Teachers: how do you start over?

The author describes a news "assembly line." A story happens in a community. A content creator reports it, a packager edits it, a mass medium delivers it back into to the community. Too many news organizations, he contends, simply add new technologies to the end of the assembly line. A newspaper might tweet links to its stories, for example, rather than use Twitter to help develop story ideas or report the stories.

When the web first arrived, newspapers simply republished everything online that they already had done in traditional form. Their approach was still "we write, you read." Social media advocates noted, correctly, that this didn't take advantage of the ability of interactive media to create communities. It is the author's view that digital media has disrupted this one-way assembly line and the entire system needs to be reinvented, that journalism needs creating, not saving.

Is the same true for your journalism curriculum?

An exercise for current or future teachers:

Imagine you must create a new teaching plan from scratch to prepare students for journalism and communications jobs that do not exist today. What would it look like? Some of these questions are pondered by the Online News Association educator's group and the College Media Association advisers group on their Facebook pages. Are those helpful? Are the syllabus exchange pages on NewsU.org or the lesson plans on SchoolJournalism.org of any help?

Take it a step further. Close down (at least in your mind) the student media at your campus – the newspaper, the radio station, the magazine, the TV newscast. Now engage your students in a project to reinvent student media, designing it to meet the needs of the community you wish to serve. What should 21st Century student media look like? How important to this task is the field of media design? Consider also the ideas of Professor Henry Jenkins, "participatory culture" scholar at the University of Southern California.

Examine this project, in which reality TV was used to help train journalism teachers. Do you think this is something that could work?