Guided reading questions for chapter four

1. According to the Knight Foundation, what does it mean to be an "informed and engaged" community?

2. How big an impact, measured in dollars, did the three investigative stories cited in this chapter have?

3. How many journalism jobs have been cut in recent years?

4. Who does the author say must share the blame for the lack of news literacy in our society?

5. What are three ways in which journalists, journalism organizations and journalism schools can highlight the impact of investigative reporters?

6. What was the problem before The Forum was created in Deerfield, New Hampshire? What happened after community volunteers began reporting for The Forum?

7. In terms of revenue, how is digital advertising different from traditional print advertising?

8. What does the chapter say about the state of arts journalism, nationally and locally? What example does the author give to highlight the state of national arts journalism?

9. According to the author, every major upward spike in U.S. election turnout has come during a time when what was happening?

10. What mistake have traditional news media made with their websites?

11. What are some ways news organizations can better engage communities?

12. Is there a relationship between whether a community engages with a news story and whether it creates a change of some sort?

13. Where can you find a journalism code of ethics?

14. Does digital media technology create new ethical concerns of journalists and citizens? Does it also create new potential to deal with those concerns?

15. What is your personal view of ethics? Do you have your own standards by which you share information about yourself or those around you?

Shaded terms for chapter four

Digital media literacy: The ability to access, create, analyze and act upon digital media.

Media ecosystem: The interconnected relationships between people, communities, information, news and media. As complex as an environmental ecosystem.

Cloud computing: A general expression used to describe computer memory and programs that reside at another location, usually in a client server, rather than in the device you are using.

Arts journalism: Reporting and commentary on the arts, including coverage and reviews of movies, books, music and theater.

Open journalism: A way to produce news that is transparent to the public and allows for community participation.

Collaborative: The process of multiple people or organizations working together.

Sunshine Laws: Laws requiring government information and meetings to be open to the public. City and state laws differ, though most were inspired by the 1976 federal law, Government in the Sunshine Act.

Some of the shaded terms are in the text; others are in the Learning Layer; still others are in the source material linked to from the book. This list helps define them, wherever they are found.

The impact of investigative reporting

Investigations can make a big difference. Yet impact can be difficult to track. Suppose an investigation shows that when prisoners are released early they quickly commit more violent crime. Reacting to the journalism, the state then keeps people in jail longer. Violent crimes, including murders, go down because the criminals are not on the streets to commit them. The investigation saved lives, it seems, but whose lives? People could be walking the streets today totally unaware that they owe their lives to good journalism.

Activities at three levels:

Flashlight: Have students explore past winners of the Journalism Education Association's Student Journalist Impact Award as well as examples of investigative reporting by college students. Discuss the stories. Were they difficult to do? Did they require special tools? Did they have an impact? Why or why not?

Spotlight: Contact an investigative journalist from a local news organization. Invite that person to speak to your class. Ask students to prepare by studying the websites of these major investigative reporting organizations to see how they report impact: the Center for Investigative Reporting, the Center for Public Integrity and Pro Publica. Have students ask the journalist to provide examples of the value of investigations. Post a report on the visit on a class blog.

Searchlight: Choose an investigative story recently reported locally. Split students into groups. Have them find people who can comment on the story's impact. For example, if the investigation revealed law-breaking landlords, students could interview tenants from the story or others who rent, respected landlords, local officials who regulate housing or even the alleged law-breakers themselves. Did the story change anything? Students who wish to may post their views at the news organization's website.

Extra credit: With Knight funds, Livingston Awards for Young Journalists hopes to increase its impact. Winning journalists will participate in community outreach programs to explain their investigations. Ask students to review Pulitzer Prize-winning investigative reports as well as the award-winning investigations featured by Investigative Reporters and Editors. Each student picks at least three

winners. Do the contests explain the impact of the stories? Should they? Blog or tweet your findings.

Controversy in Wisconsin

The Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism is a non-partisan, non-profit news organization located in two small offices at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Its professional staff works with the university's journalism program. Wisconsin state legislators added a provision to the state budget wanting to boot the news organization from the university. Lawmakers also sought to prohibit university employees from working officially with the center.

Many news organizations, as well as the director of the university's school of journalism and mass communication, Gregory Downey, did not agree with the proposal. Ultimately, the Wisconsin governor vetoed the budget's anti-journalism provision, saying that the state can't single out an organization among the many nonprofits that work at the university.

Discovery at three levels:

Flashlight: Student journalists can be as controversial as professionals, especially if they paint their schools in an unfavorable light. Ask students to research the answers to these questions: On campus, who seem to be the biggest censors of student journalists? What were last year's major court cases and the outcomes? What Student Press Law Center resources are available? Discuss in class. Encourage students who wish to do so to promote the center through their social network.

Searchlight: Ask students to research the Wisconsin stories mentioned above as well as this Huffington Post article. Questions: Are the center's investigations needed? Why did some state legislators want to remove it from the university? What was the reaction? Ask students to use their research to create or beef up a Wikipedia entry on the center, citing sources carefully.

Searchlight: Research the law. Could a state have singled out a media outlet and banned state university employees from working with it? Invite a local lawyer or law professor to class to discuss. Did anyone ever actually do this? (Universities hold many public broadcast licenses, and experts such as professor Barbara Cochran of the University of Missouri say they should be more involved with their communities. Can a state stop professors from working with public broadcasters as well?) Ask your students to outline a letter to Wisconsin's governor expressing their views about his

decision.

Extra credit: This book's author argues that universities can improve journalism education through a "teaching hospital" model. Ask students to find an online forum where this issue is discussed, then post answers to one or more of these questions: Are there other possible conflicts to university-journalism partnerships? Should universities, especially public ones, avoid collaborating with media outlets? Do those in "teaching hospital" models need special protection from political interference?

Scholars look at priming, framing, agenda-setting

Media impact research studies how news and information influences the way people learn, vote and behave in society. The two popular academic pieces described below look at the impact of news on perceptions of the U.S. president. Ask students to read these summaries and complete the assignment below.

