

A News Management Reference

COMMUNITY JOURNALISM:
GETTING STARTED
third edition

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COMMUNITY JOURNALISM
GETTING STARTED

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What Is Community Journalism?

Television, radio, cable, and print newsrooms all over the United States are experimenting with a new concept called community or “civic” journalism. Some incorporate it into their daily coverage plans, while others focus on specific projects. These news organizations are finding the answers to improving journalism in the practice of community journalism.

Some of the most important benefits of community journalism are increased diversity, greater depth and context of the news coverage, and a stronger understanding of the various communities that make up a particular viewing area.

One of the complaints often leveled against television and radio news is that it lacks depth and context. Community journalism helps stations to include context in news stories and encourages journalists to add more depth to their coverage. Since community journalism is focused on issues coverage, it is more likely that issues of importance to citizens will receive greater continuing coverage.

Community journalism encourages journalists and news managers to find ways to capture citizen priorities, concerns and perspectives on different issues of importance to many different communities. As part of the process of creating connections to citizens, news managers are now finding ways to hear and understand the greatest diversity of voices and communities in their viewing and listening areas. Practicing community journalism helps both news content and source diversity by encouraging a discussion of citizen views and issues using a wide range of community perspectives.

The best reason for practicing community journalism is to create a stronger community understanding by news organizations and the journalists who work in these newsrooms. Inherent in this increased understanding is an ongoing conversation between journalists, citizens and public officials on issues facing their communities. The result of this conversation is larger file of community sources for stories and an increase in story ideas from various communities. These connections and the resulting coverage can help strengthen the value of your news product for citizens in your market.

RTNDF has developed this guide to give you tools to create, adapt and sustain community journalism in your own area. These tools include ideas for incorporating community journalism practices into your organization, sources for developing and funding projects, contacts for help in developing your effort, and resources for improving your understanding of community journalism. You have taken the first step toward community journalism by simply gathering more information about it. The next step is creating a community dialogue to address your area's pressing issues, and using that to enhance your community news coverage.

Community Journalism: The Basic Elements

Among the scores of television, radio and newspapers involved in community journalism around the country each developed their own styles and comfort levels by understanding their respective communities. The following information is a starting point to bring community journalism into your newsroom.

➤ Incorporating Community Journalism into Daily Newsroom Practices.

How a newsroom operates may dictate the level of success of community journalism at that station. This includes the work environment, the daily journalistic routines, the placement of managerial influence, and the expectations and contributions of news staff.

1. Story development:

Story development is one of the most important daily tasks in any newsroom. Community journalism focuses on enterprise reporting and its contribution to story development. In most newsrooms, it is a struggle to get all employees involved in the generation of ideas. Since your station's employees tend to live in different neighborhoods, in different parts of town, their view of the community and what issues are important may also differ. Each of us has an understanding of the area where we live, which is based on our own experiences or view of the world. If incorporated, these views can add greatly to the depth of your coverage. Some stations not only seek to somehow incorporate all the newsroom employees' views into store idea sessions, but seek the opinions of the promotion, sales, and other station department staffs as well.

2. Newsroom discussions:

Newsroom discussions of issues are important, outside of the daily coverage routines. These casual conversations among peers help broaden understanding of an issue or add perspective. Because journalists tend to be highly mobile, changing stations every couple of years, it is important that workers with longevity in the market carry the institutional memory of the area for the station. These are the individuals who remember the last time key events occurred in that area, the important public figures and groups involved, and the overall history of the community.

3. Source development:

Community journalism at its roots encourages news workers to seek out community sources and include them in their source files. Some reporters treat their finding new community sources as a regular beat. Continually developing these sources can lead to interesting stories your competition is less likely to catch.

4. Finding story ideas:

Don't assume you know what is important to citizens in your area. You have to ask them – and community journalism helps your station do that. Once you have a priority list of these issues and ideas, include citizens in the development of your coverage. This is not to suggest handing editorial control over to citizens. Rather, it is focusing your news on the fact that there are many sides to any particular issue. Including citizens in the discussion makes it more likely that the issue will accurately reflect citizens' views. It is also important to provide sufficient time for research on the issues to ensure adequate citizen input. The Internet is a good quick way to gather background information, but your staff should be careful to use sources they know to be reliable.

5. Community mapping:

Simply stated, this means creating an imaginary map in your mind about the different parts of a particular city, community, neighborhood, or group. Most journalists already do this. What is different here is that community journalists are constantly adapting and refining their mental maps. These journalists do not rely on stereotypes of communities. Instead they go to the community to develop their own understanding of the people and institutions in that part of town. Because of high staff turnover rates, a few stations are now conducting bus tours of the neighborhoods in the market every 6 months or so. These tours include stops to meet neighborhood leaders. While this is not perfect, it is a good way to jump-start community mapping, particularly for new employees.

