Bridging the Gap
Rebuilding Citizen Trust in Media

Anya Schiffrin, Beatrice Santa-Wood, Susanna De Martino

with Nicole Pope and Ellen Hume

OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

- Massa: "Hoy las empresas de información valen 20 y hasta 30 veces más que las empresas que ..." — FALSO
- Mauricio Macri: "Ha avanzado el delito en esta década como nunca antes, igual que la droga y el d..." — EXAGERADO
- Massa: "La Argentina, comparada con el resto de los países de la región, tiene su edad de imputa..." — VERDADERO
- Macri: "Hoy crecen seis cocinas de paco por día"... — INSOSTENIBLE
- Stolbizer: "100 de las 650 toneladas de cocaína producidas en el mundo salen por Argentina"... — INSOSTENIBLE
- Macri: "En ocho de gobierno no h una denuncia de corrupción"... — FALSO
- Macri: "Nuestro gobierno ha sido el que más viviendas construyó en los últimos 15 años"... — VERDADERO, PERO...
- Massa: "El Código Penal que enviamos establece perpetua para narcotraficantes, perpetua para viol..." — FALSO
- Massa: "La ANSES constituyó un fondo de $500 mil millones [... cuyo resultado anual] garantiza el..." — ENGAÑOSO
- Rodríguez Saá: "El problema más grande que tiene la educación en el país es su falta de calid..." — VERDADERO, PERO...
- Del Caño: "3 millones de familias se encuentran en emergencia habitacional"... — VERDADERO, PERO...
- Del Caño: "Mue de 300 mujeres en el país por abortos"... — INSOSTENIBLE
- Macri: "Nuestro gobierno ha sido el único en Argentina en implementar las formas de gobierno abie..." — EXAGERADO
- Del Caño: "En el 2% de las escuelas públicas de la provincia de Buen... jornada..." — EXAGERADO
- Stolbizer: "Hay 111 policías procesados por narcotráfico en..." — VERDADERO
- Del Caño: "El salario promedio real cayó desde el año... a la..." — ENGAÑOSO
- Rodríguez Saá: "Hay doce millones de pobres en la..." — VERDADERO
- Massa: "... tener un régimen..."
- Stolbizer: "En el año 2001 la mitad de los hogares no tenían cloaca. Después de diez años de c..." — EXAGERADO
- Del Caño a Massa: "Él se ausentó de casi el 90% de las votaciones este año en la Cámara de Di..." — VERDADERO
- Margarita Stolbizer: "Hay 40% de precariedad laboral"... — VERDADERO
- Rodriguez Saá: "El 48% [de la coparticipación] era para la Nación y el 52 % para las provincias..." — VERDADERO, PERO...
- Macri: "El país hace cuatro años que no crece" ... — VERDADERO, PERO...
- Massa: "Nos presentaron un proyecto de Có Penal que bajab penas en 130 d..." — ENGAÑOSO

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Cover image: A screenshot from the website of the Argentinian media organization *Chequeado*, which conducted live fact-checking during Argentina's presidential election debate in October 2015. These cards summarize its conclusions regarding the veracity of each of the five candidates' statements.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Journalists in many countries are experimenting with how to build trust and engage with audiences. In this study, we profile organizations that are working to build bridges with their readers, viewers and listeners and deliver relevant news to local audiences. We surveyed 17 organizations and conducted interviews with representatives of 15 organizations, one of which chose to remain anonymous.

Some key survey findings include:

- Although the groups we surveyed are concerned by the broader phenomena of **falling trust in media and media credibility**, they are also, by necessity, **focused on immediate fixes** important to their organizations and readerships. Some believe that media credibility depends on engagement with readers. Some place more emphasis on journalism practices, including audience engagement, ethical standards and newsgathering practices.

- The outlets we profiled use **digital technology** to **communicate with audiences**. Some also **involve their readers in sourcing and sometimes verifying information**. Some conduct focus groups and online surveys. Responding to comments online is part of their engagement efforts.

- Their **audiences are most likely to receive information on mobile phones, followed by laptops, print newspapers and radio.** Stories are also seen when picked up by other sites and newspapers and shared widely though social media.

- **Comments are made online** and are also submitted over email. Half of the outlets say they **respond to comments online**.

- Some outlets and organizations **make personal contact** with their audiences. **They go into the community**, **offer trainings** and **invite readers to contribute to their reporting**. Some of our interviewees respond to **trolls**, but **most say that they ignore them**.

- Most of the outlets **hope to expand their geographic reach, coverage and activities, but few are financially self-sufficient or have the resources to do so.**

- The editors we spoke to say that their **readers appreciate investigative reporting as well as stories that touch on their daily lives.**

- There seems to be a **tradeoff between audience size and the quality of content produced**. Some groups with large followings (*Hivisasa* and *263Chat*) promote headlines and short snippets rather than carrying out deep investigative reporting. (This finding may be due to our small sample and not signify a broader trend. *Raseef22* is one notable exception.)

- Several groups said their audience is different from what their founders had originally expected. **The reach of the outlets we surveyed is generally not as diverse as they had hoped. Their audiences tend to be educated and urban** and, in some cases, include large diaspora communities.

- **The outlets largely cater to niche audiences**, but they have broader reach through their online presence and national reach when their stories are picked up by legacy media or other outlets. Sometimes they are able to get on the national agenda (*Bristol Cable* and *GroundUp* among others).

- **Many of the organization do not systematically measure their impact. Some monitor traffic, and one produces an "impact report."**

- The groups likely provide tangible benefits in the long term because **they are seeding the ground for future efforts and offering valuable work experience for the next generation** of journalists in their countries.

- As we saw in *Publishing for Peanuts* (our 2015 report for Open Society Foundations' Program on Independent Journalism), the organizations we profiled believe that **delivering accurate information is a way of gaining credibility in a world of diminishing trust**. The organizations maintain that they demonstrate their trustworthiness by providing accurate, objective stories and adhering to strict standards.

- Many organizations reported that **further efforts are necessary to build trust with readers.** Six of the sites said they reveal their funding sources and four discuss their ownership. Five show audiences how their newsrooms work. **Fifteen of the organizations surveyed answer "yes" to the question "do people who know your organization trust it?"** Nine say that their readers trust their outlet more than other outlets.

- Ten of the organizations **explain their story selection process to their readers** and eight give them a **voice in editorial or business decisions**. Twelve said they have "used their readers' knowledge or expertise when producing a story."

- When asked to choose which statement they agreed with the most, six picked the following sentence: "The key to a journalist's credibility has always been telling the truth and that has not changed in the digital era." Six agreed with the statement that "In the digital era, the key to a journalist's credibility has changed. You have to tell the truth but you also need to actively convince your readers and society-at-large that you are trustworthy. To achieve this, you need to develop new ways of relating to the public."

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INTRODUCTION

The media are under attack. Rising income inequality, populist anger, disinformation campaigns and the election of right-wing regimes in countries such as Hungary, Turkey, the Philippines and the United States define the current turbulent political climate. A major outcome of this instability is that public regard for social institutions has plummeted.

All of this has undercut trust in experts and governments in many countries, with the media becoming scapegoats. Media organizations have been accused of espousing liberal, elite views, being out of touch with the working class and peddling "fake news," in the words of President Trump and his supporters. Elsewhere, news outlets have become targets not just of populist anger but also of governments that pressure them to conform to official lines. In some cases, faced with a hostile state, journalists have become complicit, engaging in self-censorship or spreading misinformation.[1] Reports of these practices have surfaced across different societies and regimes.[2]

Percent trust in each source for general news and information

	2012	2017	Change, 2012 - 2017
Search engines*	61	64	+3
Traditional media	62	57	-5
Online-only media**	46	51	+5
Owned media	41	43	+2
Social media	44	41	-3
Media as an institution	46	43	-3
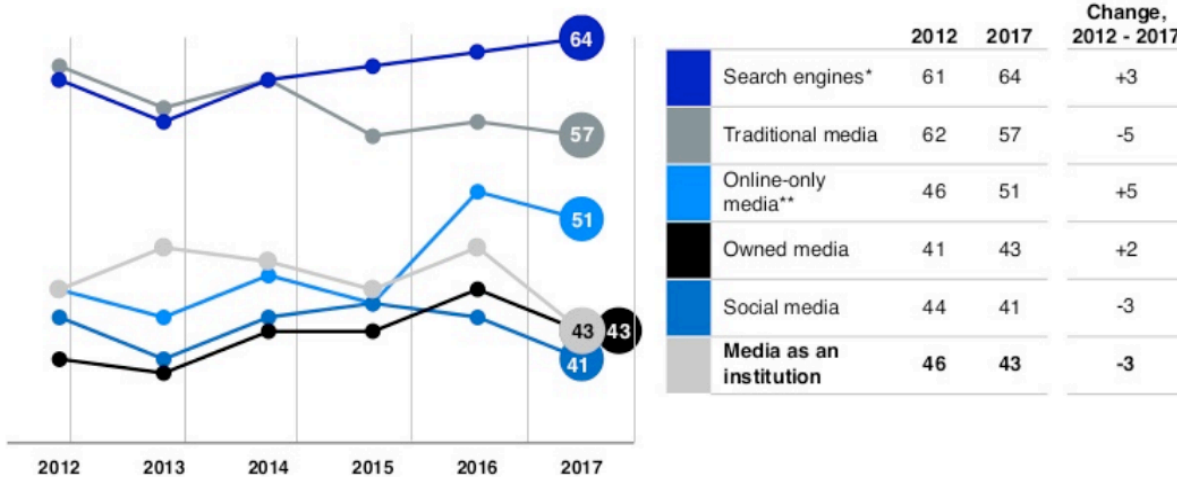
Source: Edelman, "2017 Edelman Trust Barometer"

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[1] Joel Simon, "Introduction: The New Face of Censorship" in *Attacks on the Press: 2017 Edition*, Committee to Protect Journalists, April 2017: https://cpj.org/2017/04/introduction-the-new-face-of-censorship.php.
[2] For just two recent examples, from Hong Kong and Turkey, see Francis L. F. Lee and Joseph L. Chan, "Organizational Production of Self-Censorship in Hong Kong Media," *International Journal of Press/Politics* 14, no. 1, 2009; and Ersa Arsan, "Killing Me Softly with His Words: Censorship and Soft Censorship from the Perspective of Turkish Journalists," *Turkish Studies* 14, no. 3, 2013.

Due to these and other pressures, readers everywhere have become disillusioned with journalists and the organizations they represent. Traditional media have taken the hardest hit. According to Edelman, in 25 advanced economies around the world, trust in traditional media has declined on average by 5 percentage points in 2012–7 and now stands at just 57 percent. Media as an institution is losing audience confidence as well, with only 43 percent of respondents worldwide trusting the media in 2017.

There have, however, been some bright spots. Eager to reverse the decline in audience trust, organizations around the world have been exploring a range of solutions. Some are short-term, such as encouraging Facebook to label unverified stories and slow their spread. Others, such as teaching news consumers to think critically, will take longer to have an effect. In the United States renewed focus on media literacy has led social media companies and foundations to fund efforts to help audiences learn how to spot rumors and falsehoods and to distinguish them from accurate, verified information. In many places, including Europe and Canada, these programs have a long history.

This report looks at different attempts to address declining trust in media. We profile 15 organizations in Africa, Europe, Latin America and the United States that are trying to build bridges with their audiences. (One of these organizations chose to remain anonymous.) Our purpose is fourfold:

- To look at what these organizations can teach us about building media trust.

- To map their approaches to audience engagement.

- To examine their newsroom practices, especially those that can be replicated.
- To understand current thinking on media trust. Much of the academic literature about trust is inconclusive. There is more research on distrust than on how to build trust and credibility.

We survey a range of innovative organizations that engage with citizens and provide, or help to provide, accurate information that affects the daily lives of readers. Many of these organizations carry out their efforts in difficult political climates in which electorates have become polarized and where the media are under severe pressure.

Many groups are highly local, offering niche content to their audiences and using digital technology and face-to-face interaction with local communities as ways of staying close to them. Of course, local reporters have always spent time on their beats and gotten to know the communities they cover. What's different this time is the constant online feedback and the speed with which journalists respond to their audiences.

The Press under Fire

Sheila Coronel

> Sheila Coronel directs the Stabile Center for Investigative Reporting at Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. She sent us this analysis over email in August 2017.

What we see in many places is a multi-pronged attack on the press as an institution. It used to be that the media were the forum for discussion, debate and the forging of consensus. Didn't Arthur Miller say that the newspaper is a nation talking to itself? No longer. The nation is overwhelmed by uncivil voices interested not in discussion and debate but in pushing a populist and antidemocratic agenda. Media efforts to engage, empower and educate audiences are puny in comparison to well-funded and sophisticated propaganda and disinformation campaigns that dominate the media space.

It is very difficult for independent journalists to operate in this space. It takes so little effort and so few resources to manufacture fake news and disinformation. It is so cheap to make fake news and the return on investment can be significant. Engagement efforts by independent journalists, on the other hand, are expensive and time-consuming because they require investment in research, reporting, verification as well as publication, presentation and dissemination.

The current era is different from what we've known in our lifetimes because:

1. The press as an institution is under attack as being biased, elitist and out of touch with the people. Or, worse, as a purveyor of fake news.

2. The press as we knew it—or better still, industrial media—has never been weaker because of the collapse of the business models that sustained it and nurtured its independence. (At least this is the case in American–type systems where profitable media were able to stand up to government. Things are different in the UK and other places with state-funded public service media that are more or less independent.)

3. The dominance of social media platforms means that the conversation has shifted from the news media to unmediated and often anarchic social platforms, where the loudest voices rule and which are vulnerable to automated disinformation and algorithmic manipulation.

4. Finally, there are the issues of ownership and control of mainstream media, sometimes known as **media capture**.

2. HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LITERATURE

Although academic researchers have long studied media trust and credibility, they have not reached consensus on questions such as which conditions give rise to trust in media, whether it can be created, and what causal relationships exist, if any, between people's trust in government or other institutions and their trust in media. More importantly, **it is not clear how to restore trust once it is gone**. This inconclusiveness can make connecting theory with practice a frustrating task. As outlets around the world make time-consuming and expensive attempts to build relationships and credibility with readers, not knowing whether they will have an effect is disheartening. While activities such as outreach via social media are necessary in today's hyper-connected world, there is little evidence that they have systemic effects. **How to scale these local efforts—and whether they would be effective at scale—is unclear**.

Worries that poor-quality information can create mistrust in society have been around since at least the nineteenth century, resurfacing in the 1960s with theories about "**video malaise**"[3] and again in the 1980s. Studies of the topic date to the 1950s but, as with studies of the media's impact on foreign policy, the findings are still inconclusive. In defense of the media, the Harvard University political scientist Pippa Norris has argued that there is a "virtuous circle" in which media exposure can **create more trust** in society.[4]

Many unresolved questions remain**. It is unclear whether newsroom practices shape the level of public trust or whether prior biases of news audiences are more important.** Observers are not certain to what extent shoddy practices and sensationalistic, simplistic coverage erode media credibility, although common sense would suggest that they must do so.

It is also not clear if educated people trust the government more because they read more newspapers and understand state processes better or whether they are generally more trusting because they have received more education and benefits from the system. **Nor is it clear which comes first: trust in institutions or trust in the media**. Whether one can have trust in the media without trusting institutions (governments,
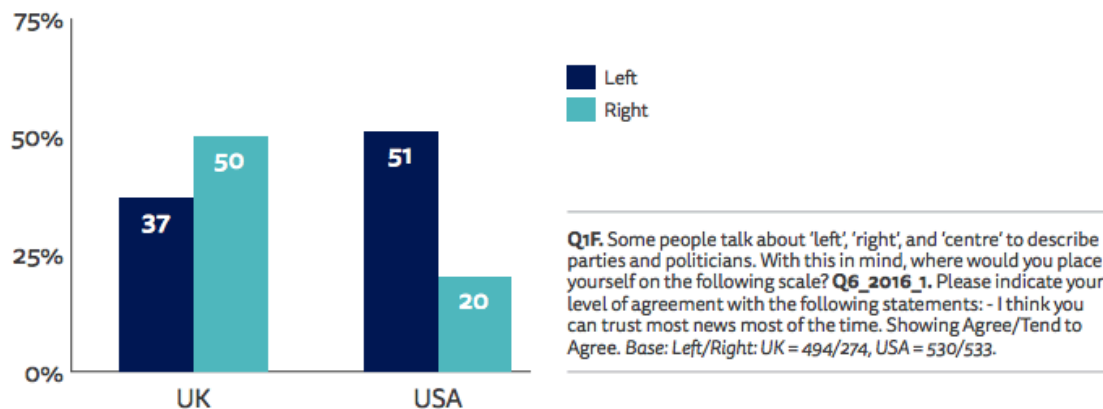
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[3] Michael J. Robinson, "Public Affairs Television and the Growth of Political Malaise: The Case of 'The Selling of the Pentagon,'" *The American Political Science Review* 70 (2), 1976: 409–32.

[4] Pippa Norris, *A Virtuous Circle*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

courts and so on) more generally—or have any trust in mainstream media at all while distrusting these institutions—also remain open questions.

Moreover, **each media environment's unique characteristics make it almost impossible to generalize across societies**. In the United States, trust in the media is higher among the liberals than among the conservatives. But the opposite is true in Britain, in part because many liberal readers believe that the right-wing press is promoting pro-Brexit views.

TRUST IN THE NEWS BY POLITICAL ALLEGIANCE – UK AND US

Q1F. Some people talk about 'left', 'right', and 'centre' to describe parties and politicians. With this in mind, where would you place yourself on the following scale? **Q6_2016_1.** Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: - I think you can trust most news most of the time. Showing Agree/Tend to Agree. Base: Left/Right: UK = 494/274, USA = 530/533.

Source: Reuters Institute, "Digital News Report 2017"

In Africa, one study found that **trust was higher** in state-owned media than in private news organizations (Moehler & Singh). One paper **found** that in China, residents of Beijing trusted state-owned media coverage of air pollution even when it contradicted what they saw looking out the window (Ravetti et al.). Conversely, a different paper **found** that in Israel, people trusted media accounts more when these accounts aligned with their personal experiences (Livio & Cohen). Indeed, trust levels seem to depend on prior beliefs and biases.

Trust in one outlet or journalist rarely extends to the media as a whole. Political science literature distinguishes between "diffuse" trust—in which individuals trust a system or regime in a general sense—and "specific" trust toward particular members of that system.[5] **There is no evidence to suggest that people who come to trust their local newspaper gain confidence in the government or the media industry more**

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[5] Margaret Levi and Laura Stoker, "Political Trust and Trustworthiness," *Annual Review of Political Science* 3, no. 1, 2000: 475–507.

generally. In fact, plenty of people seem to believe that the most credible news source is their own social network (Turcotte et al.). Yet there is also evidence that mainstream American outlets such as CNN generally enjoy more trust than other sites.

Surveys by the Media Insight Project (a collaboration between the American Press Institute and the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research) have found that American news consumers may have contradictory ideas about the trustworthiness of media sources. While they may not hold "the news media" in general in high regard, they do trust the news sources that they themselves use on a regular basis.[6]

People's descriptions of two different categories of news media

(from a survey of American news consumers, by percent of responders)
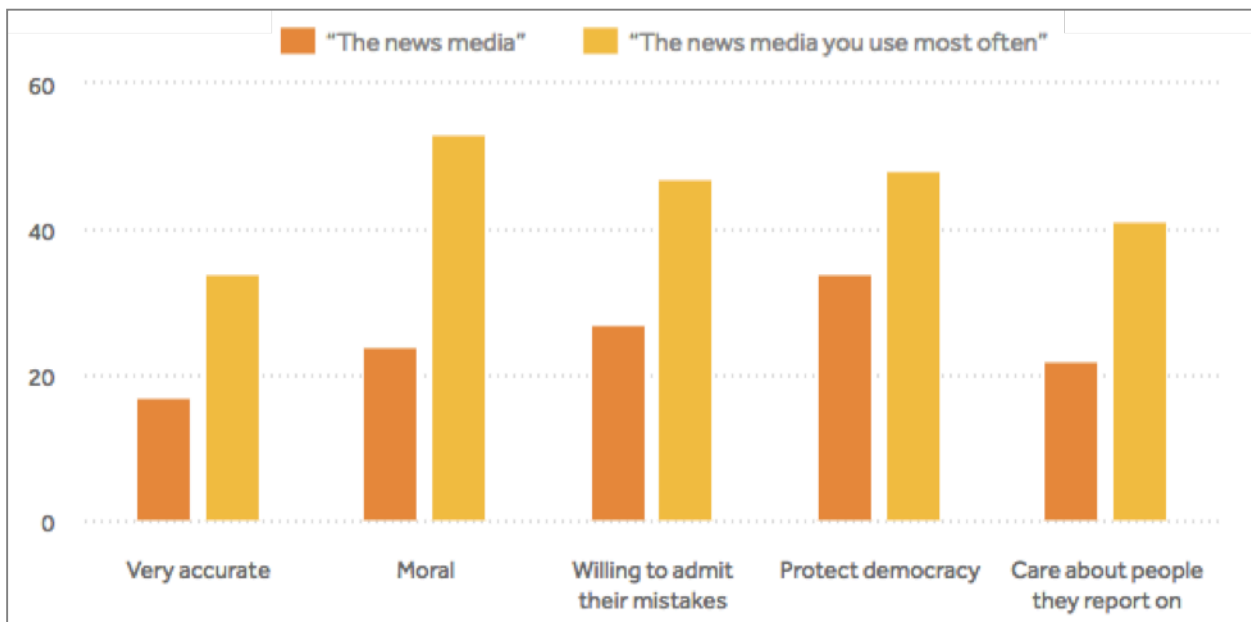
Source: American Press Institute, "'My' Media versus 'the' Media," May 2017

Indeed, familiarity with particular outlets and their storylines is often key to explaining why readers find some content more believable and worthy of sharing. One study has found that whether or not social media users trust a specific news headline depends in large part on whether they have seen it before (Pennycook et al.). Indeed, readers tend to believe fake news headlines, seen repeatedly, even when they defy logic or contradict one's political views. This holds for fake news headlines that have been clearly labeled as misleading or unverified.

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[6] American Press Institute, the Media Insight Project, "'My' Media versus 'the' Media: Trust in News Depends on Which News Media You Mean," May 2017.

Warning labels of this kind are not the only journalism tool whose overall effect might fall short of observers' expectations. The other is editorial corrections, long assumed to be an effective method of building reader trust because they signal transparency and accountability of journalists behind the headlines. Yet **existing research on the impact of editorial corrections is mixed**. Some suggest that corrections help people revise their opinions only in certain cases—namely, when these corrections are detailed and the original misinformation is countered with new evidence (Chan et al.). Others have found evidence that **corrections often undermine audience perceptions of credibility** regardless of their form, suggesting that printing them is more damaging than withdrawing flawed articles altogether (Karlsson et al.). Still others find that corrections are persuasive only when the audience is predisposed to believe them.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind **that the influence of a given piece of reporting or a particular newsroom practice on individual readers is just one way to define media impact.** A whole chain of hard-to-quantify processes links the initial exchange of information between reporters and their audiences and any changes it triggers in society as a whole. One way to think of this complexity is offered by the classic 1991 volume *Journalism of Outrage* coauthored by the acclaimed media educator David Protess.[7] Discussing the role of investigative reporting in the United States, the authors argue that its impact unfolds over time and on three distinct levels. A news item can first affect private views of individuals, then enrich public discussion of the problem and its potential solutions, and finally, with luck, help precipitate government policy change. Although journalists generally aspire for this last, top-level effect on society, it is useful to remember that even the smaller effect of helping a handful of individuals reassess their preconceptions often constitutes a meaningful shift.

More details are available in annotated bibliographies in Annexes I and III.

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[7] David L. Protess, Fay Lomax Cook , Jack C. Doppelt, James S. Ettema, Margaret T. Gordon, Donna R. Leff and Peter Miller, *The Journalism of Outrage: Investigative Reporting and Agenda Building in America*, New York: Guilford Press, 1991.

3. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

The political climate is difficult in many countries. Given the intense political polarization and growing distrust in institutions, as well as the rise of echo chambers in which audiences pick and choose what news they read, it is doubtful that the outlets we profile can significantly impact overall levels of trust in their societies. This uncertainty echoes broader doubts expressed by some seasoned media veterans, who have begun to question whether journalism initiatives can affect the mass populations' regard for their institutions given a political climate in which trust is low.

Media Capture

The problem of media capture is a phenomenon we have been studying for two years. Our recent reports **delineate** how ownership models have changed over the last decade. In many media environments, foreign investors have pulled out of media outlets, and companies connected to, or sympathetic to, government have moved in. This has happened, for example, in **the Balkans**, **the Czech Republic** and **elsewhere in Central Europe**, compounding the problem of media capture and further hobbling independent press. The Sciences Po professor Julia Cagé and others **believe** that regulation of ownership is the only way to combat the problem and protect space for quality journalism.

A similar trend is unfolding in Israel, where two dominant and nominally independent newspapers, *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Israel Hayom*, are beholden to owner interests. The first is owned by the American magnate Sheldon Adelson who strongly supports Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, while the second has recently been embroiled in a leak-fueled scandal over its alleged collusion with the government in return for financial gain. These scandals feed the public's growing distrust of the media, says a Middle Eastern journalist who wished to remain anonymous. "Netanyahu has been inciting and talking about fake news and it's working, it gets under people's skin. People ask themselves questions: Is media reliable? Biased? ... When you see dubious morals, it shakes people's trust."

Working in a Climate of Distrust

Many news organizations we profile say that they are struggling in difficult political climates. Unsurprisingly, the political situation is affecting their work and in some

instances reshaping their strategies, sometimes by boosting their efforts to engage with their audiences and demonstrate their credibility and trustworthiness.

"The general mistrust and uncertainty can be quite hard to bear," says Ilona Moricz, director of the nonprofit Center for Independent Journalism in Hungary. The center has so far avoided attacks from state-run media in a country whose government is curtailing press freedoms, but its staff remain apprehensive. "I think there is a general mistrust of media and it's not new," Moricz says. This sentiment, which she thinks took root in the past decade, is strengthened by tremendous changes in media ownership. "Twenty years ago we had predominantly foreign investors," Moricz says. "Now the majority of ownership is Hungarian and is not media investment but is largely linked to the political elite. Some organizations have started to publish fake news—not just propaganda but deliberate fake news which is more damaging. … It's difficult to fight against trends that are centrally supported."

South Africa is another country where room for political debate is shrinking and the media have become captured. Adding to the pressure felt by journalists are deeply polarizing corruption scandals such as the so-called Guptagate of 2015, which exposed connections between President Jacob Zuma and a wealthy Indian family. "It's scary and frightening for everybody in South Africa because the space has been taken over by a bunch of corrupt people, and they might do anything to stay in power, a bit like America," says one South African journalist.

Predrag Blagojević, editor-in-chief of the independent Serbian website *Južne Vesti*, says that instances of harassment and media intimidation are becoming more frequent in Serbia as well, and he does not think that the site's reporting is having much systemic impact on corruption. Even so, *Južne Vesti* reporters continue to investigate graft, particularly on a local level, and Blagojević believes that it is important to continue holding government accountable. He says that to protect themselves, journalists at other publications often resort to simply republishing government press releases without checking their veracity. "For the majority working in traditional media, self-censorship is very strong, because they don't want to be involved in any unpleasant situation," he says.

Organizations such as the Center for Independent Journalism in Budapest have reacted to changing political climates by revising their programming. For Moricz, teaching newsroom practices such as ethical sourcing allows to not only train a new generation but also to counteract self-censorship of captured media.

Nigerian news site *Premium Times* sees its mission of promoting social justice as its own way of fighting the trend of falling media independence. Cofounder Dapo Olorunyomi believes that the country's press is increasingly losing public trust because two overlapping crises, of revenue and of ethics, are hampering its effectiveness as a government watchdog. Declining circulation and waning income for many mainstream publications have helped create a media ecosystem dominated by state-sponsored news. As a result, Olorunyomi says, many people have come to believe that traditional media are "in bed with administration and politicians," leaving readers to suspect that they are not getting all the facts.

Other outlets too, such as the South African *GroundUp*, hope that by publishing factual information they will help raise the bar. Nathan Geffen, *GroundUp*'s founder, says the organization is resisting calls to make its reporting more partisan. "We try to be reasonable and we don't let our politics get in the way of what stories we cover. We are strict about sticking to the 'rules' of journalism. We don't take cheap shots and avoid editorializing. We try to do news reporting whether we are in a sane world or an insane problem because that's the kind of journalism we believe in," he says.