Miller, J. M., & Krosnick, J. A. (1996). News media impact on the ingredients of presidential evaluations: A program of research on the priming hypothesis. *Political persuasion and attitude change*, 79-100. Priming is the idea that what appears in the news triggers related thoughts that cause people to make decisions or take actions. This piece examines the history of priming from 1920 to the 1990s. The researchers sought to understand how news consumers made certain inferences based off of the news they consumed.

Miller, J. M., & Krosnick, J. A. (2000). News media impact on the ingredients of presidential evaluations: Politically knowledgeable citizens are guided by a trusted source. *American Journal of Political Science*, 301-315.

In this more recent study, the researchers concluded that priming does not occur because politically naive citizens are victims but rather reflects conclusions drawn from a credible source of information by educated citizens.

Assignment: In addition to priming, scholars also study framing (how the context in which news is reported influences perception) and agenda-setting (how repeated media coverage can push issues to center stage). Research these concepts and write a short paper comparing and contrasting them.

Fracking: Find out for yourselves

Fracking is a major issue. On one side is energy production; on the other, human health. Start a student investigation by having the class watch Gasland, a past nominee for an Academy Award for best documentary. (For a free alternative documentary on gas drilling through shale view this shorter video: After the Gas Rush.)

Activities at three levels:

Flashlight: Show the class ProPublica's investigative music video on fracking. Discuss: What is fracking? Do you think this story has been covered well enough? Why or why not? Class activity: Tell the story of fracking using only pictures. See how Pennsylvania artists did it and look at the YouTube fracking videos for inspiration.

Spotlight: Ask students to use web resources to try to answer these queries: Do you live in area where fracking is taking place or is being considered? What are the issues? Must a state government agency give natural gas companies permission to extract by fracking? Consult this Los Angeles Times story for context.

Searchlight: Here are three different views: the Earth Justice map of skulls showing fracking locations, the American Enterprise Institute's article about the benefits of fracking and a nonprofit investigation into how industry funds college researchers studying shale. Imagine you are a city council deciding what to do about fracking. Research your state's laws and news reports on the issue. After you vote, look up the results of the same debate in Pittsburgh, the first city to take a stance on fracking.

When reporters are murdered

The Chauncey Bailey Project was modeled after the Arizona Project, which drew journalists in 1976 from across the country to complete the work of the Arizona Republic's Don Bolles. While investigating land fraud, Bolles was killed by a car bomb. This video shows what's left of Don Bolles' car, on display at the Newseum.

Unlike the Arizona Project, which predominantly drew newspaper reporters, the Chauncey Bailey project drew journalists from a wide-range of backgrounds: daily, weekly, web, print, television and journalism education. On the project website, the journalists describe challenges — stories held for days in one medium so the others could catch up. Yet Pete Wevurski, managing editor of the Bay Area News Group-East Bay, said that the project "will be the most important work any of us have ever done and ever will do."

Student activities at three levels:

Flashlight: Start a Wordpress blog on which the students will each post a short piece comparing and contrasting the Chauncey Bailey Project and the Arizona Project. After online research, ask them to explain what was done differently in the Chauncey Bailey Project. What lessons could be applied to future projects?

Spotlight: Research ABRAJI. What is it? When was it founded and why? Who was Tim Lopez? What role did Rosental Alves of the University of Texas play in the group's founding? Here's a starting point. Blog the results of your research.

Searchlight: There are many dangers to freelancing in the journalism world. Knight Foundation President Alberto Ibargüen noted that terrorists are the shock troops in a "new war on journalists." Discuss with the class: Are the benefits worth the risks? More than 2,000 journalists from around the world have died while gathering the news. Explore their stories at the Newseum's Journalists Memorial and view this video of the memorial. Pick five of the journalists. Can you find any evidence that their colleagues finished the stories they were working on? The Committee to Protect Journalists keeps track of what it calls the Impunity Index, how many killers of journalists go free. What happens most of the time when journalists are murdered for doing their jobs? Put your findings out through social media.

Extra credit: Examine this map of journalists murdered in Mexico. The map will tell you where the murder occurred, the type of attack and the type of aggressor. What can information like this tell us? Is it necessary to have a map of the entire world? Why? How can it help us assess risk?

Does journalism need promotion?

The author says journalism is a fact-based enterprise that ironically often relies on faith-based arguments to earn the trust of communities. Journalists, for all their skills, seem to do a poor job of communicating about themselves and their positive effects on society.

Perhaps journalism needs a good public relations or marketing campaign to show audiences just how valuable it is.

Assignments for students at three levels:

Flashlight: Ask students to choose a local media outlet and explore its impact. Then show the first "Got Milk?" TV ad and others from that campaign, credited with increasing American milk consumption. Ask students to make their own video ads, highlighting the importance of journalism, including an original slogan or tag line.

Spotlight: The Reuters "Handbook of Journalism" and other news company policies discourage self-promotion and encourage journalistic humility. Class discussion: Is it a conflict of interest for a journalist to discuss the role of journalism involving a story he or she is still reporting? Would that be the same as "becoming part of a story you are covering?" Should individual journalists be ambassadors only in a general sense when explaining the role of journalism?

Searchlight: Note the web sites of the Newspaper Association of America and the National Association of Broadcasters. NAA promotes newspapers; NAB promotes broadcasters. Assignment: Blog about these questions: Who speaks for journalism in general? What about journalism schools? They frequently give prizes for the best journalism. Do they have an obligation to the public to explain why journalism matters? If journalism schools aren't the right ones to speak up, who should?

Extra credit: This video shows library officials in Dalkeith, Scotland promoting their library with pole-dancing classes. Does journalism need a similar make-over? If so, how do you reconcile the dire warnings of the collapse of democracy and success of entertainment-driven media? Is the fun of journalism hard to convey without seeming shallow?

What's the impact of student journalism?

Professional journalists can do impactful stories, uncovering corruption, exposing threats to citizen safety. But so do student journalists; their work also has effected major change in their communities.

Student assignments at three levels:

Flashlight: Explore the past winners of the Courage in Student Journalism award and the National Scholastic Press Association's Story of the Year award. Consider the stories about the failing schools and teen pregnancies, local sex-trafficking and an increase in local gang activity. Come to class ready to discuss: Do you see those types of stories in your school media? Why or why not?