6. Recognizing other world views:

As you get to know a variety of communities, you will notice that different groups and people hold different views of the world. Working to gain a better understanding of these differing world views will help add depth and context to the station's coverage. It is important that your whole staff recognize the variance in perspectives, not simply the journalists in the field. Otherwise, differing views are likely to be edited out of a story as not being an important perspective.

➤ Different community journalism activities.

1. Small group meetings:

These meetings can be developed in several ways. Some stations promote the opportunity to have open meetings with their news staffs, and then encourage community groups to schedule and promote such a meeting. Other stations create their own meetings, scheduling groups that include stakeholders on a particular issue. Still other stations go out in the community looking for spaces where small groups tend to convene informally, such as a barber shop or a local restaurant that is known as a place people congregate to discuss issues. And still other stations have convened

informal meetings of citizens in people's homes, sometimes providing food such as pizza and sodas. All of these are effective in different ways. The key in setting up these meetings is to look for the widest diversity of people and views.

2. "We Listen" projects:

This involves encouraging citizens to call, write or email the station and/or participate in small group forums in the community. This can be an excellent method for creating basic community connections, developing story ideas, focusing on issues of importance to citizens, and staying in touch with their evolving concerns.

3. Town hall meetings and public forums:

These are much larger productions, which are usually focused on a single topic or debate. Meetings generally last up to 2 hours and can be broadcast on television and/or radio to extend their reach. Some town hall meetings have public officials, who have relevant information on the topic, either as panelists or planted in the audience. Others are simply a collection of citizens publicly discussing an issue or providing questions for a debate. Usually station staff, such as an anchor, conducts the meeting.

4. Concentrated topic coverage:

Community journalism often focuses on a particular issue such as education, transportation, land use, or racism. The idea is to cover a topic in great depth and encourage citizen input in defining the issue and generating potential solutions. This form of community journalism tends to be associated with projects, rather than as part of daily coverage. (See next section.)

5. Election coverage and polling:

Election coverage is a natural for community journalism. Knowing what is on citizens' minds can only help your reporters ask tough and meaningful questions of the candidates. Meetings and forums also allow you to let citizens ask the politicians their own questions, all with the camera and the tape deck running. Election coverage is where media partnerships are most likely to form because it is where there is the greatest opportunity for sharing resources. Polling and debates are generally large budget items for a single station. Sharing the cost of these big ticket items tends to be an attraction to this form of community journalism. This allows partners to take advantage of the strengths of each media outlet. It also creates broader coverage and a larger discussion in the community. Media partners also tend to make the most of the potential for cross-promotion in this type of community journalism.

6. In the daily coverage routine:

One goal of community journalism is to create daily coverage that reflects the conversations about issues in the community. This goes beyond simply personalizing a story to capturing the essence of a discussion. Of course, if the reporter and photographer are not connected in that community, it is less likely that they will capture the true voices of that community. This kind of daily coverage begins with a bottom-up approach and a strong focus on enterprise reporting, and relies on the news staff in the field knowing the communities they cover.

➤ Conducting Community Journalism Projects and Partnerships.

Many community journalism projects focus on well-defined issues or topics. Often, the projects are oriented toward election coverage and political campaigns, although some of the more successful projects have focused on community issues. Many projects generally involve media and/or community partnerships. Traditionally, these partnerships have included a commercial television station, a radio station, public television and/or radio stations and a local newspaper.

Projects created through a partnership often involve conducting joint polling, community focus groups, citizen town hall meetings and covering news stories about the focal issue. There are many creative variations of these elements, particularly in the design and execution of the town hall meetings. This guide describes a number of these partnerships and provides contact names and numbers.

The most successful projects are ones where the partnership is continual and only the topics change. Frequent evaluations are made to keep building and improving the execution of the projects. Currently, several of the older, project-focused partnerships are revamping their focus and structure to provide improved coverage to the citizens they serve.

One problem with a project focus is that community journalism is less likely to filter down into daily news coverage. Often the news staff who are not involved in the project do not have a clear understanding of community journalism or the chosen project. This can be minimized through good internal meetings and memos to make sure all station employees understand the project and its grounding in community journalism.

➤ Funding Community Journalism Projects and Partnerships.

News managers beginning community journalism frequently ask about the costs involved and funding available for projects. Since no two partnerships are the same and all projects use different resources, each project will have different needs.

As a general rule, RTNDF encourages news managers to look directly within their own budgets to fund their projects. Money can usually be found once the ideas of *Community Journalism* are truly a part of the newsroom culture. There may also be

extra money budgeted during seasonal sweeps and promotional campaigns that can be applied to projects. Funding for some projects may be found within a local community through various sponsorships by businesses.

The Pew Center for Civic Journalism invites news organizations to apply for financial support for civic journalism projects. To qualify, the Pew Center requires a plan to determine the citizens' agenda through the use of focus groups and surveys. Media partnerships are encouraged. News managers should submit a plan showing methods of training reporters and producers along with a plan showing how money would be spent. Guidelines and deadlines to submit proposals are available by contacting the Pew Center at (202) 331-3200.