In Argentina, the online fact-checking platform *Chequeado* was born as a reaction to the highly polarized and partisan political climate. The environment for media has improved somewhat, according to *Chequeado*'s executive director, Laura Zommer. Still, the legacy of media partisanship and widespread confirmation biases remains strong, with a dearth of truly independent voices.
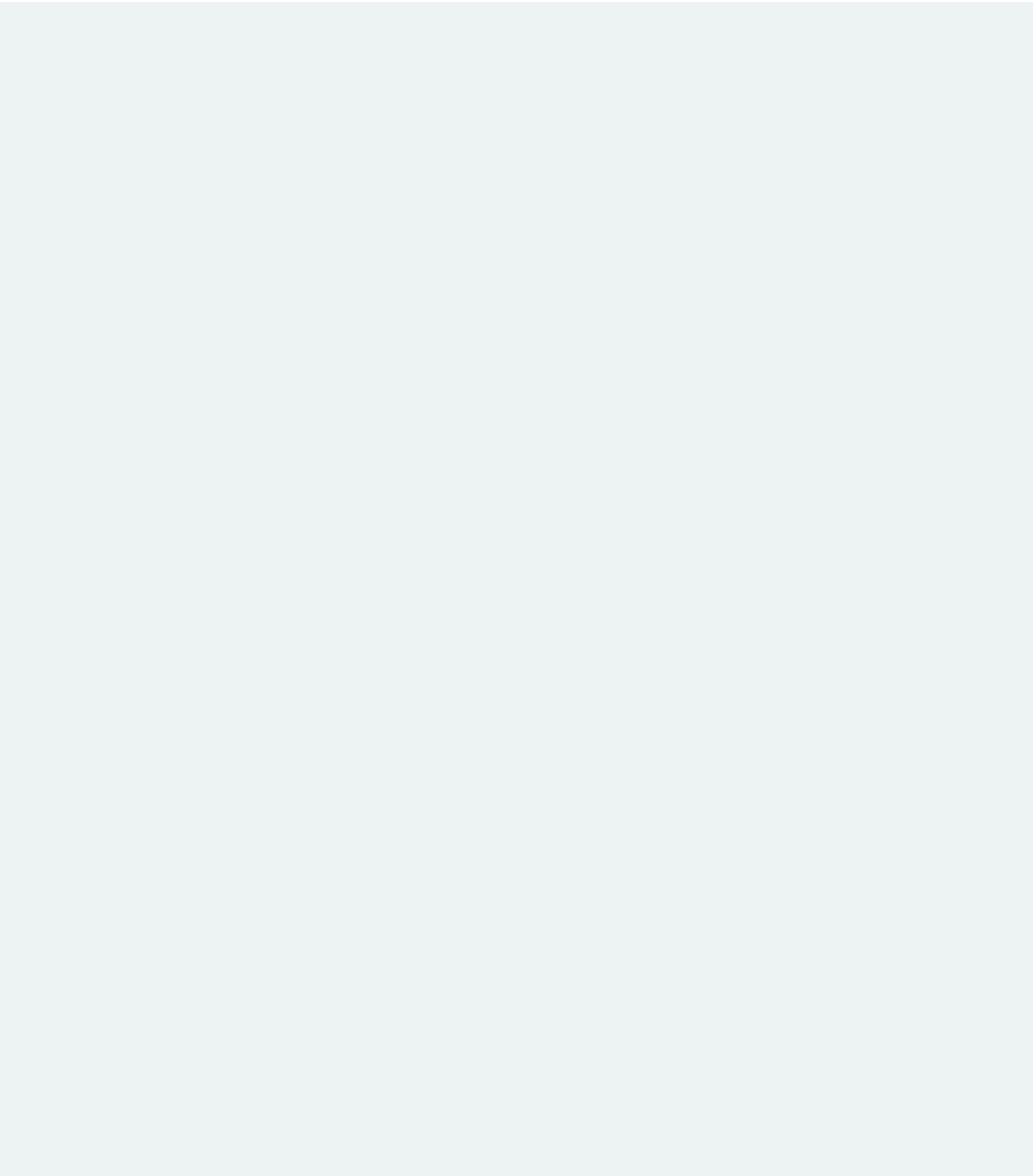
minded motive, and concluded that they used this "strategic ritual" to protect themselves from charges of bias. What such critics didn't recognize was that when done well, objectivity not only provided a fairer approach to the news, but it was essential to protecting journalists from their own advertisers and media bosses.

Critics on both the Right and the Left charged that the media were hiding their real political motives behind the cloak of "objectivity." While such attacks may have been unfair, both sides did correctly identify some structural biases. For example, as the 1980s Reagan revolution brought big business back into style, the economics beat was framed by Wall Street rather than the labor movement. On the other hand, most elite mainstream reporters voted for liberal candidates, as conservative scholar S. Robert Lichter famously pointed out in a 1981 survey he coauthored with Stanley Rothman. When pressed, however, Lichter had to admit that he hadn't studied whether their actual professional news output reflected this bias. And if *The New York Times* was so driven by liberal bias, why did its reporter Jeff Gerth become the champion of the so-called Whitewater scandal against the Democratic President Bill Clinton, which ended up not being a financial scandal after all, but which nonetheless allowed Republicans to nearly remove Clinton from office for lying about sex with an intern?

While Lichter was promoting his survey that reporters voted for liberals, the Left made the opposite charge, that they were being shortchanged because most media business owners and senior managers were Republicans. This structural fact mesmerized Noam Chomsky, but he and Lichter both failed to understand that the media's actual biases were quite different. TV news had a bias toward drama and conflict over good news and consensus. There was a bias to quote establishment figures, especially white males rather than people of color and women. The more incendiary quote would get better play than the reasonable, wise comment.

The actual "liberal" bias among journalists was an attitude baked into their professional methodology, which refused to accept faith or tradition as a framework for their work. Their method was to distrust everything and everybody, and *rely on multiple perspectives*. There was no one correct version of the truth. This drove the purists on both the Right and the Left nuts. Journalists were embarrassed to be accused of partisan bias, and they sometimes bent over too far backwards to prove that they weren't partisan, making equivalencies even if one political side was more to blame than the other.

## 4. MAIN FINDINGS: HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR SURVEY

Mission and Audience

The groups in this study all recognize that regenerating society's trust in media will require a multifaceted long-term effort from numerous players. Yet they must also focus on the immediate tasks of audience engagement and fundraising if they are to ensure their short-term survival. Balancing these two perspectives requires dedication and stamina—as well as hope that daily hard work will ultimately help trigger a larger systemic impact.

Virtually all media organizations we interviewed say that their organizations were **created in response to an information gap** in society and with the objective of bridging it through their reporting.

Was your organization created with the aim of changing something in society?
(17 answered, 1 skipped)
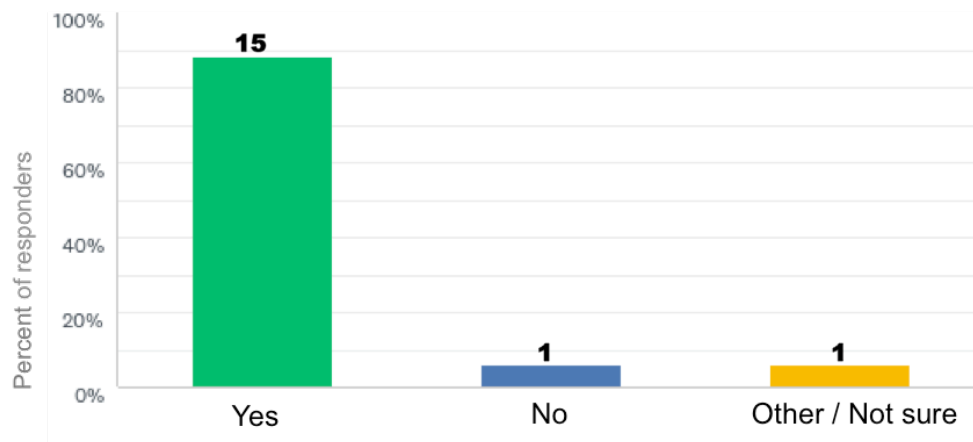
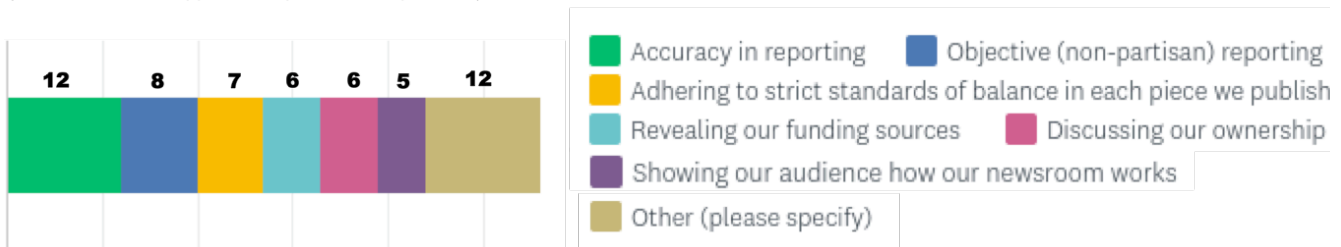**Was your organization created to fill an information gap in society?**
(15 answered, 3 skipped)
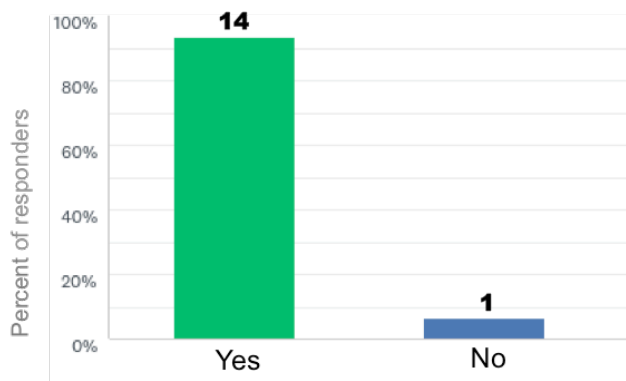
Similar to what we saw in *Publishing for Peanuts* (PIJ 2015), the organizations we interviewed for this report believe that providing accurate information is a way of gaining credibility in a world of diminishing audience trust.[11] Some do this by producing and distributing reliable coverage. Others, such as the Center for Independent Journalism in Budapest, train journalists in ethical and fact-based reporting to counter falling standards in state-run media. Some startups, like the Coral Project and Echo Mobile, are focused more on creating tools to improve the way journalists connect with their communities.

How do you show the credibility of your media to readers, advertisers and funders?
(16 answered, 2 skipped; multiple answers possible)

| 12 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 12 |

Legend:
- Accuracy in reporting
- Objective (non-partisan) reporting
- Adhering to strict standards of balance in each piece we publish
- Revealing our funding sources
- Discussing our ownership
- Showing our audience how our newsroom works
- Other (please specify)

Many organizations we surveyed were created to serve particular target audiences, but most report that their audiences have changed over time. Some have diversified and reached a different kind of audience than expected, as happened for example when the Zimbabwean media producer *263Chat* found a following with domestic readers as well as in the diaspora. *Chequeado* staff thought that their reporting would attract a niche audience of well informed people but have found that its audience is more diverse. Other outlets have reached a different age group than anticipated.

Still, **many news outlets do not reach as extensive a community as they have hoped.** Founders often told us that their readers are more urban and educated than those they had originally intended to attract. Most outlets are based in cities and are not connecting with as many people in rural and low-income areas as they would like.

Most interviewees do report growth in their readership over the years, but part of the problem for smaller organizations is competing financially with legacy and mainstream media in their countries.
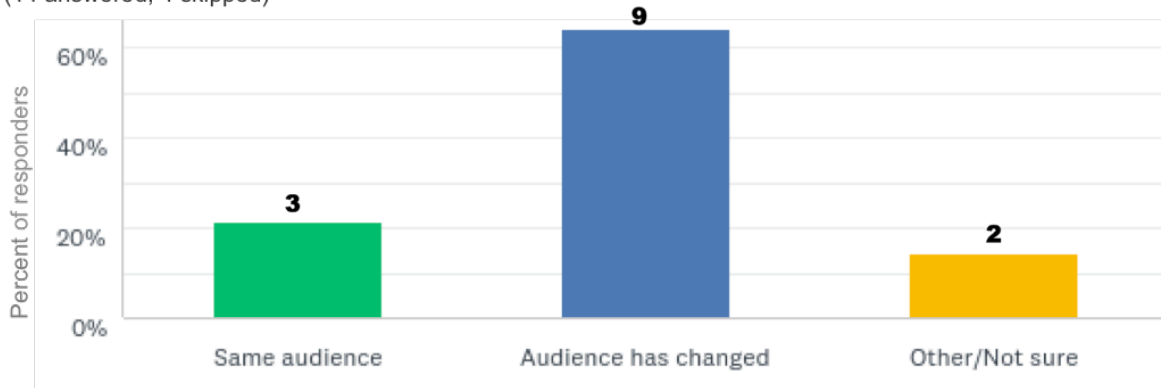
Was your organization originally created to serve a particular audience?
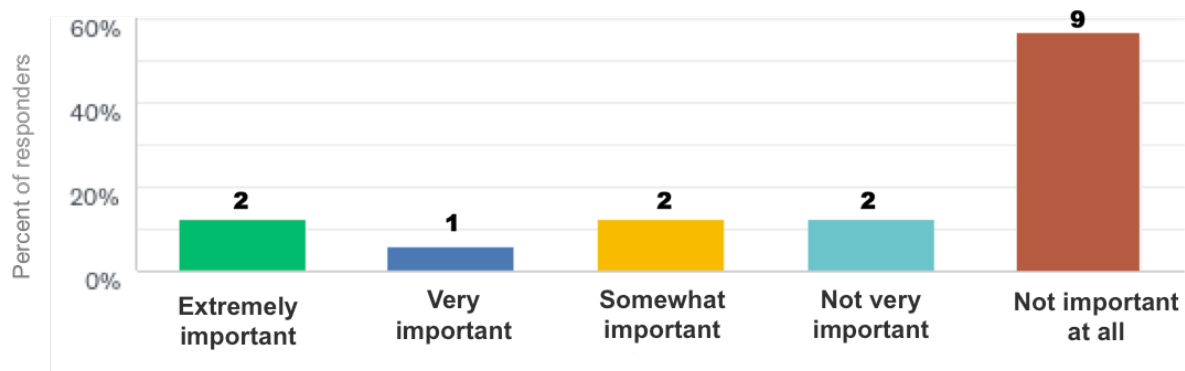
(16 answered, 2 skipped)
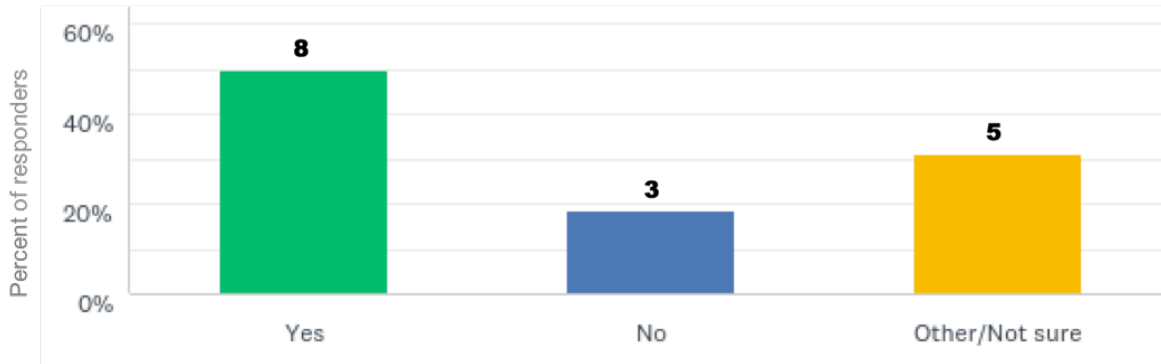
If yes, do you think you currently serve the same audience?

(14 answered, 4 skipped)

How important is it for you to be the main source of information for your readers?

(16 answered, 2 skipped)

Note: These charts include responses from the Coral Project, Echo Mobile and CIJ, which do not publish articles.

Methods of Audience Engagement

All organizations surveyed believe that engaging with audiences is essential, not just to collect and disseminate information but also to build trust in their work.

For many news outlets, their respective missions dictate unique ways of interacting with readers. *Bristol Cable* in Britain and *Krautreporter* in Germany were established as media co-operatives in which core readers have not only held a financial stake from the beginning but also have helped direct story selection via regular meetings with staff. For others, reader engagement is naturally facilitated by geographic focus. Apart from *Bristol Cable*, these groups include *Južne Vesti* with regard to the southern Serbian city of Nis, by *GroundUp* with Cape Town and by *Hivisasa* with several local counties in Kenya.

All our interviewees drew a direct connection between attracting a dedicated audience with deep knowledge of their coverage and building their readers' confidence. Although many were at best skeptical about the general state of public trust in media in their societies, all prided themselves on their content being trusted and often promoted by people who knew it well.
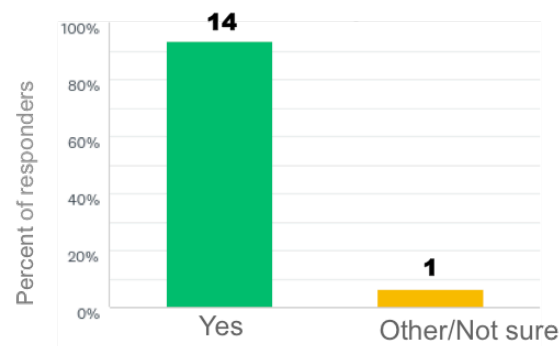
Do you think that people in your country generally trust traditional / mainstream media?
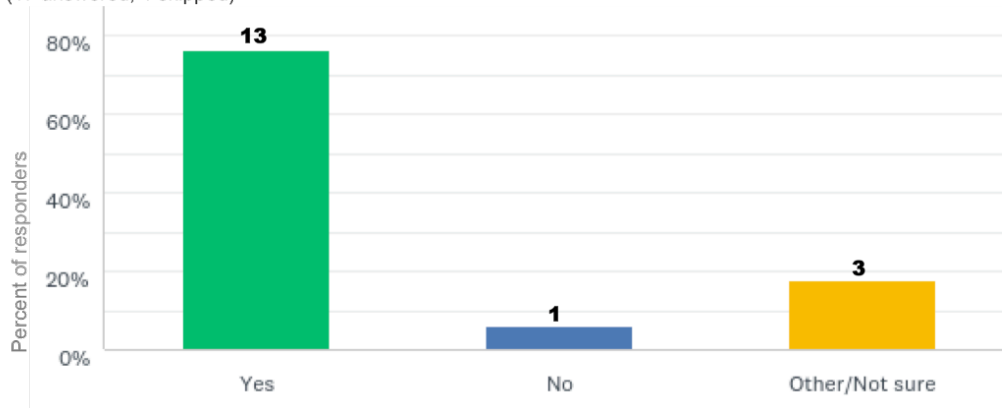(17 answered, 1 skipped)
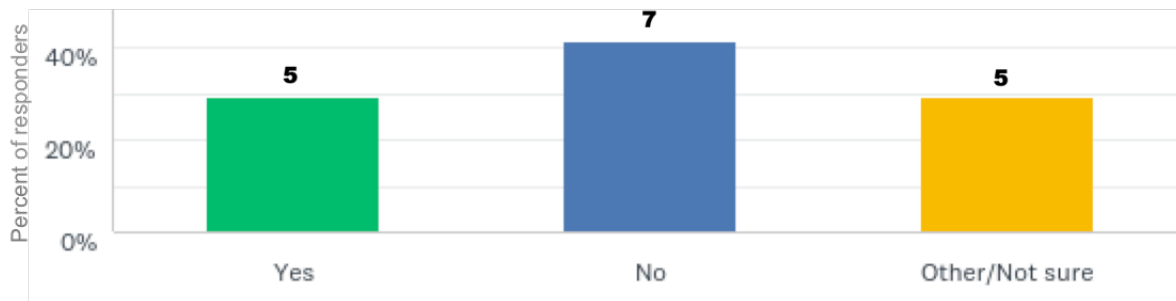
Do you think people who know your organization trust it?
(15 answered, 3 skipped)

Do you have "fans" or evangelists who share or quote your stories regularly, or are otherwise publicly identified with your organization?

(17 answered, 1 skipped)

Note: This chart includes responses from the Coral Project, Echo Mobile and CIJ, which do not publish articles.

All news organizations we profile rely on digital technology to reach their audiences. Most of the day-to-day engagement between individual writers and readers happens on social media or in comments under published articles. Several outlets, including *Krautreporter*, *Južne Vesti* and *Chequeado*, describe this interaction as very important to their newsroom process. They make an effort to write prompt and personal responses to the readers who relay their thoughts and criticism constructively and consider it a crucial component of their work (even if they usually ignore trolling).

Do you respond to feedback directly?
(17 answered, 1 skipped)
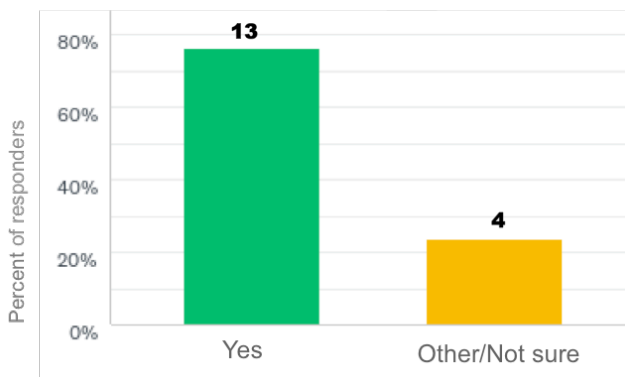
"It is not just about our [co-op] members, but also others who might be listening," says Sebastian Esser, the editor and cofounder of *Krautreporter*. Involving members in story selection through surveys, rather than waiting for their feedback, has had a big impact on the dynamic between journalists and audiences, he believes: "It changes the conversation completely." Meanwhile, the close relationship that this approach fosters

with readers yields conversations that are unusually constructive for cyberspace. "We don't have trolls. We have never had to delete a comment," Esser says.

At *Južne Vesti* in Serbia, reporters have found that reader comments can help tip them off to facts they may have missed otherwise. For example, when the site ran an article about a citizen hit by a police car, it immediately received several comments saying that incidents of this kind had happened before, and reporters were able to investigate the story further. "We have to rely on information from citizens, so it is important [that] citizens trust us," Blagojević says.

The Coral Project, based in the United States, develops tools to improve such writer-reader interactions in newsrooms. Its "Talk" software is designed to better meet the needs of newsrooms, with input from numerous journalists in mind. The software equips moderators with a wider range of tools that allow them to not only disrupt and shut down trolls more efficiently but also highlight important comments and embed them in stories.

Andrew Losowsky, Coral Project's lead, says that the team's goal is to bring journalists closer to the communities they serve and that improving comment sections is part of that objective. "Comments are a means to an end," he says. "Comments aren't the only way, but we do think it is an effective way." Bringing journalists closer to communities ultimately "benefits democracy in a big way," he adds.

Most of the organizations we surveyed use social media to communicate with and engage their readers, although the extent to which they do so varies. Zimbabwe's *263Chat*, which was a Twitter account before it became a media producer, naturally has a far larger social media footprint than a veteran organization like the Center for Independent Journalism in Budapest. In *263Chat*'s case, a constant lively conversation with readers regularly complements, or even substitutes for, actual reporting done by journalists.

However, many outlets are not doing as much with social media as they could, either for lack of staff resources or due to external limitations. In a problem endemic to journalism worldwide,[12] journalists report that changes to social media algorithms have created new challenges. *Južne Vesti* says that Facebook's newsfeed used to be a valuable tool for sharing stories, but that it has become less useful in the last five years. Its staffers still use Facebook to promote their investigative work, and editor-in chief Blagojević says that it still brings in about 60 percent of the site's readers but that this share has plateaued since 2014.

"We think the new rules of Facebook have impacted us," Blagojević says. He believes that the new algorithm puts *Južne Vesti*'s content at a disadvantage. For example, Facebook has offered more incentives for particular formats of stories, such as Facebook Live, and because its algorithm determines what readers will see, even with their best efforts many publications struggle to reach wider audiences.

Media organizations are beginning to respond to these pressures by diversifying the content they produce. For instance, *Chequeado* is working to expand multimedia offerings that tell its stories in video, GIFs and infographics in an effort to reach a larger and younger audience on social media. It has found in particular that articles with embedded GIFs result in higher view counts.

Germany's *Correctiv* has a different engagement model. It sees its role as complementing rather than competing with traditional media, which still enjoy relatively high public trust in Germany but lack resources for investigative work. *Correctiv* cooperates with regional newspapers and TV stations and makes its work available to them for free. It also turns its investigations into exhibitions, theater plays and graphic novels, reaching an audience much larger than its own community.
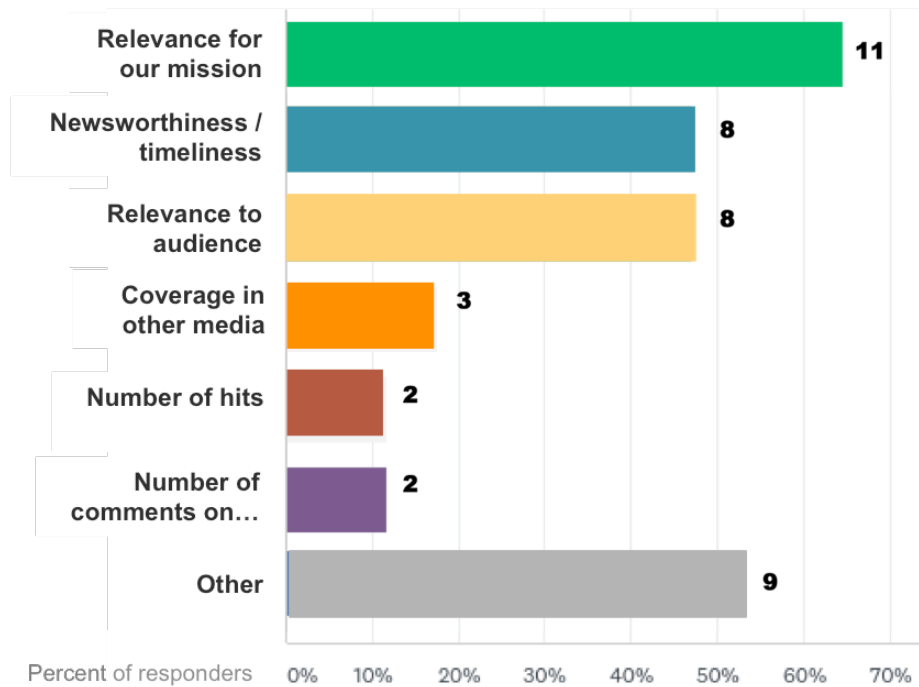
Mobile is one potential solution. The Kenyan company *Echo Mobile* says that its mobile tech platform helps collect customer information through call and text surveys. "It gives people a voice who may not have normally had one," CEO Zoe Cohen says. Using mobile, companies can interact with remote and rural audiences that are much harder to reach otherwise.

Selecting and prioritizing content

When trying to decide what news to publish, journalists we surveyed say that they have looked closely at how it fits with their mission and whether the story matters to readers. Primary reasons for prioritizing coverage, on one topic over another, vary between outlets, but most interviewees cite at least one of the following: "relevance for our mission," "newsworthiness," and "belief that it's relevant to the lives of audience members."

What factors impact your decision to first develop a story?
(17 answered, 1 skipped; multiple answers possible)

Factor	Percent
Relevance for our mission	11
Newsworthiness / timeliness	8
Relevance to audience	8
Coverage in other media	3
Number of hits	2
Number of comments on…	2
Other	9

Percent of responders — 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%

Do you explain to your audience how you make editorial decisions or select stories?
(16 answered, 2 skipped)
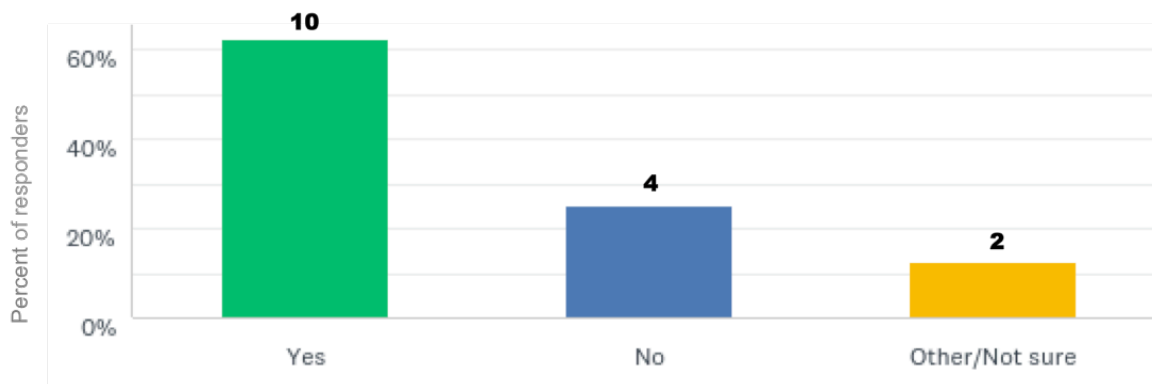
Response	Count
Yes	10
No	4
Other/Not sure	2

Percent of responders — 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%

Note: These charts include responses from the Coral Project, Echo Mobile and CIJ, which do not publish articles.

Although intense focus on meeting readers' interests could raise fears of pandering, the outlets we interviewed were **clear about their goals and keen on publishing news that matter, even if some stories were expected to draw fewer page views than others**. "There are pieces that generate less traffic but the value of that piece of journalism convinces people to become [co-op] members at a higher ratio than the shorter piece that gets more views," Aviram, of the *Bristol Cable*, says.

On the other hand, **all online publications we surveyed also run stories that are not in-depth news but that are intended to attract audiences**. As Abir Ghattas, the communications and outreach director at the Lebanon-based news site *Raseef22*, explains, "to keep our readers and make them come back to our website, we also need to include lifestyle content that actually touches on their daily lives and choices." For *Raseef22*, this means publishing lighter pieces on culture and cinema. *263Chat* received lots of traffic from a video about a man from the countryside who set up his own business in Harare when he couldn't find employment. *Južne Vesti* has a large sports section.

Chequeado wants to attract more readers who aren't as news-savvy as its legacy audience. "We need to go where people live, build partnerships with traditional media to reach these people," says institutional development coordinator Noelia Guzman. "Using GIFs, humor [and] drawings can be a line to them." The site has put more effort and staff into producing humorous GIFs to illustrate its political fact-checking work along with a growing array of videos.

Citizen reporting and interacting with audiences

Using readers and members of the public as sources is another effective method of building trust. As just one example, in Dortmund, Germany, *Correctiv* teamed up with a local newspaper and set up a Crowd Newsroom to crowdsource information on adverse effects of teacher shortages in the area, such as lesson cancellations in local schools. Thanks to numerous contributions from parents and pupils, it found that the children ended up missing far more classes than the ministry of education had acknowledged.