Spotlight: Explore past winners of the College Press Freedom Award and the Associated Collegiate Press Story of the Year award. There, you can find stories about how a college's board of trustees might be in violation of state open meetings laws, a sorority removed from campus after reports of hazing and questionable spending by a campus student government. Find a similar story in student media on your campus. Come to class prepared to dissect the story. What was the reaction to it?

Searchlight: Browse the above links. Brainstorm story ideas. Have the class nominate the top three stories. Using a simple SMS voting site like Poll Everywhere, send out the nominees through your social networks and let people vote on their top story. Back in class, map out that story, including sources, questions, etc. Here's a Seattle Times tip sheet to help map the story. For extra credit, do the story as a class project.

Investigative reporting, meet the philosophers

Explore the role of investigative reporters and public agencies in exposing public deceit and fraud as well as the underlying thinking of the importance of knowing what's really happening.

Discussion assignments for students:

Flashlight: View the 60 Minutes clip on the best-selling book "Three Cups of Tea." Ask students to read the posted comments. Discuss the role of the press in upholding standards of integrity in society: Did the report lead to increased accountability? Why is it important for people to know whether the book and the charity it supports are non-fiction or fiction? Would you have done the story?

Spotlight: For further discussion, consider: Should people who do good deeds fall under the same press microscope as obvious criminals? Do the ends justify the means? Look at the Wikipedia page on Greg Mortenson and "Three Cups of Tea." Are there any circumstances under which a journalist may know something but not do the story? What might those be?

Searchlight: Philosophy studies basic questions having to do with existence, knowledge, reality and reason. Consider the reading list below, selected for readability, logic of arguments and originality. Look up some of the books (or others if you wish). Do any of them argue for or against societies based on facts? What would the authors have said about the value of investigative reporting? Blog your results, or, for extra credit, assemble a package telling what you learned using Zeega.

First batch: *The Analects,* Confucius; *The Plague,* Albert Camus; *Critique of Pure Reason,* Emmanuel Kant; *Beyond Good and Evil,* Friedriche Nietzsche; *Sophie's World,* Jostein Gaarder; *The Book of the Tao,* Lao Tzu; *Critique of Religion and Philosophy,* Walter Kaufmann; *The Republic,* Plato, and *If Aristotle Ran General Motors,* Tom Morris.

Second batch: *The Upanishads,* Anonymous (Hindu); *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre,* Walter Kauffman; *Thus Spake Zarathustra,* Friedriche Nietzsche; *Utopia,* Thomas More; *Candide,* Voltaire; *Being and*

Nothingness, Jean Paul Sartre; *On the Suffering of the World,* Arthur Schopenhauer; *Oration on the Dignity of Man,* Pico della Mirandola; *Modern Man In Search of a Soul,* Carl Gustav Jung; *The Dialogic Imagination,* Mikhail Bakhtin; *Being and Time,* Martin Heidegger, and *The Decent Society,* Avishai Margalit.

The risks of transparency

The author calls for greater transparency in journalism. But, like anything else, transparency can be overdone. Scholars Stephanie Craft and Kyle Heim warn openness in journalism may produce unintended consequences. An example: If journalists were to act exactly like scientists and reveal every source of information, sources that wanted anonymity couldn't have it, and those stories would be lost.

Discussion at three levels:

Flashlight: What other things might go wrong if journalists are "too transparent"? Think about transparency in everyday life. What information do doctors, lawyers and other professionals keep to themselves? Should there be some things that journalists simply don't discuss?

Spotlight: The "open journalism" page at *The Guardian* invites users to explore how the news organization reports its top stories. This major news organization routinely asks for help from the public to analyze large numbers of documents. Its readers help shape the articles it writes and share their own content and comments. What do you think of this way of doing journalism?

Searchlight: Jeff Jarvis from New York University, in his book *Public Parts*, argues that the benefits of being more open outweigh the risks. Jarvis gives as an example his own battle with cancer, which he openly discussed. Would you have revealed a life-threatening illness to the world? Why or why not?

Extra credit: Consider this scenario: A journalist interviews a local businessman about unethical activity. The interview went badly for the businessman, so he issues a "prebuttal" to defend himself. The journalist, knowing that could happen, had immediately posted the raw interview footage. With interview and reply already online, what sort of story, if any, should the journalist create? Ask students to make a short video of their opinion.

Nonprofit vs. commercial: What's the difference?

What are the differences between nonprofit news organizations and commercial ones?

Discussions at three levels:

Flashlight: Have students search the Internet to answer that question, list five differences each and come to class ready to discuss. Did anyone compare audience size? How would that be done?

Spotlight: From a media consumer's perspective, can you tell the difference between a nonprofit and commercial operation? How? Now take a look at the investigative channel on YouTube. That's nonprofit media being distributed over a commercial platform. How would you categorize that?

Searchlight: What are the disincentives for becoming nonprofit? How have those disincentives diminished in recent years? Look at the report on IRS delays in approving nonprofit media. Class discussion: If you were starting a news organization, would it be nonprofit or for-profit?

Extra credit: PBS says it has moved from being a 21st Century laggard to a digital leader. Watch this keynote by Jason Seiken. Review PBS.org. Did you know PBS wins Webby awards? On the other hand, the economics of public broadcasting are in flux. Local stations collect local donations and use them to purchase national programs, like *All Thing Considered*. When public media users can get the national programming directly, who needs the local station? Post a video to YouTube predicting the future of public broadcasting.

The many faces, many uses of open data

Information is power. It keeps government accountable and businesses transparent. New methods are emerging to make information more accessible.

Flashlight: Explore these projects offering greater access to information:

- Reframe It, Inc. is using Knight Foundation funding to test new journalistic approaches to covering policy and legislation with special research polling.
- The Global Editors Network sponsors the Data Journalism Awards to demonstrate the value of data journalism.
- The U.S. Open Data Institute is a new initiative to improve the standards of the free-flow of information by businesses and government.
- The Columbia Daily Tribune offers guidance on how to reach all a city's neighborhoods through data mapping. http://www.naa.org/News-and-Media/Blog/columbia-daily-tribune-neighborhoods.aspx

Which is your favorite project and why? What project offers the most data about business and government? Which project is most likely to produce information on government and business that citizens can understand?