RTNDF provides non-financial assistance for startup projects in *Community Journalism*. In newsroom training is available at no cost. A proposal letter is required outlining the plans of your news organization. Broadcast and print partnerships must be identified, along with other educational and community groups involved. The plan should include a timetable of specific dates for community meetings and potential issues. A review of your ideas and general assistance is available by contacting RTNDF at (202) 659-6510.

Guidelines for Successful Community Journalism

There are some specific organizational elements in newsrooms that tend to improve community journalism in practice. These are elements that can be incorporated into community journalism efforts. Not all of these ideas will work in every market. You need to decide what will work within the framework of your community and your newsroom.

➤ Clear internal communication is a must.

It is extremely important that news and station managers communicate effectively with employees. Without employees, particularly individuals in the newsroom, having a clear understanding of community journalism and how the station plans to implement it, the likelihood of success is diminished. Most successful stations begin with a meeting to inform and discuss community journalism and the station's specific plans. This is often followed up with regular meetings updating the effort or project and providing details on progress, changes and new elements. If any one person in the newsroom cannot describe the basic premise of community journalism and the station's specific effort, then the internal communication has not been completely effective.

➤ A bottom-up approach to coverage within the news organization.

This is enterprise reporting at its best. Encourage everyone at the station, not just reporters and photographers, to submit daily story ideas for the morning editorial meeting. This does not mean every story will get coverage, but it does give the news staff access to a larger pool of potential stories. Do not allow anyone to apply pressure in favor or against coverage of a particular story. Instead, encourage a discussion of all of the stories and then prioritize stories as a group. This generally starts out as a slow and cumbersome process, but it can pick up to speed as people become more comfortable with the expectation of contributing to the team effort. Some stations require email submission of story ideas to the news manager a couple of hours before the morning meeting. This allows enterprise ideas to be considered as part of the day sheet at the meeting. It is important to give appropriate credit for enterprise stories, so individuals will get credit for their work. This encourages them to continue to submit future story ideas. Encourage thoughtful submissions that include contacts and potential for video and sound.

➤ Managers need to sit on their hands and listen.

Too often managers control the conversation during the daily editorial meetings. Community journalism is all about listening and then taking action. Listening is not just for communities, it is also important to listen to employees. Listening and allowing greater group consensus in daily news planning opens the doors for new ideas to be considered and greater development of the ideas already under consideration. Editorial meetings should be places where everyone at the table,

including the interns, has a voice and a vote. This form of editorial meeting does take a little longer to complete, but the value is found in the stronger resulting coverage.

- Create time for reporters, producers, and photographers to build community connections and sources.

Meaningful community connections are not developed through phone calls or limited contact. It is important to find ways for news staff to get into different communities to create meaningful relationships on a regular basis. Some stations are even setting up a community beat system, though it is more common to see systems where news staff are given time to stop by a neighborhood on a regular basis to simply check-in. Still other stations sponsor community meetings and require news staff to attend a few each year. These can be small group meetings in neighborhoods, or larger town hall meetings and other events. The key is to allow the news staff to listen to community concerns to gain a better understanding of issues from a citizen's point of view.

- Create spaces and times for meeting with a variety of diverse community groups and leaders.

The best stations create situations to meet with community leaders from a wide cross-section of groups and neighborhoods. Some stations host community leaders breakfasts or brown bag/pizza lunches to solicit feedback on coverage and encourage the sharing of ideas for future coverage. Usually these meetings are hosted monthly, often at the station. Other stations hold small community meetings with groups around the viewing area on a weekly basis. Since these groups are often already organized, the planning logistics are diminished. Some examples are neighborhood watch groups, book clubs, cultural organizations and churches. Be careful to work to attract a wide range of racial, ethnic, economic, and political diversity at these meetings.

- Allot air-time for community conversations to be heard.

These community conversations and points of view should be reflected and overheard in stories. Too often, elected officials drown out the community voices, unless the journalists are aware of ways to include citizen views in their stories. This does not mean a station should ban public officials from stories, since that leaves a void in another important area. Instead, it means reporters and photographers need to learn to listen for and capture citizen voices on issues they are covering. This is more than simply adding a personalization bite. Sometimes adding community voices to a story not only makes it richer, but also makes it longer. Give producers the flexibility to decide when a story is worth the extra time and then challenge the journalists to create a story that will hold viewers' attention and justifies the extra time.

- Encourage reporters and photographers to be creative in developing good visuals and good storytelling techniques on issue stories.

Too often issue stories are stereotyped as boring stories. Help your news staff develop a new attitude toward issue coverage that includes rewards for making an issue story visually interesting. To achieve this, reporters and photographers must work together closely to create a seamless and compelling story.

- Recognize and reward good community journalism work.

Reward good work. Sometimes all that is needed is some public recognition of what is considered good community journalism in your shop. Once recognized, more of your staff will work to develop community journalism in their stories.

Community Journalism Examples and Contacts

The following list is a sample of broadcast, cable and print projects and partnerships around the country. Updates on some of the news organizations are found on the websites of RTNDF <www.rtndf.org> and the Pew Center for Civic Journalism <www.pewcenter.org>. The list is alphabetical by city/community.