Have you ever used your readers' knowledge or expertise when producing a story?
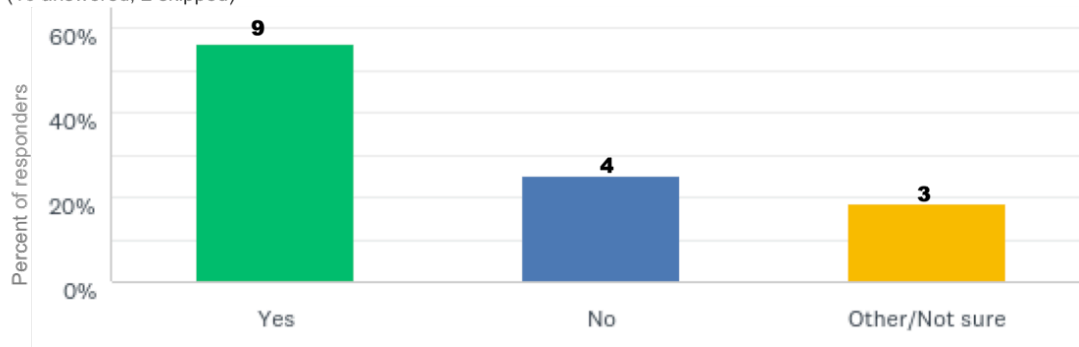(17 answered, 1 skipped)
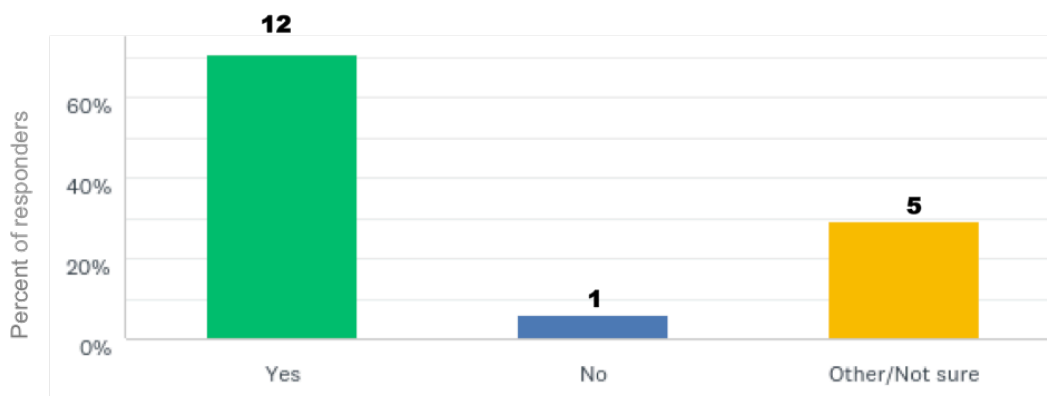
Note: This chart includes responses from the Coral Project, Echo Mobile and CIJ, which do not publish articles.

A Middle Eastern news website we interviewed, which asked to remain anonymous due to the sensitive nature of its activist journalism, relies on nonprofessional writers for much of its content and helps train them along the way. "It's not like most newsrooms, the editors don't send stories for reporters to cover. Here we work for the bloggers," says one of the site's founders.

Another online Middle Eastern publication, *Raseef22*, has set a blog to promote citizen reporting on key issues. It invites citizen activists and nonprofessional journalists to contribute articles, and the blog now makes up 15 percent of the site's traffic.

Have you ever invited your readers to meet your journalists, visit the newsroom, attend editorial meetings, or otherwise peek into your work in any way?

(16 answered, 2 skipped)

Note: This chart includes responses from the Coral Project, Echo Mobile and CIJ, which do not publish articles.

Many of those we interviewed hold **events as a way to build a closer connection with readers.** In addition to engaging with its audience through social media, for example, *Correctiv* organizes dozens of readings, lectures and exhibitions across Germany every year. To reach younger followers, it has teamed up with a university in Dortmund for a festival of journalism and new media held in September 2017, and it is launching online journalism tutorials.

Južne Vesti has made plans to travel to cities and towns throughout southern Serbia, inviting readers to meet with reporters for coffee. A Middle Eastern news outlet is currently raising funding for a similar project, where its writers will host panels, lectures and talks in local communities to share their stories. In Zimbabwe, the founder of *263Chat* gives lectures and addresses church groups, and in Sweden journalists often interact with community members in formal and informal ways, giving talks and making themselves available for conversations.

Chequeado holds a live fact-checking event every year during the Argentinian president's annual address to the parliament. Staffers and volunteers, including academics and journalists, come together to check the president's factual statements in real time. *Chequeado* has gone on to share information on how to run live events of this kind with *The Guardian* and *PolitiFact* as well as media organizations in Peru (*Ojo Público*), Brazil (*Lupa*) and Mexico (*Animal Político*).

Chequeado staffers are also working to get more young people involved in its fact-checking efforts. They collaborate with Model United Nations organizers in Argentina to incorporate fact-checking into conference proceedings and are currently developing a separate Instagram account for young people, where they hope teenagers themselves will produce posts.

Others, like the Center for Independent Journalism in Hungary, offer workshops in data reporting to local journalists. *Chequeado* runs online courses on fact-checking techniques, along with classes on more specific topics such as gender and climate change.

Many of these efforts at personal reader engagement, however, are labor-intensive and time-consuming. They keep reporters away from working on stories while offering **only a very uncertain promise of making any kind of systemic difference in the long term** (as we discuss in our literature reviews in previous chapters and the annexes).

Handling corrections

In the free-for-all that is the Internet, where errors, rumors and disinformation run rampant, some of the outlets we surveyed say they are **building trust by handling corrections of factual mistakes in an open and professional way**. Many groups in this study are proud of their transparency when fixing errors. The *Bristol Cable* and *Chequeado* apologize for inaccuracies they register, printing lengthy explanations of how factual errors came to be made. Their staffers believe that making public and detailed corrections builds trust. *263Chat* founder Nigel Mugamu apologized to readers for a photo that was in poor taste, and says that owning up to mistakes improves his readers' confidence.[13] "I quickly apologize. It's very important for credibility," he says.

How do you deal with factual errors on your site?

(17 answered, 1 skipped; multiple answers possible)
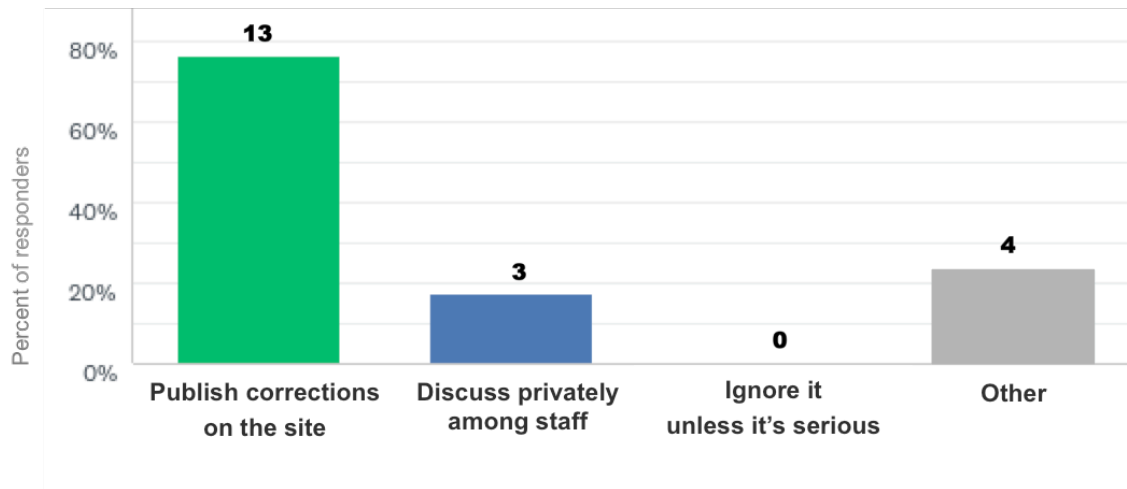
Note: This chart includes responses from the Coral Project, Echo Mobile and CIJ, which do not publish articles.

Many outlets are careful to respond to critiques only if there has been a fallacy in their reporting. In this respect, their practices are similar to those of legacy media institutions such as *The New York Times*, which prints brief corrections of factual errors and reserves long discussions (about mistakes in newsroom processes or political bias) for extreme situations. Examples of the latter include criticisms of Judith Miller for her 2002–3 coverage of the run-up to the Iraq War and the scandal over Jayson Blair's fabrication of numerous stories. Those discussions often took place in print, with the public editor responding to comments from readers. They may also take the form of public letters written by the editor or, occasionally, by *The New York Times*' **own reporting** on how fabrications came to be written and published.

Raseef22, a Lebanese news site focusing on human rights advocacy, simply deletes small errors, like incorrectly tagged photos. Then staff review procedures internally to determine where the error came from—writing, editing or proofreading.

As in *Publishing for Peanuts*, we found that **in polarized countries with partisan media, providing credible news is already an important niche to occupy.** However, experience and our interviews suggest that **in the era we live in, just publishing credible news is not enough to address larger problems of trust in media.**

Funding

While a few of the groups we interviewed are financially self-sufficient, most rely on donor funding. Many worry that this source of income does not represent a sustainable business model, although they struggle to come up with immediate alternatives. Their financial difficulties notwithstanding, many of the outlets hope to expand their activities and geographic reach.

Do your revenues (excluding grant funding from govt or donors) cover your costs?
(18 answered)
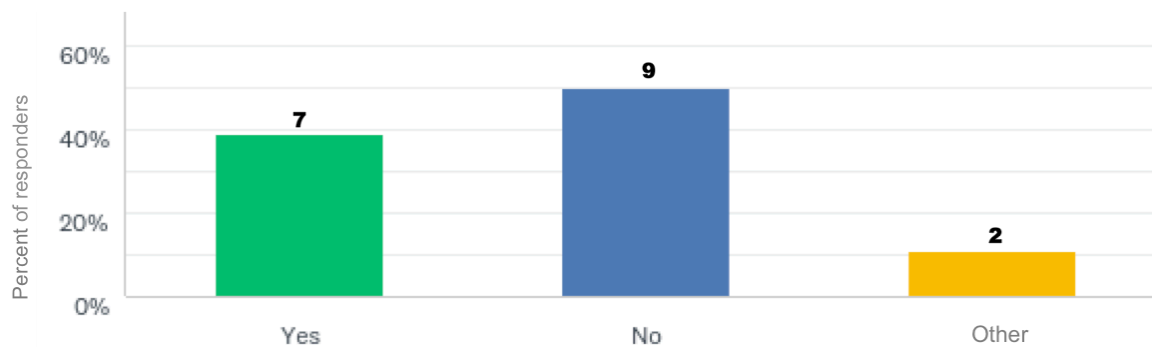
At *Chequeado*, Laura Zommer, the executive director, would prefer not to rely too much on international donor funding, although she recognizes that it plays an important role in the publication's work. "It's not necessarily that only these kinds of corporations [donor organizations] pay our salaries, but without that money our impact would be lower," she says.

Even if some organizations report being financially sustainable today, they often have a history of relying on donor grants as start-up capital. The Kenyan-based mobile tech platform Echo Mobile, for example, is currently able to cover its costs entirely through selling its technology and offering consulting services to many of its clients. However, its founders' ability to develop the platform and launch an independent business in 2012 owed much to funding from the Ford Foundation.

Relatively few of the organizations we surveyed use crowdfunding. It may be that crowdfunding is sustainable only in middle- and high-income countries. It is too early to know whether a long-lasting culture of crowdfunding can be created in countries with less developed economies and digital payment mechanisms. "We mulled over that decision but never went ahead and said 'Let's make this happen'," says Nigel Mugamu, who runs the popular Zimbabwean media producer *263Chat*. "I have been

told it is a good idea but I just thought, let's do the work and then the money will come."

"We haven't seen a [crowdfunding] initiative that worked in the Arab world," says Ghattas of *Raseef22*. A kickstarter model is more appealing to the outlet. Ghattas and others report that they have had success with fundraising initiatives in which people receive something in return for their donations.
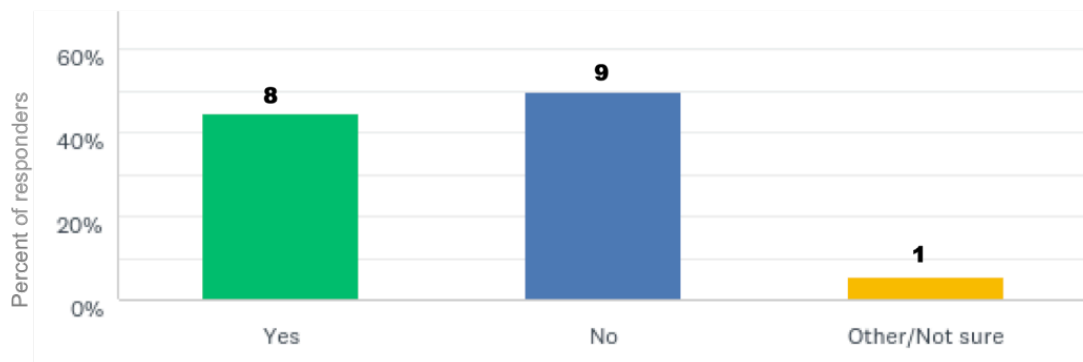
Have you ever asked your readers to support your enterprise financially?
(18 answered)
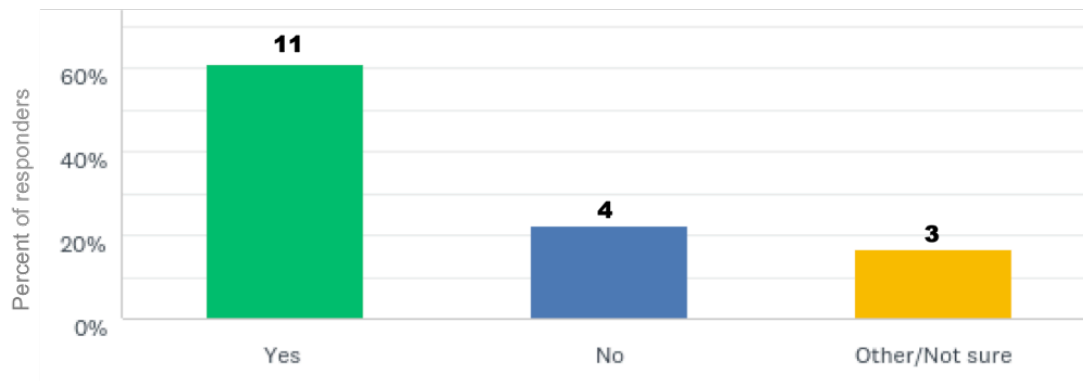
Have you ever used crowdfunding to raise money for your organization?
(18 answered)

One example of successful crowdfunding is Germany's *Krautreporter*, a news co-op that was originally started as a crowdfunding platform for other media organizations wishing to pursue specific projects and investigations. After much early interest, founders switched course in October 2014 and began publishing an online magazine of their own, after running a crowdfunding campaign that raised some €1 million, or $1.3 million, in contributions.

Chequeado has run several successful crowdfunding efforts, with individual donations ranging from $10 to $10,000. Its dedicated social media presence has helped get out the word, and campaigns have brought in support from Argentinian journalists, community leaders and even public officials. Apart from the financial benefits, *Chequeado* sees crowdfunding as a way to forge closer ties with its audience members. "The objective is more about having the community support us. It is important because we want our community to value our work," says Noelia Guzman, the site's institutional development coordinator. These crowdfunding projects are quite explicit in how money will be used and are usually tied to specific ventures such as covering midterm elections.

Some organizations sell memberships: the *Bristol Cable* is a co-op of some 1,850 members and counting, which relies on the membership model as the main revenue source. Others are still considering the idea. *Premium Times*, a news and investigative reporting site based in Nigeria, is considering a membership model to allow the public to invest in its journalism. As a sign of gratitude, members might receive small mementos or gifts, says cofounder Dapo Olorunyomi.

As we saw in *Publishing for Peanuts*, many small media organizations find **creative ways of fundraising**. The *Bristol Cable* has raised money to teach courses on investigative journalism to local citizens, some of whom became reporters for the publication.

Measuring impact

Many of the outlets we spoke with do not systematically measure impact although they would prefer to improve on this score. "We would like to measure impact in terms of positive [and] punitive actions, measures to which creating dialogue has improved the community," says the Coral Project's Losowksy. Although the team is able to measure feedback from journalists using their tools, it is harder to measure the impact on readers.

Outlets track Facebook, Twitter and Google Analytics, monitoring and responding to comments and recording how many of their stories get picked up by the mainstream media and what legal proceedings and policy changes ensue. For instance, *Chequeado* has been trying to determine how its work affects political events such as midterm elections. It has been using an open-source impact tracker developed by the American nonprofit Center for Investigative Reporting, which helps it log quotes and mentions of its work.

A similar approach is employed by *KRIK*, a Serbian investigative network whose reporting often exposes corruption at the highest level of government. Staffers closely track the fallout from their big stories, both in mainstream media and at the institutional level, says project manager Jelena Vasić: "We follow each story till something is done." The team then reports on any developments—whether a protest, a court case or even deliberate official inaction.

Do you measure your audience (for example, with Google Analytics)?
(15 answered, 3 skipped)
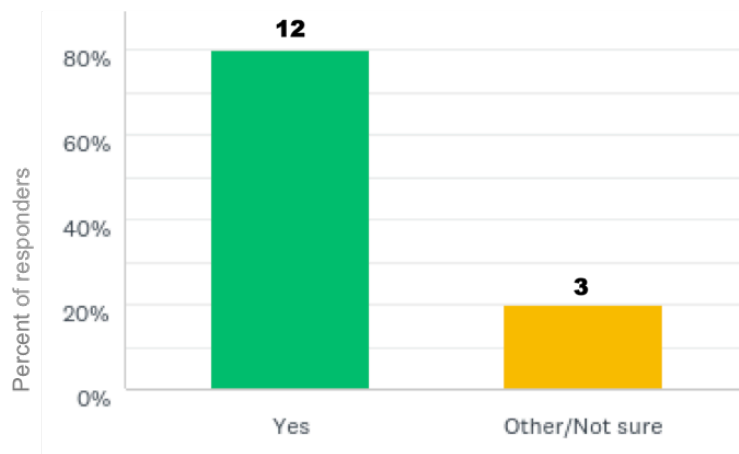
Note: This chart includes responses from the Coral Project, Echo Mobile and CIJ, which do not publish articles.

A few news outlets report finding that their **exclusive stories get picked up by other publications without attribution**, but that even in those cases, **the fact that important stories get amplified is a positive**. *GroundUp* syndicates some of its stories to mainstream media outlets in South Africa at no cost. The idea, it says, is to get the news out.

Chequeado collaborates on some stories with local TV and radio stations, which bring the organization's content to a much wider audience. With the enhanced name recognition that has resulted from these partnerships, *Chequeado* is now considering producing its own video show. While their work is also occasionally republished by other print media outlets, *Chequeado* insists on (and generally receives) proper attribution.

Some publications, like *Južne Vesti* and *Krautreporter*, post surveys on social media or embed them in articles. At least two, *Chequeado* and *Premium Times*, occasionally hold focus groups with their audience. *Premium Times* in particular runs "contact sessions,"

where it invites readers to provide feedback on its coverage in person. One such session was called together when staffers noticed alarmingly low female readership. The team learned from readers that the site's coverage on a particular story was inadvertently skewed by not having enough female reporters and interview sources. Afterward *Premium Times* hired a gender consultant and stepped up its efforts to enroll, train and promote female staff.

New tools currently under development might simplify the task of measuring impact, or at least influence. They include not just Internet-based software, but also simpler phone-based technology. Echo Mobile uses mobile technology for organizations and companies to gather more reliable data and to reach out to remote communities that are often ignored. In particular, its technology enables people who live in Kenya's rural areas and have no Internet access to communicate their feedback on products they use, like clean-burning stoves, directly to these products' manufacturers. "By giving them a free way to communicate with the company, it gives them direct access," Cohen says

Indirect impact

Their hard work notwithstanding, **we do not expect that these groups will scale**. Although all the media outlets we profile are committed, energetic and creative, hardly any can count on becoming very large or influential. They are more likely to remain niche organizations serving targeted communities, either due to funding constraints or because of outside factors. In Africa, this is partly because Internet usage is concentrated in the cities. In other cases, it is because the content appeals to a niche audience by design. *Južne Vesti*, for instance, was created to concentrate on southern Serbia and the city of Nis in particular. Editor-in-chief Blagojević says that publishing more international and national news would probably bring in a larger audience, but that the team is not considering this route. These considerations are echoed by *Bristol Cable*, which is committed to serving local communities in its namesake city.

However, these media outlets are providing tangible benefits apart from quality information. Many of them, for example, offer a valuable training ground for young journalists. By adhering to high standards and focusing on fact-based coverage, they are modeling good norms for media organizations around them.

One case in point is *Južne Vesti*, which has often struggled to find reporters in Serbia who meet its high benchmark for accuracy and rigor. This past summer it hosted an intensive writing workshop for young reporters, with funding from the Serbian Ministry

of Information. "We don't want to be the only ones writing quality, we want healthy competition," Blagojević says.

Premium Times, in partnership with the Ford Foundation, conducted an internship program for journalism students at eight of Nigeria's public universities. The program put 500 university students through a three-day training on investigative reporting, data reporting and media management, and set them up with mentors.

Chequeado believes that holding media to high standards through its fact-checking work could lessen partisanship in journalism. "We showed our colleagues that you don't need to be on a side of a fight. A journalist can say [whether] someone is right or not the next time," notes Zommer.

In Germany, *Correctiv* believes that to counter fake news and populism, it is important not just to train investigative journalists but also to educate the public and create an "editorial society" of citizens capable of asking the right questions. The staffers will soon launch what they call a Reporters' Factory, a series of online journalism tutorials and workshops for anyone interested.

One Middle Eastern news outlet, which asked to remain anonymous, prides itself on serving as a mentor to its numerous citizen reporters. Many of its writers come from activist backgrounds, and while they are deeply connected to their local communities, they often need editing and other help to allow their reporting to resonate. The site sees this mentorship as a crucial part of its mission. "We offer tools to professionalize their writing, make sure they know how to cover a demonstration or how to ask a relevant government body for a comment," its editor says.

In some cases, journalists move from one small outlet to another, bringing with them knowledge and expertise. Sophie Chamas, who has contributed to *Raseef22*, was previously a co-editor of *Mashallah News*. The latter, profiled in our 2015 report *Publishing for Peanuts*, is a news site focused on urban culture and society based in Beirut and France.

Similarly, several journalists at Nigeria's *Premium Times* previously reported for *Next234*, a now-defunct Nigerian newspaper founded by Dele Olojede, a Pulitzer Prize-winning writer. This kind of cross-pollination between small outlets may have the effect of strengthening independent journalism in their regions even if the individual outlets do not scale.

In cases where self-censorship is common, these outlets provide a valuable space for journalists to work on investigative reports. Two Serbian outlets we interviewed, *Južne Vesti* and *KRIK*, say that they often collaborate on in-depth and data-heavy reporting, especially when investigating government corruption.

Lessons for Media Funders

Small outlets run by dedicated founders are an enduring part of the media ecosystem and have existed since the beginning of journalism.[14] They often cover important stories that are ignored by mainstream media and can help generate awareness and action. When these stories are picked up by larger or foreign outlets, they become amplified. The information that the small groups provide and the force of public opinion can push governments, courts and regulators to right wrongs or enforce existing laws.

The small organizations and the "vanguard journalists" who run them (in the words of Joel Simon, Committee to Protect Journalists' executive director) are often the only alternative voice available in repressive regimes, and they doggedly report the difficult stories which legacy publications ignore and which governments would rather sweep under the carpet.

As funders choose whom to support, it is worth bearing in mind that **these outlets are not typically financially self-sufficient** and they **often don't last more than a few years**, although some survive for one or two decades. **Nor do they usually scale.**

Grant making needs to be carefully thought out. A few criteria:

▪ What are the goals of the funders? Do they want to keep the flame alive of alternative voices? Do they seek to support individuals or outlets that are training the next generation?

▪ Is it important to support outlets that can survive without donor funding after a couple of years? Should donor efforts include helping organizations become financially self-sufficient or is that unrealistic?

▪ How important is it that the outlets have broad reach? If this is the priority than are the outlets able to disseminate their news in mainstream media? How do they work with mainstream media outlets, which in some cases have more credibility than online sources?

- Or is it enough to pursue a "grass-tops" strategy aimed at influencers, government and policy makers. If so, what policy changes result from the work of the small outlets?

- What is the desirable balance between publishing sports/entertainment/feel-good news in order to boost traffic versus investigative stories on important subjects? At what point are these outlets not suitable candidates for donor funding?

- Is there an exit strategy for funders? What does it look like?

- How does grant making for small, niche outlets relate to the larger problems? Would it be better to support large, established outlets or push for policy changes including state support for media?

Lessons for Founders of Organizations

- What are your goals? How do you define success and how can you measure it?

- Which newsroom practices can be replicated outside of your home market and which should be?

- What can you teach other organizations and how would you do it?

- Have you looked closely at who your audience is? How can you broaden your reach? How can you work closely with mainstream media in order to expand your impact?

- How do you measure what works and what doesn't? Do government policies change as a result of your reporting?

- Will your organization be able to stand on its own two feet in the future or is it reliant on a few dedicated founders and volunteers?

- What can you do to ensure that your outlet survives?

- Are you training the next generation of reporters in ethical, professional reporting standards? Are you spreading these ideas to the broader community?

- If you plan to grow, ask yourselves how realistic that goal is for your organization. Do you have the funding and staffing to move into new markets? Can you partner with other organizations with similar objectives?

Learning from Success: Perspective of a Swedish Journalist

Peter Larsson

> Peter Larsson is the head of the department for media and audience research at Swedish Radio which is the market leader in Sweden.* In this email to us, he outlines what he thinks of as conventional wisdom in Swedish media, discussing why Sweden's public broadcasters and television enjoy very high trust ratios.

Let me start with what builds audience trust in general terms. It's how close you are to people's daily lives. I define "close" in several ways: it is geographical, but it is also socio-economic. It includes what topics you report on and the perspective you bring to those topics, as well as which experts and people you invite to discuss them.

This lead us to transparency. It is more important than ever to **make clear how you found and wrote the story**. Newspapers now label every article to let readers know whether it is an opinion piece, an explainer, or straight journalism and tell the media consumers how the specific job was done. Everything about media companies today needs to be more transparent. For example, we talk a lot with our audiences about which stories to write or how to go about getting them. And in Sweden we have a tradition of strong morning newspapers, delivered to the door containing local and hyperlocal journalism. The biggest radio channel is P4 (Swedish Radio), which is made up of 25 local channels most of the time and one national channel the rest of the time. So, we have **a tradition of local and hyperlocal journalism**. We meet our readers/listeners on the street, we talk to them at the supermarket, we send our kids to the same football practices, and so on.

How much value/use/benefit you get from the radio channel or newspaper also builds trust. And for many people that has to do with how accurately **media coverage reflects the reality of people's daily lives**.

All this is also, of course, about how you behave in accordance with audience expectations. Some media companies abroad have endured scandals because DJs and program hosts have been caught with their pants down, so to speak. Most researchers say that **one or two scandals is not a problem, but if they occur more frequently it will affect public trust**. In Sweden, we have had very few scandals throughout the years, and the common view is that you get a lot in return for the license fee. It is worth the money!

Another key word is **stability**. We, and many media companies in Sweden, perform well year after year.

And something else: **Not even our tabloids are like the tabloids in Great Britain and elsewhere**, and that also affects the whole picture. We have no Rupert Murdoch who can practically take down a Prime Minister with his tabloids.

We also have a **higher general trust in our government and major companies** than many other countries. That is because we have a **long tradition of very little government or corporate corruption.** Of course, we haven't been entirely without it, but it's been far less than elsewhere.

All this means that the Swedish people have a great deal of trust in Swedish Radio and Swedish Television, and we lead those kinds of trust surveys every year. But, and this is a problem for us and I guess for society as a whole, the trust for public service and for almost all other institutions connected to the establishment is gradually declining. Society is getting more polarized in Sweden, and, I guess, in the rest of the west, including the United States.

Of course, it also has to do with how big you are. We have a daily reach of almost 60 percent of the population. In almost every office and factory in the country, someone starts the day with, "Did you hear on the radio today…?"

If we have problems **reaching a young audience** in the future, I guess that will also have a negative effect on audience trust, because **if they don't listen to us in the first place we won't be able to build a strong relationship with them**.

So, public trust in the media has to do with how close you are in several ways: transparency, stability, the number of scandals, how you perform according to people's expectations and your mission. It also has to do with context—whether your company exists in a market or a society with a long democratic tradition and less corruption than other countries.

* Swedish Radio has a daily reach of 58 percent of the Swedish population aged between 12 and 79. (By comparison, the daily reach for the country's commercial radio is about 37 percent.) The market share of Swedish Radio is 77 percent.

