officials have to say about the press is probably not available to your profession because they can't say it in a way that won't sound like the standard griping. Well, whose problem is that?

I got so frustrated with this defensiveness a few years ago, it led to one of the dumbest things I've done yet. I spoke at an SPJ event at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, and I was so peeved by this unwillingness to engage and read and argue on the ideas (as opposed to the reflexes), that I stood there and offered \$300 from my foundation grant to anybody at the *Inquirer* who would study up on public journalism and offer us an informed critique. I said, "I'll pay you to read about this idea and critique it for us. I'll pay you to come to a seminar at API and argue about public journalism from your point of view." Three hundred bucks! That's how desperate I was. By the way, nobody took me up on my offer.

Well, it was a pretty bad idea. It didn't advance the understanding of public journalism one bit. But it did provide some laughs at my expense, which were, I think, well deserved.

Let me go to my fourth point: You decline to challenge yourselves or your elite. What's my evidence for this? Look at the prize structure. I'm amazed at the power of the Pulitzer Prizes in journalism. Nothing motivates more people to do particular kinds of work than the Pulitzer Prizes. And what purpose do the Pulitzer Prizes serve? From my perspective, one purpose is the following: to synthesize a model of excellence at the top in New York and Washington, and then communicate it downward in the professional hierarchy so that it can reward everybody for doing one kind of journalism very well. Yes, there are different categories in the prizes, but are there different ideas about excellence embedded in them?

The prize system is, in my observation, a conservative structure. It rewards a lot of fine work and motivates people to do it. No doubt about that. But, with rare exceptions, the







**John Wicklein**



**Michael Schwartz**



**Deborah Gump**



**Janie Nelson**

prizes don't challenge the profession. They reward it for excellence at its own inertia. Is there a Pulitzer Prize for innovation? For experiment? For distinguished criticism of the press? For conversation with the community? For outreach? For "solutions" journalism? For finding the journalism of the future?

Look at the journalism reviews. I do. I don't see the reviews taking controversial and dangerous stands. I don't see prophetic voices routinely allowed the space to expand their thoughts. I see a lot of good journalism about journalism and some very fine reporting. But is there a journalism review with an editorial voice—about journalism—that is as powerful and coherent as *The Wall Street Journal's* much-admired editorial page? Why not? Doesn't the trade need it?

I go to the professional conferences and I rarely hear the kind of challenges to group-think that are needed. I see a social club, which is fine; camaraderie is important in any craft. I see the power of the profession on display: We get the president to talk to us. And there's nothing wrong with using your power for that reason. Believe me, I wish my own professional association could do that. I hear a lot of applause; but I don't hear the kind of ideas I would expect given the trouble you're in. Do you ever come away from these events with a different way of thinking about daily journalism?

Another way that you decline to challenge yourselves has to do with the mostly dreary subject of journalism ethics. I've found that many journalists love ethics discussions. Why? Because they can repeat this highly individualized way of thinking: "You have your ethics, I have my ethics. You made a different call than I made but, hey, that's OK." My experience of the ethics debate in journalism is that it keeps ethical questions within safe bounds. Do you join the PTA? Where do you draw the line? Honestly, in your experience, does that kind of discussion, as necessary as it is, ever go anywhere?

Or think for a moment about this: Where's the ethical discussion of the problem of letting audiences drift away? Whether it's minority audiences or statewide audiences or the big general audience. That to me is an ethical challenge, as much as a commercial problem. Is this right to allow? But it's not addressed in that context. Because ethics aren't seen in any larger public sense. The ethics debate is consumed by judgment calls, like: Where do you draw the line?

I'm interested in the response to institutional failure

in journalism. Recall the savings and loan crisis from a few years back. If I had an investment in investigative journalism as the most heroic pursuit in the craft; if I thought the watchdog role was where I did the most good, I'd be extremely disturbed that the country lost some \$150 billion from the biggest crime ever in our history. I would take a look at my own performance. Weren't we asleep at the switch? Isn't this a case of massive institutional failure? Haven't we failed the American people big time? And I might go right back to the drawing board and say, "How could we possibly have let this happen?"