WXIA-TV (NBC) Atlanta, GA

Incorporates community journalism into daily coverage.

Dave Roberts

News Director

WXIA-TV

1611 W. Peachtree Street

Atlanta, GA 30309

(404)898-8900

www.11alive.com

KLRU-TV (PBS) Austin, TX

Project: Not named

Partners: Small community partners

Managers are developing the station into a public square. This public square is seen as the center of community life, a place where citizens can come to discuss civic issues.

Susan Abrams

Producer

KLRU-TV

P.O. Box 7158

Austin, TX 78713

(512)471-4811

Tom Spencer, Vice-President of Production

KLRU-TV

(512)471-4811

KVUE-TV (ABC) Austin, TX

Project: Crime Project

The station is continuing their Crime Coverage Guidelines. They have also started holding community meetings with small groups several times each month.

Cathy McFeaters

News Director

KVUE-TV

3201 Steck Avenue

Austin, TX 78757

(512)459-6521

WBFF-TV (FOX) Baltimore, MD

Project: Your Voice

Partners: Patuxent Publishing, surrounding media outlets

Town hall meetings conducted where community members can voice concerns which are then incorporated into news stories.

Joe De Feo

News Director

WBFF-TV

2000 W. 41st Street

Baltimore, MD 21211

(410)467-4545

WLOX-TV (ABC) Biloxi, MS

The assignment editor has built a large list of community contacts used to add a community voice to daily coverage. Used community journalism in the station's coverage of Hurricane George.

Dave Vincent

News Director

dwalker@wlox.com

Doug Walker

Assignment Editor

WLOX-TV

P.O. Box 4596

Biloxi, MS 39535-4596

(228)896-1313

WBNG-TV (CBS) Binghamton, NY

Project: Facing Our Future

Partners: *Binghamton Press & Sun Bulletin*

Following up on the ideas developed by the "Facing Our Future" community discussion groups. "Facing Our Future" as a project is over. The station is now looking for another project to do with the newspaper.

Darcy Fauci

News Director

WBNG-TV

P.O. Box 12

Johnson City, NY 13903

(607)729-8812

Marty Steffens, Executive Editor

Binghamton Press & Sun Bulletin

(607)798-1186

KTVB-TV (NBC) Boise, ID

Project: Collision Course

Partners: KIFI-TV (ABC) and 5 regional newspapers

Project looked at state funding to see where money was spent, focusing specifically on education and prisons. They found that education money was shrinking, while prison

funding was growing. The project then asked citizens and state officials if this was the direction the state should be going. In addition, KTVB-TV is now embarking on a project to look at resource-based industries in the state.

Lindsay Nothern
News Director
KTVB-TV
5407 Fairview Avenue
Boise, ID 83706
(208)321-5740
lnothern@ktvb.com

WSOC-TV (ABC) Charlotte, NC

Incorporates community journalism into daily news coverage.

Vicki Montet
News Director
WSOC-TV
1901 North Tryon Street
Charlotte, NC 28206
(704)335-4999

WGN-TV (IND) Chicago, IL

Project: Not named

Partners: *The Chicago Reporter*

In-depth coverage of race and poverty issues in a transitional neighborhood. Recent stories focused on what happens to residents when large public housing buildings are torn down.

Carol Fowler
Assistant News Director
WGN-TV
2501 Bradley Place
Chicago, IL 60618
(773)528-2311

WKRC-TV (CBS) Cincinnati, OH

Project: School Works

Partners: Community Papers

Identifying promising ideas in education in the surrounding school districts. Stories are created detailing the ideas and showing ways the public can get involved.

Steve Minium
Vice President, News
WKRC-TV
1906 Highland Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45219-3161
(513)763-5425
sminium@one.net

WCPO-TV (ABC) Cincinnati, OH

Working to integrate community journalism into daily coverage.

Stuart Zanger

News Director

WCPO-TV

500 Central Avenue

Cincinnati, OH 45202

(513)721-9900

zanger@wcpo.com

WEWS-TV (ABC) Cleveland, OH

Project: Car Seat Safety

Educating the community on the proper use of car seats in order to protect children from serious injury.

Milt Weiss

News Director

WEWS-TV

3001 Euclid Avenue

Cleveland, OH 44155

(216)431-5555

mweiss@wews.com

John Lansing, General Manager

KOAA-TV (NBC) Colorado Springs-Pueblo, CO

Project: Listens Project

The station is working to make its crime coverage more sensitive to the community perspective. KOAA-TV management is trying to incorporate community journalism elements into daily coverage.

Dan Dennison

News Director

KOAA-TV

P.O. Box 195

Pueblo, CO 81003

(719)544-5781

WIS-TV (NBC) Columbia, SC

Project: WIS Listens

Partners: South Carolina Education Television Network for political coverage.