5. PROFILES OF ORGANIZATIONS INTERVIEWED

The Bristol Cable: Slow News with Wider Reach (United Kingdom)

Anya Schiffrin

The Bristol Cable **is a citizens' media co-operative in Bristol, England. Launched in 2014 with a mission to publish underreported news and democratize local media, it has expanded into doing more investigative reporting than expected. Co-founder Alon Aviram believes that publishing news of direct relevance to local communities inspires their engagement and support. In a time of intense media polarization, Aviram hopes that local news covered by trained community members in a transparent way has the potential to build bridges and restore trust in journalism.**

> **At a glance: The Bristol Cable**
> - Citizens' media co-operative (1,850 members and counting) founded in 2014
> - Content: one story per day
> - Niche: Bristol and nearby areas
> - Staff: 5 full-time, 4 part-time
> - Print circulation: 30K, quarterly
> - Annual revenue: £130K ($174K)
> - Funding: Grants, co-op member contributions, crowdfunding, ads
> - Social media followers: 7.5K on Facebook, 6K on Twitter

Aviram describes some of the *Bristol Cable*'s reporting as investigative journalism because he and his colleagues aim to use journalism to solve local problems. "We believe in using journalism to hold power to account. Many of us don't come from a journalism background and we want to use journalism as a tool to have meaningful impact in our communities," says Aviram.

> **Approaches to engagement and building trust:**
> - Focus on **slow news**, important local stories that others don't cover.
> - Branched out into **investigative reporting**, encouraged by strong reader demand.
> - Leads **campaigns to implement solutions** to problems that its reporting uncovers.
> - Offers workshops and training in **data journalism** and **citizen journalism**.
> - Emphasis on **content**: Long pieces that generate less traffic but draw in new co-op members.

"I am driven by radical politics and want to fight inequality on a local level and connect the dots between what happens on a local level and an international level. Too many people are getting away scot free with abuses, whether it's landlords treating tenants badly or companies doing dodgy deals. We are interested in adversarial journalism and in having an impact, in challenging people who do wrong," says Aviram, who cofounded the site with two others, Alec Saelens and Adam Cantwell-Corn. The media co-operative is currently run by nine staff members.

The team has been heartened by the pickup they've gotten from other media outlets and from national media. One example is the *Cable*'s **2016 scoop** on British police forces buying devices called IMSI-catchers—surveillance tools that can trace the location and the International Mobile Subscriber Identity (IMSI) of cell phone users. Until their practices were exposed by the *Cable*'s investigation, British police forces have steadfastly denied using the devices.

The story received wide resonance including coverage in *The Guardian*, *The Times*, BBC and VICE. Shortly after, the *Cable* was awarded a grant of £7,000 (about $8,500) from the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust to lead a nationwide political campaign pressing for regulating IMSI-catcher use. The *Cable* has submitted **a report** to Parliament on the subject and is coordinating with civil liberty, legal and journalism bodies to bring about national reform.

This is far from the only example of the *Cable* advancing its investigative reporting into campaign journalism. Other campaigns it led on a city level, likewise grounded in its coverage, have targeted the **growth of mega factory farming**, **homelessness and immigration**, unaffordable **housing developments**, **underpayment of the minimum wage** by local employers, and the **University of Bristol's fossil fuel investments**. These campaigns have in several instances delivered tangible results for local residents and inspired co-operative membership uptakes.

The *Cable*'s **series** on wage theft at the city's main ice-cream parlor exposed a local business that preyed on immigrants and systematically broke UK labor laws. The investigation prompted not only dozens of tip-offs from victims going back decades, but also an ongoing examination by the city council and police.

"With the networks and the skill set we've developed, we've been able to take on local investigations and we find a lot of interest in these stories. When we publish we see a rise in signups. We've identified an appetite for investigative journalism and are happy to see that," Aviram says.

In some ways, *Bristol Cable* is following the traditional path of local magazines: trying to build a following by doing niche reporting on subjects that matter. Indeed, the newsroom, perhaps unknowingly, replicates traditional newsroom practices by having monthly meetings to discuss which stories to cover, for example.

However, the *Cable* is pursuing a very different ownership model. Its staff members hold equal shares, as do some 1,850 co-operative members (and counting) who own one share each and have the right to democratically influence its content and strategy. This principle of equal democratic rights is essential to building trust with readers, Aviram says.

Aviram believes that being transparent with readers about mistakes is important and he is proud of the *Bristol Cable*'s fulsome corrections, explanations and apologies when it makes factual errors. A recent example of the *Cable*'s approach to issuing corrections is its detailed and clear **account of why it made a mistake** regarding Bristol City Council salaries, which was a story of its own. It didn't just fix the error but also offered its readers a breakdown of the calculations behind it. In the end, the apology got more traffic than the initial story, Aviram says. "People really, really appreciated it. We were amazed at how much support we got. People wrote in and said, 'this is why I support the *Bristol Cable*—because they don't bury it and are honest about their mistakes.'"

Business Model

In a world where media trust is falling in many places, including the UK, Aviram understands that it's not just his newsroom practices, buffeted by outside sources, that can affect the *Cable*'s credibility. More broadly, the team sees a connection between trust in media and ownership of outlets in a country filled with media barons like Rupert Murdoch and scandals like the one over media **phone hacking** in 2011.

"Trust relates to the business model behind media," Aviram says. "People understand the nature of media ownership and see it as a vehicle for the elite. The phone hacking scandal, the Hillsborough scandal and many events in modern British history shook the foundation of the modern British press and made people feel it's untrustworthy."

For the *Bristol Cable*, the co-operative model itself not only builds trust but also ensures that the stories covered matter to people locally, which deepens the loyalty of its readers.[15] "One of the main issues of distrust in media is the ownership and business model. That's also why media does not deal with issues at the local level," Aviram says. "By identifying the problem, we can find a solution at the same time. We can do our duty to the public and find a funding mechanism too."

Funding

Its membership strategy notwithstanding, the *Bristol Cable* does not currently generate enough revenue to cover its annual expenses of about £120,000 (approximately $155,000 at this writing), some of it channeled to salaries of its full-time and four part-time staff. All of them are paid the same flat rate: minimum wage. Aviram hopes that this rate will increase soon, provided that the *Cable* succeeds in its member-recruitment campaign scheduled for late 2017 and wins further grant funding. As of summer 2017, the *Cable* also pays its freelancers, with set rates for different types of contributions based on article type.

Grants have represented a significant share of the budget. In fiscal year 2017, the *Cable* made about 49 percent of its income (£64,000) from grants—compared to 39 percent (£51,000) from memberships, with another 6 percent coming from advertising. Some of the grants were small and earmarked for specific projects, such as the tranche of £1,500 (about $2,350) received in 2013 from the UK Federation of Co-operatives to develop media training sessions for audience members. Others are much larger: In January 2016, the Reva and David Logan Foundation awarded the *Cable* £80,000 for

two years for core costs, educational provisions and publishing. The *Bristol Cable* regularly publishes all **funding details** on its website.

Much of the grant funding the *Cable* receives is allocated to various training initiatives. To date, some 1,600 local people have attended its free workshops and events. The organization has its own education and training arm, the Bristol Cable Media Lab, whose first big project was a structured and rigorous **journalism course** for people with no experience in the field. Fifteen course participants from diverse backgrounds, who submitted applications to participate but were then enrolled for free, attended 12 sessions over a five-month period, ranging in scope from data journalism to FOIA requests, filmmaking and forensic accounting. They learned investigative reporting techniques from leading national journalists and published content with the *Cable* following completion.

Advertising revenue has been rather limited, yielding approximately £8,000 ($9,100) in fiscal year 2017. Advertisers are mostly local businesses, such as the local culture and arts center, social services and charities. Although the *Bristol Cable* does not expect income from advertising to cover costs, it does see it as a "necessity," and the co-operative members have drawn up an ethics charter, outlining what kind of ads they will and will not accept.

Raising more funding is an "absolute necessity," Aviram says. As well as searching for more grants, the *Cable* is considering other ways to spread the word, such as a referral scheme that would give members benefits for new people they bring into the co-operative. The team is also currently exploring ways to encourage members to increase what they spend. (Membership fees can be as low as £1 a month but on average are about £3 a month.) In the future, the *Cable* might experiment with tiered memberships. Aviram says that the team are creating website infrastructure that could allow some members to receive exclusive access to behind-the-scenes content and meet the journalists.

Impact

The *Cable*'s stories have been getting growing attention from national media, with some of them starting to have an impact. But Aviram says the team has not yet begun measuring impact in a systematic way. The staff also concede that they have made fewer inroads into some local immigrant communities than they had hoped, despite delivering hard copies on foot to many Bristol neighborhoods. "The good news is that our readers are committed to having a broad and diverse audience," Aviram says. Local

immigrant communities do not have their own publications so the *Bristol Cable* features a foreign-language column with articles appearing in Somali, Arabic, Bengali and Spanish.

In the future, the *Cable* team wants to further develop their audience analytics. They want to map out the city and concentrate on neighborhoods with fewer members, such as Hartcliffe, one of the poorest both in the city and the UK. The media team will then create relevant content for these neighborhoods, encouraging membership growth.

"We don't do breaking news on Bristol. We don't have capacity or desire. We are very much interested in the 'slower' journalism or in-depth pieces and in amplifying voices and angles that are not addressed by other outlets. We publish one piece a day online and that is the level we want to maintain. A 200-word report on an event might get a lot of traffic but that doesn't mean people become members," says Aviram.

Center for Independent Journalism: Strengthening Journalism Standards and Quality (Hungary)

Anya Schiffrin

In a stressful and evolving political climate that is putting pressure on independent journalism, the Center for Independent Journalism (CIJ) believes that boosting quality and teaching ethical standards and skills is a way to strengthen the media. CIJ works with local media outlets to build trust, reveal disinformation and provide legal assistance and training in ethical reporting. Established in 1995 in the aftermath of Hungary's transition from Communism and founded by the Independent Journalism Foundation in New York, the center has been organizing trainings and supporting journalists and media outlets with legal, technology and business advice ever since. A new strategy plan adopted in 2015 redoubled the center's focus on digital skills and helping media workers strengthen their professional autonomy.

> **At a glance: Center for Independent Journalism**
> - NGO that promotes quality journalism, launched in 1995
> - Content: Supports/funds reporting by independent media and freelancers
> - Funding: foundation grants, donations

Based on strategy priorities and with OSF support, CIJ has completed phase one of its 2015–17 program on "Re-launching Journalism: Supporting investigative journalism and incubation services of digital media," which addressed some key areas of

> **Approaches to engagement and building trust:**
> - Focus on **strengthening investigative reporting**, esp. by **small media outlets** in Hungary.
> - **Training and mentoring**: In 2015–17, assisted 1,000 media professionals and students:
>   - Organized conferences, roundtables, training workshops, a summer camp and a hackathon. One roundtable focused on **countering fake news**.
>   - Published **tip sheets and manuals**, including on source verification, identification of fake news and ethical handling of news sources.
>   - Provided **free consulting and mentoring** on media technology, legal assistance and business management to media organizations and freelancers.
>   - **Reporting grants** to journalists resulted in several published investigative stories.

journalism. Activities included short, hands-on workshops on investigative journalism, digital skills development, data journalism and audience engagement for publishing, podcasting and use of smartphones. The center provided grants for investigative stories via open calls, organized mentoring programs for small local outlets, media students and young professionals, and published 10 thematic manuals and tip sheets online.

All of these activities are useful for Hungarian media outlets. The center has also made efforts to reach the next generation of journalists, especially by offering training in digital skills. "When you are a 20-year-old organization your core audience is getting older with you. It's been interesting to reach out to the younger generation," says the center's director, Ilona Moricz.

Despite the constrained political landscape, there are two smaller but important nonprofit investigative journalism sites in Hungary: *Direkt36.hu* and *Atlatszo.hu*. A few other larger outlets also continue to publish investigative stories, and data journalism is gradually gaining ground.

"I think more and more well-researched, visually represented stories are being published," says Moricz. "And the authors are of the young generation."

Media trust climate

Moricz believes that the erosion of the media climate in Hungary began about 10 to 12 years ago, accelerated after 2010 and has led to the complete "erosion" of journalism as a profession. In part, this happened because recent restrictions on press freedom coincided with trends unfolding globally, such as the international financial crisis and economic recession and the accelerated pace of technology development. At home, the ever-changing legal framework and growing political and economic pressure on media have shrunk the print industry and triggered drastic layoffs across newsrooms.

Apart from overt government pressure, Hungary has become a textbook case of media capture, where many outlets are owned by businesses with ties to the government.[16] This has severely limited the space for independent reporting and has led to widespread self-censorship and sometimes overt partisan journalism. The result is growing divisions among media professionals. Perhaps worse, the disinformation campaigns and fake news now appear not only in the state-sanctioned media but also in outlets echoing them.

"It's difficult to fight against trends that are centrally supported," Moricz says. "But we still have real journalists in the country and, even with small steps, the rigorous revealing of lies and abuses and corruption will finally bring fruit."

Compounding the problem is inadequate journalism training. Hungarian universities with media and communications departments can accredit courses and subjects related to journalism, but do not give diplomas in journalism. In such circumstances, universities do not have fully fledged journalism schools; they just teach particular elements of reporting skills for interested students. Young journalists are expected to learn their profession by doing. Yet in the current media climate, where even quality newsrooms operate with reduced staffs, beginner journalists rarely find the kind of work environments that allows peer training to replace missing professional education.

Moricz is not aware of many efforts to engage Hungarian audiences in citizen journalism, noting that "unfortunately there is little knowledge about how to directly engage audiences." To help improve these skills, the center has organized workshops on podcasting and using Facebook to promote journalism, including a series of lectures on how to add features, build audience and find alternative business models such as crowdfunding.

The center has also led efforts to encourage editors and publishers to agree on ethical guidelines that would help Hungarian journalism regain public trust. Its first attempt to do so was hobbled by the restrictive 2010 media laws, which had a chilling effect on the whole news media. Finally, leading editors decided to form an association and adopt ethics guidelines, and what is how the Editors' Forum was established in 2012. The center facilitated its creation and has since cooperated with the Editors' Forum on a number of projects and events.

Ending on an upbeat note, Moricz adds: "We adjusted our strategy to address the new situation and have focused on areas where we can help the community of journalists. All this is to strengthen the classic watchdog role of journalism (for example investigative journalism), but also enhance digital skills (data journalism, technology, social media tools) and help smaller-sized newsrooms to develop sustainable business models."

Funding

The center was originally part of a regional network of four centers established by the Independent Journalism Foundation in New York. (Two centers, in Bratislava and Prague, have closed while those in Budapest and Bucharest continue to operate.)

Other funders in the past five years have been: the European Commission, the Open Society Foundations, the EEA/Norway Civil Grant Fund, ICFJ and IFEX. In July 2017, the center **won a grant** from Google Digital News Initiative for a prototype project to develop a tool to detect stealth editing.

KRIK: Exposing Corruption and Crime in Serbia

Anya Schiffrin

KRIK is an investigative journalism network launched in 2015 with a start-up grant from the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project. It specializes in exposing government corruption and malfeasance—not the only outlet to do so in Serbia but one that stands out for investigating the highest levels of power. *KRIK*'s stories often focus on the people behind the corruption because the publication believes that describing the human side is a way of drawing in readers and explaining the larger context.

At a glance: KRIK
- Non-profit investigative network, founded in 2015
- Content: corruption investigations, a database of Serbian politicians' assets
- Niche: government corruption
- Annual budget: $120K
- Funding: 90% donors, 10% crowdfunding
- Staff: 11 people, including 2 volunteers
- Social media followers: 57K on Facebook, 25K on Twitter

In 2016, *KRIK* launched a database listing the assets held by prominent Serbian politicians. *KRIK* staffers used public records of real estate ownership and then valued property at current prices. (They worked with a certified real estate agency that calculated the market value of every house, apartment and plot of land.) They encourage readers to provide tips and information for the database, although readers have so far not been directly involved in creating content.

One part of the three-part database lists assets of all the ministers in the Serbian government. Another tallies the assets of all presidential candidates who ran in the April 2017 presidential election. The information was released 10 days before the

Approaches to engagement and building trust:
- Strong **audience engagement** component: Facebook, Twitter and email.
- First media organization in Serbia to use **crowdfunding**. Gives small awards to contributors.
- Encourages readers to contribute facts to its **comprehensive database of politicians' assets**.
- Follows up on its investigations, reports on any fallout for government officials, **updates readers on institutional response**.

Screenshots of KRIK's database of politicians' assets

election and was the first time that the "citizens of Serbia had an opportunity to get verified facts on everything that presidential candidates would like to hide from them," *KRIK* says in a report outlining its recent achievements.[17]

KRIK also **broke the news** that Belgrade Mayor Siniša Mali had personally organized the middle-of-the-night demolition of several buildings in the city center, in which some residents were

suddenly and violently evicted, to clear the way for major waterfront redevelopment that would be undertaken by a United Arab Emirates firm.

Protests ensued, leading to some media speculation that Mali would step down, although he now looks unlikely to do so. The mayor, who maintains nominal political independence, is strongly supported by the right-wing populist Serbian Progressive Party that holds the majority in the parliament. Its head is President Aleksandar Vučić, who was reelected in a landslide in April 2017 and who today describes himself as a pro-European leader despite once serving under the strongman Slobodan Milošević.

Serbia is a **polarized country** with partisan media, and KRIK has earned the trust of a loyal group of readers who believe in its honesty and care deeply about the subject. *KRIK*'s readers are educated, urban and passionate, and *KRIK* tries to be their primary source for news about corruption. KRIK does not try to be the first provider of all Serbian news, says Jelena Vasić, project manager and investigative journalist. Although she has not studied the matter, she

assumes that *KRIK*'s readers are also getting their news online and through mobile devices as well as from independent television stations.

KRIK's page views spike whenever it publishes an important investigation, something the editors try to do every month or two. *KRIK* now has half a million unique visitors each month, and website visits have doubled in 2016. To put this in context, Serbia's population is about 7 million, and daily circulation of large newspapers ranges from 30,000 to 100,000.

Readers comment regularly and phone in tips. *KRIK* encourages them to share important news and replies to their comments and constructive criticism, but has a policy of ignoring trolling. *KRIK* has been under attack by pro-government media, including threats in 2016 and the July 2017 break-in at the home of the investigative reporter Dragana Peśo. "Her belongings were turned over, but no valuables are missing," *KRIK* wrote in a report.

KRIK is mostly funded by overseas foundations but it also gets about 10 percent of its revenue from readers through crowdfunding. In this aspect, *KRIK* was a pioneer on the Serbian media scene, Vasić says. As of September 2017, some 700 readers have donated to *KRIK*. Individual donations could be as small as $4 or $8, but they have added up to some $15,000 since 2015. *KRIK* especially encourages readers to support its database of politicians' assets.

"Since the beginning we gave our readers the opportunity to support our work. We add explanations and invitation to donate to us after every article," says Vasić. Those who donate receive different rewards, such as advance summaries of *KRIK* stories and access to online copies of documents used in investigations. Vasić stresses, however, that most of these documents have been publicly available before KRIK published them, even if they have not been uploaded online.

So far, however, *KRIK* has not involved its readers in creating content because it hires freelance experts with knowledge of subjects like forensic accounting and the law. *KRIK* hosts occasional seminars for its readers and recently invited them to a birthday party for the organization.

"Our readers see us as fearless, and this is something they are constantly talking about—that we are independent and fearless and give exclusive discoveries and don't hide anything from them," Vasić says. "They are used to media that only publish things not connected to their supporters but we publish everything. Whether it's about

someone in the opposition or someone in the government, we do complete investigative reporting."

Vasić adds that another part of why the readers trust *KRIK* is the publication's transparency in its own operations. "We say to our readers that they can see the system and how we are working every day. Our finances are public."

KRIK closely tracks what happens to its important stories. The team looks at which other media outlets reproduce them and measures traffic. They also track what institutional response there is after KRIK stories are published. And they let readers know what the responses are, whether it comes one month, six months or a year after a story first runs, Vasić says, adding: "We follow each story till something is done."

Južne Vesti: Thinking Locally to Rebuild Trust (Serbia)

Beatrice Santa-Wood

Južne Vesti is an independent online news platform based in the Serbian city of Niš and covering business, sports and politics relevant to southern Serbia. It works to rebuild trust in local media through transparent ethical standards, investigative reporting and forging close relationships with its readers. The team has had success in investigative stories and journalist training. But although their investigative work has uncovered corruption in the region, they are unsure of both short- and long-term impact on the community. *Južne Vesti* has also struggled to compete financially with mainstream media and wants to work toward being financially self-sufficient.

At a glance: Južne Vesti
- News platform focused on southern Serbia, founded in 2009
- Content: online stories, 10-20 daily
- Niche: southern Serbia
- Funding: foundations, government grants, advertising
- Annual budget: $500K
- Staff: 20, including 8 full-time reporters
- Reach: 9.8 million sessions
- Social media followers: 145K on Facebook, 12K on Twitter

Južne Vesti believes that factual, in-depth local news coverage is the most effective way to build trust and serve community needs. It was founded in 2009 as an alternative to mainstream media in southern Serbia and initially began with funding from IREX. The team chose to concentrate on local news because of the dearth of fact-based reporting from other outlets, and to explore societal problems and challenges in the region.

Approaches to engagement and building trust:
- **Focus on local news** in southern Serbia that impact daily lives of readers.
- Fosters **reader recognition** of staff reporters; developing a community outreach program
- Follows an **internal ethical code** for journalists and advisory board.
- Investigates **cases of misinformation** in the community.
- **Collaborates** with other independent media in Serbia to access information and write stories.
- Asserts **financial independence** from the government.

Južne Vesti has eight full-time reporters and hopes to take on more. The publication runs many long, in-depth investigative pieces on politics and business, as well as shorter pieces on daily news, sports and culture. All content focuses on Niș and southern Serbia and is published online only, with a daily output of roughly 10 to 20 stories. Predrag Blagojević, editor-in-chief, says that if *Južne Vesti* were to publish more international and national news, it would bring in a larger audience; however it prefers to concentrate on local coverage.

Focus on local news

Blagojević believes that covering local topics serves an important public need. "It is more effective to work with people through local news, because they can identify themselves with local journalists. We are trying to work on building recognition, so when they see the author of an article, they will trust that person," he says. The site's journalists belong to local communities in Niș and nearby areas, and readers know many of them by name and follow their work.

The site tracks reader opinions through online surveys and often factors them into editorial decisions. Facebook polls used to be a useful tool in this regard. Now that this capability is unavailable, the staff sometimes pose questions on Twitter or embed surveys within published articles. For example, when a particular bus route in Niș was facing elimination, *Južne Vesti* set up a poll asking readers what they thought of the change. The majority responded that they wanted to keep the route. Several days later

at the Municipal Assembly, the mayor **mentioned** the *Južne Vesti* poll, which may have helped influence the final decision to keep the route.

Reader engagement

One result of this close relationship is that *Južne Vesti* readers sometimes point out inaccuracies in stories or provide useful news tips. Reporters have found that reader comments can help alert them to stories they may not have picked up on yet. For example, when the site posted a story about a citizen hit by a police car, it immediately received several comments saying that this had happened before. The team was then able to expand and investigate the story further. "We have to rely on information from citizens, so it is important [that] citizens trust us," Blagojević says.

Tracking metrics through Google Analytics, staff members have found that as their readers have aged over the past eight years, they have continued to read *Južne Vesti*. Readership has been growing steadily, and some 75 percent of page visits were by returning visitors in 2016.

The staff hopes to build an even closer relationship with readers. A new project will soon take *Južne Vesti* editors and writers to cities and towns in the region, inviting local residents to meet them for coffee. *Južne Vesti* wants to get a better sense of what its audience cares about and hopes it will strengthen trust in its work. When it comes to local communities and their daily concerns, "we are not about them but with them," Blagojević says. This kind of coverage provides factual up-to-date information readers may not find elsewhere—"everyday problems they need answers to" like power outages, he adds.

He notes that there is general distrust of media in Serbia, with many citizens unaware of how to gauge trustworthiness. But while he recognizes that tabloid-style stories are popular in Serbia, the site isn't after those readers, he says: "More people may initially read about a murder or traffic accident, but our stories last longer. It's up to you who you want your audience to be."

Combatting misinformation in mainstream media

Blagojević has noticed that local media outlets often report politicians' statements or press releases without fact-checking. He remembers a particular instance when Aleksandar Vučić, then Serbian prime minister and now president, opened a factory in the region. Blagojević covered the event and saw that the factory was completely

empty. **"Most headlines were, 'Prime Minister opens factory,' but our title was 'Prime Minister opens empty factory,'"** he says.

Blagojević admits that it can be disheartening to report on corruption when so little changes in response. A recent *Južne Vesti* investigation, for example, focused on the city's procurement of some $60 million in government funding for public transportation. It found recordings of a city assembly meeting where the mayor admitted that he was planning to channel the money to a particular contractor—a conflict of interest that is criminal under Serbian law. However, the newspaper's report yielded no retribution for the mayor. "We can publish anything we want, but when a mayor is asked about it [the story] at a press conference, his answer is 'so what?'" Blagojević says. This frustration is felt by readers as well, he adds. When the site runs articles on corruption, the "first ten comments are often that nothing will happen. People [are] losing faith that rule of law exists."

In 2016–17, Serbia has experienced a decline in press freedom and an increase in state financial control over media outlets.[18] While Serbia does have legal protections for freedom of speech and freedom of the press, in practice they are often ignored.

Collaboration with regional partners

Južne Vesti works with other independent media outlets and networks to write stories of national and regional interest. It sometimes collaborates with Serbian nonprofit KRIK (Crime and Corruption Reporting Network) and BIRN (Balkan Investigative Reporting Network) to access databases. Larger networks like KRIK and BIRN have greater access to paid databases, sources and correspondents that are beyond *Južne Vesti*'s capacity. For example, if *Južne Vesti* needs information on ownership of a foreign company based in southern Serbia, it can use subscription databases through KRIK. *Južne Vesti* and KRIK have been collaborating on two investigative stories as well as on joint applications for reporting grants.

Funding

Južne Vesti is the nonprofit arm of Simplicity Ltd., which also owns a web development operation that creates and maintains online databases. The two share a building and offices. *Južne Vesti* does not receive money from Simplicity, however, and any income it generates stays with the publication. *Južne Vesti* also receives donor funding, including money from the National Endowment for Democracy, the Partnership for Transparency Fund, EU, OSCE, SIDA (Sweden) and Open Society Foundations.

Južne Vesti sees itself as different from mainstream Serbian media not only in its editorial choices but also in its economic independence. Serbia has a crowded media landscape, and large mainstream outlets are heavily dependent on state funding.[19] This allows them to lower their advertising fees and, In Blagojević's experience, lends them an unfair advantage over independent media organizations like *Južne Vesti*.

Nominally, Serbian law prohibits giving taxpayer money to private media unless it is for stories of public interest. *Južne Vesti* has applied for and won government funding for specific projects under these criteria, but this has made up only a small share of its overall funding. The newspaper has found that the vast majority of such public contests are a form of "legalized corruption," Blagojević says, especially after recent laws have allowed state officials to use taxpayer money for whatever serves their interests.[20] *Južne Vesti* has taken legal action on issues like this, twice against the city of Niš and once against the Ministry of Information. Every time, the courts ruled in its favor, finding that state officials were distributing money with personal interests in mind. Yet these rulings produced virtually no systemic changes, Blagojević says, because no one has implemented them. Meanwhile, *Južne Vesti*'s combative reputation might explain why this past year, it has not received any funding from Niš, Vranje or Leskovac, the three largest cities in southern Serbia.

Južne Vesti considers building a sustainable business model a priority and has considered asking for donations or introducing "premium" subscriptions to build revenue. However, Serbian laws and red tape make online financial transactions extremely difficult. For now, the publication is not charging for its content and exploring ways of renting out building space or selling merchandise as additional revenue sources. Its revenue currently covers expenditures, but *Južne Vesti* is looking to diversify revenue streams in case it loses donor funding.

Media environment: Lack of training and self-censorship

Serbian journalists are often encouraged to avoid criticizing the government or their advertisers, since they depend on them for funding. As a result, there is rampant media self-censorship. *Južne Vesti*'s existence and ethos is a reaction to this trend. Its staffers believe that their work fills an important role in improving media literacy. "The goal for many [in media] is to be a propaganda machine, so in that situation it's not in your interest to have media-literate citizens," Blagojević says. This problem extends to journalists themselves, and *Južne Vesti* has had challenges when it comes to recruiting journalists who can meet its standards.

Basic training for journalists in Serbia remains a problem. For example, *Južne Vesti* recently held a competition to hire a new reporter and narrowed it down to 30 candidates, all of whom had degrees in journalism or related fields. During interviews, however, many could not explain the division of power in Serbian government or demonstrate a grasp of basic economic concepts like net and gross.

This past summer, *Južne Vesti* received funding from the Serbian Ministry of Information to lead an intensive summer boot camp for journalists. The program was led by the online editor of B92, a longstanding Serbian radio and TV broadcaster. Ten journalists were selected for the program, most of them between 20 and 25 years old. Participants wrote news stories in real time, publishing them on a website meant to mimic a newsroom pace. One participan has since become a correspondent for *Južne Vesti*, and Blagojević hopes to repeat and expand the program next year. "We don't want to be the only ones writing quality, we want healthy competition," he says.

Ethics code

Južne Vesti has always had an ethics code, but had not written it down until 2014. The code is now part of an ongoing Google document the organization works on together. The staff also hold annual retreats to evaluate *Južne Vesti*'s work and direction. Last year, they invited some 40 people—civil society leaders, other independent media outlets like *Deutsche Welle* and Radio Free Europe, academics, EU delegates and public officials—to review their code and suggest changes.

Responding to criticism and checking facts

Južne Vesti has had its share of detractors. It has been accused of being a mouthpiece for foreign agents because of its foreign foundation funding. In the past, Blagojević has faced physical attacks from police for his reporting, and **politicians have threatened** *Južne Vesti* writers in their comments section. This problem is endemic throughout Serbia, as President Vučić has accused critical media outlets of being foreign agents.