A journalist at *Newsweek* once wrote a piece about it. Here, in essence, is what he concluded, "The stories were out there. You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink." This is his conclusion: "We did the story." So here's a profession that's invested a good deal of its professional identity in investigative reporting, am I correct? And the biggest crime ever passes into history, involving a slew of other professions in America. Banking. Law. Politics. Accounting. Real estate. Journalism. Big government bureaucracies. The savings and loan crisis was not just a financial story. It involved the integrity and civic duty of the entire political and professional class.

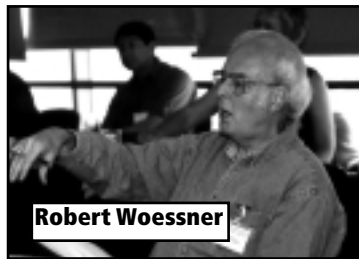
But that story rolled right along without the American people being alerted to the danger by its own watchdog. The watchdog did some stories; but did it wake up the appropriate people? I didn't find any dramatic response to that failure within journalism. Maybe I didn't look hard enough, but I missed the industry's self-evaluation. And I missed the challenge to all the other professions involved to take a hard look at themselves. The news rolls on, so the profession moved on—to other stories.

Like the political conventions. Fifteen thousand journalists show up in San Diego and Chicago and everybody says the same thing, "What are we doing here?" Isn't it clear that there's some kind of failure there? But people keep going because that's where the club meets. Aren't we supposed to be getting something out of it, "we" the American people? It just seems to draw amusement every year that there's nothing to report. And this year, Ted Koppel finally said, "I'm going home." Which in a way was a heroic move. But, to me, the message that Koppel was sending was: "I'm out of ideas. I have no notion about what I could do here that would be of any use." That's quite a statement. But how did things ever get to that point?





**Christine Martin**



**Robert Woessner**



**Ann Schierhorn**



**Ted Pease**

Koppel is a part of the fraternity's elite, so a few further remarks on the attitude of the elite press: In responding to the changes and crises that the rest of you are going through, what have they added? What have the editors in Washington and New York had to offer as you struggle to redefine – or preserve – your craft? There are times when the message seems to be: "Let them eat cake." I don't see from the broad middle of the profession any persistent challenge to that elite. And when I listen to those who are in a completely different situation from yours pronouncing upon the wisdom of your efforts, I wonder what's going on. How does Max Frankel know what's best for Wichita?

It almost feels like the elite is saying to you, "Follow us over the cliff. We'll be OK." After all, the elite press has a public: Its public is the nation's elite. Most of you don't have that luxury. *The New York Times* sells to 20 percent of the people in the metropolitan area. How many of you could survive on that?

So why not ask them some tough questions – politely, of course. Washington and New York, what are you giving us? Are you engaged with us in a search for answers to some of our difficulties? Are you involved in our professional organizations? Are you helping us with your knowledge and expertise? Are you inspiring us in our current predicament? Are you at least informed about the challenges we face? Are you volunteering for the ASNE change committee? In my view, looking on as an outsider to your profession, they're giving you the back of the hand. But who's saying anything about it?

I referred earlier to the herd of independent minds. What does this mean? Everyone knows about pack journalism. The pack is made of individuals who move in the same direction, but don't often act or work together.

Several years ago, I attended a Nieman Foundation conference on technology and journalism at Harvard. It was well organized and informative. There was a discussion of legislation moving through Washington that would help set the pattern for the Internet and the worldwide information highway. A panel of policy types up from Washington was present, including public interest people who lobby the government on communication legislation.

So we're listening to this discussion about the Wash-

ington power game and how the outline for the future is being formed now. Somebody raises a hand in the back of the room and says, "Who's looking out for the journalist's agenda in all this?" Everybody looks at him. The panelists look at each other and say, "Er...um...no one. Why would you think anyone would be protecting your agenda?" And the question just hung there in the room. It turned out that nobody was looking out for the journalist's stake in this legislation. And there's the herd of independent minds. Everyone knows you can't get "involved" because you have to cover the story. As if that's an impossible problem to solve. Isn't that one thing you have your professional organizations for?

