



SEARCHLIGHTS AND SUNGLASSES

LEARNING LAYER

Map your news and information ecosystem

The Knight Commission said eight elements are needed to make up a healthy local news and information ecosystem: easy to use digital government information; open government meetings and records; quality local journalism; digital forums for debate; vibrant libraries teaching digital media literacy; special topic information; schools teaching digital media literacy, and high-speed, affordable broadband for everyone.

Activities at three levels:

Flashlight: Create a rubric based on the eight elements. Students work in groups to assess various elements in a chosen community and share their findings with the class. Each group then proposes measures to improve the health of the elements in a walk through gallery format with each element written on a large poster board and markers available at each station. Ideas are gathered and discussed as a class at the end of the exercise.

Spotlight: Each student interviews a community leader, collecting audio or video as they poll them on the eight elements. Compare their findings, create an infographic interpreting the media ecosystem consensus. Put the interviews out through social media and collect the results on a platform like [Storify](#).

Searchlight: As a class project, perhaps in partnership with student media, hold a large event inviting local leaders as well as local media leaders. Using this [information toolkit](#), choose one form of news, like education news, and map how your ecosystem works. Are the leaders surprised by anything? Put out the results and see if you can interest the media outlets in the story.

Extra credit: [The New Jersey News Commons](#) is a news cooperative project, as is [Net-J at the Seattle Times](#). Elsewhere around the country, such as Ohio and Florida, news organizations that used to compete are now sharing news. After looking at these models, envision a news collaborative in your community. What problems would it solve? How? What would the roadblocks be to its creation?