

# Journalism

Telling the public what's most important, at one end of the news spectrum, and what's purely fascinating, at the other end, involves many elements of craft. How to deal with anonymous sources, where to aim investigative teams, how to find the contrasting angle, when to demand more levels of iron-clad verification — all done well help perfect the imperfect craft. What are key practices in the constant evolution of journalism? And were the “glory days” of old really that good?

## William Hearst III

I interviewed Tom Wolfe one time. I remember asking why the writing in newspapers wasn't better. And he said to me, “Well, when you're having an angina attack, you don't worry about going bald.” It took me a minute or two to understand what he was trying to say: that the newspapers had so many other things to deal with that it was hard for the baldness of poor literary quality to float to the top.

## Nancy Maynard

Journalism is this great adventure, but the early days can be like working in an insurance company. It's necessary to take orders and follow rules to some degree. When the (Maynard) Institute for Journalism Education began training and placing reporters in the mid-1970s, there were incredibly talented young people who came to us after starting their own news organization. But if they hadn't worked 9-to-5 at some time in their lives, if they hadn't gotten in harness, it didn't survive the first year. ...

Success is built on patience — that revolutionary patience on the front end — to understand that you have to get in harness sometimes and hold on to be able to get done what you want to do in short order.

## Burl Osborne

Newspapers are like a stool, supported by the three legs of quality, community service and earnings. We certainly want to maintain the quality of people and content that we tell our readers they have a right to expect. And we have to maintain a level

of service to those communities in a way that they will understand that we are an important institution. And yet our companies are businesses that have to make sufficient profits to reinvest in those other two activities while satisfying expectations of our

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owners. Occasionally the legs get out of balance. Right now the financial leg has been sawed off. At times like this we need to rebalance the stool, to reset the amount of resources to fit the business needs. We do not necessarily need to achieve the absolute maximum profit but sufficient profit to keep us stable. Some newspapers today see their revenues at levels of three or four years ago. We had great newspapers three or four years ago with the resources available then — and we can again. But it isn't easy.

### Neal Shapiro

Some of my frustration is that even when you do important shows, I often cannot get critics to review them. We have done stories about inner-city education. ...

We did an hour on migrant workers, which by anybody's measures is a high-road, important story involving children and exploitation. We could not get people to write about it. And what saddens me a little bit is that these are some of the same people who say (television) newsmagazines are emotional, they do not take anything important, they just want to make you cry.

### Dick Wald

Originally we derived the central impetus of what we do from the efforts of people joined together in a small enterprise. Gradually, the newspapers joined together in newspaper groups. The newspaper groups became groups that own television or radio stations. Those groups now own cable. They are being bought by other groups, and slowly we are developing in this country behemoths of industry that are only incidentally in the news business.

It may be that the rights we enjoy and fight so hard to keep will be accorded to us in lesser degree because we are no longer, as Andrew Hamilton said of John Peter Zenger, an independent man speaking his mind. We are pieces of other enterprises. And the core of how we manage our business is not the imperative of the business itself or of the enterprise in which it is encapsulated, but the stock price set by someone else.

### Ben Bradlee

During Watergate coverage, the tension and the risk of being wrong was so high that a lot of people thought, if we get out of this one alive, I'm in no hurry to get

involved with another story that [has] ... such measurable impact on the presidency. ...

We were quite slow to tackle the new controversial subjects. I don't think it lasted very long, but it may have lasted a year — which was funny because that story had attracted so many highly qualified youngsters into the business. And you could take all that junk (unsubstantiated charges) out with a good editor. But we may have stifled some. ... I know that (*New York Times* columnist) Scotty Reston, who had a certain stuffiness in his genius ... said the trouble with us now is we're all scared of our power. And we're not looking for those stories that we should be looking for. And I think he was right.



In the early days of (Reagan aide) Mike Deaver, you were being spun without knowing about it. Now they come down after a television debate; they come down out of the stands. You can see them, and you can identify them. You know what the hell they're there for.

Once you know what they're doing, it isn't so hard to deal with. That's why reporters are now known as so argumentative — because they're arguing against the spinners, and they're arguing against the message they receive, to test its validity, and to see if they can't poke holes in it.



I've become a connoisseur of lies. As a journalism professor a couple of years, I taught how to recognize lies. You feel it.



We were all scared to death of television when it went on, and when we were finally confronted with the fact that we were not going to be the first with 50 percent or 60 percent of [the stories]. Once we got over that, that made us assume that people had some understanding, so that brought the “so what” paragraph up higher. It made us write to explain to people why it was interesting in the first place, which was probably good.

But it made us not worry about being beaten. That was the big deal in this town when there were four newspapers. And if you were covering District Court and the *Star* had a story that you didn't have, there was a real long, attitude talk with the editors the next morning. And that was very useful.

There is nothing quite like the feeling that you are part of a story that's got the town by the throat.

Everybody is interested in it. Everybody stops you in the street and talks about it, even in a big city like this. Your friends call you up before they go home and say, what have you got tomorrow? I can't wait. If you could keep a story like that on Page One every day, you watch the circulation of the newspapers go up.

## Monica Lozano

Have passion. You have to love what you do. I do not think this is a job like other jobs. It really has, and needs to have, fundamental meaning, because you are building

civic life. You have to be a lifelong learner. It is not a question of knowing how to write a story and how to get on the phone and get information out of people. You are constantly being exposed to new things. ... You are then going to translate them for a broader audience.

## Tim McGuire

We know how to prioritize, systematize and organize [news]. That is a part of newspapers that's vastly underrated. Some people get concerned when people thumb through a newspaper and just scan pages. I think that's great. Then they'll stop occasionally. That shows that we were doing our job really well. We organize, we tell people what's important on the front page and then on each page.

## Karen Jurgensen

(On a card is the) *USA TODAY* Reader Bill of Rights. The little underline is SERVICE. Those letters stand for something. When I read *USA TODAY*, I will expect the following:

**Surveillance.** I will get the important national and international news I need to know today, and what it means to me and to my family. **Exclusives.** I will find scoops, enterprise, authoritative reporting and analysis that nobody else has.

**Reader-friendly presentation.** I will quickly find what I'm looking for. Graphics, breakout boxes, headlines, captions and sidebars will make it easier to understand and navigate. **Veracity.** I trust what I read to be true, fair and balanced. When errors are made, I can trust that they will be corrected.

**Ingenuity,** fun and excitement. I will be entertained, surprised and delighted by what I find. **Community.** I will find what I need to know as a member of the global community of readers who travel frequently, surf or conduct business on the Internet, who have interests far beyond local news and events.

**Equality** and diversity. I will see women and men of all ages, races and nationalities throughout this newspaper.

Periodically, I do a daily note to try to talk about these.

## Dick Wald

In the 1950s, the people among whom I worked, by and large, had not been to college and were unfit for most other work. About half of a quite distinguished newsroom was [made up of] either alcoholics or former alcoholics. Pay was terrible. It was not a wonderful profession. Everyone looks back on it as the glory days. That's nonsense. If you were there you know it was nonsense. ... In truth, all of these things have gotten better. In truth, ethics have gotten better. Intelligence has gotten better.