So I stood up in my role as inside-outsider and said: Here we have a problem. In order to protect the journalist's agenda, someone would have to say what that agenda is. You'd have to figure it out: What do we want – and what does the public need – from the information system of the future? You'd have to make a persuasive argument to others who might agree with you. You might need partners and public support for your agenda. After all, it's not a mystery how these things are done in Washington. Who knows better than the press how the power game works?

There was a reply to this from the editor of a metropolitan newspaper who was attending: "I don't think we should do anything that would threaten our independence," he said. Well, one thing you've got is your independence. The fact is you're "independent" from a political process that just could be shaping your entire future. That's the problem: No one's looking out for the journalist's agenda. Well, the moment passed. But it said something about what I've called the herd of independent minds.

It's an instructive experience to sit in a pressroom when a major candidate is giving a speech, piped in by the TV monitors. The reporters are there with their laptops. The candidate starts speaking. The room is silent. He's saying, "We've got to get the country moving again. We're going to do this...that. And what I've proposed is..." Silence; they've heard it all before. Then he starts to attack his opponent. And you hear ... clack, clack, clack, clack. Then he stops and the room goes silent again. A couple of minutes later he says, "...and when our opponents say..." Clack, clack, clack, clack. Then the room goes silent again. It's a weird but fascinating pattern: What you're hearing is the power of convention – rendered as sound. Here you have all these independent intelligences, free to report whatever they want, and somehow they are all doing the same thing. What makes





**Peggie Stark**



**Rosalie Stemer**



**Sheila Solomon**



**Gail Workman**

that possible? The herd of independent minds.

Let me go to my final point: You're losing the thing you love. There's nothing in the laws of this country that says journalism has to survive. Look at the network news divisions. They were once citadels of good, solid journalism. Are they still that? The situation in local television news is even worse. If we had a map of the United States showing a bright green light for every newsroom where serious journalism was being done in, say, 1975, and you reproduced that map in 1996, you would notice a sad fact: A lot of the lights went out. Even though there's more "news" available than ever before.

To understand this development, we need to distinguish "journalism" from "media." Media loves news, but it doesn't care that much for journalism. News is a cheap source of content. Journalism is more expensive. What's attractive to commercial television about news is simple. The stuff you put on the screen doesn't have to be produced by writers, set directors, actors. It just "happens" in the world. It's a lot cheaper to record and edit stuff that happens—especially crime and disaster—than it is to create that stuff in a studio. That's the cost differential that makes the media interested in

news.

Take the Simpson trial, the biggest media event ever. What made the media so interested in Simpson was not simply the audience draw. That was a huge part of it. The other part was that O.J. didn't get paid. The star of the spectacle worked for free. The "sets" for his trial were produced by the criminal justice system at taxpayer expense. From a media executive's point of view, this was great. We have a movie of the week—movie of the year, really—produced for us by American society. Cheap programming. The media's interest in "news" starts there.

Journalism starts somewhere else. It is a craft with its own values, which are historically connected to politics, community and democracy. That's what public journalism is trying to talk about, but, as some of our critics have helpfully pointed out, all journalism is about that. The press needs a public to survive. It needs a community to report upon. It needs citizens, not just consumers of news. The media need only an audience, which they already have and will continue to have.

So if journalism cannot learn and change and challenge itself to preserve its public, along with its values, it may soon be changed into something else, to which I have given the name "media." If you believe it can never happen, then

**William F. Wu, visiting professor at Stanford University, says: "First know yourself," because there is no one-size-fits-all training plan. The plan must be adapted to the needs of each staff and newspaper.**



# Appendix C

## Training: One Paper's Story

By Steven Smith

*Steven A. Smith, editor of The Gazette in Colorado Springs, Colo., delivered the opening remarks at the 1998 Training Editors Conference at The Freedom Forum Pacific Coast Center.*

This summer I celebrate 25 years as a news professional. I began my career at the end of the hot lead/hot type era and learned the craft from editors whose concept of training and development grew out of their World War II military experience.