Spotlight: Assume you are a philanthropist with $50,000 to invest on open-data technology prototypes. Explore the following Knight-funded prototypes. If you could only choose one to fund, which would it be? Could you split your $50,000 among the three projects? If so, how much would each receive?

- Code for America will extend and publicly launch Ohana API, a tool for organizing databases of social services for a community.
- SmartResponse.org seeks to improve transparency of disaster recovery funding.
- Procure.io helps government gain greater access to open-data technology, driving down costs of transparency and engagement.

Searchlight: Open data also means more information is available for researchers and journalists to use to confront health issues. Explore these Knight-funded projects:

- [The Homebrew Sensing Project](#) seeks to create a set of low-cost hardware and free software that citizens can use to measure local health data, such as air and water quality.
- The [New Venture Fund](#) is building a curriculum to help mentors to reporters and editors develop editorial strategies and look for trends in health data.
- [The Open Humans Network](#) will match people willing to share their health data with researchers who would benefit from access to more information.
- [Civic Ninjas](#) are developing [Sitegeist Health](#) to present health data in an accessible format.

What skills do you need to create these prototypes? What sorts of professionals need to be included in the development team? Does your school teach the skills to create these tools? Does your school teach the skills to understand and report the findings from these projects?

Join a professional journalism organization

The impact of journalism might best be told through journalism organizations. But do they do enough to reach out to the public? If they don't, the best way to change them may be to join and reinvent them from within. Most professional journalism organizations offer reduced-price memberships to students. Some organizations even encourage student chapters to be formed.

Discovery assignments for students to prepare for class discussion:

Flashlight: The Journalism Education Association's Scholastic Press Rights Commission has a student group called 45 Words. Explore this program to see how it benefits high school students working in student media. Are there other such programs at the high school level?

Spotlight: Most professional journalism organizations welcome college student members. The fastest growing is the Online News Association. Check out its website, as well as those of the Society of Professional Journalists and Radio Television Digital News Association. Review this list from the American Journalism Review of other journalism organizations. Do some groups seem more welcoming of students than others? Which of them highlight the major scholarships offered by AP-Google?

Searchlight: Look in-depth at the Investigative Reporters and Editors. How did the group get its name? What's its mission? When was it formed? What is the fee for joining IRE as a student member? Can you find anything on the website that indicates a desire by IRE to reach out to the general public to explain the role of journalism?

Extra credit: If journalists have a "common language," it is found in the Associated Press Stylebook. AP offers virtual communities around its stylebook, including a digital tool to check your stories against AP style Ask your students to get the stylebook and be prepared to talk about the general practices it outlines that describe good journalism.

Update

Technology + data + journalism = solutions

Journalists are using technology to mine data and collect government information. Examples:

- The Center for Investigative Reporting funded the development of the FOIA Machine through a Kickstarter campaign. The FOIA Machine is a tool for filing freedom of information requests.
- Journalists are being trained to gather local-level campaign finance data through the FollowTheMoney.org platform.
- The African News Innovation Challenge encourages digital and data-driven journalism in that continent.
- The Center of Michigan promotes solutions-based journalism in a project to infuse data-driven coverage of Detroit's bankruptcy and related state policies.

Exploring beloved crime logs

Freedom of information laws require police to keep a record of daily activities that is open to public inspection. Search the Internet or a community newspaper for a crime log. Why are crime logs frequently described as one of the most-read features of any news organization?

Student activities at three levels:

Flashlight: Find a local police log, either in print or online. Look through a few weeks of reports. What surprises you? What would you make into stories? Was it because the story was important or just interesting? Pick one or more human interest stories. Tell it in the form of a poem.

Spotlight: In the satirical <u>Colbert Report</u>, the crime log led to a reporter visiting Rogers Road and <u>doing an unrelated story</u> for Georgia's <u>Athens Banner-Herald</u>. Discuss in class: Why was the first story too thin for the newspaper? Why was the second story better? Why did the source have credibility? How did <u>the second story become nationally known</u>?

Searchlight: Study the links above. What was the Colbert team really trying to say in its satire? Now look at the reality TV show <u>"Here comes Honey Boo Boo"</u> and this Atlanta Journal Constitution blog about its popularity. Are crime logs popular for the same reason reality TV shows are popular? Make a reality TV-style video of your own effort to look over a local police log. Will the police allow you to make a video inside the station? If not, do it outside.

Reviewing Sunshine Laws

All states, the District of Columbia and the federal government are subject to open meetings laws, called " Sunshine laws ." In addition to securing freedom of access to public documents and data, these laws require public officials to hold certain meetings in public. That doesn't always mean the public has a right to speak, says the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press. What else isn't included? Discussions allowed to be private include the hiring, firing or disciplining of employees, meetings with attorneys and discussions regarding the purchase or sale of property.

Ask students to examine this map of Sunshine laws and then choose from these activities:

Flashlight: Look up your state's open records law. Create an infographic showing what's interesting or surprising. (Ask the class if the best graphics should be posted online, and, if so, where.)

Spotlight: Watch the video of Waldo Jaquith, the award-winning "open government technologist" who developed the White House's *Ethics.gov* tool. What does he say is wrong with state government open meeting and records laws? How does he propose to fix it? Find an appropriate online forum and post your opinion about Jaquith's project. Turn in the link.

Searchlight: Think of public records you would need to have to tell an important story. How would you ask for those records in your state? Would you consider a lawsuit against a government agency to obtain a public record? Locate your state FOI group through the National Freedom of Information Coalition at the University of Missouri. The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and the Student Press Law Center also provide useful tools. Could they help you? What would be the factors in making a decision about suing? To complete the assignment, submit your public records act request.

Extra credit: What's happening with Freedom of Information in your state since 9/11? If you can get access to Academic Search Complete on your campus, see if there is scholarship on the subject. Has your state group done an FOI audit recently in your state? Write a proposal for your school to spearhead such an audit.

