Out with the old, in with the new?

Right out of Towson University, in 2007, Brian Stelter began his career as a New York Times media reporter. By 2013, he was CNN’s senior media reporter and host of Reliable Sources. His rapid rise was fueled by what Forbes calls entrepreneurial journalism. While in college, Stelter started the Cable Newser blog (renamed TV Newser), gained the interest of the New York Times and sold the blog to Mediabistro.

Entrepreneurial media outlets come in different shapes and size, though they are generally digital natives that emphasize individual voice and new story forms, and encourage engagement.

- **Buzzfeed** was founded in 2006 as a lab to create viral content. It has since become a site that blends lists, news articles, long-form journalism, opinion pieces, quizzes, videos and GIFs by staff writers and community contributors.
- **The Huffington Post** was founded in 2005 and features a blend of original and aggregated content intended to be shared. It has developed a reputation for engagement. Sold to AOL in 2011 for more than $300 million, it won a Pulitzer Prize in 2012.
- **FiveThirtyEight** was founded as an independent site in 2008 by statistician Nate Silver. It was first picked up by the New York Times and then in 2014 was re-launched as an ESPN-owned site. It analyzes statistics to reveal insights on topics such as politics, sports, economics and the environment.
- **Upshot**: The Upshot, a publication of The New York Times, was founded in 2014 to help readers understand big, complicated stories by writing in a direct, plainspoken way and by analyzing data sets.

Are the best jobs for today’s student journalists the ones that don’t yet exist?

Assignments on different levels:

**Flashlight:** Check out Newspaper Death Watch by author Paul Gillin. Note the publications that have folded since 2007, the ones that have merged and the innovators. In each category, do the publications have anything common?

**Spotlight:** Nonprofit news models are growing. At The Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, student fellowship grants fund stories on underreported topics abroad. Take a look at its 2014 student fellow projects. Write your own proposal for a travel grant that includes a story idea, tentative budget and ways you will integrate multimedia into your project. Where does the Pulitzer Center get its funding?

**Searchlight:** The Poynter Institute’s Andrew Beaujon reports that local newspapers
are consistently cutting newsrooms. Take a look at Justin Auciello's project Jersey Shore Hurricane News, a one-reporter operation launched by a city planner and land use consultant. Select a topic in your local community that is underreported. Who in your community might fund that reporting? Cover an event relating to your topic.

**Extra credit:** Select a big national story currently in the news. Find an article that covers that story in each of the following young media outlets:

- BuzzFeed
- Gawker
- VICE
- FiveThirtyEight
- PolicyMic
- POLITICO

How did each publication frame its story? How did each use multimedia or data? Does each employ a specific style? Are there similarities between them? Would you consider these sites entrepreneurial journalism? How do they differ from traditional journalism?