But outside funding goes both ways, Blagojević says, also serving to lend *Južne Vesti* more credibility among some readers. The site does get pushback from some politicians and business leaders whose corruption and lies their stories uncover. Staffers are proud of instances when local academics or citizens have called on *Južne Vesti* specifically to investigate specific topics.

Transparency in fact-checking is important to *Južne Vesti*. By national law, Serbian media are required to put out public corrections for false information. *Južne Vesti* publishes any corrections it makes to stories and responds online to criticism of its work. However, if staff members deem the contested information to be truthful, they won't publish corrections and have the option to take the issue to court. While they value reader comments, they are more likely to fact-check with their collaborative partners like academics, local experts, or other independent journalists and networks.

Advisory board

Južne Vesti had an advisory board made up of seven outside experts and individuals invited to oversee its work. However, the advisory board is not active at the time of writing because the publication is stepping back to create a written set of rules for the board. Until now, the staff had explained their role and goals to board members, but it was not written down.

Past board members have included the head of the Serbian Independent Media Journalists Association (IJAS), head of the OSCE media department, the commissioner for information of public importance and personal data protection, and even a popular Serbian basketball coach who is well-known in his community. The board is designed to act as a wall between the business and the editorial side of *Južne Vesti*, provide credibility and defend the publication from public attacks. This means that if any business decision is made that is not in the best interest of *Južne Vesti*, the advisory board can intervene. The board can also act as a watchdog in ensuring that editors are not working toward any personal financial gain.

Blagojević believes that reporting the truth, even if it goes against what local media report, eventually wins over readers. "You have to be persistent in publishing the truth. You can't lie to people all the time. When they see you publishing the truth, they'll be able to see the lies in other places. After that it is much easier, people become your correspondent, see you as their protector," he says.

Correct!v: Crowdsourcing Investigative Journalism (Germany)

Nicole Pope

CORRECT!V is a German nonprofit investigative journalism bureau. Launched in June 2014 and funded through foundation grants and member donations, *Correctiv* collaborates with regional German newspapers as well as radio and television stations, giving them free access to its stories and material. The publications also pursues an educational mission and seeks to foster an "editorial society" by training not only reporters but also interested citizens to ask the right questions, process information and publish it.

At a glance: Correctiv

- Nonprofit investigative newsroom founded in 2014
- Content: Detailed investigative stories, data journalism
- Staff: about 50, incl. data journalists, software developers, freelancers
- Annual budget: $2–2.5M
- Funding: grants, reader donations, book publishing, crowdfunding
- Social media followers: 30K on Facebook, 30K on Twitter

Correctiv was set up to carry out the kind of extensive research into structural issues of society that traditional media can no longer afford to do. Its seed capital was a three-year grant of about €3 million ($4 million) from the Brost Foundation. Based in the western German city of Essen with a satellite office in Berlin, *Correctiv* relies on four income streams: general grants from foundations (40 percent); grants earmarked for specific projects (30 percent); donations from members (15 percent); and income from publishing books based on *Correctiv* investigations (10 percent). *Correctiv* also turns to crowdfunding to finance special investigative projects. A board of trustees oversees the business aspects of its operations, and a board of ethics contributes to defining its editorial strategy.

Approaches to engagement and building trust:

- Operates **Crowd Newsrooms**: mobile offices that invite community help in investigations.
- Uses **innovative mediums** to disseminate content: graphic novels, exhibitions, stand-up comedy.
- Strong focus on **data journalism**: readers can access tailored information on specific topics.
- Collaborates with Facebook to **fact-check and flag fake news** on German social media.
- **Partners with legacy media outlets** to bring investigations to a broad audience.

"Many successful independent media work through pay walls. As a nonprofit, we want to distribute our information for free. But it's harder," says David Schraven, publisher and managing editor.

Correctiv has strong ties with some 50 of Germany's 120 regional newspapers. These collaborations can take three forms: Its partner newspapers can republish its stories, use its material to develop their own reporting, or collaborate with *Correctiv* on the investigation itself. *Correctiv*'s work also appears on public television and on the private RTL channel.

Topics are selected for their importance and impact on society. *Correctiv* has conducted in-depth research into right-wing extremist groups, doctors beholden to pharmaceutical firms, the society's "invisible" people living without documentation, the management of mutual banks and drug-resistant pathogens. An investigation into climate change and rising sea levels, jointly conducted with Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism's Energy and Environment Reporting Project, has **received coverage** in major international publications.

Correctiv employs some 50 people based not only in Germany but also France, Italy and Turkey. Some are full-time employees; other work part-time or have freelance contracts. Three quarters are reporters, many of them with experience in legacy media.

Data journalism features heavily in the *Correctiv*'s work. "It is very important to focus on the tech side and have enough developers," says Schraven. An extensive investigation into **elderly care in Germany** involved not only hundreds of interviews with the authorities, caretakers, doctors and patients, but also compiling data on 13,000 care homes. Through the *Correctiv* website, readers can request information on individual care homes and access write-ups produced by specially programmed bots.

Since its stories are often channeled through established media organizations, visitors to its own website account for only a fraction of *Correctiv*'s audience. "It is very difficult to measure success; sometimes, it's about raising awareness," Schraven says. A three-year investigation into **drug-resistant superbugs**, for example, has led a German hospital to adopt new regulations and attracted the attention of the government, resulting in a 10-point action plan that was later submitted to the G20. *Correctiv* has won several media awards for its investigative work.

The landing page of the Crowd Newsroom that Correctiv operated in March 2017 to source data on cancelled classes in Dortmund schools. More than 520 people, including many students and parents, contributed information.

Each research project generates numerous articles and broadcasts. *Correctiv* often crosses geographical borders in pursuit of information and stretches the boundaries of traditional journalism by finding innovative ways to bring its stories before a wide audience. Its research into right-wing extremist groups was turned into a best-selling **graphic novel** and an exhibition that toured 100 German cities. *Correctiv*'s work on refugees crossing the Mediterranean was turned into a stage play, so far viewed by over 5,000 people around Germany.

Within *Correctiv*, teams supervised by senior reporters focus on different themes. One group operates in the Ruhr area, known as the rust belt of Germany. Another focuses on international crime and yet another on healthcare. *Correctiv* also provides Turkey coverage, in cooperation with Can Dündar, the exiled former editor-in-chief of the liberal newspaper *Cumhuriyet,* who now lives in Germany. Produced together with several reporters on the ground in Turkey, the collaboration, *Özgürüz*, reaches 3 million people in Turkey through Periscope, a live streaming video app, with up to 15 short broadcasts a day, according to Schraven.

Audience engagement: crowdsourcing data

Correctiv has repeatedly involved the public in sourcing information for its stories. When the team sought to investigate how the shortage of teachers affected local schools in the city of Dortmund, but found related government data to be insufficient, it set up an online **Crowd Newsroom** to collect information. Anyone with insight into the problem—parents, educators and students themselves—were asked to log instances of classes cancelled and lesson hours misspent due to insufficient school personnel. More than 520 people contributed. *Correctiv* and its partner on the project, the local newspaper *Ruhr Nachrichten*, analyzed the data, finding that Dortmund schools were losing **at least twice as many lesson hours** to teacher shortage than official data indicated.

More recently, some *Correctiv* members worked for several weeks from a **Mobile Newsroom** in the town of Bottrop while researching a story about adulterated cancer drugs sold by a local pharmacy, which affected thousands. The team invited victims and community members to the editorial office to share their experiences, attend workshops with lawyers and healthcare workers, and network with one another for support. The team also set up a special closed Facebook group for those affected.

Full transparency is the only way to gain public trust, Schraven says. **"When people have questions, we answer them. We show the material we have."** He believes that 70 percent of people still trust traditional media in Germany. Media outlets peddling fake news have yet to gain a foothold in the country, he says, but "it is like sitting in a sand castle when it starts raining." He has found that attempts to undermine German democracy through fake news are mainly concentrated on social media and targeted at specific groups susceptible to outside influence. A *Correctiv* team is also cooperating with Facebook, fact-checking news flagged as potentially fake.[21]

Correctiv **sees education as part of its mission. The staffers are currently developing what they call a** **Reporters' Factory**, which will offer online journalism tutorials and workshops to anyone interested, both media workers and members of the public. "We need to train as many people as possible to collect information, process it and publish it in the right way," he says. "By giving people more tools, you help a society immunize itself against demagogues. We need to take enlightenment to the next level."

Correctiv **organizes dozens of other events**—readings, lectures and exhibitions— around Germany every year. To reach a young audience, it has teamed up with a

university in Dortmund for a **festival of journalism and new media** held in September 2017.

Schraven also has plans to set up a European hub to expand cooperation between independent news organizations and share what *Correctiv* has learned. *Correctiv* has teamed up with the Schöpflin Foundation, which has pledged to invest almost $30 million (€25 million) in a **House of Public Interest Journalism** that will house the *Correctiv* newsroom and provide space for educational activities as well as a "news-hostel" and work stations for visiting reporters, illustrators and programmers.

Krautreporter: A Crowdfunded News Platform (Germany)

Beatrice Santa-Wood and Nicole Pope

Krautreporter (KR), a German independent news website, was launched in 2014 to "combat rising polarization and distrust of news in Germany." *KR* posts one long story a day, aiming to produce quality journalism that is closely tied to the interests of its readers and helps them understand the bigger connections. It uses a soft pay wall and operates on a subscription model, which currently supplies all of its revenues and covers production costs. It keeps in constant touch with its members, who are consulted on the choice of topics being covered and occasionally used as sources for specific stories.

At a glance: Krautreporter
- Independent news co-op founded in 2014
- Content: one long story per day
- Annual budget: $300–350K
- Funding: crowdfunding ($1.2M in starter capital), member subscriptions
- Staff: 14 people, some part-time
- Social media followers: 90K on Facebook, 60K on Twitter

Krautreporter's original purpose was to serve s a crowdfunding platform for other media organizations wishing to undertake ambitious projects and investigations. It switched course and began publishing its own online magazine in October 2014, following a crowdfunding campaign that raised about €1 million (approximately $1.3 million at the time). Its goal is to "collaborate, explain and personalize" the news, changing the language of journalism and its relationship with readers to address declining trust in media.

Germany has a fairly free media environment and publications do not knowingly publish fake news, but *KR* felt that trust in the media was undermined by journalism

Approaches to engagement and building trust:
- Regularly **engages with subscribers** through social media, daily and weekly emails, as well as surveys and meetings.
- An **informal and conversational tone** used in stories that are relevant to readers, who are also consulted on the choice of topics.
- **Run by a cooperative** of some 380 people who have contributed at least €250. Each investor gets one voice, regardless of the amount invested.

geared more toward the needs of advertisers than the readers. "People are no longer passive media consumers; they want to be heard. It's about the willingness to listen," says Sebastian Esser, *Krautreporter* founder.

Finding the right formula took a while and cost *KR* some of its initial readers. Since 2015 and the introduction of a pay wall, the readership has been growing steadily, gaining around 200 members a month. "You cannot take it for granted that people will believe you're telling the truth. You have to tell people what they are getting for their money," Esser says.

KR's readership has shifted significantly since the early days when it mainly enjoyed the support of young online intellectuals intent on making a statement. Its audience is now concentrated in two social groups: a well-educated and relatively affluent middle-aged group as well as a younger crowd, more avant-garde and tech focused. *KR* subscribers are liberal and have a global perspective, but they are also involved in the local community. Many of them still subscribe to mainstream newspapers.

KR reaches out to its audience through email, Facebook and Twitter, engaging in a dialogue with supporters as well as critics. Staffers also carefully monitor and respond to reader comments about their work. "It is not just about our members, but also others who might be listening," says Esser.

To boost growth, *KR* is working on increasing the conversion rate, the share of casual readers who choose to subscribe. "We have developed a model where business incentives are aligned with journalism incentives," Esser explains. "We know what our readers are interested in."

KR subscribers are more focused on larger issues than on daily politics. They expect basic information that helps them make sense of complex stories. "One of our biggest conversion drivers is a **60,000-character explainer on the war in Syria**, written in a Q&A format and conversational in style," Esser says. *KR* journalists produce series on complex issues, such as climate change, refugees in Germany, terrorism in Europe, and health and family matters. In the course of a week, different types of articles can be posted: a column, an addition to a series, a hard news story and a feature. Articles are rarely under 10,000 characters in length.

Stories are selected for their news relevance, their links to topics *KR* follows regularly and their emotional resonance for subscribers. *KR* regularly involves audience members in the selection of reporting priorities through surveys rather than waiting

for their feedback, which has a big impact on the dynamic, Esser believes: "It changes the conversation completely."

To expand foreign coverage, *KR* is collaborating with independent media outlets abroad—a drive that began during the 2015 Greek financial crisis, when the publication reached out to *Athens Live*. Cooperation now extends to seven or eight international outlets.

The absence of advertising and external funding keeps *KR* independent and trustworthy in the eyes of its audience. The news site is run by a cooperative of members, who each contribute a minimum of €250 (about $295) and get one vote, regardless of the amount invested. Esser says that co-op members support *KR* because they view it as an important initiative. "They are not as urban as our usual readers. They can be older couples, people from the countryside, and many of them are men."

Two executives, including Esser, are in charge of the day-to-day running of operations, which is overseen by a supervisory board. Editorial decisions tend to be made collaboratively in the newsroom, taking into account subscribers' comments.

KR currently employs 14 people, but not all are full-time staff. Each journalist is expected to contribute two stories a month. One reporter based in New York is in charge of sending a daily email containing teasers and a summary of the three main news events of the day, which lands in readers' inbox at dawn. Subscribers also receive weekly updates on Saturday that keep them informed of stories being investigated or considered. Meetings with readers and an annual gathering of co-op members strengthen the ties between *KR* and its audience.

KR collects extensive data about its readers, which is only possible because they "know we are not doing anything evil with it," Esser says. On specific stories, subscribers are asked to contribute. Esser cites the example of the Germanwings plane that crashed in France in March 2015; during its reporting, *KR* found 70 potential sources in its database. When subscribers are asked to contribute their knowledge, it enhances their engagement with the publication as a whole, he adds.

For *KR*, innovation is primarily about the tone, relevance and quality of journalism. But marketing expertise and technology, particularly sales technology, are also crucial to achieving growth. *KR* uses open-source instruments to measure traffic. Its target is not an audience of millions, but a steady flow of new subscribers.

In the three years since *KR*'s launch, the mainstream media landscape has evolved. More large newspapers have shifted from advertising to digital subscription models and adopted a less "God-like hierarchical" style of journalism, says Esser.

News consumption is also different. *KR* readers initially accessed the site via desktop computers. Now 60 percent read on their mobile phones, which has implications for the all-important conversion rate. When potential subscribers, reluctant to enter credit card details on their phones, stop at the payment stage, *KR* sends them email reminders at times when they are likely to have computer access. Developing an app would be too expensive at this stage, Esser says.

Greater cooperation between independent news sites could reduce the cost of technology. "We're all doing the same thing. If there were tools and standards that all could use, it would help." *Krautreporter* is currently seeking a grant—its first since a German foundation offered support at the crowdfunding stage—to invest in sharing its methods, writing down its processes and extending collaboration with other media outlets.

KR measures success in its ability to win over more subscribers and invest more money into good journalistic work. "We are not revolutionaries, we are reactionaries," explains Esser. "We want to go back to the 1970s, with good stories, time to research, strong photography, and the kind of journalism no longer possible in the click-bait culture."

Chequeado: Fact-Checking Argentinian News

Beatrice Santa-Wood

[Chequeado](#) is a pioneering fact-checking organization that employs a wide array of tools to improve the quality of information in Argentina and hold its media and politicians to account. Its work ranges from investigative stories and video to verifications of speeches by leading politicians to live-checking events and various education projects. Aiming above all to encourage civic participation, *Chequeado* also runs an innovation lab to develop new storytelling techniques and methods of connecting with readers. It actively collaborates with a growing international network of fact-checking organizations and advises other media groups beyond Argentina's borders.

At a glance: Chequeado
- Fact-checking organization, founded in 2010
- Staff: 8 full-time, 8 part-time
- Niche: fact-checking
- Content: articles, data, multimedia and interactive content
- Annual budget: approx. $705K
- Funding: foundations (main project of Fundación La Voz Pública), crowdfunding, trainings
- Social media followers: 63K on Facebook, 192K on Twitter

At the time of *Chequeado*'s launch in 2010, Argentina was riven by deep political divisions that echoed throughout the media. Most publications were strongly connected to particular political parties. Former president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner would often avoid media organization that criticized her and her government, instead issuing statements via press releases or public service announcements.

The problem was not just a lack of trust in media but also a widespread confirmation bias, explain two *Chequeado* team members: executive director Laura Zommer and institutional development coordinator Noelia Guzman. Many people in Argentina would only read news that supported their existing beliefs. Although political tensions have somewhat eased since 2010, media partisanship remains high, fueled by events

Approaches to engagement and building trust:
- Conducts **live fact-checking events** that encourage and address readers' queries.
- An **interactive online platform** allows readers to submit questions for fact-checking.
- Offers **open courses on fact-checking** to journalists, public servants and educators.
- Runs **educational programs** for youth focused on vetting and fact-checking information.
- Employs **crowdsourcing** to fund individual projects and rally audience support.

like midterm elections in October of 2017 and the state's recurring clashes with human rights activists.

In this environment, founders believed, an independent nonpartisan fact-checking platform would perform a function crucial for strengthening democracy. *Chequeado*'s founding mission was to serve as an impartial referee, providing citizens reliable information to make informed choices and hold both the country's media and public officials to higher standards. With these objectives in mind, *Chequeado* was founded as a place for information and data about the news rather than a news source in itself. This strategy holds true today. "We try to be complementary to mainstream media," says Zommer. "We try for things that are in-depth."

Zommer comes to *Chequeado* from a rich professional background—she has experience in law, policy, journalism and communications—and many other staff members bring similarly diverse knowledge. They have studied or worked in economics, sociology, communications, journalism and political science, Zommer says, which helps *Chequeado* wear its many hats. (The team also engages topic experts in anticipation of many specific fact-checking needs.) The staff is divided into four teams:

- The media team is responsible for the coordination and production of all journalistic content.

- The innovation lab works on increasing audience engagement, testing out new approaches to fact-checking and storytelling.

- The education team works on journalist training and civic engagement with youth.

- The institutional development team works to secure a sustainable funding strategy and to position *Chequeado* as a world leader in data and innovation journalism.

Chequeado believes that it builds audience trust through transparency in sources and funding, accuracy of information and reader participation. In keeping with its nonpartisan mission, it readily calls out and if necessary contests claims made by officials belonging to different political parties, which, Zommer hopes, assures its readers of its lack of bias. She believes that this ethos is having an impact on other Argentinian journalists as well. "We showed our colleagues that you don't need to be on a side of a fight," she says.

One recent *Chequeado* story investigated **campaign finance practices** of President Mauricio Macri, elected in 2015. Its reporters found that while on the campaign trail, Macri accepted generous donations from some 60 executive-level employees of government contracting companies—actions that violated national election finance

laws. Other news media organizations quickly picked up *Chequeado*'s story. "We broke the silence on the topic," Zommer says. Amplified media coverage eventually led to a court examination of the Macri campaign's financial reports and to a judge declaring the donations illegal and ineligible for use. *Chequeado* would go on to win the Argentine Journalism Forum (FOPEA) award for this story in November 2016.[22]

The publication's biggest annual event is the live collective fact-checking of the **presidential address** to parliament which takes place on 1 March. The address, known as Apertura de Sesiones en el Congreso, is covered live in a marathon checking session where staffers team up with experts and volunteers to verify most relevant factual claims, while simultaneously taking in suggestions from readers.

Funding

The *Chequeado* team is working to diversify revenue and improve organization sustainability. The publication was initially funded with capital from three private investors[23] but now runs independently through the La Voz Pública Foundation. To ensure its complete neutrality, *Chequeado* refuses any funding from the Argentinian government as a matter of principle. Some 57 percent of its budget come from international donors, and although Zommer would prefer not to rely too heavily on this source, she recognizes that "without that money, our impact would be lower." *Chequeado* also holds annual fundraising dinners, which have attracted corporate sponsorships and support from national companies.

The team has organized successful **crowdfunding campaigns** over the past five years, finding them to be particularly effective when they were tied to specific projects. These campaigns have had the added effects of bringing in more small donors and engaging new readers. Their overall value might lie as much in rallying community support as in raising money, says Guzman, adding: "The objective is more about having the community support us. It is important because we want our community to value our work."

A small portion of the revenue, about 10 percent, comes from offering online courses and selling content (always clearly attributed to *Chequeado*) to other media outlets.

Audience and community engagement

Chequeado engages its audiences across different initiatives and actively solicits readers' questions and comments during events like the live fact-checking of the annual presidential address. Its innovation lab has created an online **interactive platform** that allows readers to submit facts and statements for *Chequeado* staff to verify. Stories that result from these requests bear a corresponding acknowledgement at the bottom.

Responding to criticism, *Chequeado* adopts a selective approach that differentiates between legitimate critics and trolls. Its journalists ignore online trolling, but they take seriously reasoned counterarguments and occasionally respond by providing additional facts or explaining where their data comes from. Any mistakes in published stories get a correction with an added explainer.

The team has shared its experience with many other organizations, among other things helping them stage their own live fact-checking events. Zommer recalls that in 2014, when she spoke about *Chequeado* at the UK Global Fact-Checking Summit, the publication was the only one doing something of this kind. It has since inspired or advised numerous other media outlets, both established ones like *The Guardian* and *PolitiFact* and more upstart ones such as *OjoPúblico* (Peru), *Lupa* (Brazil) and *Animal Político* (Mexico). Many of them have gone on to stage their own live fact-checking events.

Chequeado has since attended every annual Global Fact-Checking Summit and collaborates actively with its organizer, the International Fact-Checking Network at Poynter Institute. The publication shares its techniques and tools with others and publishes its **fact-checking methodology** openly on its website. It also offers online how-to courses on topics from broad fact-checking methods to more specific subjects. A recent example is a course for journalists on gender and data offered in partnership with Argentinian NGO Economía Femini(s)ta. The team are now considering future courses on topics like climate change and security. While the majority of people taking the classes are journalists, participants have also included educators and, in at least one case, a congresswoman, Mayra Mendoza.

Today, the biggest challenge is expanding readership, says Zommer. Most of *Chequeado*'s first readers were active news consumers already, and its stories on politics and economics enjoyed immediate popularity with them. To continue growing, it is now crucial to reach new audiences who don't necessarily read the newspaper or follow public policy.

The team especially wants to engage younger generations. One youth outreach program already underway, titled Chequeado+, works to incorporate fact-checking techniques in Model UN conferences for Argentinian high school students. *Chequeado* has worked with conference organizers since July 2016 to tweak program rules in ways that require participating students to verify and contest the facts used in Model UN speeches and debates.[24] The initiative's early success has drawn attention from abroad, and *Chequeado* is now helping two South African organizations, *Africa Check* and *Livity Africa*, to launch similar projects.

Because much of *Chequeado*'s work is designed to take complex subjects and break them down, the team regularly publishes "explainers" on topics like health and science, which have steadily grown in popularity. These items get widely shared on social media, and staffers believe that they might be a way to bring in new readers. Alongside its

political coverage, the organization debunks myths in **_Mitos y Fraudes_** (Myths and Frauds). "People are not always looking for posts on the president, but also about smaller topics, like health," Zommer says.

"We need to go where people live and build partnerships with traditional media to reach people who are not well informed," she says. One collaboration to this effect is with the TV station LN+, where _Chequeado_ fact-checkers present their stories. Zommer says that at first they believed they were more effective working under the name of the TV station to reach more people. However, now that _Chequeado_ is a more recognizable brand, they are interested in producing their own show in the future.

Other promising avenues for reaching new readers are new media tools, from digital videos to social media. "Using GIFs, humor, drawings can be a line to them," Zommer says. The innovation lab employs graphic designers and developers who assist with these projects. New video and graphics content are forms that translate easily online and on social media, and they have already drawn very positive responses. A project slated for 2018 envisions a new stand-alone Instagram account targeted at teens, where youth will help develop content.

Measuring impact

Chequeado measures its reach through online feedback and Google Analytics. Staffers have led one focus group and plan to do so again in 2018. To measure impact, they use an adapted version of the open-source impact tracker developed by the Center for Investigative Reporting, where they log mentions of their work by politicians, academics and other media outlets, and analyze results over time.

There are currently no systematic ways to measure public trust, although the team plans to develop them in the future through funding awarded by OSF. Till now, says Zommer, audience research was focused more on assessing _Chequeado_'s impact on events like the 2015 elections rather than considering the concept of trust alone.

Zommer says that it is important to _Chequeado_ to continue to innovate and grow. She adds: **"We are in the middle of a very polarized society. We can't just _be_ balanced; we must show we are balanced."**

Echo Mobile: Improving Information through Technology (Kenya)

Beatrice Santa-Wood

Echo Mobile is a Kenyan platform for collecting customer data that helps companies, NGOs and media outlets interact with their audiences using mobile phones. The platform provides a reliable way to collect information, particularly in communities without Internet. Echo Mobile's technology allows clients to send voice or text surveys to individuals' phones. Its clients can gather data from users to tailor content to the their audiences. The company believes that its technology can give a voice to diverse communities, build trust and improve quality of information for organizations. Although it began with a focus on "socially-oriented" clients, it is expanding into new industries and countries and experimenting with new ways to engage audiences.

At a glance: Echo Mobile
- Platform for collecting customer data via mobile phones, founded in 2012
- Staff: 16 people
- Annual budget: $1 million
- Clients: approx. 70 per month
- People reached through Echo Mobile platform: 2.4 million

Through its innovative mobile surveys, Echo Mobile allows a wide array of companies and organizations to collect and disseminate information. Its clients range from companies marketing clean-burning stoves and solar power technologies to rural medical clinics and social change campaigns. Its technology can reach diverse types of communities, and it is particularly helpful for those traditionally without a voice**,** like low-income or remote populations.

Approaches to engagement and building trust:
- Organizations use the Echo Mobile platform to **provide information** and **engage with audiences** at no cost to their customers.
- Mobile communication between companies and customers **supplies reliable, useful information** in areas where there is a shortage of it.
- **Mobile technology** allows to reach a wider population, including rural and low-income Kenyans.
- Echo Mobile encourages face-to-face interactions as a crucial way to build trust in its tools.
- Echo Mobile technology is **highly adaptable** as Software as a Service (SaaS).

Before they launched Echo Mobile, founders Rachel Brooks and Jeremy Gordon worked at the Kenyan company Juhudi Kilimo that helps jumpstart microfinance institutions. Brooks and Gordon saw a need in Kenya for reliable ways to disseminate and collect information, especially in remote communities. They believed that improving the quality and quantity of information would help organizations connect with their audiences and make well-informed decisions.

While Brooks and Gordon were at Juhudi, the company received Ford Foundation funding for a project that involved collecting data, which enabled them to deploy the mobile platform they had created. They spun off Echo Mobile shortly thereafter, and it has retained Juhudi as a client since. The new firm's cloud-based platform allowed clients to send out survey questions via text or voice message to mobile phones, and let individuals to send back any questions or comments of their own. As respondents answer each question via a free text message or through a voice call, the information gets collected, aggregated and visualized.

Because Echo Mobile technology uses 2G networks (via SMS and automated voice calls), it can reach people without access to the Internet. As more local markets in Kenya get more affordable data and better 3G availability, however, Echo Mobile is considering this new market as well.

The company employs 16 full-time staff members, split among several teams: administration and finance, user support, sales, engineering and deployment. It has an advisory board that oversees operations, made up of both Kenyans and expats from companies like Juhudi Kilimo, Microsoft, GE Health and Vodafone, as well as its two founders. Echo Mobile's deployment team advises organizations on using survey data more effectively, and revenue from consulting services of this kind accounts for 70 percent of its income. The remaining 30 percent is revenue generated from licensing and delivering software on demand, the practice known as Software as a Service (SaaS). Echo Mobile is able to rely solely on these two income streams.

Audience engagement

As Echo Mobile evolved, so has its audience. "We used to be focused more on socially-oriented [organizations] but we've expanded beyond that," says CEO Zoe Cohen. She has worked in project management and evaluation consulting for both international NGOs and mobile technology companies in Kenya before joining the team in 2014. When thinking of which clients to pursue, "we usually ask ourselves, 'Are they customer-centric in their approach?'" she says.

The company has maintained steady growth in recent years, thanks in large part to word of mouth. Its clients include bank and microfinance institutions, international organizations like the World Bank and UNDP, international and domestic NGOs, and environmentally conscious companies like One Degree Solar. Echo Mobile prefers to work with partners interested in creating services that target the needs of beneficiaries, because it believes that these kinds of organizations stand to get the most from its platform. Its deployment, the company hopes, will allow its clients to collect information on how to best serve their customers.

One standout Echo Mobile client is **Well Told Story**, a social communications company that helps commercial, philanthropic and development organizations in Africa use print, radio and social media to build audiences. One of its projects is **Shujaaz FM**, a multimedia platform that produces illustrated and audio stories about the popular **fictional character named DJ Boyie**—or DJ B for short—as a way to discuss challenges faced by Kenyan youth. Shujaaz FM uses Echo Mobile to communicate with its audiences and get feedback, and users can text in and receive responses from DJ B. Readers can ask the character anything, from his financial planning advice to his counsel on health and moral dilemmas. The platform keeps all responses confidential, so clients can publish results while ensuring anonymity.

Echo Mobile's engagement with media projects of this kind demonstrates the rich potential of its technology in building writer-audience relationships. It has found that its SMS messages to listeners are more effective when they are personalized. SMS technology also allows engagement to take the form of a conversation, in which Well Told Story can ask listeners multiple questions and aggregate answers in real time. Based on the responses, it can group its audience members by factors like age and direct further questions to specific groups, or customize additional questions using keywords. All these could be useful techniques for other media organizations eager to create stories that their readers or listeners want.