My first managing editor was an ex-Marine, a veteran of Iwo Jima and a half-dozen other South Pacific campaigns. In my first months on the job, his training goals were simple – learn the language of journalism – all the F words, D words, S words and other words I don't even want to initialize – and the practice of journalism – as in how to duck out of the way of a lead spike hurled in your general direction by a senior editor trying to get your attention.

In the classic Marine tradition, he'd declare that any wet-behind-the-ears reporter who couldn't duck didn't deserve to be in the business.

As to the actual practice of daily, mass-market journalism, you were expected to figure that out on your own, sucking up what you could from your colleagues, learning by doing and learning by making mistakes – as long as you never repeated the same mistake twice.

I'd like to say that the “you're-on-your-own-kid, don't-screw-up” era is long over.

But in the last five or six years, as I've crisscrossed the country, consulting and doing training of my own, I've found countless newsrooms where the learning experience hasn't changed all that much. Apparently it doesn't take an ex-Marine drill sergeant to act like one.

That's why it's so heartening to be with this group tonight. I know I'm preaching to the choir when I say that considered, measured, well-executed training programs are the key to professional development in the '90s and beyond – almost certainly the key to our industry's survival as well.

Tonight, I'm going to tell you about *The Gazette's* cultural revolution. Think of it as an after-dinner case study in how we applied certain training and development principles to the task of blowing up and rebuilding a traditional metro newsroom.

I present this as a case study rather than as a success story because it would be arrogant of me to claim that we've been successful in all that we've attempted. We're a better

paper today than we were in 1995, but we're not a great paper – yet. I very much think of us as a work in progress.

Some of what we've done may be of use to you. Some of what we've done should not be tried anywhere else as it certainly did us no good. Bottom line, what we've done in Colorado Springs, what works for us, may not work for you. Every newsroom has to be built around the particular – maybe peculiar strengths and weaknesses of the paper and of the community it serves.

My goal in Colorado Springs was to move the newsroom from a traditional, hierarchical, white-male-dominated, somewhat sleepy culture to a vibrant civic culture. Our success in making that transformation is measured on the page -- by our ability to produce more compelling, relevant, thoughtful and authoritative journalism every day in every department.

The essential goal is to produce a paper, cover-to-cover, that more effectively reflects life in our community in all of its wholeness. And we wanted to create a newsroom culture that would help us achieve that goal.

Here's how we went about developing our civic culture.

Step 1: Really something that I didn't do - a trap far too many new editors fall into. I did not go to war against the old culture. The Gazette may not have been my kind of paper. But its hard working professionals deserved better than a new editor telling them their work was crap.

My time working in Knight-Ridder newsrooms taught me that you begin this long and laborious process by discovering the good things, building on those, while cutting away at the negatives. Reinforce the new direction, but never insult the past.

Step 2: A cultural inventory. We surveyed the newsroom with a written instrument, seeking to understand the existing culture, especially looking at ways we communicated, ways we learned, ways we reinforced or discouraged.

- The survey was followed up by personal interviews, conducted by an outside consultant, involving about 50 percent of the news staff. The cultural profile that emerged helped us focus our early efforts on the forest fire issues:
- Communication -- or the lack of, between reporters and editors, between departments, between copy editors and everyone else.
- Decision-making --- which was closed to all but a



handful of newsroom priests.

Step 3: A re-examination of the foundation of our journalistic enterprise. We needed to determine exactly what we should be already, right now. Out of that process came the “What we are” list, posted throughout the newsroom. This is what the list says:

Every day we are:

- Aggressive in our pursuit of news. First and foremost, we are a daily newspaper.
- A watchdog of government and public institutions, a champion for open records and open meetings.
- The essential provider of information for citizens of Colorado Springs, Central and Southern Colorado.
- A source of surprise, amusement and entertainment.
- We recognize the fullness of our readers’ lives.
- We tell readers what we know when we know it.
- We’re fearless in the pursuit of truth.

How did we do today?

Step 4: Building off of “what we are” we had to decide what we wanted to be – not what we wanted to be instead of but what we wanted to be in addition to, building on our core. That process produced our list of aspirations: Every day we strive to:

- Expand our field of vision.
- Take news coverage below the surface and beyond what is easy to see.
- Go beyond traditional frames and packages.
- Put a greater emphasis on storytelling and fine writing.
- Provide readers with links.
- Challenge readers.