There is a "Listens" area on the set. The station has a better dialogue with viewers than ever before. Managers see this as part of every story. This project leads to story ideas and feedback. They also get out in the community to meet with small groups. In addition, the station uses civic interactivity as part of their political coverage, which was done with SCETV.

Randy Covington

News Director

WIS-TV

P.O. Box 367
Columbia, SC 29202
(803)799-1010
rcovington@wis-television.com

KERA-TV & FM (PBS & NPR) Dallas, TX

Project: Not named

Attempting to inject community journalism into daily coverage. Working to formalize a proposal to improve community journalism work. Formerly involved in partnership with *Dallas Morning News*.

Marla Crockett

Assistant Director for News and Public Affairs

KERA-TV

3000 Harry Hines Blvd.

Dallas, TX 75201

(214)740-9349

WFAA-TV (ABC) Dallas, TX

Project: Family First

An ongoing commitment by the station to help improve the quality of life for families.

This five-year-old project involves constant conversation with the community on topics such as drug abuse, education and health. Meetings are held frequently with community groups as the station serves as a catalyst for conversation.

John Miller

Executive News Director

WFAA-TV

606 Young Street

Dallas, TX 75202-4810

(214)977-6296

news8@wfaa.com

KCCI-TV (CBS) Des Moines, IA

Project: Methamphetamine Town Hall Meeting

Partners: *The Des Moines Register*

The partners held a forum at a community center to discuss the dangers of methamphetamines.

Dave Busiek

News Director

KCCI-TV

888 9th Street

Des Moines, IA 50309

(515)247-8888

kcci@kcci.com

WXYZ-TV (ABC) Detroit, MI

Project: 7 Can-Do Challenge

Partners: Various community organizations

For 3 days the station asked people in the community to get involved in fighting hunger.

At the same time, the news department focused coverage on describing the faces of hunger in the community. Coverage focused on people in the community making a difference. The station filled 1 1/2 semi-trucks with canned goods for area food banks.

Andrea Parquet

Futures Producer

WXYZ-TV

P.O. Box 789

Southfield, MI 48037

(248) 827-7777

WDSE-TV (PBS) Duluth, MN

Project: Men As Peacemakers

Partners: *Duluth News and Tribune*

Project encouraged men to get involved in peace-making activities. Worked with a local organization to help men find solutions to violence in the community.

Greg Grell

Producer

WDSE-TV

1202 E. University Circle

Duluth, MN 55811

(218)724-8567

almanacn@wdse.org

KVIA-TV (ABC) El Paso, TX

Project: Race Relations in El Paso

Partners: *El Paso Times*

The partners conducted town hall meetings. They also invited community leaders to help develop survey questions. About 1000 citizens were polled. This was followed by a week of coverage in every evening and late newscast and a local "Nightline" program.

Kevin Lovell

News Director

KVIA-TV

4140 Rio Bravo

El Paso, TX 79902

(915)532-7777

kevin@kvia.com

WTVW-TV (FOX) Evansville, IN

Project: Not named

Partners: Conniseur Radio Group

The news director holds quarterly meetings with community leaders to discuss civic issues. He also is focusing the station's news coverage on finding out the real concerns of

viewers instead of the assumed concerns.

David Smith
News Director
WTVW-TV
P.O. Box 7
Evansville, IN 47701
(812)424-7777
Dsmith@wtvw.com

KUVN-TV (Univision) Garland, TX

Station managers are redefining the station's policies to focus on a dedication to serving the community. The station brings community and civic groups to the station as resources for viewers.

Jorge Mettey
News Director
KUVN-TV
3720 Marquis Drive
Garland, TX 75042
(972) 494-2300
Cynthia Garcia
Assignment Editor

WDAZ-TV (ABC) Grand Forks, ND

Project: A Community Conversation

Partners: *Grand Forks Herald*

A forum was held where community members formed focus groups and identified issues that they felt were important. Specifically, the issue was the flood. A conflict resolution specialist was present to resolve problems.

Mike Brue
News Director
WDAZ-TV
2220 S. Washington Street
Grand Forks, ND 58201
(701)775-2511
wdaz@means.net

KCBS-TV, KPCC-FM Los Angeles, CA

Project: The Election Connection

Partners: *The Press-Enterprise* of Riverside, *The Orange County Register*, *La Opinion*, KCET, Orange County News (OCN), KCBS-TV2

This is the largest civic journalism coalition in the country. The project seeks to reframe political coverage by local media in an effort to give citizens the information they need to become informed voters and participants in civic life.

Ilsa Setzoi
Producer
KPCC-FM

1570 East Colorado Blvd.
Pasadena, CA 91106-2003
(818)585-7564
iasetziol@paccd.cc.ca.us

WISC-TV (CBS) Madison, WI

Project: We The People - Wisconsin

Partners: WHA-TV & FM, *Wisconsin State Journal*, Wood Communications Group

One of the oldest community journalism projects in the country. "We the People" just completed an 18-month project on the state sesquicentennial focusing on four aspects of life in Wisconsin (family, race & culture, using the land, and work). The partners held a two-hour statewide broadcast debate for the 1998 elections. Right now they are working to reinvigorate the project in 1999. Part of that is developing new places to find citizens. "Schools of Hope" is another on-going community journalism project with the *Wisconsin State Journal*. Currently, this project is focusing on class size as a strategy for improving minority student achievement.