How do handlers of records see their role?

Public records usually are defined officially as documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data, data processing software or other material made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any agency.

Laws differ by locale, but they can include marriage and death certificates, court documents, community meeting proceedings, proposed laws and legislation, zoning measures and political candidate tax records. General records schedules are published by local and state governments to determine how long public records should be kept.

A professional organization that has established ethical practices in records management is the International Association of Records Managers and Archivists. It explains best practices for digital and physical records.

Activities for students: Look at public records from the perspective of someone who must manage those records. Locate information about organizations who have established best practices in records management, such as ARMA. Be prepared to discuss in class: Who joins these professional organizations? Are their goals consistent with journalism best practices? What challenges do they face?

The ethics of big data

The author argues that government data systems should be redesigned so that all public data is available as soon as it is created. That would be a huge change from the current system, where public information, in practice, may be in files that few people ask for or see. After getting a public record, journalists make ethical decisions about whether the public's right to know outweighs an individual's right to privacy. In the age of big databases, however, those decisions are now made involving thousands or millions of people at once.

A case in point: Shortly after the shooting massacre at a Newtown, Conn., elementary school, the Journal News in White Plains. N.Y., published an interactive map of people who had permits for handguns. The map was taken down in 2013 after drawing almost 3,000 comments. The paper disabled its interactivity. Citing gun violence, some wanted more information to be released, such as rifle ownership, the number of guns in a household, etc. But lawmakers were among the others proposing limiting public access to such permits altogether.

In a PBS MediaShift blog post, Kathleen Bartzen Colver argues that data by itself lacks context. Do journalists have an ethical obligation to provide that context? Often, they do. But under our free press system, that's an ethical choice, not a legal mandate. Data projects can be good, as with this package on delays in helping veterans, yet journalists can approach data in ways that don't work as well.

Class activity: Study the links above. Look at the codes of ethics of various news organizations and professional groups. Design an ethics code involving big data sets, using the same principles. What can happen when journalists don't report data ethically?

'Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain'

The above quote from the "Wizard of Oz," says journalism engagement advocate Joy Mayer, helps characterize the way many news people see their profession. They are the great and powerful wizards and audiences should appreciate that.

But without knowing what's behind the curtain, communities can easily distrust journalism.

Engagement activities on three levels:

Flashlight: Is your school media really serving the needs and interests of the students in your school? Conduct a readership survey or a focus group with random students to find out. Be sure the students you speak with are as diverse as the student body.. What's most important to your readers? What would they like to see? Brainstorm a list of questions, before conducting the survey/focus group. Post the results on a school or local news organization's website.

Spotlight: Mayer writes that there are three sorts of engagement: outreach, conversation and collaboration. Read her blog post describing these strategies. Choose a local news outlet, such as a campus or local newspaper, and evaluate how they are/are not using these tools. What could they do to better improve community engagement?

Searchlight: Mayer says news organizations can learn from the business world, because successful non-media organizations see engagement as a mindset more than simply a set of activities. Each student could find a non-media company that has a strong engagement presence, especially on social media. Conduct an interview with a representative digitally, on Skype, Google Hangouts, Livestream, etc. Report to the class on the results. Describe how the business engages customers. What could the news media learn from it?

Bonus for student news media advisers: Mayer says engagement must be baked "into the DNA" of an organization. What can you or your students do to make engagement a permanent part of how you think about journalism? Consider asking other experts at your school to research your engagement

efforts, using the "living lab" of student media.

Learning from journalism history

Journalism history has much that it can teach us about where we are now — this is why some scholars spend their entire careers studying it. Sometimes the very specific instances and cases from our past can say a lot about our future. Yet their work doesn't fill this Wikipedia "History of journalism" page, which is more of a country-by-country approach. Other timelines do a bit better.

Class activities on three levels:

Flashlight: Notice how slowly technology progressed in the past and how quickly it progresses now. Consider: Are there any other trends you see in how journalism has progressed? What is it progressing toward? What do you think journalism will look like in another 100 years? Create a collage of images that make your point.

Spotlight: How would you explain digital technology to a person from the industrial 19th century or the agricultural 18th century? Consider that words and ideas you take for granted now didn't exist in those eras. How would you justify the functionality and pervasiveness of the media technologies we now have? Choose a historical figure, like Frederick Douglass or Tom Paine, and write them a letter telling how we live today.

Searchlight: Mass media have created shared social narratives. The classic examples are during times of war or great national tragedy, such as World War II or the Kennedy assassinations. But today, some have suggested mass communication no longer exists (see *"The End of Mass Communications"* by Steven H. Chaffee and Miriam J. Metzger). Do fragmented media consumption habits and the "demassification" of media affect the shared social narratives and histories that society has experienced for such a long time? To what end?

Extra credit: Journalists focus on the present. Their history often doesn't receive the attention it should. Myths abound. How many errors or incomplete items can you spot in the University of North Carolina capsule history listed above? Show your sources. (Here's a starter: The first press in the Americas was in Mexico City, more than a century before a printing press came to New England.)

Different types of local, digital news outlets

Writer and trainer Michelle McLellan created a list of promising local news websites, including sites she called "micro local," which focused on small geographic regions, such as neighborhoods, communities or towns.

Flashlight: Explore the sites on McLellan's list and describe the sorts of stories that are published. Do you have any new digital news sites in your community? What category would you put them in? Describe the tone of the coverage. Is it detached, or does it show an interest and involvement with the community?

Spotlight: The Texas Tribune and Deerfield Forum couldn't be located in areas more dissimilar. The Tribune is located in urban Austin; the Forum in a small New Hampshire town. Examine the websites of the Texas Tribune and the Deerfield Forum. What sorts of stories do you see on these websites? What might appeal to people? What information might they get here that they couldn't get elsewhere?

Searchlight: Does your town have a Friends of the Library organization? Invite students to set up a brainstorming session with Friends of the Library representatives to discuss the future of the library. Tell them about the Deerfield Forum experiment to gauge their reaction. What ideas do they have to engage a diverse range of citizens in local issues and community events?