Cohen believes that the sense of connection and participation fostered by these types of conversations helps build trust on different levels in society. She also thinks that using mobile surveys—be it for communications, marketing, or outreach—allows customers to reach more people.

As Echo Mobile grew, it reached out to new business sectors—including microfinance, consumer goods and insurance companies—both at home and abroad. To date, its technology has been used in 17 countries, although the bulk of its clients and users are

still in Kenya and East Africa. Its positive reputation in Kenya is a big part of the reason, as is the fact that Kenya has a relatively high mobile penetration rate (about 89 percent[25]) and telecommunication laws that allow using toll-free text messages. By comparison, Echo Mobile can offer only about 60 percent of its services in countries like Tanzania because local regulations mean higher telecommunication costs.

Trust in Echo Mobile's technology

The accessibility of Echo Mobile's service—in costs nothing for listeners of Shujaaz FM to answer DJ B's survey questions and share their opinions, for example—helps to build trust between companies and their customers. This accessibility often has direct social benefits. Another one of Echo Mobile's clients, the maternity healthcare enterprise Jacaranda Health, encourages its patients to use their mobile phones to schedule appointments and receive health tips via mobile for free. And Juhudi can respond to its microfinance borrowers in rural Kenya much more efficiently on matters such as applying for new loans or checking an existing account's status.

These conversations help address another social need, Cohen says. In many areas of Kenya where access to reliable information remains difficult, they supply people with accurate, immediately useful data. She emphasizes, however, that Echo Mobile encourages clients to further build trust by having face-to-face meetings whenever possible, especially when the toll-free service is first introduced.

Of all the different sizes of Echo Mobile's client organizations, Cohen says that it is smaller groups that have used its technology to greatest effect. For instance, a company such as Burn Manufacturing (which makes clean-burning stoves) often employs smaller companies or individuals to sell its products, making it harder to collect feedback directly. Echo Mobile's technology fills the gap, providing a line to individuals who actually use clean-burning stoves day to day. in rural communities, Echo Mobile empowers consumers, Cohen says, by "giving them a free way to communicate with the company" along with direct access. Any problems with the generators can be relayed directly to Burn Manufacturing.

Measuring impact

Echo Mobile measures program engagement through platform interactions, but it does not have a way to measure end-user impact. It has communicated with over 2.4 million people through its platform, sending and receiving over 34.5 million messages. While it can look at how people use its tool, it is harder to measure whether its use helps to

build trust. When users receive surveys, they associate the questions with the organization distributing it. Cohen says that Echo Mobile isn't a subject of the survey process, but rather a silent facilitator for its clients. "We're more like Twitter, in that Echo Mobile's use is dependent on the users."

The company does collect and analyze information from its clients to improve the technology. As phone data and Internet penetration grow in Kenya, Echo Mobile is considering new ways to disseminate surveys. The staff hope to design a 3G strategy while still maintaining mobile access. They are also exploring Facebook Messenger as one possibility, and are interested in using WhatsApp (though WhatsApp's current terms of service would make that impossible).

Hivisasa.com: Making Local News Fun and Accessible (Kenya)

Anya Schiffrin

Hivisasa is a Nairobi-based media startup that aims to connect writers and readers and to provide coverage of local news that Kenyan mainstream media often neglect. Most of its content is from citizen journalists, who are free to write on any topics of their choice and are paid weekly for their contributions. Launched in 2014 and branding itself "county news," the site has steadily grown to cover 10 of Kenya's most populous counties.[26] Its name means "right now" in Swahili.

The opportunity to publish with *Hivisasa* is available to "everyone," touts a short animated **recruitment video** the team has created. *Hivisasa* recruits its numerous contributors through tools like the video and

At a glance: Hivisasa

- News site populated by citizen reporters, founded in 2014

- Niche: local (county) news, Nairobi and 10 nearby counties

- Content: short citizen-reported news and opinion pieces

- Output: 4,000 items per month

- Funding: venture capital investments, advertising

- Audience: 20M page views a month, mostly 18-25 years old

- Social media followers: 500K on Facebook, 14K on Twitter, 62K on Instagram

word of mouth, and many come from rural areas. No previous journalism experience is necessary. Contributors are offered brief online training by editors in charge of the particular counties, and *Hivisasa* is currently developing a **free online academy** for its writers, with guidance on how to interview, take good photos, avoid plagiarism and libel, write a compelling story and give it a good headline.

Approaches to engagement and building trust:

- Content written by **hundreds of citizen reporters** who cover daily developments in their **local communities**, responding to a dearth of reliable local news in Kenya.

- Runs popular **social media accounts tailored to individual counties** the site covers.

- High volume of **hyper-local news stories** fuels **reader engagement** and online conversation.

- Uses **mobile** to reach a wider population, including rural and low-income Kenyans.
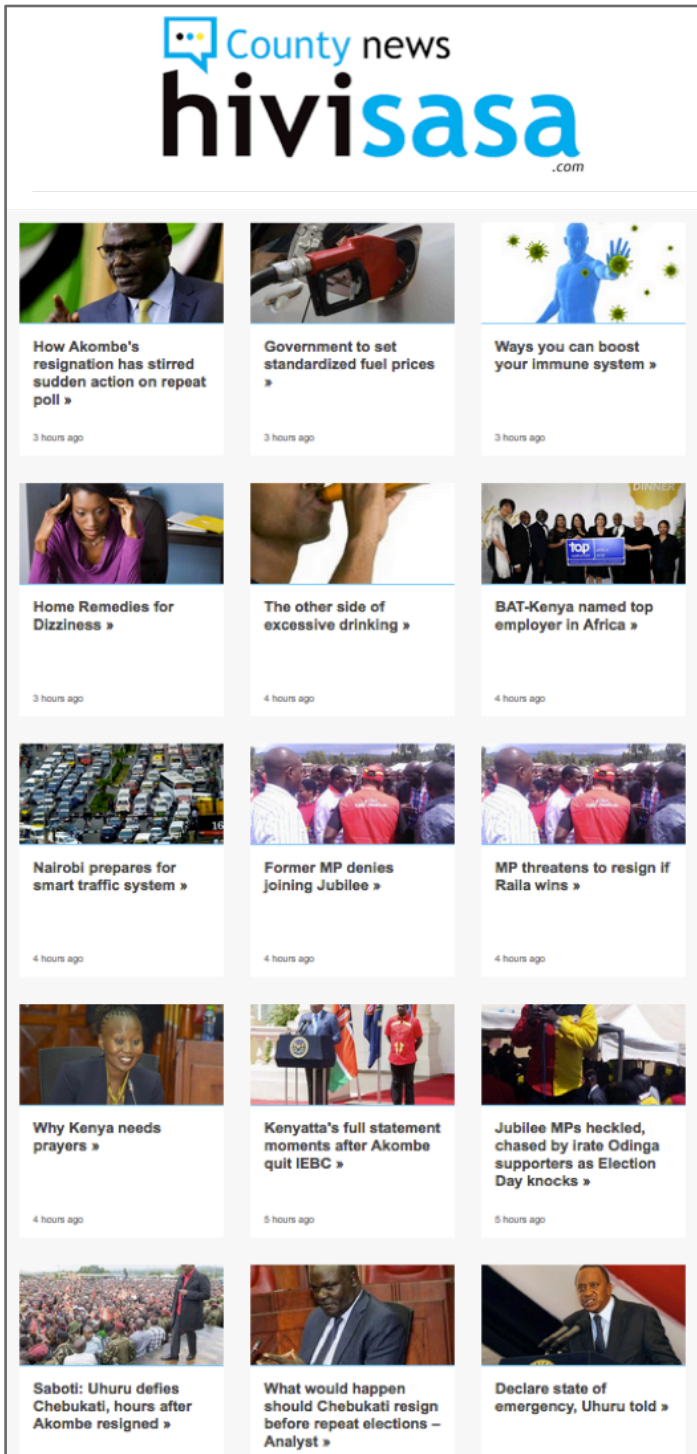
Hivisasa stories are "short and straight to the point," says content manager Enock Nyariki. The site makes it a priority to offer content that would be engaging for the audience, he adds, and to ensure that it is "written in an interesting way." The stories are typically about 200 words long and address topics as diverse as politics, crime, culture and sports. Citizen reporters are paid via the Kenyan mobile system M-Pesa, and, according to the site, some are able to make upward of $80 per month.

The site's focus on local news came as a response to an almost complete lack of published content that would address the day-to-day reality of most Kenyans. *Hivisasa* founders realized that people are interested not only in what was happening in the capital but also in their immediate local area. Sometimes people move between villages and want to know the news and happenings in their new home, for instance, or they might be looking for a reliable source of information on social and administrative developments that are affecting their daily lives. The site currently covers everything from live updates on the **2017 presidential election** to the **senate race** in the south-western town of Kisii to the **controversy** that resulted when a man from Nyaribari Chache constituency buried his deceased wife in their kitchen.

The model has proven successful, propelling the website's rise to one of Kenya's largest producers of online news. *Hivisasa* now publishes more than 4,000 stories per month, and on average gets more than 20 million monthly page views, according to

Nyariki, spiking at 38 million in September 2017. Perhaps a testament of these stories' relevance to local everyday realities, many of them attract more than 500 comments from readers.

Some 98 percent of these readers visit the website on their mobile phones, Nyariki says. The site follows a simple layout to enable easy mobile access via Kenya's ubiquitous 3G network. (The country's 4G connection is much more expensive and only available in major cities.) Mobile companies do not charge *Hivisasa*. Instead readers purchase data bundles for access to the site.

The high volume of site visitors has led to a growing volume of add sales. Funding has also come from the Nairobi-based investment fund 88mph (which supplied seed capital), the Kenyan venture capital firm Novastar Ventures and the Omidyar Network.

The readers are a mix of wealthy and poor Kenyans, and one reason *Hivisasa* processes such a broad range of stories is its commitment to reaching a diverse range of niche audiences. Some stories would run online despite the expectation that they won't be read by many visitors, Nyariki says, because the staff believes they contain news value. Others attract numerous readers whose comments make it clear that *Hivisasa* is their first news source, even if this particular news development was already reported elsewhere.

Hivisasa engages extensively with readers on its main **Facebook page**, which has almost 500,000 followers, as well as on individual subpages set up for each county it covers. The team also sends readers online surveys and sets up visits to rural villages to meet with their local writers and register them for further journalism training.

Nyariki maintains that audience trust in *Hivisasa* is very high. This is perhaps due to the fact that *Hivisasa* does not take a political stance, and, as Nyariki says, "anyone who has dissenting views we allow" to be featured. The site also has an easily accessible opinion page. Nyariki says that "if someone feels we are biased to one side, they are free to write and we respond" and will always make a correction to a piece if contacted by a reader. He adds that the site tracks government responses to its stories and announces when they have had impact.

GroundUp: Reporting on Social Justice (South Africa)

Anya Schiffrin

South African media is under severe pressure from Jacob Zuma and the ruling African National Congress party (ANC), and 2017 saw attacks and harassment of journalists— including the well-known editor Peter Bruce— as well as soft censorship in state-owned media.[27] Against this background, Cape Town-based *GroundUp* reports on local news that matters and syndicates its stories to leading media outlets around the country.

GroundUp is a niche online outlet that publishes about five stories a day, mostly on health, education and human rights—particularly as

At a glance: GroundUp

- Nonprofit independent news agency, launched in 2012

- Niche: South African townships, social justice, civic journalism

- Output: about five stories daily

- Staff: Seven full-time reporters, 15-20 freelancers

- Revenue: approx. $300K

- Funding: foundation grants

- Social media followers: 10K on Twitter, 13K on Facebook

they relate to greater Cape Town and South African townships. "We focus mainly on everyday working people and their struggles," says editor Nathan Geffen, adding that *GroundUp* reporting makes an impact "all the time." That is particularly true with regard to government service delivery shortfalls that often plague townships. An early success was a series of stories in 2012 and 2013 that investigated broken street lights in Khayelitsha, Cape Town's largest black township. After the stories were published, city authorities got to work and **repaired** the lights.

Approaches to engagement and building trust:

- **Covers** densely populated South African **townships** that **mainstream media neglect**.

- Strong **civic journalism** component: many reporters have **backgrounds in community activism**.

- Content includes **non-news items of high daily relevance to readers**, such as tip sheets on applying for social grants and housing that answered common questions.

- Reporting has achieved **improved service delivery** and **government accountability** for readers.

The site employs seven full-time reporters and some two dozen regular freelancers, including many who come from a background of community activism. Shortly after its launch, Geffen says, *GroundUp* ran workshops with political activists from working-class backgrounds who wanted to become reporters. "That was where our initial intake came from. People from working class communities may have less experience writing but bring an insight into *GroundUp* that other news organizations are sometimes missing. We also take students from journalism school."

When it comes to the writers' beats, Geffen says, the parameters are "quite loose; everyone does a bit of this and that." In addition to running investigations, the site covers some breaking news. A recent list of the website's five most popular stories included a report about a **teacher beating a student** and a summary of a court appearance by a different teacher **accused of sexual assault**. Another category is highly in-demand content with little news value but immediate bearing on people's

lives, such as tip sheets on how to apply for government **social grants** and housing. These items got "hundreds of thousands of page views," says Geffen.

Throughout its reporting, the publication's top priority is to draw public attention to the everyday struggles of people for their rights that mainstream South African media often ignore. For that, Geffen says, *GroundUp* must maintain high quality standards in its journalism. "We want to be a trusted, reliable source, and to do that means striving for fairness and accuracy," he says. "No daily publication gets it right all the time, but if there is an emphasis on fairness and accuracy, as well as a commitment to rectifying errors, readers will notice and appreciate it."

The site's original mission was to report on human rights. This is still true, Geffen explains, but two things have changed. The first is that the site has become more of a news agency, syndicating news to front-end publishers such as the *Mail & Guardian*, *News24*, *Daily Maverick* and *Times LIVE*. As such, *GroundUp*'s audience extends far beyond its website. "We are very much concerned about increasing our website readers, but the point is that it's not our only or even our main source of readership," Geffen notes.

The second change is that *GroundUp* no longer reprints material from other sources. "We used to republish some stuff and now we have become quite strict. Anything you see on *GroundUp* is original. We won't even publish a Facebook post," Geffen says.

GroundUp does not charge readers for its content, and its stories are free for other media organizations to republish. Donor funding supplies the bulk of its annual revenue of around $300,000. The site was initially financed as a joint project of the **Community Media Trust** and the **Center for Social Science Research** at the University of Cape Town, which also helped with fundraising and hiring student writers. Today its supporters include the Bertha Foundation, the Raith Foundation and Open Society Foundations.

263Chat: Sharing News and Conversation in Polarized Zimbabwe

Anya Schiffrin

Nigel Mugamu is an entrepreneur who returned to Zimbabwe after studying in Australia and Scotland and who, in 2012, launched a Twitter feed that he hoped would encourage constructive conversation about the issues of the day. In a deeply polarized political environment, *263Chat*, now a website, serves up a steady stream of short, lively news items about Zimbabwe. Mugamu, who sometimes goes by "Sir Nige," has hired business, tech and entertainment reporters in 2017, and he hopes to add a sports reporter and a network of stringers around the country. Despite his wide reach, however, making money in a turbulent economy with low Internet penetration is hard.

At a glance: 263Chat
- Media producer housed mostly on social media, launched in 2012
- Content: short videos, social media posts
- Staff: 11 people, full-time
- Revenue: $60–90K per year
- Audience: 350K across multiple social media accounts
- Funding: ads from local businesses, video production, online campaigns
- Audience: mostly urban; 60% in Zimbabwe, 20% in South Africa, 20% in the diaspora (incl. Canada, Australia)
- Social media followers: 226K on Twitter; 77K on Facebook

Mugamu's Twitter account began by aggregating and distributing credible news sources about Zimbabwe. "What we are trying to do is get people to talk and discuss [Zimbabwe] and what is going on," he says. Another objective is to provide an alternative to foreign news media coverage about the country. Many societies have tension between the diaspora community and locals, and one of Mugamu's goals as a returned expat was to help bridge the gap between both sides. "When I founded *263Chat* I just wanted people to talk. I had been living overseas. Lots of tension between us and them. 'You stayed in Zim, you left'," he says.

Approaches to engagement and building trust:

- **Broad readership**: Estimated audience of 350,000. (Zimbabwe's population is 16 million. According to **Freedom House**, Internet penetration is 15 percent, and the government blocks some apps. Via mobile devices, Internet penetration is over 50 percent.)

- Active **social media presence**: 750,000 interactions on Facebook per week, with a total reach of up to 1 million people on the platform.

- Founder and CEO Nigel Mugamu speaks at **public events** including on panels and to church groups.

To his surprise, it turned out there was a lot of appetite for discussion about local news and Mugamu began holding Tuesday afternoon Twitter chats after asking his audience what they wanted to discuss. Mugamu would go off and research the subject and moderate the conversations. He soon found that Twitter was an ideal place for quick discussions.

"On Twitter you are anonymous and can create a pseudonym and on Facebook you can write a whole thesis about how you feel but on Twitter you only have 140 characters and you need to get to the point. It's quick and fast and there is a lot of dialogue," Mugamu says. Subjects where there has been a lot of online engagement include gender-based violence, the 2013 elections, Zimbabwe's economy, education and government controversies, such as one over the new constitution in 2012–13.

263Chat expanded from Twitter and, five years later, has established a presence on other social media platforms including Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Google+ and SoundCloud. It is now a recognized online publication in Zimbabwe. Team members do extensive surveying on Facebook of audience members in order to see what topics they are interested in, but ultimately Mugamu believes in the principle of "build it and they will come." "For us, it's about if the story needs to be told. If it's a good story, it will get attention," he says.

One of the stories Mugamu is most proud of is a **2016 video about Gabriel Mapfunde**, a local entrepreneur. Mapfunde had an agricultural background, but when he left the countryside for Harare, he couldn't find work. He knew how to ride a motorbike, however, and so he started a courier company, Quickbikes. "We did a video of him explaining how he set up his business, how he solved a problem. That video helped him grow his business," Mugamu says. Other examples of *263Chat* video stories include "**Pastor Evan Speaks on the National Shutdown**" and "**Zim Government blamed for Xenophobia**."

Most of Mugamu's readers are on Facebook but he tries to lure people to the *263Chat* website because the visits help garner advertising revenue. The major demographic on Facebook is 18 to 44, and women do most of the sharing, accounting for only 38 percent of the group's members but 70 percent of its shared posts. The team runs 15 WhatsApp groups with an average of 250 people each: four WhatsApp groups for sharing jobs and opportunities, four for general discussions, four for receiving news updates, two for classified and adverts, one on entertainment and one for "The 263Chat Show" podcast.

Mugamu prides himself on being accessible online and answers emails and comments personally. "A lot of the big media owners aren't available but I respond," he says. *263Chat* is also willing to own up to its mistakes and Mugamu has apologized to readers, which he says helps them trust him. "I quickly apologize. It's very important for credibility," he says. He adds, though, that "we don't have a section for corrections as such. Corrections are published across our social media and the website."

In 2015, Mugamu published a graphic photo of a fetus that had been aborted and there was an immediate outcry. Within 40 minutes *263Chat* had taken down the photo and apologized. "Our audience gave us props and said, 'At least you guys said sorry. Other media don't'," Mugamu recalls.

Mugamu has learned one of the rules of the Internet age: attention and followers doesn't mean profit will follow. *263Chat* lives largely off its advertising and also runs online communication campaigns for different clients, including mom-and-pop businesses. Some of the ads are purchased by local businesses, including Econet Wireles, CBZ Bank and the retailer OK Zimbabwe. Others are international organizations and a couple government agencies: UNICEF, World Bank, ZimTrade and the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises.

Even so, annual revenues vary widely, reaching $60,000 in 2016. Collecting from clients and advertisers is always hard, even in the best of times and certainly in Zimbabwe where, according to the **International Monetary Fund**, the economy is likely to grow by only 2 percent in 2017 and contract by 1 percent in 2018. Added to the woes are a debt crisis and chronic currency shortage.

"It's not the best time to be in business. I have thought of giving up several times. It's hard," Mugamu says. "Getting clients is one thing, getting a job is one thing, getting paid is another."

These challenges notwithstanding, Mugamu has so far opted against crowdfunding. "We mulled over that decision but never went ahead and said 'Let's make this happen,'" he says. "I have been told it is a good idea but I just thought, let's do the work and then the money will come."

Zimbabwe's political crisis has dragged on for years as the ailing President Robert Mugabe clung to power and used it to enrich his friends and family. The uncertainty

and the economic policies of the government contributed to a hyperinflation, which lead to the 2009 dollarization of the economy.

Politics have been fraught in Zimbabwe for decades before this November government overhaul, and Mugamu says he has had his fair share of trolling. Above all, he seeks to provide balanced coverage and says it's what his readers want and what helps *263Chat* get access when they need comments or responses from government officials.

263Chat is not doing hard-nosed investigative reporting in a difficult environment, but is providing balanced news, videos and entertainment. Mugamu estimates that its audience runs to 350,000 people, 60 percent of them in Zimbabwe, 20 percent in South Africa, and another 20 percent in the diaspora, including in Canada and Australia.

Despite its unusual origins, what once began with a Twitter account has grown into a full-fledged media organization that fosters conversation and keeps citizens informed. It has attracted growing acclaim, including the Highway Africa New Media Award for innovative use of technology for community engagement, received in 2013.

Says one reader: "I know Nigel Mugamu a bit, the guy who runs it. I think he sees himself as local tech entrepreneur. I get *263Chat* in my Twitter feed and most of the stuff I see is retweets of other media. They do lots of sport too. I honestly don't know how much original stuff they do. But I think it has quite a big following, and is probably a force for good, insofar as it helps to get info out there."

Premium Times: Holding the Government Accountable (Nigeria)

Susanna De Martino

Premium Times is a Nigerian news website that focuses on investigative reporting. Its parent organization Premium Times Services Ltd. also runs the nonprofit Premium Times Center for Investigative Journalism (PTCIJ) that relies on donor support and works to promote accountability, open data and civic technology. Cofounder Dapo Olorunyomi believes that the sites help to check government power in a media ecosystem dominated by state-sponsored news. The organization's ethos draws directly on Section 22 of the Nigerian constitution, which states that the media must hold government accountable.

At a glance: Premium Times
- News website with a nonprofit investigative arm, founded in 2011
- Staff size: 50 people
- Annual budget: approx. $170K
- Funding: foundations, advertising, marketing intelligence, data sales
- Audience: mostly urban and young (ages 18–45)
- Social media followers: 1.2M on Facebook; 627K on Twitter

Premium Times started with the goal of renewing Nigerian journalism. The founders saw that Nigerian media "had an ethical and revenue challenge," as Olorunyomi puts it, which hampered their efforts to serve as a watchdog. He and another prominent journalist, Musikilu Mojeed, set out to build a new kind of Nigerian media organization: one that is "professional, fact-based, independent" and focused above all on "accuracy in reporting and verification of claims." The two began by pooling together their

Approaches to engagement and building trust:
- Pursues **civic journalism** that has repeatedly pressed the government to improve transparency and accountability to the public.
- Dedicates five staff member to implement digital strategy, including by **engaging with readers** on the Facebook page (over 1 million followers) and **replying to comments**.
- Hosts "contact sessions" to **solicit reader feedback on coverage** and implements audience recommendations (including in one instance by hiring more female reporters).
- **Engages with readers who hold alternative views**, including by publishing op-eds by social media followers who disagree with previous coverage.

savings and then turned to friends for donations and support until foundation grants began to arrive.[28]

Today, Premium Times Services Ltd. is divided into three operations that employ around 50 people. In addition to the main news site with a staff of 38 and PTCIJ with a team of seven, the parent company is currently developing a data services arm that will employ another five. On its end, the PTCIJ is expanding into geo-journalism and fact-checking.

All three branches are under the same management, although both the news site and PTCIJ have their own advisory and editorial boards. Several staff members had previously worked at *234Next*, an online publication founded by the Pulitzer Prize–winning writer Dele Olojede. Its five-person investigations desk became the first such dedicated department among the country's media in 2009, according to Olorunyomi. Although *234Next* eventually closed, *Premium Times* arrived in late 2011 to take over its mantle by dedicating a whole newsroom "to the ethos and practice of investigative reporting."

Premium Times publishes multiple articles per day, most of them with an investigative angle. Other coverage focuses on health, lifestyle, culture, business, agriculture and the extractive sector.

Funding and impact

Advertising makes up 35 percent of *Premium Times* revenue, and another 15 percent comes from events, data sales and due diligence work. The remaining 50 percent is supplied by foundation funding, including from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Natural Resources Governance Institute, the OSF's Open Society Initiative for West Africa, MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation and the Free Press Unlimited.

Premium Times' first grant, from the Initiative for West Africa, supported the publication's **Parliament Watch project**, which promoted transparency in Nigerian National Assembly. The project carried out over 50 investigations into various inadequacies, scandals and financial impropriety on the part of parliament members. The reporting helped press the new National Assembly leadership to commit to a more accountable parliament and to release its budget for the first time in five years. The project's other major accomplishment was **compelling** the Nigerian president to order a downward review of the salaries and allowances of top Nigerian officials.

PREMIUM Times

Thursday, October 19, 2017 | Abuja ☁ 22°C

Menu ≡

Kachikwu, Baru meet with Osinbajo

The minister brief journalists after the meeting.
💬 Comment

Top News

2019: PDP Senators, State Lawmakers Strategize

Agency Report | October 18, 2017

The opposition party says it plans to win in 2019.

💬 Comment

How Rivers Govt. Fuelled Rumours Of Vaccination Of Schoolchildren By Nigerian Military

Bisi Abidoye | October 18, 2017

The development has pulled the two main political parties in the state into the ring.

💬 Comment

World Bank Explains Stance On Nigerian Govt's Debt

Press Release | October 18, 2017

The finance minister had earlier explained why the government was borrowing.

💬 Comment

Seven Nigeria Airways Pensioners Die In One Week Awaiting Entitlements

Agency Report | October 18, 2017

President Muhammadu Buhari recently approved N45 billion for the workers but the money is yet to be disbursed.

Special Reports

SPECIAL REPORT: How A Nigerian Law Is Suppressing Citizens' Freedom On The Internet

Samuel Ogundipe | October 17, 2017

Free speech is being hampered under a repressive statute that security agencies have turned to a tool for government and influential Nigerians.

💬 Comment

Six Years After Passage, Nigerians Make 'Little Use' Of FOI Act – Report

Kemi Busari | October 15, 2017

Over 53 per cent of government agencies received "just one or no request for information in the years under review."

💬 Comment

Another initiative was the Security Sector Accountability Project, implemented with OSF support, which helped expose corruption in arms spending and budgetary allocation. Reporters also surfaced integrity issues around military operation in Nigeria's northeast and severe human rights violations, particularly for the internally displaced people. This reporting has led President Muhammadu Buhari to **convene** the first investigative committee on the procurement of hardware and munitions since 2007. The investigation ultimately involved at least **17 army generals**, both retired and serving, along with other top officers. At least **241 companies** were indicted in the probe.

Premium Times partnered with the Ford Foundation to create an internship program for journalism students at eight Nigerian public universities. The program put 400 university students through three days of training on investigative reporting, data reporting, and media management, and set them up with mentors.

The newspaper's reporting on health was supported by the Gates Foundation, which helped the team to probe government healthcare spending and bring wider awareness on health issues. And a MacArthur Foundation grant is currently supporting the creation of Nigeria's first

dedicated fact-checking platform. Its site, Dubawa.org, is due for formal launch in December 2017. (*Dubawa* is an indigenous Nigerian word for "verify.")

Its significant foundation funding notwithstanding, *Premium Times* is exploring other revenue strategies, including a membership model. This model need not be subscription based, says Olorunyomi. It could also be one "that allows members of the public who find consequence in our [reporting] to invest in it." In return, beyond continuing to do the journalism the members want to support, Olorunyomi says the site might award them with "mementos, memorabilia and other gifts." Another potential revenue source is publishing anthologies of *Premium Times* op-eds.

Premium Times has won multiple awards for its reporting. It was the only Nigerian paper invited to participate in the Panama Papers reporting and **was part** of the global team that won a Pulitzer prize for the work. A different investigation, focused on **government misuse of oil resources**, won the Investigative Journalist of the Year **prize** given by the Lagos-based Wole Soyinka Center for Investigative Journalism in 2015.

Audience engagement

Premium Times set out to be a youth news platform, according to Olorunyomi, and its initial focus was on readers aged between 18 and 45. The publication has since relaxed this goal, opting instead to seek out specific communities. To promote audience engagement in Nigeria's north, for instance, *Premium Times* publishes in Hausa, an indigenous language, which has build up intergenerational readership in the region. Although the paper's audience is mostly urban, its indigenous-language content has seen great interest from semi-urban areas, Olorunyomi says. He hopes that readership will ultimately extend into rural areas and farming communities who might find the site's health and agriculture coverage relevant.

The team estimates that *Premium Times* reached about 62.5 million readers from July to October 2017. Most of them, some 73 percent, were from Nigeria. The others visited the site from the United States (13 percent), the UK (3 percent), Canada, Australia, South Africa, France and elsewhere.

The three aspects crucial to all *Premium Times* articles, according to Olorunyomi, are public interest in the subject, factual and accurate sources, and an ability to verify every claim. The site's staff use Google Analytics and Facebook shares to measure their audience, along with onthe.io, an analytics tool that provides data on article penetration. Olorunyomi adds that measuring what readers are paying attention to

"helps bring us back to reality," as "the newsroom [can] develop its own sense of reality." The site content is distributed through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, a WhatsApp channel and email newsletters.