How did we do today?

That last question, the “how did we do today” question, requires a suitable forum for the asking and for the answering.

So...

Step 5: We changed the way we communicate and make decisions. All news meetings moved out into the middle of the room – open to anyone, including other newspaper departments and the public.

We started opening the morning meeting with a learning critique – asking the question “what did we learn today” and, of course, “how did we do” in relation to our two lists.

We had to train ourselves how to critique, and we had to

learn how to generate and accept meaningful, constructive self-criticism. That was, maybe, the hardest lesson of all.

We require our youngest staff members, including and especially interns, to attend the morning meeting when they’re in the office – especially the critique portion – so that we can get younger voices to the table at the time when we’re framing the day’s news.

We blew up the hierarchy, flattened the organization and diversified the management team.

Step 6: We developed a language to describe the culture we wanted to create and the kind of journalism we wanted to produce. With the help of The Harwood Group, we created a handbook for all newsroom staff that we could use on deadline to transform our on-the-page journalism. The handbook includes sections on story framing, civic conversations, third-place reporting, open-ended interviewing and so on.

Step 7: We changed the reward system. Our “how did we do today” standards and aspirations created new criteria for Page 1 and section front stories. As the criteria for making Page 1 changed, reporters and editors began to produce stories that were new and different.

We set up a monthly newsroom reward program – certificates and cash for up to 20 newsroom associates in categories ranging from best breaking news story to best failed experiment. The awards are presented at a monthly staff-wide meeting amid much hoopla and applause. And, of course, we changed our performance appraisal and compensation policies and procedures to encourage quality work within the new culture.

Step 8: We physically remodeled the newsroom, lowering barriers between individuals and departments, creating casual meeting areas, opening up windows and easing movement between work areas. Our goal was to facilitate and encourage little meetings, casual conversations between colleagues who just happened to be in the vicinity when something interesting was happening.

Step 9: We set up a “fun” committee charged with making sure newsroom life had its lighter moments. We put toys on the huddle table. The Slinky was my contribution. We held a sock hop around the news desk – dubbed the “Death Star” because of its dominating presence in the newsroom. During a particularly stress-filled period, we had the Humane Society bring by its traveling puppy-mobile. Now, there is a big challenge for training managers – learn how to teach fun.

Step 10: We changed our hiring practices and procedures, making sure that new hires, especially young journalists, understood the culture they were trying to join. The hiring interview, for me, at least, is more of a conversation as I try to determine the applicant’s ability to cope with change and ambiguity.



Step 11: We played hardball with the stragglers. After two years, we told those who simply couldn't move forward that the time had come to fish or cut bait. We weren't going to set up tables in the back of the room for people who wanted to play act the old way of doing business. While our cultural transformation was—and is—certainly not complete (and never will be), we were far enough removed from the sleepy old days to insist that everyone come aboard or rethink their place in our newsroom. Some rethought themselves to other newspapers where they'll almost certainly be happier.

Now some of you may be wondering why I've bothered to recite these 11 steps, some of which may seem pretty far removed from the topic of training and development. But, from my perspective, this is all about training.

The challenge in contemporary newspapering is teaching our newsrooms at an institutional level how to produce a newspaper that is more compelling and relevant than ever before—to develop the capacity within the room to produce such a newspaper.

It is no longer enough for the training and development managers to think in terms of teaching discreet journalistic skills. There is a gestalt here that has to be recognized.

Training and development managers, I believe, need to see the big picture. In addition to teaching fine writing and quality editing, they need to understand how to teach innovation and experimentation and flexibility, and communication and team building and quality hiring practices and so on down the list.

And they need to learn ways to explain, foster and reinforce the powerful values that separate journalism from what [New York University Professor] Jay Rosen describes as “practitioners of media.”

And in newsrooms where the commitment to change is lukewarm, it may be the training editor who is the essential catalyst for change—the editor who makes the case for and then teaches others how to turn up the heat. Here are a few conclusions I've drawn in the last few years about training and development. I hope they are not all old news for you.