Extra credit: Suggest a joint project between your school and a local library, similar to On My Block. Suggest a joint project between your school and a local library. Work together to create a picture book for children so they can learn about important recent news stories. Give it a local emphasis but include national and international events and issues. Test it with local children whose parents agree. Librarians are experts at the dividing line between children's books and adult books. How was the handling of sensitive topics different in the picture book?

Multitasking: Is it a myth?

In 2009, Stanford University released a <u>study regarding the use of multitasking</u> among students. The primary researcher, professor Clifford Nass, found that people who regularly receive several streams of electronic information do not pay attention, remember things or switch mental tasks as well as people who complete one job at a time. Nass' conclusion? You accomplish more if you're focused on doing less. Yet <u>multitaskers are "environment scanners"</u> and there may be advantages of this, but researchers haven't found them.

Choose an assignment for students:

Flashlight: Turn off all other media. Scan the above study and then the report <u>"Generation M2: Media in the lives of 8- to 18-year-olds"</u> from the Kaiser Family Foundation. It says young people "media multitask" to the point where they consume almost 11 hours of media content into about a seven-hour period. Do you do this? Write a blog post analyzing your own media use – but do it in total silence, with no radio, no TV, no phone, not any media. What are your conclusions?

Spotlight: Test your class. Turn on a television, a radio, tell everyone to text their friends, pull up a homework assignment on a computer, if they have one. As they are doing all that, without making a fuss about it stand at the front of the class and read the read the following: Alexis-Charles-Henri Clérel de Tocqueville was a French political thinker, best known for *Democracy in America,* first published in 1835. He stated: "I know of no country in which there is so little independence of mind and real freedom of discussion as in America." Stop all the racket. Ask students to write down what they heard you say. Discuss what you really said and what the quote means.

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?

The value of libraries

In this chapter community foundation leaders support their local libraries. Yet in many communities journalism classes and library media programs at the high school and college level can be cut to save money.

Activities for students:

Flashlight: Consider this report on the <u>success of high school journalism students.</u> Discuss in class. What is it about media skills that helps these students succeed academically? Could digital media skills similarly be linked to the success of a community? Where do people go to learn those skills?

Spotlight: Read this press release about <u>California joining a program to advance 21st century skills</u>. Find the latest statistics on school budget cuts in that state. Focus on libraries and journalism programs. If possible, compare funding levels for these programs over the last 20 years. Discuss the implications on student achievement.

Searchlight: Ask students to read this paper by Susan Montgomery and Jonathan Miller, <u>"The Third Place: the library as collaborative and community space in a time of fiscal restraint"</u> (2011, *Faculty Publications,* Paper 32.) With other research as needed, ask students to write an opinion column on the state of libraries in their community. Give students the extra-credit option of publishing or posting their stories or sending them directly to the libraries.

Further Research: Ask students to explore public versus private school funding. How many students now attend private schools compared to public? Imagine two students: one a male at the poverty level attending a Los Angeles public school, the other a female from a wealthy family attending New York's top private school. Will their educational experiences be equal? Does this framing put public school budget cuts in a different light?

Teaching modern literacies at all levels

The Knight Commission says digital media literacy – a combination of news literacy, digital literacy, media literacy and civics literacy – should be taught at all levels of America's education system. Do you agree?

Activities at three levels:

Flashlight: Is digital literacy, media literacy or news literacy taught at local schools? Ask students to poll teachers on the importance of this topic, given all else they must do, and ask where within the school it should be taught (if it isn't). If they do not think these literacies are a high priority, what are their priorities? Give students the option of publishing their work in appropriate venues.

Spotlight: If your school is in the process of developing a class curriculum on digital media literacy, the Center for Media Literacy may be a good resource. Have students take a look at the site and design their own lesson plans for such a class.

Searchlight: Queens University in Charlotte, N.C., not only teaches digital media literacy, but also has taken on the responsibility of trying to raise the digital media literacy rate of the entire city. The Digital Charlotte website explains their mission. Ask students to examine the Queens strategy, which focuses on students training the trainers at libraries, schools, hospitals, etc. Would that work in your community? Have the class map out a project.

Extra credit: The author says news literacy programs at Stony Brook and the News Literacy Project are noteworthy, deserving of their good publicity, but not digital enough. Examine their websites. What digital tools might they be using to help?

Local arts news and information

How is arts journalism, news and information doing in your community?

Student activities at three levels:

Flashlight: Go on line with the class. Everyone pick a different local news site. How much arts does it cover in any given edition? Look at Alexa or other analytics sites to see if it gets much traffic. Now use the Wayback Machine to see how much arts coverage the same site did on a sample day five or 10 years ago. Plot the results in a graph.

Spotlight: In some communities, alternative newsweeklies pick up the slack in arts and entertainment coverage. Find a nearby alt-weekly in the directory of the Association of Alternative Newsmedia. Visit the website of an alt-weekly and describe its content, particularly its coverage of the arts. Class discussion: Are there any outlets in your community that serve this function?

Searchlight: Brainstorm a list of local arts organizations with your students, who then divide them up. Each student meets with at least one nonprofit to discuss what role the campus media outlet(s) might play in a citywide arts event that would call attention to local organizations. Is there a role that does not cast the journalists as publicists?

Extra credit: Art can be hard news. Have students choose an artist who has been in the news and tell the story of that artist in the medium of that artist. Suggested starting places: "Using Art and Art Controversy to Teach History," by Robert McBride, Jr; the SPARC website, about giving voice to the voiceless; "Arts and Science: Friends or Foe?"; or the documentary Press Pause Play.

Infographics are stories, too

Thirty years ago, USA TODAY appeared as a new national newspaper, devoted to color, infographics and short stories. Some traditional journalists derided it as shallow, calling it "McPaper." But then, as founder Allen H. Neuharth said, "they stole our McNuggets." By that, he meant that newspapers nationwide began using the same techniques. Chief among those was the colorful infographic designed to convey "maximum information" in "minimum time."