Neil Heinen

Editorial Director

WISC-TV

P.O. Box 44965

Madison, WI 53744-4965

(608)277-5241

nheinen@wisctv.com

Andy Moore

Senior Producer

WHA-TV

(608)263-5628

KARE-TV (NBC) Minneapolis, MN

Incorporates community journalism into daily coverage.

Tom Lindner

News Director

KARE-TV

8811 Olsen Memorial Highway

Minneapolis, MN 55427

(612)797-7203

Minnesota Public Radio

Project: MPR Civic Journalism Initiative

Partnerships vary, generally not with other media.

MPR used technology to connect with citizens through the Internet. They are also using video conferencing as a way to bring various diverse groups and stakeholders to the discussion at their public forums. The morning sessions use small group settings. A national expert is brought in as a lunch speaker. The afternoon sessions shuffles the groups and then they go back into small groups to develop action plans. They have a website for civic journalism: http://access.mpr.org/civic_j/

Leonard Witt

Executive Director, Civic Journalism Initiative
Minnesota Public Radio, 45 East 7th Street
St. Paul, MN 55101
(651)290-1262
lwitt@mpr.org

WSFA-TV (NBC) Montgomery, AL

Project: Voice of the Voter
Went into the community to gather questions from citizens to pose to the candidates for Governor & Lt. Governor. The station has plans to continue this work in the coming year.

Jennifer Zunk
Acting News Director
WSFA-TV
P.O. Box 251200
Montgomery, AL 36125
(334)288-1212
Russ Bradley
Assignment Editor

WLBC-FM Muncie, IN

Project: Tax Reform
Partners: *Muncie Star Press*
Citizen forums made recommendations on tax reform in Indiana. A panel of public officials attended the meetings to give an overview of the tax system and then citizens were given most of the time to ask questions and discuss issues. Both radio and newspaper coverage followed the forums.

Deborah Ross
News Director
WLBC-FM
800 E. 29th Street
Muncie, IN 47302
(765)288-4403
www.wlbc.com
Larry Lough, Editor
Muncie Star Press (news@thestarpress.com)
(765)747-5754

New Hampshire Public Radio

Project: New Hampshire Tax Challenge
Covered a series of stories on how schools are funded in New Hampshire. The current system was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Stories illuminated alternative methods of funding. Citizens can calculate their own taxes for each proposed method using a form on the station's web site: <http://www.nhpr.org>

John Greenberg
Senior News Director

NHPR
207 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301
jgreenberg@NHPR.org

WVEC-TV (ABC) Norfolk, VA

Project: Pilot 13 News

Partners: *Virginia Pilot*

No major civic projects in the past year. The partners are refining their joint event coverage this year in daily news. The partnership produces a cable news program using community journalism as the basis for coverage. The partners plan to revisit political town hall meetings in 1999.

Dick Splitstone

Executive Producer

WVEC-TV

613 Woodis Ave.

Norfolk, VA 23510

(757)625-1313

dsplitstone@wvecnews.com

Oregon Public Broadcasting

Project: The Oregon Forum

Partners: *The Oregonian*, Project Vote

Conducted a joint statewide poll followed by a couple of focus group meetings based on the poll. Also cosponsored a debate and a forum for the elections. The group created a citizen ad-watch committee to view and comment on the ads.

Morgan Holm

News Director

Oregon Public Broadcasting

7140 W. Macadam Ave.

Portland, OR 97219

(503)244-9900

WGME-TV (CBS) Portland, ME

Project: Beyond the Ballot

Partners: Portland newspapers, Central Maine newspapers, Maine Public Television
Attempted to go beyond the candidates' platforms to get to the issues citizens said they were interested in discussing. The project brought citizens together with facilitators to discuss issues. The forums were not televised, but the ideas from the forums were covered by reporters. Now working on a book for the governor and state legislators which identifies the issues citizens felt were important.

Lois Czerniak

Executive Producer

WGME-TV

1335 Washington Ave

Portland, Maine 04103

(207)797-9330

WTVD-TV (ABC) Raleigh-Durham, NC

Project: Your Voice Your Vote 98

Partners: WCNC (NBC), WFMY (CBS), WWAY (ABC), WRAL (CBS), WUNC-FM (NPR)

Broadcasters worked with eight regional papers conducting statewide polling and joint candidate interviews. The group produced a series of stories based on the top issues identified by the public and produced citizens' forums for statewide broadcast.

Rick Willis

Executive Producer

WTVD-TV411 Liberty Street

Durham, NC 27701

(919)683-1111

WXXI-TV (PBS) Rochester, NY

Project: Varies with topics and election cycles.