**First**, even if a news organization has a training editor or coordinator, training and development is everybody's responsibility. Nearly everyone in the newsroom has some bit of expertise worth sharing. At *The Gazette*, we encourage informal writing support groups, casual editing teams and veteran-rookie mentoring relationships. People who are blessed with the opportunity to experience special training—a trip to Poynter or API, for example—are expected to share their newfound knowledge with the room in seminars and brown bags.

**Second**, while training must embody topics other than the craft issues of writing and editing, you have to start there. I don't need to tell you that all of our colleagues, but younger journalists in general, are too often woefully short on some of the most basic skills.

**Third**, the training has to have some connection—meaningful connection—to readers. In our newsroom, conversations with readers are critical to our progress at every step. And through a program called “ombuddy” by the staff, everyone in the room is required to speak with readers on a regular basis. It sounds glib, but readers can be among our best training partners.

They'll tell you what they want and what they need—and what you need to do that you're not doing. Training that leaves out readers—their interests and needs—is, potentially, irrelevant. How many of you have development programs or exercises that include face-time with readers?

**Fourth**, training has to be ongoing and programmatic. We do journalism every day, 365 days a year, and we do our journalism around a set of firm copy flow procedures and deadlines. Training needs to be pursued with equal rigor. Spot training here and there won't cut it.

**Fifth**, training needs to be in-house. I love sending people to the Cadillac seminars—the Poynters, API and Pews. But some of that big-conference money can go a lot further spent on effective in-house programs. At *The Gazette*, we have a building-wide training program called

GTU (Gazette Training University) that offers everything from basic skills coaching to lessons in meeting facilitation to Toastmasters.

**Sixth**, we have to develop and teach processes for revolutionary innovation. Too much of our inter-departmental team-based product development work—so common in our newsrooms today—produces only modest, incremental improvement. We need to take a lesson from the hi-tech world and create processes that produce real, transformational innovation.

**Seventh**, we have to develop a commitment to continuous learning, for all our newsroom colleagues as well as a short-course sensibility for new employees who have to catch up with everyone else very quickly.

**Eighth and last**, we have to learn how to teach the intangibles—attitude, flexibility, an appreciation for ambivalence and fog. Most important, we have to train a staff to be comfortable with ceaseless, rapid and discomfiting change.

In describing how we went about pushing cultural change in *The Gazette* newsroom, I have not mentioned that we carved out of our staff—utilizing a reporter FTE—a full-time training and development editor. It was a gamble for a paper our size. But Kathryn Sosbe, who has filled that role, has been instrumental in moving us forward. I wanted to both recognize her, by name, and also recognize the value of such a position, especially in a mid-size to smaller newsroom where training has to be continuous.

Let me close with this last personal thought and observation. Like you, I've gone through the tough times of the late 1980s and early 1990s. I went through my period of depression and angst. But I got tired of the endless negativity, the pessimism and the doubt.



I reached a point in the mid-1990s where it was time to get past that or time to get out. I stayed. And, as was the case with so many editors working in the civic journalism/newsroom change arena, I abandoned the can't-do attitude in favor of a why-not attitude.

I followed Columbia University J-professor Jim Carey's advice—bring back the spirit of experimentation and innovation, do the unexpected, teach for the future and have fun.

Throw out the templates, Carey says, encourage

risk, eliminate fear and innovate.

So this is your challenge—train for optimism, foster enthusiasm and teach against negativity.

Develop a capacity in people for thinking about what we do and why we do it in a new way. Take some of that back to your newsrooms and you'll have a powerful force behind your training and development efforts.

Will that produce a great American newspaper? You tell me.

**Steven Smith delivers the 1998 keynote talk in San Francisco.**



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## James C. Clark

James Clark began his career in journalism 30 years ago with United Press International in Washington. He has worked for the Associated Press, *Raleigh News & Observer*, *Tampa Tribune* and *Orlando Sentinel*. He now writes a syndicated column that appears in newspapers throughout the country, and serves as a consultant to newspapers on hiring and training. He is the author of four books and lives in Orlando, Florida.



**Clark speaks at the 1997  
Training Editors Conference  
in San Francisco**