Activities at three levels:

Flashlight: Ask students to research the history and purpose of infographics, and then create an infographic on what they learned. It might be about how to make an infographic, or the history of infographics, or the anatomy of an infographic. Discuss as a class where to post the best ones.

Spotlight: Explain the concept of infographics to your students. Have them explore the following Infographics websites and apps: Google Drawing, Easel.ly, Visualize (iPad App), and create an infographic to complement a story of their choice.

Searchlight: Why does some web content do well on search engines? It's called Search Engine Optimization. Have your students look at this infographic explaining SEO. Find a way to display it on a big screen or printout. Blog or post a sample piece of content and use as many of the techniques as possible. Do they work?

SEARCHLIGHTS & SUNGLASSES
LEARNING LAYER

Wisdom of the crowd

This book calls for more community engagement in journalism. Many American journalists, often those in smaller news organizations, already are community focused. In the 1990s, the names "civic journalism" or "public journalism" were given to techniques such as polling, town meetings, community advisory groups or seeking citizen questions for candidates. But some big-city editors said that the wisdom of the crowd can turn into mob rule and warned against a loss of journalistic independence. Others insisted that these techniques had been used for generations and that news leaders who use them are simply trying to play their part in the democratic process. Some online publishers are now letting readers fill space. Does this cross the line?

Activities for students:

Flashlight: Type your zip code into the search box of the U.S. Census website. Look at the demographics of your community. Now study the local newspaper's website. Does its journalism reflect the city's population? What could reporters do to diversify their coverage? Can you imagine what stories might be of interest? Now find a member of an underrepresented group. Discuss your story ideas. Do they have different ideas?

Spotlight: Read this New York Times story about an experimental collaborative newsroom at Mercer University in Macon, Ga. Professionals from the local newspaper, the Telegraph, are joining those from Georgia Public Broadcasting and Mercer students and professors to all work in the same newsroom. With journalists collaborating, the idea is that Macon will be provided with more and better news than it otherwise might have had. The news organizations have agreed to work together on special projects to engage the community. Class discussion: What do you think? Can professionals and students work together to improve news in a community? What are the potential pitfalls? How could they be overcome? Is there anything about Macon that might make community engagement especially important?

Searchlight: Comedian Jon Stewart says CNN anchors are "news DJs," and wonders what the actual reporters are doing. Watch this clip from Jon Stewart's "Daily Show" on CNN's 2011 efforts to include its community. Is Stewart's criticism fair? Can crowd-sourcing go too far? Where is the dividing line between engagement and pandering? Check CNN.com. Can you find examples of gratuitous community engagement?

Extra credit: Study this guide to community engagement produced by the Reynolds Journalism Institute. Imagine you run a local news organization. Design a model company policy on the issue of community engagement. Would your journalists report the news differently? If not, why not? If so, how?

Double extra credit: Before he became USA TODAY president and publisher, digital pioneer Larry Kramer wrote the book C-Scape, arguing that every company is now a media company. Find an online summary like this one. Kramer says "curation" – the ability to filter the ever-flowing news stream -- is important. How would your news organization curate the news? Kramer also says companies should know what people are saying about them and join the conversation when need be. Should news organizations do that as well?

Voting and social media

Voters in the election of 2008 inhabited a vastly different social media world than those who went to the polls only eight years earlier. When George W. Bush was elected, Wikipedia, YouTube and Facebook were not yet publicly available. Witness social media expert Clay Shirky's TED Talks about the influence of digital media on politics: "How the Internet will (one day) transform government" and "How social media can make history."

Activities for students on three levels:

Flashlight: Pick three digital or social media innovations that were invented or released between 2000 and 2008. Here is a timeline of social media innovations and another social media timeline. Students share their findings with the class, including answers to these questions: When was each of your media released or invented? How many users does each currently have? Do you think any of your media had an impact on the presidential election of 2008? Explain fully.

Spotlight: Media is not the only thing to change in the last two centuries. What are some other major changes in American society that correspond to the increases in presidential voting? Explore youth voting data in the 2012 election collected by The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement. Discuss in class what other factors may influence youth voter turnout.

Searchlight: PolitiFact is a Pulitzer Prize-winning website that rates the accuracy of claims by American politicians. Its journalists, Tampa Bay Times staff members, research statements and rate their accuracy on the Truth-O-Meter. The largest falsehoods earn the rating "Pants on Fire." Have students explore the site. How could student media create their own campus or community PolitiFact? Brainstorm as a class.

Extra credit: Ask students to read "The Presidential Campaign on Social Media," by Jenna Wortham. Is Obama's preference for social media over press interviews a danger to balanced news coverage? Why? Compare statistics on social media influence on voting between U.S. and other countries such as France during the recent French elections. How are tech savvy journalists

[making use of digital tools there](#)? Blog your answer to this question: Is social media creating a better democracy?

Studies on comments on news websites

Several researchers have examined how commenters and news organizations address behavior on news websites and public forums.

Reader, B. (2012). *Free press vs. free speech? The rhetoric of "civility" in regard to anonymous online comments.* **Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 89(3), 495-513.**

What is civility and can it be found in anonymous comments posted to news media websites? Reader conducted a textual analysis of journalistic essays about the issue and more than 900 audience-member responses to those essays. He found that professional journalists and most online forum participants have different interpretations of what is civil and the role of anonymity.

Boczkowski, P. J., and Mitchelstein, E. (2012). *How Users Take Advantage of Different Forms of Interactivity on Online News Sites: Clicking, E-Mailing, and Commenting.* **Human Communication Research, 38, 1-22.**

This study looked at the most clicked on, e-mailed and commented-on stories during periods of heightened and routine political activity. Stories with the most comments were more likely to be focused on political, economic and international topics than the most clicked and most e-mailed articles.

Rosenberry, J. (2010). *Virtual Community Support for Offline Communities through Online Newspaper Message Forums.* **Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 87, 154-169.**

In a survey of participants on online message forums for U.S. newspapers, those who post on the forums had a greater understanding of their communities than those who do not but do not necessarily take part in real-world community activities.

Student assignment: If you were editing a digital news outlet, given the research above, what would you do differently? What other research would you need? Can you find it online?

Nobody knows you're a dog: or do they?