Staffers monitor and often reply to feedback they receive online and over email or phone. They respond directly to online comments, and the digital strategy section staff, a team of five people, check with editors before replying to posts. "Sometimes it becomes an interesting interchange," says Olorunyomi. The site has occasionally published op-eds written by its social media followers who disagreed with its articles.

Another way to seek out reader feedback has been "contact sessions," or discussions of *Premium Times* coverage with readers. One such conversation occurred after the team noticed a lack of female readers. *Premium Times* held a discussion to gauge reader reactions to its reporting on a specific topic: gentrification of a fishing sub-community near Lagos. Readers pointed out that the site "didn't have enough female writers," which was reflected in its content's angles and tone. When reporters covered demolitions that were taking place in the neighborhood, they "focused so much on the men," Olorunyomi says, "but most of the work in the community [was] done by women." After this feedback, the site hired a gender consultant and stepped up its efforts to hire, train and promote female staff.

Audience trust and engagement

Olorunyomi believes that mainstream print media in Nigeria are increasingly losing the trust of the population because of declining circulation. In his view, the erosion of trust relates directly to the "challenge of revenue," which has deepened the crisis of ethics in local journalism. Too many believe that traditional media are "in bed with administration and politicians," he says, leading people to worry that they're not getting all the facts.

Although *Premium Times* does not measure trust systematically, Olorunyomi believes that readers have confidence in its reporting. "The trust quotient is a critical part of our mission," he says, and the fact that in six years the site has grown to become one of Nigeria's most read publication, "way ahead of those in the business for about 40 years" is proof that it is succeeding in that aspect. "We see ourselves essentially as a force to help revive the trust of Nigerian citizens towards media and [getting] them to believe that media is central to the promotion of good governance."

Looking ahead, *Premium Times* hopes to bolster agricultural journalism by building a price discovery platform. "If you look at our agriculture policy … you find that everything seems to be there except for the communication gap," says Olorunyomi. "We have the capacity to fill that communication gap." If established, the price discovery web platform will be accessible via mobile and be separate from *Premium Times*. People using the platform will be charged a brokerage fee, and they will provide the site with data. In Olorunyomi's words, "the platform will bring all the stakeholders in the agricultural value chain to aggregate around the need for information as it concerns producers, retailers, cooperatives, those in policy, as well as the scientist."

This platform would be part of the site's push in the direction of data and civic technology. Another, related initiative is developing an open contracting platform to help regulate the government procurement process.

At bottom, however, *Premium Times*' top priority is to "help evolve a Nigerian media that is truly independent from a revenue perspective," Olorunyomi says. He remains hopeful that it is possible to create the media that depend neither on the state nor on advertising revenue and is geared towards "mainstreaming a solution-centered journalism in Nigeria."

Raseef22: A Pan-Arab Approach to Human Rights Issues (Lebanon)

Susanna De Martino

[Raseef22](#), an independent news and opinion site based in Beirut, was founded in 2013 to provide readers with homegrown Arabic content on politics, economics and lifestyle, with a bent toward social issues and human rights. Inspired by the Arab Spring, the site emphasizes a pan-Arab approach to its coverage, seeking to appeal to all 22 Arab countries. *Raseef22* focuses on in-depth analysis rather than breaking news and runs several articles a day in Arabic, in addition to maintaining a smaller English-language site. Its decision to feature both civic journalism and lifestyle coverage stems from a desire to attract the greatest possible audience to its stories, with the hope of informing conversation and fueling political debate.

At a glance: Raseef22

- News and commentary site founded in August 2013
- Target audience: all 22 Arab states
- Content: 8–10 stories in Arabic per day, 1–2 stories in English per week; civic journalism and lifestyle news
- Staff: 18 full-time
- Budget: $1M per year
- Readership: about 16M per year
- Funding: ads, premium content partnerships, one grant (OSF)
- Social media followers: 3.6M on Facebook, 57K on Twitter

The site was launched to fill a perceived need for a pan-Arab voice, says its communications and outreach director Abir Ghattas. Although the Arab Spring produced "a surge in media outlets writing about politics and social issues," there was something lacking—an independent outlet that would touch on all 22 Arab countries. *Raseef22* aimed to fill this "culture gap" and to provide readers with homegrown Arabic-language content on politics, economics and lifestyle while "always keeping in mind social issues and human rights."

Approaches to engagement and building trust:

- **Directly responds to reader comments** on Facebook and Twitter, including to readers who disagree with its coverage.

- **Provides a platform** for local **human-rights activists** to publish op-eds, gives them liberty to write on any topic of their choice.

- **Covers underreported stories and communities** in a way that challenges restrictive media environments and encourages cross-border reader interaction.

رصيف 22   بلاد حياة سياسة ثقافة اقتصاد ملفات22 فيديو

الحسن والبؤس والشبق: معاني ودلالات الشامة والخال في التراث العربي

عالسريع

أشكمان حقق ال"سلام" بين باب التبانة وجبل محسن
منذ 13 ساعة

"بعد ما شاب وذوه ع الكتاب"... حان الوقت لنسف هذا المثل الشعبي
منذ يوم

الحجز المفرط... الخطيئة التي ترتكبها شركات الطيران من ورائكم؟
منذ 3 يوم

الأحدث

لمن الحكم في مصر؟ للشريعة أم للقانون؟
أحمد يونس | سياسة
"مبادئ الشريعة الإسلامية المصدر الرئيسي للتشريع"... هل تعتبر مصر دولة مدنية تُحكم بالقانون أم دولة دينية تُحكم بالشريعة الإسلامية أم بين بين؟

هل باتت أيام "هيئة الأمر بالمعروف" معدودة في السعودية؟
خالد الشايع | حياة
ستكون الفترة المقبلة مصيرية لجهاز هيئة الأمر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر، مع ارتفاع الأصوات المطالبة بدمجه بوزارة الشؤون الإسلامية، ما يعني أن الجهاز المثير الجدال، لم يعد يحظى بالاستقلالية التي كان يستمد قوته منها...

This pan-Arab approach to reporting and advocacy is central to *Raseef22*. Its coverage of the Islamic State's attacks on homosexuals in Syria, for example, included perspectives from across the region. Ghattas emphasizes the site's 22-country approach: "It's not only Syria related—especially when it's social issues. It's for everyone." Despite all the differences among Arab countries, she says, "there are problems that intersect on the social level."

Raseef22 sees its mission as covering human rights, raising awareness of social injustice and changing people's conceptions. "There's always an underlying tone of advocacy in our articles," Ghattas says. "We amplify the voices of the marginalized communities." The site provides a platform for activists to write on any subjects they choose, in addition to publishing research and reporting of its own. The goal is to help readers become agents of change in their societies by questioning the status quo, Ghattas says: "If you question your mass media or mainstream media, this is the first step towards actually thinking, and needing and wanting change."

Among recent articles that resonated the most with readers was a piece on the stigma faced by **Egyptian women who struggle with drug addiction** and often must overcome resistance from their own families in pursuing rehab. According to Ghattas, the writer has heard from several women struggling with addiction problems of their own who thanked her for her reporting and said they were comforted by hearing stories like theirs. Another example was a series of pieces about **religious minorities in the Middle East** that sought to

break stereotypes about religious groups such as the Yazidis and the Ismailis. The articles "encouraged enormous interaction from our readers," Ghattas says. People "engaged in a discussion about the freedom of faith and belief and what it means to live in diverse societies."

Raseef22 publishes eight to ten articles a day in Arabic and about two a week in English. In addition to daily reporting and op-eds, it runs longer "dossiers," in which authors delve deeper into individual topics, providing background and updates for their readers as stories develop. The site also maintains a blog, populated by contributing writers who are not on *Raseef22*'s staff and who, despite not being professional journalists, take on many important themes. Many of them were recruited from the ranks of local activists and bloggers, and the blog now supplies 15 percent of the site's monthly traffic.

Raseef22 also publishes lighter fare alongside its in-depth human rights reporting. This "lifestyle content" is key to ensuring that the site captures readers' attention and keeps them coming back, Ghattas says, because it "touches on their daily lives and choices." The team tries to balance between these two content categories without sacrificing quality. Says Ghattas: "being creative and being catchy without being cheap and clickbaity is the art to creating identity and sustaining it."

This strategy has attracted a young audience, and today 40 percent of *Raseef22* readers are aged between 25 and 34. Two-thirds of site visitors live in urban areas, and more than 70 percent of them are male. The team estimates that *Raseef22* reaches 16 million people per year.

Funding

The site was launched by Kareem Sakka (who is Lebanese, but based in London) with private capital, and he has since served as its publisher. The site is governed by an editorial council within the team. It has grown significantly since its blog-like early days and now employs a full-time staff of 18, including an editor in chief based in Washington DC. Revenue growth has been a challenge, however. Annual costs run to about $1 million, but 2016 was the first year when *Raseef22* earned income.

Advertisement (Facebook instant ads and Google ads) supplies 70 percent of the income. The rest comes from premium content that Raseef22 develops for other organizations, most of them international advocacy groups including the UNDP, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Red Cross and Transparency International. This

collaboration often involves articles written by *Raseef22* staff, coverage of events and joint workshops and trainings. This collaboration often involves articles written by *Raseef22*, coverage of events, and joint workshops and trainings. In one instance, the UNDP requested research, along with preparation and facilitation of an event and a workshop. In another, MSF wanted to raise awareness of the areas it works in and to encourage people in the Arab world to join its staff; *Raseef22* produced videos, GIFs and infographics, and wrote a couple of articles in a storytelling format to narrate the group's experiences in Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen. In addition, the site published personal stories written by MSF staff on its blog.

In addition to these sources of revenue, *Raseef22* has also received one donor grant: $150,000 from the Open Society Foundations that it has allocated to building a video department.

The publication's most pressing challenge is monetizing its content. Several approaches are being considered, including syndicating articles. Ghattas notes that existing *Raseef22* content can be "transformed into sellable material." One idea is to repackage stories into guides—similar to the dossiers the site has published on famous Arab cities, places to go to, food and design. The team is also considering doing more workshops, of the kind they conducted for UNDP on how to create effective online narratives.

Ghattas says that *Raseef22* hopes to move away from Google ads, believing them to not be a viable financial model for the current Arab market. "Sports magazines or tabloids—these cash in more on Google ad revenue because they have way more clicks," she explains. "Google ads make our website look a bit crowded and dilute the image."

Media environment and building trust

Many Arab governments have recently redoubled efforts to repress journalism and its supporters, and *Raseef22* has encountered criticism after reporting on policies limiting press freedom. "If we try and write about the latest ban in Egypt on over 135 news sites, people actually would attack us and say, 'We hope you're next,' because they're pro-Sisi and pro-military," Ghattas says. "We rarely encounter constructive criticism."

Government crackdowns have changed the way readers interact with the site. Although *Raseef22* engages with its readers publicly, the readers sometimes move to private messages to continue the conversation. This has been especially true in the

summer of 2017, when the site has seen **a surge in private messages in response to the United Arab Emirates' ban on social media posts sympathizing with Qatar**.

Government pressure is also affecting the team's thinking on how *Raseef22* content should be distributed. Staffers have been considering developing a mobile app, Ghattas says, because "if you have a mobile app, [governments] cannot block you even if they block your website."

Raseef22 engages directly with readers and closely monitors reader feedback that comes via social media and email. Ghattas is proud of the site's "100 percent response rate on Facebook," where she takes the lead on replying to comments. This often includes engaging with readers who criticize or challenge the site's articles. "For those who disagree and want to have a conversation and are open to changing their minds, we take our time to engage with them," she says. Ghattas thinks these interactions build readers' trust in the site. "We actually talk to them—we sometimes fight with them. We don't just tap them on shoulders and say, 'thank you for reading.' … We treat them as equals, we listen to what they're saying."

Ghattas believes that mistrust in the mainstream media is growing across all 22 Arab countries, but that smart readers can seek out headlines and articles that serve a particular agenda nonetheless. *Raseef22* stands out to these readers because "we don't spice up our headlines to have provocative click-bait." She says that *Raseef22* is especially trusted on certain topics, such as human rights, where it has developed a reputation for quality.

The site encounters more distrust and criticism when reporting on topics that some may find taboo, such as sexual minorities, and when challenging some practices attributed to religion. "But we're still a trusted source for … activists, liberals, [people] who aren't afraid to push the envelope," she says. "If they don't trust us they will stop coming to the website. … The best way is to always commit to our guidelines and our identity."

The Coral Project: Building Tools for Trust (United States)

Beatrice Santa-Wood

The Coral Project is a collaboration of the Mozilla Foundation, *Washington Post* and *The New York Times.* It provides online tools, resources and research to help bring newsrooms closer to their communities. Its open-source tools are designed to encourage engagement between journalists and readers, particularly through online commenting. Unlike other online engagement tech, Coral Project tools were built with journalists in mind and a desire to better understand what journalists need. The organization is continuing to expand the number of publications it works with and seek more substantive ways of measuring impact.

At a glance: The Coral Project

- Nonprofit newsroom-resource collaboration started in 2015
- Collaboration of the Mozilla Foundation, *Washington Post* and *The New York Times*
- Staff: 5 full-time, 2 contractors
- Budget: $1.2 million
- Social media followers: 5.6K on Twitter; no Facebook page
- Audiences served: Newsrooms, journalists and readers
- Based in United States, serves outlets around the world

The central aim behind the Coral Project is to bridge the disconnect between journalists and their communities. Project staffers create technological tools and provide research and resources for journalists to build closer relationships with the communities they serve. Their aim, says project lead Andrew Losowsky, is to help change newsroom behaviors to make journalists more comfortable with community engagement.

The project began in 2015 with a grant from the Knight Foundation and has received support from a variety of funders including Mozilla, the Democracy Fund and the Rita Allen Foundation. Losowsky says that the Coral Project's transparency in funding has

Approaches to engagement and building trust:

- **Spans the political spectrum**: Works with publications on the right and left.
- Forms of engagement: Tech tools, one-on-one engagement with community members.
- **"Ask"**: Form-builder and submission tool that allows journalists to **pose a question** to their readers, **collect and aggregate responses** and **embed best responses** within stories.
- **"Talk"**: A platform for **commenting on** and **moderating reader responses** to articles.

helped build its partners' trust. Its advisory board, run through the Mozilla Foundation, is made up of newsroom stakeholders who believe in its mission.

The Coral Project is based in New York and employs five full-time staff, most of whom had no prior experience in journalism. Their work is divided into three categories: software, research and promotion.

Partnerships

Losowsky says that the organization's connection with well-known names such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* helped build its credibility and jump-start client interest in the beginning. However, that relationship was on a two-year contractual basis, which has recently ended. The Coral Project still works with both publications, and *The Washington Post* uses its technology.

The team has conducted extensive research with journalists around the world while designing its tools, including media in the United States, UK, Australia, the Netherlands, Brazil and France. To gauge industry challenges, it has interviewed news outlets of all sizes and different approaches to audience relationships. Losowsky says the project will work with anyone, as long as its partners are related to journalism and are professional organizations. It has already worked with publications on the right and left, ranging from *The Daily Caller* to *The Guardian*, and wants to establish itself as a nonpartisan resource.

The Coral Project programs

The Coral Project's three products—"Ask," "Talk" and "Guides"—are all open source and free. The products are currently in use in about a dozen newsrooms. With Ask, program journalists create online forms to ask readers questions. They can then manage, tag and filter the responses, as well as create a gallery in a couple of clicks to add to their article. The software is customizable to the specific needs of a publication or type of story and, being a Mozilla project, does not include any surveillance or ad tracking, with all information staying internal to the publication using it.

The Coral Project Guides provide resources on how to build effective and healthy communities online. They include advice on everything from how to pose better questions to readers to managing Internet trolls.

The Talk software is designed to improve comment sections on websites. With Talk, moderators can use a more flexible range of tools from other systems to more easily address or remove disruptive comments and trolling. "Comments for us are a means to an end," Losowsky says. The Coral Project believes that there are many ways to build trust, and that comments are one way to strengthen the relationship between writers and readers. "Trust is built up with a relationship. It is something ongoing. Comments aren't the only way, but we do think it is an effective way," Losowsky says.

Working with journalists to build tools

Losowsky says that when designing Ask, the team looked closely at commonly used tools like Google Forms, and identified how they could better meet the needs of journalists. "We built Ask looking at how they [journalists] interact with their communities," he says. In particular, the team noticed that many of these tools made it difficult to take information and feed it into a story.

As just one example, the Salt Lake City newspaper *Deseret News* recently began using the Ask tool to collect reader experiences around the opioid epidemic in the United States. It asked readers if they knew anyone who was affected by the crisis. At first all the responses simply said "yes" or "no" rather than providing the substantive comments that the *Deseret News* had hoped to collect. Because Ask connects to Slack, however, the reporters quickly realized that the question was not worded clearly and were able to rewrite it with Ask. They then received far more answers with stories and examples from the community, some of which helped propel further investigation into the topic.

Univision has also had success using the tool, especially with collecting viewer response during TV reports and debates. It is able to sift through and categorize responses with Ask more effectively than in its previous workflow, when it simply published an email address. It asked people to submit stories of crossing the US border by truck, for instance, which brought in a large number of stories, and *Univision* could highlight and respond to some of the best ones.

Measuring impact

Currently, The Coral Project measures most of its impact through qualitative data. It would like to find better ways to collect quantitative data, such as positive or punitive actions its tech helps produce, but while it does provide guidance to newsrooms on

how to collect that data, the decision to do so is ultimately up to the end users of the software.

Losowsky says that the Coral Project would also like to measure "the extent to which dialogues have improved communities." He believes that improving journalists' connections to their audiences can have a big impact. "Comments are a means to an end. The Coral Project brings journalists closer to communities, which benefits democracy in a big way," he says.

APPENDIX I. ANNOTATED LITERATURE REVIEW: SCHOLARS TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE EFFECT OF THE INTERNET ON TRUST IN MEDIA

Anya Schiffrin

In the late nineteenth century, French sociologist Gabriel Tarde argued that the creation of "a public" as a social institution was spurred by the invention of the telegraph, the use of the printing press and the rapid expansion of the railways. These served to link different communities and ensure that people could access the same information at the same time. Historians also refer to "periodicity," the reliability with which newspapers could appear on the same day and at the same time.

The growth of the public meant that public opinion could be formed and societies could have informed debate on the important subjects of the day. **We can argue that the fragmentation caused by the Internet, which gave rise to echo chambers and filter bubbles, was the undoing of this concept of the public.** People now receive segmented and targeted stories from friends on social media and from sites they choose rather than relying on legacy outlets. In many places, audiences no longer trust the media as much as they did.

A number of scholars in economics, political science, psychology and communications are exploring the characteristics of trust, the relationship between trust in media and trust in other institutions, the link between education and trust in institutions, and the impact of social media on perceptions of credibility. They are looking at the conditions that make people susceptible to disinformation and exploring why readers believe some outlets but not others to be credible and fair. Among other topics, they have studied readers' exposure to fake news and to corrections to see what is persuasive. Below is a summary of some recent papers.

Pennycook, Gordon, Tyrone D. Cannon, and David G. Rand. "Prior Exposure Increases Perceived Accuracy of Fake News." *SSRN Electronic Journal* **(2017).**

The authors find that the key factor enabling many fake news narratives to travel widely on social media is how familiar they become to readers. The study reports that fake news headlines, encountered repeatedly, are believed even when they defy logic. In fact, this was true even when these headlines were implausible or

contradicted readers' own beliefs. Warning labels of the kind Facebook has began assigning to fake news (which cautioned readers that the story had been "disputed by third-party fact-checkers") had no effect on perceived accuracy. As long as this content was already familiar, social media users were rarely discouraged from ranking it as credible and passing it on to others. The authors conducted two identical experiments with a total of some 950 study participants to obtain these results. They conclude that "social media platforms help to incubate blatantly false news stories, and that tagging such stories as disputed is not an effective solution to this problem."

Swire, Briony, Adam J. Berinsky, Stephan Lewandosky, and Ullrich K. H. Ecker. "Processing Political Misinformation: Comprehending the Trump Phenomenon." Royal Society Open Science Publishing 4 (2017).

The authors studied voters' reactions to both true and false political statements made by Donald Trump during the 2016 election campaign to assess the importance of source credibility in their evaluation of such claims and the effectiveness of correcting misinformation once disseminated. Controlling for voters' political preferences, the study **found that when Trump was identified as the source of information, his supporters were more likely to trust its veracity, and that correction of his inaccurate statements had no effect on supporters' voting preferences. The perceived credibility of the initial source, moreover, was found to carry more weight with voters than the credibility of those correcting misinformation.** In sum, these findings indicate that **voters** "use political figures as a heuristic to guide evaluation of what is true and false, yet **do not insist on veracity as a prerequisite for supporting political candidates."**

Karlsson, Michael, Christer Clerwall, and Lars Nord. "Do Not Stand Corrected: Transparency and Users' Attitudes to Inaccurate News and Corrections in Online Journalism." *Journalism & Mass Communications Quarterly* **94, no. 1 (2017): 148-216.**

A survey of 2,091 Swedes about their attitudes to media corrections of factual errors found that they were not forgiving of factual errors in news coverage, had not become accustomed to them despite the ubiquity of the Internet, and were not willing to sacrifice accuracy for speed. The authors conclude: "Although corrections are easier to make in the digital environment, it is **very doubtful**, based on these results, **that openness about these mistakes will increase trust unconditionally or even to any large extent.** … We can also note that those who

are more distrustful of the media do not have their mistrust remedied to any large extent by the news media being forthright about their mistakes. … It is only those who already trust the media who appreciate corrections." The authors suggest that it might be better for media outlets to withdraw a flawed article then to correct it. They argue that professional codes of conduct are not at all guaranteed to improve trust in media, in part because journalists and citizens may have different ideas as to what constitutes proper conduct. The study cite research by Thomas Hanitzch (2013) who found **no confirmed link between journalistic performance and public trust in media**. Other studies, however, reach the opposite conclusion (see Oren and Cohen 2016 below)**.**

Turcotte, Jason, Chance York, Jacob Irving, Rosanne M. Scholl, and Raymond J. Pingree. "News Recommendations from Social Media Opinion Leaders: Effects on Media Trust and Information Seeking." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* **20, no. 5 (2015): 520-535.**

Using online survey data and Facebook's API in order to gather data about the respondents, the authors found that people trusted news more if it came from their friends. Also, people were more likely to read a particular news outlet if it was recommended by a friend viewed as an "opinion leader." The authors conclude that "social media users interact with other users in a politically heterogeneous way at higher rates than social media interactions between representatives of news organizations. … Consequently, social recommendations can help to mitigate the effects of moderate groups receiving less prominent coverage." The study's literature review notes that people who do not trust the news media resist news from the mainstream. Therefore, **"declining levels of media trust fosters a heightened perception that the current political climate is a polarizing one."**

Flanagin, Andrew J. and Miriam J. Metzger. "The Role of Site Features, User Attributes, and Information Verification Behaviors on the Perceived Credibility of Web-Based Information." *New Media & Society* **9, no. 2 (2007): 319–342.**

The authors studied how people assess credibility of different websites they visit. They found that people trust news sites the most and don't much trust personal sites. Also, perceptions of credibility are affected by website attributes (design features, complexity, depth of content) rather than knowledge of who is behind the site. Other factors that audiences take into consideration are message credibility, site credibility and sponsor credibility (page 322). For both sponsor

credibility and message credibility, **news organization sites were considered the most credible.**

Kohring, Matthias and Jörg Matthes. "Trust in News Media, Development and Validation of a Multidimensional Scale." *Communications Research* 34, no. 2 (2007): 231–252.

The literature review does a good job of explaining the last 50 years' worth of efforts to measure media credibility and trust, but says that although techniques improved, they were flawed because they were not theoretical enough (page 237). The problem is that people need information but lack time and resources to gather it and so must trust someone else to provide it. Domino effect: society can't trust politicians unless they have reliable information on what government is doing (page 238), and yet media is selective. **The authors also note different kinds of trust: trust in the media's selection of topics, in facts, in accuracy of depiction and in journalistic assessment. They find that selectivity of topics is of first-order importance when audiences decide which outlet to trust.**

The literature review discusses earlier research on media trust, including the original 1959 study by Carl Hovland at the Yale Communication Research Program. He made **the distinction between "expertness" and "trustworthiness." It's not clear if people trust the dentist because he is an expert or if his expertise builds their trust (233).** Roper Center surveys included questions about which would you trust, TV over print, but their methodology has also been criticized. The field advanced in the 1970s and 1980s when experts developed different scales for measuring credibility (page 235) but the authors feel there is more to be done to advance understanding of trust in media.

Livio, Oren, and Jonathan Cohen. "'Fool Me Once, Shame on You': Direct Personal Experience and Media Trust." *Journalism* (2016): 1–15.

This paper looks at what happens to trust when people consume media coverage of an event they have witnessed. Lit review notes: **"To the extent that a substantial portion of an individual's news exposure comes through recommendations on social media, this may provide a sense of increased trust that may generalize not only to specific news items but to news media more generally"** (page 4). Conclusion: "**Perceived correspondence between direct personal experience and news reports was the strongest predictor of trust in journalists when controlling for all other factors. …** Declining levels of trust in

journalists may be associated with actual evaluations of the quality of media performance by individuals thus **refocusing the question of trust on journalistic practice rather than on audience attributes**."

Messing, Solomon and Sean J. Westwood. "Selective Exposure in the Age of Social Media: Endorsements Trump Partisan Source Affiliation When Selecting News Online." *Communication Research* **41, no. 8 (2012): 1042–1063.**

The literature review notes that correlation of media trust with conservative views is different in different countries. In the United States, conservatives are less likely to trust the media, and people on the left are more likely to do so, although trust has declined overall. Internet has become a more prominent source of news, and its **use is associated with less trust in the media**. More recent studies find that people trust legacy media more than the Internet. **Information recommended by friends is considered more trustworthy, as is information recommended by lots of people**. The paper concludes on an optimistic note that social endorsements may be a way to ensure that people see a range of opinions. (Five years later, this forecast seems a bit overoptimistic.)

Moehler, Devra C. and Naunihal Singh. "Whose News Do You Trust? Explaining Trust in Private versus Public Media in Africa." *Political Research Quarterly* **64, no. 2 (2011): 276–292.**

According to Afrobarometer data, citizens in Africa trust government-owned broadcast media more than privately-owned media, despite the history of state propaganda and lack of independent state-owned media. The authors analyze Afrobarometer data from 16 countries and find that **"low political sophistication, illiberal attitudes and support for incumbents are all associated with greater relative trust in government media. Citizens also prefer public broadcasters in polities with greater press freedom and lower corruption."** In less free countries, citizens trust the private media more. Trust in private media is also associated with higher levels of corruption. "The results suggest that **the relative distrust of private media is more the product of political culture than the result of an immature and poor-quality private media sphere**… **The international community's focus on improving media quality and press freedom will not be sufficient for private media to engender trust** and to become influential and economically viable."

Africans say the news media...

... should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control
54%
42%
Government right to prevent "harmful" publications

... should constantly investigate and report on government mistakes and corruption
69%
27%
Too much negative reporting only harms the country

... is somewhat/very effective in revealing government mistakes and corruption
59%
32%
Media is not effective

... rarely/never abuses its freedom by publishing lies
51%
36%
Media often/always publishes lies

Role and performance of the news media
36 African countries | 2014/2015

AFRO BAROMETER
LET THE PEOPLE HAVE A SAY

Figure 2: Support for free media | by region, gender, education, age, and urban-rural location | 36 countries | 2014/2015

West Africa	49%
North Africa	51%
Central Africa	52%
East Africa	58%
Southern Africa	60%
Female	53%
Male	55%
Post-secondary	57%
Secondary only	57%
Primary only	55%
No formal education	46%
Over 65	49%
56-65	51%
46-55	53%
36-45	54%
26-35	55%
18-25	55%
Urban	55%
Rural	53%

(% who "agree" or "agree very strongly" that media should have the right to publish any views and ideas without government control)
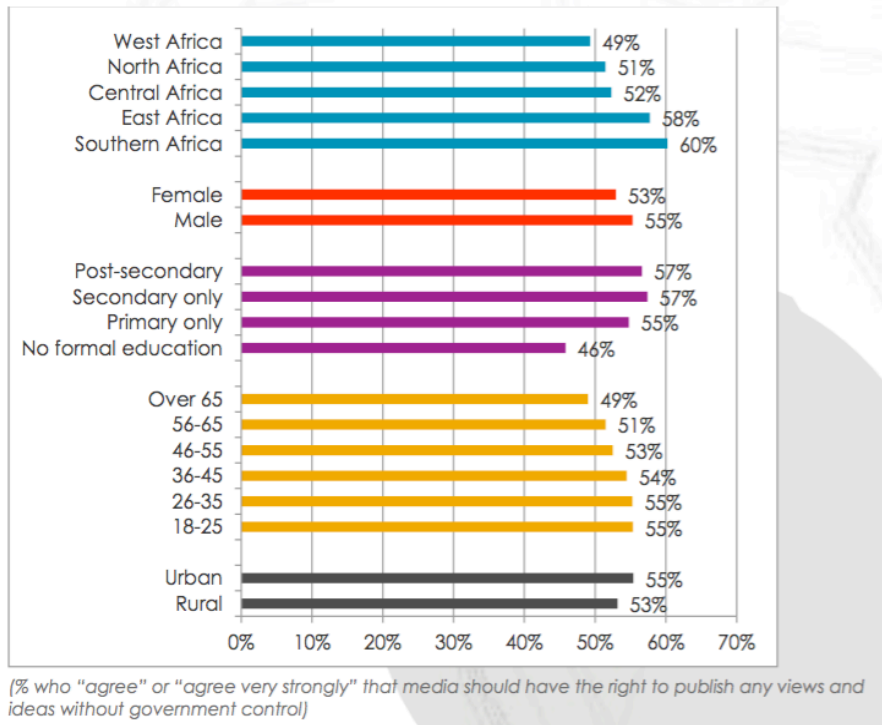
Source: Afrobarometer, "Dispatch No. 85," May

Moy, Patricia and Dietram A. Scheufele. "Media Effects on Political and Social Trust." *Journalism & Mass Communications Quarterly* 77, no. 4 (2000): 744–759.