Partners: WOKR-TV, *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*

These partners have conducted town hall meetings, polling, and community coverage for several years. Some areas of joint work include school quality, constitutional convention issues, elections, and youth/teen violence. Currently working to formalize the partnership arrangement for the long term.

Gary Walker

Vice President

WXXI-TV

P.O. Box 21 (280 State Street)

Rochester, NY 14601

(716)258-0241

gwalker@wxxi.org

Elissa Marra

Director of News and Public Affairs

WXXI-TV

(716)258-0349

KTVX-TV (ABC), KUER-FM Salt Lake City, UT

Project: People's Project

Partners: *Salt Lake Tribune*

The partners commissioned a joint citizen poll to determine the four top concerns of citizens in Utah. Each partner spent one week covering each issue. They also presented citizen feedback and comments and held a political town hall meeting.

Debbie Rogers

Executive Producer

KTVX-TV

1760 Fremont Drive

Salt Lake City, UT 84104

(801)975-4452
Kat Snow
Reporter
KUER-FM
(801)581-5015

KRON-TV (NBC) San Francisco, CA

Project: About Race

Partners: *The Chronicle*, KQED-FM

"About Race" was a 5-part series on racism that originated in February 1998 sweeps in the 6:00 p.m. news. The managers at the station wanted the series aired in a ratings period and the station's ratings held during the series. Since the original series, another 20 "About Race" stories have aired, two in the 11:00 p.m. newscast during November sweeps. The stories ran 5-6 minutes and again the ratings were good. KRON also started a race panel in the newsroom to look at coverage, hiring and newsroom attitudes.

KQED-FM and *The Chronicle* ran stories and op-ed pieces over the course of the series.

Craig Franklin

Producer, Special Projects

KRON-TV

1001 Van Ness Ave.

San Francisco, CA 94109

(415)561-8958

franklin@kron.com

Raul Ramirez, KQED-FM

(415)553-2253

KQED-FM (NPR) San Francisco, CA

Using community journalism as an approach to daily coverage, they produced a series on health in low-income communities as part of the California Report. Currently hiring an outreach coordinator to get communities not normally heard in news coverage on the air.

Also a member of the KRON and *The Chronicle* civic journalism projects.

Raul Ramirez

News Director

KQED-FM

2601 Mariposa

San Francisco, CA 94110-1400

(415)553-2253

rramirez@kqed.org

WWSB-TV (ABC) Sarasota, FL

Integrates community journalism into daily coverage.

Julie Ford

News Director

WWSB-TV

5725 Lawton Drive

Sarasota, FL 34233

(941)923-8840
jford@wwsb.com

KUOW-FM Seattle, WA

Project: Front Porch Forum

Partners: KCTS-TV (PBS), KPLU-FM (NPR) -through 1998, *Seattle Times*

In existence since 1994. Growth in Puget Sound has caused serious traffic problems and pressure on housing prices. The 1998 Front Porch project examined the causes and impacts of growth.

Ross Reynolds

Program/News Director

KUOW-FM

P.O. Box 535750

Seattle, WA 98195

(206)543-2710

Rar@u.washington.edu

WCTV-TV (CBS) Tallahassee, FL

Community journalism is integrated into daily coverage.

Michael Smith

Director of News and Production

WCTV-TV

P.O. Box 3049

Tallahassee, FL 32315

(904)893-6666

WTOL-TV (CBS) Toledo, OH

Project: 11 Listens

Station has received a lot of community response to "11 Listens." As a result, they are doing a variety of community meetings on different of topics. Four series have been developed from these meetings. Topics included crime and absentee landlords, among others. They are committed to community journalism for the long term, including incorporating it into daily coverage.

C.J. Beutien

News Director

WTOL-TV

730 North Summit Street

Toledo, OH 43699-1111

(419)248-1112

news@wtol.com

Patrick McCreery

Producer

(419)248-1123

WPBM-WTOM-TV (NBC) Traverse City, MI

Project: Our Town

Reporters visited towns in the viewing area to hold community meetings and do stories about community concerns.

Dave Walker

Anchor

WPBM-WTOM-TV

P.O. Box 456

Traverse City, MI 49685

(616)947-7770

Pallus Hupe

Anchor

KSNW-TV (PBS) Wichita, KS

Project: KSN Listens

The station regularly organizes meetings with viewers to get input on stories. The station has a "Listens" project, which they are expanding.