From shopping sites to news organizations, finding anonymous comments online isn't difficult. Many like that. A well-known New Yorker cartoon joked about digital anonymity, showing a happy dog telling a pal: "On the Internet, Nobody Knows You're a Dog." But if you look closely at the link, there's a second cartoon. Based on the "click data" that gets fed back to search engine, social media and other digital companies, the commercial world not only knows who the dogs are but their breeds and hobbies. This is the privacy paradox: You might think you are anonymous, but you're actually less anonymous than you've ever been.

Class discussion at three levels:

Flashlight: Find examples of anonymous comments that make a positive contribution to an online discussion and those that do not. Can you think of a way to encourage one and discourage the other? If you were to make a rule against anonymous comments online for your website, would you create any exceptions? How would you define those exceptions and how would you enforce them?

Spotlight: Mozilla, the New York Times and the Washington Post plan to develop a more sophisticated user-generated content and commenting platform. It aims to create a community of commenters; encourage better engagement between journalists and readers; and eliminate inflammatory and abusive comments. Do you use comments on news? Would you comment differently if you had to disclose your identity? Would you like journalists to respond to your comments? What do you think about attaching your Facebook profile to your comments?

Searchlight: Given the privacy rights espoused above, look into the revelations of the PRISM program and the seizure of Associated Press phone records and a Fox reporter's emails. Without warning, the federal government believes it may sweep huge amounts of information from the servers of major data companies, as well as phone records and even emails. On top of this, companies collect massive amounts of data about consumer activity, often traced back to an individual user's ISP address. Add to that the voluntary flood of personal information on social media. Class discussion: Are new consumer protections needed? A credit score is information collected by business according to your purchases and

payments. You have access to that and can review or challenge it. Why not do the same for information profiles? Would knowing what the companies know and what the government could know change how people behave on line?

Update

Revising codes of ethics:

- The Society of Professional Journalists in 2014 revised <u>its code of ethics</u>. The society's <u>ethics essays and articles</u> help apply the code. In the SPJ ethics blog, Andrew Seaman writes that the new code "doesn't specifically address digital journalism." But he says "the changes address concerns shared by all journalists practicing in a digital and social world." Read the code and discuss. Are there digital news or media practices that aren't addressed?
- <u>The Online News Association</u> is using crowdsourcing to create the <u>ONA Build Your Own Ethic Code.</u> It has solicited feedback through its website and at domestic and international conferences. The project is intended to help journalists and organizations design ethics codes that reflect their view of journalism while maintaining fundamental principles.
- Native <u>advertising</u> is becoming increasingly popular. Look at some examples of legacy media native advertising. The <u>New York Times</u> has done it. The <u>Washington Post</u> does it. Should the code of ethics be updated to reflect these practices? If native advertising <u>succeeds to the extent that it deceives</u>, is it ethical?
- Not all ethical issues are digital: Reporting on your company or yourself. How does a media outlet know when to mention itself?? <u>Bloomberg</u> has put forth a great example. Another is the case of former NBC anchor <u>Brian Williams</u>, who embellished war stories about himself and lost the anchor's chair.

Updating the codes of ethics

The Society of Professional Journalism's three main principles have historically been truth, independence and accountability. These ethical principles, which were informed by the Poynter Institute, were in the summer of 2013 updated to truth, transparency and community in a new Poynter book, *"The New Ethics of Journalism: Essays for the 21st Century."*

This transition represents the shift to the digital age. Transparency is needed to maintain credibility. Journalists may still make independent decisions and have affiliations as long as they are disclosed. Community has always been important in journalism, but it's even more relevant now the community can have a voice in the news process.

Discussion questions at three levels:

Flashlight: How should the SPJ code implement these new principles? Take transparency: What does that mean when it comes to anonymous sourcing and anonymous comments? Could a news organization look at these two differently? Are there circumstances in which you might allow each of them, and if so, what would those circumstances be?

Spotlight: Why were independence and accountability no longer thought to be organizing principles? Do the new themes, transparency and community, simply say the same thing in different ways? Does the existence of the new emphasis threaten those values?

Searchlight: Ethics are only as good as the people who wish to follow them. Soon after the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, CNN rushed to wrongly report a suspect had been arrested. Major news outlets followed. But it wasn't true. CNN withdrew the report. A suspect wasn't arrested for days. Consider this story on CNN's new procedures. Discussion questions: What might have stopped the error? What did CNN do well in this case? What do you hope the new system of 'check-and-balances' includes?

Extra credit: Bonus credit to any student who explores the codes of ethics from national journalism organizations such as the Society for Professional Journalists, the Radio Television Digital News Association, the Associated Collegiate Press

and the National Scholastic Press Association. The assignment, in writing, is to answer these questions: Do they all seem up to date with digital age issues? If not, which need freshening? How?

In a world of problems, solutions are news

Mainstream journalism reports on problems but usually omits the responses, says the Solutions Journalism Network. That means "Newsworthy solutions exist everywhere, but they are hidden. It's time, the group says, for journalism to broaden its lens and tell the whole story. If journalists fail to report on solutions, are they sensationalizing the news by telling it out of context?"

Activities for students at three levels:

Flashlight: Break students into groups. Give each a different newspaper, The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA TODAY, a local paper, a free metro paper, a magazine, etc. Give the groups 10-12 minutes to skim the papers and mark any solutions-oriented headlines or content they see. Class discussion: How many did you find? Were you surprised? Were their solutions angles to other articles that might have been used? Is a solution as newsworthy as a problem?

Spotlight: Have students read Peg Tyre's award-winning article, *The Writing Revolution.* Identify ways in which the story meets (or doesn't meet) the different elements on the solutions journalism checklist. (This activity works best when students have a chance to read the article in advance and mark it up independently.)

Searchlight: Play around with the Global Burden of Disease Report Arrow Diagram until you figure out how it works. Are there any causes of death that are lessening? Hint: Look for something where the median percentage change in the last column drops significantly between 1990 and 2010. This is called a positive deviant. With the class, brainstorm ways to report this story. How would they find out why the improvement happened? How might they frame or pitch this story?

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