



Linking to community with mobile, social media

As longtime media expert Tom Rosenstiel explains, citizens had to adapt their behavior to the news media, reading papers in the morning, watching TV news in the evening. Now, news organizations must adapt to fit the behavior of their consumers. That includes recognizing that social media draws more traffic than web portals, and developing a “mobile first” strategy for the devices that soon will dominate news delivery.

Assignments for students at three levels:

Flashlight: Ask students to examine this list of Millennials' And Teens' Top 20 News Sources. Note how many of these sites curate content, providing what the author would call digital sunglasses. What are these sources doing that traditional news and information sites are not? Students should create a list of their own favorite sites for news and explain why they prefer those.

Spotlight: The Reynolds Journalism Institute and researchers from the Missouri School of Journalism are studying how journalists use social networks. At KETC St. Louis and other news organizations, they are asking: How can journalists use social media to dig deeper into issues and engage communities? Ask students to look up the terms “public journalism,” “civic journalism,” “trustee-networked journalism” and “net-j.” Assignment: What are the differences and similarities between these forms of community engagement?

Searchlight: Social media allows real-time reporting as news is unfolding. But how can you trust what’s being said? Andy Carvin, National Public Radio's senior product manager for online communities, was hailed as an innovator for journalistic use of Twitter to curate breaking news stories. Assignment: Try following a developing news story using Twitter. How do you track the reliability of sources that are retweeted? You can use tools like Twitter Audit, Klout or the analytics tools in Hootsuite to get a better insight of how Twitterers influence each other. Check out Twitter’s guide for newsrooms and present your findings and a strategy for improving ways to inform and engage communities through social media.

Extra credit: Returning to the University of Missouri’s study of KETC. Is this research an example of practical ways scholars and professionals can work together? What is the news organization doing differently? For extra credit, ask students to find one other current example of scholars studying news experiments. Are any of those experiments at student-produced media?