Bryan Frye

Promotions Manager

KSNW-TV

P.O. Box 238

Wichita, KS 67203

(316)265-3333

bryan@ksn.com

Contact Organizations for Community Journalism

- The Radio and Television News Directors Foundation
1000 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 615
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202/659-6510
Fax: 202/223-4007
Contact: Cy Porter, Project Director
Email: cy@rtndf.org
Internet: <http://www.rtndf.org>

- The Pew Center for Civic Journalism
1101 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 420
Washington, DC 20036
Phone: 202/331-3200
Fax: 202/347-6440
Contact: Jan Schaffer, Executive Director
Internet: <http://www.pewcenter.org>

- The Poynter Institute for Media Studies
801 Third Street South
St. Petersburg, FL 33701
Phone: 813/821-9494
Fax: 813/821-0583
Contact: Roy Peter Clark Senior Scholar
Internet: <http://www.poynter.org>

- The Kettering Foundation (for information on how media, public officials and citizens interact in our democracy)
200 Commons Road
Dayton, OH 45459-2799
Phone: 937/434-7300
Fax: 937/435-7367
Contact: Ed Arnone
Internet: <http://www.kettering.org>

- NewsLab
1150 18th Street NW
Suite 775
Washington, DC 20009
Email: mail@newslab.org
Phone: 202/969-2536
Fax: 202/969-2543
Contact: Deborah Potter, Executive Director

Internet: <http://www.newslab.org>

- The Civic Practices Network (an Internet resource on civic development, including civic journalism)

Internet: <http://www.cpn.org>

Suggested Reading on Community Journalism and Related Topics

** indicates sources written for an academic audience, but still of value to professionals.

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Anderson, R., Dardenne, R., et al. (1994). The Conversation of Journalism : Communication, Community, and News. Westport, Conn., Praeger.

Bassham, G. (1995). "Citizens on the Air." Washington, DC, National Public Radio.

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Clark, R. P. and Poynter Institute for Media Studies. (1992). A Call to Leadership : This Document is Written At A Time of Trouble for American Journalism and the Public It Serves. St. Petersburg, Fla., The Poynter Institute for Media Studies.

Corrigan, D. H. (1999). Evangelists in the Newsroom : The Public Journalism Movement in America. Westport, Conn., Praeger.

**Dahlgren, P. and Sparks, C. (1991). Communication and Citizenship : Journalism and the Public Sphere in the New Media Age. London ; New York, Routledge.

**Eksterowicz, A. J., Roberts, R., et al. (1998). "Public Journalism and Public Knowledge." Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics 3(2): 74.

**Ettema, J. S. and Glasser, T. L. (1998). Custodians of Conscience : Investigative Journalism and Public Virtue. New York, Columbia University Press.

Evans-Ferkin, J. (1996). "KVUE-TV Experiments With Crime Coverage." Communicator: 23-25.

Fouhy, E. and Schaffer, J. (1995). "Civic Journalism - Growing and Evolving." Nieman Reports 49(1): 16-18.

**Friedland, L. (1995). "Public Television as Public Sphere: The Case of the Wisconsin Collaborative Project." Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media 39: 147-176.

**Gunaratne, S. A. (1998). "Old Wine in a New Bottle: Public Journalism, Developmental Journalism, and Social Responsibility." Communication Yearbook 21:

277.

Harwood, R. C. (1991). "Citizens and Politics: A View From Main Street America." Dayton, The Kettering Foundation.

Iggers, J. (1998). Good News, Bad News : Journalism Ethics and the Public Interest. Boulder, Colo., WestviewPress.

Kees, B. and Phillips, B. (1994). Nothing Sacred : Journalism, Politics, and Public Trust in a Tell-All Age. Nashville, TN (1207 18th Ave. S., Nashville 37212), Freedom Forum First Amendment Center at Vanderbilt University.

Kennedy, B. M. (1974). Community Journalism: A Way of Life. Ames,, Iowa State University Press.

Lambert, R. (1998). "Rebuilding Trust." Columbia Journalism Review. **37**: 39.
>The editor of Britain's *Financial Times* examines why public confidence in the media is at a low ebb in the U.S. -- and offers some friendly advice about how to reverse that decline.

Lambeth, E. B., Meyer, P., et al. (1998). Assessing Public Journalism. Columbia, University of Missouri Press.

Lauterer, J. (1995). Community Journalism : The Personal Approach. Ames, Iowa State University Press.

Merritt, D. (1998). Public Journalism and Public Life : Why Telling the News Is Not Enough. Mahwah, N.J., L. Erlbaum Associates.

Miller, E. D. (1994). "The Charlotte Project: Helping Citizens Take Back Democracy." St. Petersburg, The Poynter Institute for Media Studies.

Miller, E. D. and Schaffer, J. (1995). "Six Cases in Civic Journalism." Washington, DC, The Pew Center for Civic Journalism.

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Parisi, P. (1997). "Toward a Philosophy of Framing: News Narratives for Public Journalism." Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly **74**(4): 673.

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Politics in the 1990s.” New York, The Twentieth Century Fund.

Rosen, J. (1993). Community Connectedness Passwords for Public Journalism : How To Create Journalism That Listens To Citizens and Reinvigorates Public Life. St. Petersburg, Florida, The Poynter Institute for Media Studies.

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**Schiller, D. (1981). Objectivity and the News : The Public and The Rise of Commercial Journalism. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.

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>The idea of reviving news councils to evaluate citizen complaints about news coverage is arousing new interest. Will this help bolster sagging credibility? Or is it a dangerous intrusion into the working of news organizations?

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