The authors look at how news consumption affects overall trust. They note: "Studies suggest that negative media portrayals of government do have an effect, and do undermine trust in government. Studies suggest that reading print media can promote trust because people develop political expertise. TV coverage of

government can be relatively low quality and not provide information and therefore hurt trust in government. Or television coverage may be episodic, and so viewers think action is taken only by individuals and don't learn about what the government is actually doing" (page 746). Findings: **Political trust is related to education and ideology**. People with education and people who were liberal trusted the government. **Social trust had to do with age, education and income. All three correlated positively. Reading newspapers and watching entertainment correlated with trust. Watching television news undermined trust.** No correlation was found with talk radio consumption. **Social trust led to political trust and vice versa.**

Tsfati, Yariv and Gal Ariely. "Individual and Contextual Correlates of Trust in Media Across 44 Countries." *Communication Research* **41, no. 6 (2013): 760–782.**

"Our findings indicate that levels of political interest, interpersonal trust, and exposure to television news and **newspapers are positively correlated with trust in media, while education and exposure to news on the Internet are negatively associated. State ownership of the media industry did not have a main effect on trust in media** after controlling for other factors. However, **an interaction was found between state ownership and level of democracy**: state ownership of television is positively associated with media trust in democratic societies and negatively associated with trust in media in nondemocratic societies."

Ravetti, Chiara, Mu Quan, and Yana Popp Jin. "A Dragon Eating Its Own Tail: Information About Air Pollution, Uncertainty and Household Adaptation in Beijing." Unpublished manuscript, September 2017.

"In this study, we analyse how the Chinese government deals with pollution information: we examine the discrepancy between Chinese reported levels of pollution and those indicated by the US embassy in Beijing and we find that the two differ substantially. Afterwards, we analyse the household dimension of the problem, focusing on the choice of various self-protecting measures, such as wearing a mask, buying an air purifier, reducing leisure time outdoor, or changing means of transportation. We examine the role of the information signal provided by the government on different groups of people: those who trust more or less the government, those who prefer to use the Internet, and those who do not care. We find that **most households rely on the public (government controlled) media**, and those who fully trust it may actually respond to high air pollution with less preventive actions. Sometimes, instead, information encourages averting

behaviour, but in the form of taking more the car or other polluting means of transportation, hence generating a negative externality in aggregate. Overall, the effect of government information seems almost detrimental, except for some encouragement towards more preventive health checks.

Internet usage for the purpose of collecting information about air pollution is still limited. The **vast majority of people interviewed relied on government controlled sources of information, such as TV, radio or newspapers.** … Furthermore, 70% of our sample considers the information available on air pollution sufficient, and only 8% of the remaining respondents indicated they would have liked to access more detailed information through the Internet. Therefore, **the government can exert a direct influence on the choices of most of the population** when deciding what data to publish for the air pollution index."

Chan, Man-pui S., Christopher R. Jones, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, and Dolores Albaraccín. "Debunking: A Meta-Analysis of the Psychological Efficacy of Messages Countering Misinformation." *Psychological Science* **28, no. 1 (2017): 1–16.**

This paper conducted a meta analysis of studies on how to effectively debunk misinformation. Among other things it found that simply printing a correction or warning does not bring people to change their minds but can rather can result in "misinformation persistence." The authors point to **Schwarz et al. (2007)**, who found that corrections often inadvertently strengthen the misinformation they intend to contest when they merely ask people to "consider the opposite" of stated facts. This risk is lowered only when a well argued, detailed debunking message is offered **(Jerit 2008)**.

Findings: **Detailed corrections produce a stronger debunking effect than non-detailed ones.** However, they can also inadvertently **perpetuate misinformation**. "It seems plausible that the misinformation messages could have been more detailed in studies with more detailed debunking. … The debunking effect was weaker when the debunking message simply labeled misinformation as incorrect rather than when it introduced corrective information. Contrary to expectations, however, the debunking effects of more detailed debunking messages did not translate into reduced misinformation persistence, as the studies with detailed debunking might also have stronger misinformation persistence" (page 13).

The authors' recommendations include: 1) Reduce the generation of arguments in line with the misinformation; 2) Create conditions that facilitate scrutiny and counter-arguing of information; and 3) Correct information with new detailed information but keep expectations low. Detailed debunking may not always function as expected.

Can the Media Decrease Political Polarization?

A comprehensive study into whether the media can help defuse polarized issues in the United States is being conducted by Andrea Wenzel and Sam Ford. The two conducted focus groups, interviews, and story diaries in two places in Kentucky, Bowling Green and Ohio County, to investigate how people choose which media to trust, and how these choices affect their relationships with people who hold different views. The project is ongoing. Wenzel and Ford are now exploring ways to create spaces where citizens can come together and discuss complicated ideas. They are also talking with local journalists about ways to build bridges with community members.

Andrea Wenzel is an assistant professor at Klein College of Media and Communications at Temple University, and Sam Ford is a research affiliate with the MIT Comparative Media Studies/Writing and an instructor at the with Popular Culture Studies Program at Western Kentucky University. Key recommendations they have drawn up so far are quoted below.

EXCERPT from Andrea Wenzel and Sam Ford, "Lessons on Overcoming Polarization from Bowling Green and Ohio County, Kentucky," *Columbia Journalism Review*, August 2017:

[W]e recommend the following for local media, organizations, and foundations positioned to act in this or similar regions:

- For local media producers, consider how you might **explore local community issues from a solutions angle**. This might mean looking at responses to this or similar problems happening in your community, nearby, or in other parts of the country or globe.

- **Providing a regional and local lens to national stories** that is not partisan in tone might engage local audiences across divides in thinking productively about key issues.

- **Collaborations between local outlets** in the region may offer opportunities for residents to better understand how complex issues play out in their region, and the connections between them.

- News outlets, individually or in partnership, could potentially play a significant role in **providing spaces for productive community engagement across divides**. [...]

- **Participatory journalism** offers potential avenues to rebuild trust in media as well. Particularly in communities that have felt marginalized and misrepresented by the media, narrowing the distance between journalists and the public can create opportunities for people to feel more connected, confident, and invested in local media. This also helps bridge divides when local outlets lack sustainable financial resources to give the coverage they would ideally provide on issues. This might mean offering training for community reporters, or inviting residents to participate in crowdsourcing projects where they share story ideas, or join the process in some other way. It may also mean evoking the longstanding local tradition of community reporters in the form of columns from local experts or "society columns," providing weekly social news from each small community in a rural area, and finding twenty-first-century twists on these rooted practices.

- For foundations and organizations supporting media initiatives, consider how you can **meet audiences where they are** by working with existing local media outlets, and facilitating/enabling collaborations between them.

- Supporting local and rural engagement initiatives may become a vital part of **bolstering local journalism** and encouraging the retention of talent in small outlets.

The full article can be found on *__Columbia Journalism Review__*.

APPENDIX II. LANDSCAPE OF MEDIA TRUST INITIATIVES

Susanna De Martino with Ellen Hume

There have been various initiatives that aimed to build trust in media both in the United States and abroad. A small selection of these initiatives have been summarized in this appendix, which was originally written in June 2017 and updated in November 2017.

Approaches to building trust in media can be grouped into several main categories. The taxonomy below highlights a few initiatives, which are then covered more extensively in the body of this appendix. Some of the initiatives in this appendix fit into only one of the following categories, while others combine two or more approaches. This list is by no means all-encompassing. Rather, it is intended to provide a brief overview of different approaches to building trust in media.

Media literacy. Media literacy initiatives aim to give the public resources and tools to understand the media they are consuming and to make informed choices. Often, these initiatives are focused on distinguishing fact-based news from opinion and falsehoods, but there have also been "calls to include elements like the critical assessment of statistical and quantitative statements in the media, a deep understanding of algorithms and artificial intelligence, and greater emotional skepticism."[29]

One standout initiative highlighted here is the News Literacy Project, which allows journalists to engage directly with young audiences. Founded by a *Los Angeles Times* investigative reporter, the project organizes classroom and afterschool programs wherein volunteer journalists educate middle school and high school students (and their teachers) about how to separate fact-based news from "opinion, rumor and disinformation."[30]

Other efforts take a less pedagogical approach to building literacy: the News Integrity Initiative, a project of the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism, gives out grants to organizations that amplify marginalized voices and increase racial and ethnic diversity in the news media. The goal is to foster reporting that is more representative of and accountable to its communities. According to managing director Molly de Aguiar, this will build "a new kind of news literacy," based on

building trust in journalism while also acknowledging "the influence and impact of media manipulation on trust."[31]

Fact checking. These initiatives promote accuracy by checking the veracity of statements by journalists, government officials, and public figures. Projects in this area run the gamut from attempting to increase transparency to ensuring that corrections are accessible and engaging to the public, and to building trust in fact-checks, among other goals.

Many fact-checking initiatives in this appendix focus on drawing and holding an audience while conveying information. One such initiative is *Pagella Politica*, the first-place winner of a grant-making competition of the Craig Newmark Foundation and the International Center for Journalists. This Italian project created engaging videos that debunked politicians' false claims by working out the math behind those claims, in chalk on a blackboard. Another winner of this same contest was a mobile gaming app called "Quack Hunt," which gives players in-game points when they distinguish facts from falsehoods.

Other initiatives focus on building trust in checked facts. One of them, Facts Matter, by *PolitiFact*, has recently won funding from the Knight Foundation Prototype Fund. The project aims "to improve trust in fact-checking, particularly among people who identify as conservative." To do this, it engages a diverse team of commenters to "assess fact-checking reports" and study the language of these reports to "determine their effect on perceptions of trustworthiness."[32] This, organizers hope, will help legitimize the information put forth by fact-checkers in the eyes of skeptical audiences.

Community engagement: initiatives to democratize journalism. These projects involve citizens in journalism to create reporting that is relevant and trustworthy to its audience.

One of them, the Listening Post Collective, is a community media initiative funded by *Internews* to democratize journalism. Its first project, in New Orleans in 2013, was a partnership with the local public radio station WNNO. New Orleans residents received news through text messages, and then were able to record their opinions on "issue-focused questions" using recording devices in local libraries, community centers, and businesses. The conversations were then

shared through WNNO. In New Orleans and elsewhere since then, the Listening Post Collective has offered "mentorship, resources, tools, and peer-to-peer support for journalists, newsroom leaders and community groups looking to revitalize their local news and connect more directly with the public."[33]

Another initiative, Wikitribune, goes a step further, inviting the public to not only engage with the news, but also to create it. The site has used crowdfunding to hire professional reporters, and these journalists write articles in conjunction with volunteer citizen reporters who also have the power to edit and fact-check articles, both before and after publication.

Regulation. Regulation-centered initiatives promote internal guidelines for media organizations, to foster more transparent and principled journalism.

The regulation initiative profiled in this appendix, the Ethical Journalism Network, is an international coalition of over 60 journalists, editors, media owners and media support groups. The network aims to "advance education in and around the principles of ethical journalism." It educates journalists and media organizations on implementing internal rules and self-regulating. With support from the EU and UNESCO, the network's project, "Building Trust in Media in South East Europe and Turkey," supports journalist training that includes sustainable self-regulation mechanisms. The project in South East Europe and Turkey also promotes the "implementation of internal rules and good practices that recognize human rights and labour standards."[34] The Ethical Journalism Network has studied the systems of self-regulation and accountability in media in 16 countries and published the data in a report titled "The Trust Factor."[35]

Initiatives to Build Media Trust

This list of initiatives on media trust is compiled from desk research done by Susanna De Martino. For the purposes of this review, we surveyed initiatives on trust in media from the perspective of foundations and nongovernmental organizations. However, it should be noted that there are other entities addressing this issue in tech, government and advertising, among other areas.

The summaries below contain direct quotes from the organizations and media initiatives described.

1. Recent Efforts

News Integrity Initiative (announced April 2017)

Description from: CUNY J-school Staff, "**Announcing the News Integrity Initiative to Increase Trust in Journalism**" and "**News Integrity Initiative**," CUNY Graduate School of Journalism, 3 April 2017; and Ricardo Bilton, "Five months in, the News Integrity Initiative is refining its focus on diversity, transparency, and trust," Nieman Lab, 23 August 2017.

- A group of tech industry leaders, academic institutions, non-profits and other organizations are jointly launching a $14 million fund to support the News Integrity Initiative, a global consortium focused on helping people make informed judgments about the news they read and share online. The Initiative's mission is to advance news literacy, to increase trust in journalism around the world, and to better inform the public conversation.

- Will be run as an independent project by the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism under the auspices of the School's Tow-Knight Center for Entrepreneurial Journalism, whose director is Professor Jeff Jarvis.

- Founding funders include Facebook, Craig Newmark Philanthropic Fund, Ford Foundation, Democracy Fund, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Tow Foundation, AppNexus, Mozilla and Betaworks.

- In August 2017, five months after the announcement of the News Integrity Initiative, NII published a new roadmap for the project, which is designed to better lay out its plans and priorities. Beyond building trust between newsrooms and communities via listening and transparency, NII plans to direct its efforts primarily at projects that increase empathy among people with opposing viewpoints, amplify marginalized voices, cultivate diversity within news organizations (not just newsrooms), and mitigate the effect of news misinformation. It plans to tackle those problems via a strategy that includes grants, events, research, and a network of people across sectors—including advertising, technology, and academia—to share ideas and collaborate on solutions.

- Managing director Molly de Aguiarout pointed out two "essential paths forward" for the initiative. One is racial and ethnic diversity in newsrooms, which she said leads to reporting that's more representative and accountable to communities. Likewise, the program is putting a heavy emphasis on improving the quality and quantity of reporting that that listens to and responds to communities' actual goals and needs. These ideas are core to the program's grantmaking activities, which will focus on funding solutions to the diversity and empathy challenges facing journalism.

The Facebook Journalism Project (announced January 2017)

Description from Fidji Simo, "**Introducing: The Facebook Journalism Project**," Facebook Media, 11 January 201; and Campbell Brown and Fidji Simo "**Facebook Journalism Project: Six Month Update**," Facebook Media, 20 July 2017.

- January 2017: program launched to establish stronger ties between Facebook and the news industry. We will be collaborating with news organizations to develop products, learning from journalists about ways we can be a better partner, and working with publishers and educators on how we can equip people with the knowledge they need to be informed readers in the digital age.

- July 2017: a six-month update shared what the staff have heard from their partners and recapped their collaboration in three broad categories.

  1. Collaborative development of news products: Instant Articles Improvement

     - Local News: Our work on local news is still nascent, but we know that local news is the starting place for great journalism. We've met with dozens of local newsrooms across the world to understand how we can best help and, in the U.S., we have begun testing new ways to help people discover local news on Facebook.

  2. Tools and Training for Journalists

     - In the last six months, we hosted 15 News Days — all-day product training, feedback sessions, partners showcases and 1:1 help desks for local journalists and audience, business, and newsroom leads — in Dallas, Atlanta, Denver, Chicago, Seattle, San Diego, Delhi, Hyderabad, Manchester, Milan, Edinburgh, Manila, Jakarta, Mexico City and Buenos Aires. We're planning to host another 15 in the next six months.

     - Our team participated in 71 media industry events — leading keynotes and workshops or joining panels at 50 of them, sponsoring 36, and providing help desk support at approximately 15.

     - In addition, we established several training programs and launched new tools to help journalists on Facebook.

     - Data and Insights: CrowdTangle

       o Since acquiring CrowdTangle, we made it free for publishers and journalism schools to help give partners the data and insights they need. In the first half of this year, CrowdTangle onboarded over 1,600 new partners around the world. Moreover, overall usage of the tool tripled, the platform is growing quickly in emerging markets like India and Brazil and is now being used in over 1,000 local newsrooms.

       o CrowdTangle also partnered with CrossCheck to help support the fight against fake news around the French and British elections, hosted trainings and workshops at major industry events, expanded their partnership with Chartbeat and joined Facebook hackathons across the globe.

     - New Training Programs and Tools

       o Facebook for Journalists Certificate: We expanded our series of e-learning courses on Facebook products, tools, and services for journalists to 10 languages and launched the Facebook for Journalists Certificate, a three-course curriculum designed by the Poynter Institute and Facebook.

- o Knight-Lenfest Institute Partnership: We announced a pilot project that delivers Facebook training and support to local and non-profit news organizations in the U.S. through a partnership with the Knight Foundation, The Lenfest Institute for Journalism, Detroit Journalism Cooperative, and Montclair State University's Center for Cooperative Media.

- o Facebook Safety for Journalists: In June we announced Facebook Safety for Journalists and introduced a dedicated page on our Facebook for Journalists website to provide resources designed specifically to help journalists protect their accounts and themselves on Facebook.

- o Partnered with First Draft Network: We increased our commitment to the non-profit First Draft Network and helped them establish a virtual verification community, among other initiatives.

3. Tools and Training for an Informed Community

- We introduced product enhancements and launched partnerships with journalists, educators and researchers to help support informed communities.

- Addressing the Integrity of Information on Facebook: We know people want to see accurate information and high quality news on Facebook. A few of our efforts to fight the spread of false news on our platform and support an informed community include:

   - o Disrupting economic incentives because most false news is financially motivated.

   - o Reducing the posts and ads in News Feed that link to low-quality web page experiences.

   - o Introducing ranking updates to identify and lower the distribution of false news, clickbait and sensationalism, and to help reduce low quality links in News Feed so people see more informative stories.

   - o Testing a new placement of Related Articles before you read a story in News Feed, to give people more ways to see a more complete picture of a story or topic.

   - o Testing ways to make it easier for people to report a false story on Facebook to help address false news globally.

   - o Exploring better positioning of publisher branding in News Feed as a focus in the months ahead.

- Promoting News Literacy: We want to empower people to identify misleading news content when they encounter it — on any platform.

   - o Earlier this year, we gathered journalists, academics and non-profits for our first working group on news literacy at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism at Arizona State University, and held similar gatherings in Berlin and London shortly thereafter. We helped found and fund the News Integrity Initiative at the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism, a diverse new network of partners who will work together to fund research and projects focused on news literacy. And most recently, we held the first meeting of the Asia Pacific News Literacy Group in Hong Kong.

WikiTribune (announced April 2017)

An advertisement-free, subscription-based news platform financed by Jimmy Wales (founder of Wikipedia) and crowdfunding.

Description from "What, How, Who," **WikiTribune**, 2017:

- "A subscription-based news platform that brings journalists and a community of volunteers together. Articles are authored, fact-checked, and verified by professional journalists and community members working side by side as equals, and supported by readers."

Donations and subscription funds will go toward hiring and employing a small staff of journalists. Volunteers/community members are not paid. Community members have editing access to the articles both before and after publishing.

- Similar to Pierre Omidyar's Peer News project Honolulu Civil Beat, where in 2010 a small team of reporters were tasked with maintaining wiki-style pages for popular topics, along with their regular reporting—an initiative that drew criticism.[36]

TruthBuzz: The Viral Fact-Checking Contest (winners announced June 2017)

Funded by the Craig Newmark Foundation and the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ).

Description from "**Winners of Global Fact-Checking Contest Help Truth Outpace Falsehoods**," International Center for Journalists, 3 October 2017; Oren Levine, "**TruthBuzz: Announcing the Winners!**" Medium/ICFJ, 2 October 2017:

- Organized by the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) with support from the Craig Newmark Foundation, the TruthBuzz contest aimed to find new ways to help verified facts reach the widest possible audience. The competition sought creative solutions to take fact-checking beyond long-form explanations and bullet points.

- A distinguished panel of judges – leaders at digital media companies including Facebook, First Draft News, Fusion Media Group and Google News Lab – selected teams from newsrooms and civil society organizations in Argentina, Italy, Georgia and Mexico as winners of the contest.

Winners:

1st place ($10,000): Giovanni Zagni and Lorenzo Catini of *Pagella Politica*, an independent site devoted to political fact-checking (Italy).

- **The entry:** A series of short and engaging videos which evaluate politicians' claims by working out the math in chalk on a blackboard. When the vice president of Italy's Chamber of Deputies said that more members of his political party had earned university degrees than their colleagues in rival parties, this one-minute timelapse video illustrated why that claim was false.

- **The impact:** The team found that these videos were shared more widely and reached a broader audience than long, fact-checking articles. Other organizations saw the videos and got in touch about potential partnerships. The team is now working on another round of videos.

2nd place ($5,000): Laura Zommer, Pablo M. Fernández, Matías Di Santi, Ariel Riera and Ezequiel Apesteguía of *Chequeado*, an independent nonprofit news organization and Latin America´s first fact-checking site (Argentina).

- **The entry**: Humorous animated caricatures, tailor-made for social media platforms, fact-check the claims made by politicians.

- **The impact**: These videos put verified facts in front of both loyal and new audiences, and got them sharing the content on social media.

3rd place, Tie ($2,500): Tania L. Montalvo, Alan Hernández, Alejandra Arteaga, Alejandro Angeles, Arturo Ángel, Arturo Daen, Daniel Moreno, Elizabeth Cruz Larios, Eréndira Aquino, Francisco Sandoval, Iván Alamillo Suárez, Jesús Santamaría Reséndiz, José Beltrán, Karla Casillas Bermúdez, Lizbeth Padilla, Mael Vallejo, Manu Ureste, Montserrat Sánchez, Nayeli Roldán, Nina Lopez, Omar Bobadilla, Paola Alín, Paris Martínez, Pedro González Moctezuma, Rodrigo Crespo Esquivel and Yosune Chamizo. The team collaborated on behalf of five Mexican news outlets: *Animal Político*, *AJ+ Español*, *Cultura Colectiva Noticias*, *The HuffPost México*, and *Vice News en Español* (Mexico).

- **The entry**: A social media campaign that deploys video, graphics, illustrations and GIFs to show whether a particular politician has kept campaign promises. For example, when the governor of the country's most-populous state promised to provide free education to the state's indigenous population, this video showed that fewer than 15 percent of that demographic group received the promised scholarships.

- **The impact**: The state government, which had earlier claimed to have given about 12,000 scholarships to students with indigenous heritage, revised its estimate to about half that number.

3rd place, Tie ($2,500): Nino Macharashvili, Teona Tomashvili, Ia Ninoshvili, Goga Gorgodze and Anton Kamaryan of ForSet, a nonprofit organization specializing in effective communications for social issues using data, design and technology (Georgia).

- **The entry**: A mobile gaming app, now in the prototype stage, for Android devices. When players successfully tell fact from fiction, they'll catch ducks and advance to more difficult levels in the game. The game, "Quack Hunt," is a take on the classic Nintendo video game "Duck Hunt."

- **Tip from the team**: Collaborate with designers and game developers to create an educational and entertaining product.

Omidyar Network (announced April 2017)

Description from Kate Vinton, "Billionaire Pierre Omidyar's Foundation Commits $100 Million To Support Investigative Journalism," **Forbes**, 5 April 2017:

- Billionaire Pierre Omidyar's philanthropic investment firm announced a $100 million commitment to support investigative reporting and fight hate speech at the Skoll World Forum at Oxford on Wednesday. Omidyar Network says it will use the funding, which will be given out over the next three years, to fight some of the "root causes of the global trust deficit."

- The first $4.5 million will go to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), which led the Panama Papers investigation last year. Other organizations that will receive money include the Latin American Alliance for Civic Technology and the Anti-Defamation League.

- "A free and independent media is key to providing trusted information and critical checks and balances on those in positions of power," Omidyar Network partner Stephen King said in a statement.

Knight Commission on Trust, Media and Democracy (announced Sept. 2017)

Description from "Knight Foundation Announces Major Trust, Media, and Democracy, to Build a Stronger Future for Journalism," **Knight Foundation**, 25 September 2017:

- The initiative is anchored by the Knight Commission on Trust, Media and Democracy, a panel of thinkers and doers from diverse backgrounds committed to creating more informed and engaged communities. This nonpartisan commission … will explore causes for the erosion of trust in democratic institutions, in particular the press. It will also identify new thinking and solutions around rebuilding trust.

- The Knight Commission will be chaired by Jamie Woodson, executive chairman and CEO of Tennessee's State Collaborative on Reforming Education, and Tony Marx, president of The New York Public Library, the largest public library in the nation and the most used library system in the world. It will be run by the Aspen Institute, with $2 million in support from Knight.

- Combining big picture thinking with immediate action, the initiative also features more than $2.5 million in new funding to seven projects aimed at improving trust in news and building stronger connections between journalists and their audiences.

  - **Cortico** | $900,000 | Twitter: @corticoAI | Cambridge, Massachusetts: The 2016 election underscored the need to better listen to the voices of people who have gone unheard, to tell their stories and to develop a deeper understanding of a public sphere fragmented by digital technologies and political polarization. Cortico, a new nonprofit led by Deb Roy of the Laboratory for Social Machines at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, will build a platform to address these issues, helping newsrooms surface and tell stories that resonate across this fragmented landscape to foster trust, empathy and common ground. Building on its expertise in social media analytics, Cortico will extend its platform to include multiple data sources (national news, syndicated/local talk radio, local news/forums, Wikipedia, survey panels) and to incorporate content and conversations at a local level.

  - **Duke University Reporters' Lab** | $800,000 | Twitter: @ReportersLab | Durham, North Carolina: The Duke University Reporters' Lab will launch the Duke Tech & Check Cooperative, an innovation hub designed to expand the network of organizations building fact-checking tools for journalists and the public. The Lab will develop and deploy new tools to help journalists find and identify claims made by public figures and analyze their accuracy. In addition, the project team will expand the Share the Facts database to develop new apps that provide consumers with live fact-checking. The Lab will also track automation projects focused on addressing misinformation around the world, and host regular meetups, webinars and an annual Tech & Check meeting to connect innovators working in this growing field. The lab also announced additional funding from Facebook today.

  - **President and Fellows of Harvard College** | $250,000 | Twitter: @shorensteinctr | Cambridge, Massachusetts: Funding will support First Draft, a research and learning lab now a part of the Shorenstein Center for Media, Politics and Public Policy at the Harvard Kennedy School. The network includes more than 100 organizations to help newsrooms, academics, fact-checkers and technology companies collaborate and encourage real-time verification of news events. The lab will increase support and training for the news industry by building a team of researchers and graduate students

who will track and test different ways of responding to misinformation. It will develop online resources for students, newsrooms and citizens to recognize and combat misinformation.

- **Associated Press** | $245,000 | Twitter: @AP | New York: Funding will help increase the news organization's ability to debunk misinformation by doubling its resources from two to four full-time staff dedicated to fact-checking. The Associated Press will work with its member news organizations and customers (more than 15,000 news outlets) to integrate local news fact-checks into its consumer-facing platforms for the first time. They will use data and automation and experiment with new storytelling formats to better understand the kinds of information people trust. Associated Press members and customers will get access to training on best practices for fact-checks through the organization's Definitive Source webinar. They will also experiment with building trust on the local level by providing training, best practices and support for at least one local or regional fact-checking project.

- **Reynolds Journalism Institute** | $100,000 | Twitter: @rji and @mayerjoy | Columbia, Missouri: Support will help grow the institute's Trusting News project, which develops news engagement experiments and trains journalists on ways to increase trust with their audiences. The project, directed by Joy Mayer, relies on audience feedback and uses in-depth research to design news innovations. It has already helped hundreds of journalists in 44 newsrooms across the country. Knight funding will help it expand to more news organizations and create a training program for journalists focused on concrete strategies to identify audience preferences and finding new ways to connect. Learn more and apply to get involved at TrustingNews.org.

- **Markkula Center for Applied Ethics** | $100,000 | Twitter: @journethics, @trustproject | Santa Clara, California: The center's Trust Project is developing open-source software toolkits to help newsrooms convey their commitment to ethics, independence and inclusive, accurate reporting to the public. The toolkits will include content management system plug-ins for eight trust indicators (i.e. best practices, type of work, author/producer info) that provide visual cues and clear information to help people assess fact-based digital news and sort it from misinformation. The tools will also provide curators of digital journalism like Google and Facebook with consistent signals via associated metatags in Schema.org. The Trust Project is partnering with newsrooms large and small to create and test the plug-ins and other software to support both the user experience and data layer behind the trust indicators.

- **Jefferson Center** | $75,000 | Twitter: @JeffersonCtr, @YourVoiceOhio | St. Paul, Minnesota: The Center's Your Voice Ohio project will help strengthen connections between local newsrooms and their communities in Akron, Ohio and other news organizations across Ohio. It will advance experiments in engaged journalism, an emerging field that examines the changing relationship between news providers and consumers, and explores new ways to attract audience attention. Participating newsrooms will test and adapt approaches to better serve their communities, determining the best fit with their newsrooms. Lessons in engaged journalism will be hosted on the Knight-funded platform, Gather, housed at the University of Oregon's Center for Journalism Innovation and Civic Engagement. The center also announced additional funding from Democracy Fund today.

Knight Foundation Newsmatch Initiative (announced June 2017)

Description from Tom Glaisyer and Jennifer Preston, "Announcing Newsmatch 2017: $2 Million Fund Will Match Donations to Nonprofit Newsrooms," **Knight Foundation,** 21 June 2017:

- The future and mission of nonprofit journalism has never been more important as trust in the news media is at an all time low and people are searching for reliable news in their social and mobile streams. Today, the Democracy Fund and Knight Foundation welcome other funders and supporters to join a new matching gifts fund to support nonprofit news. Democracy Fund and Knight Foundation are pledging $2 million in 2017 to kick off a campaign to support nonprofit journalism, with an additional $750,000 committed to help nonprofit organizations build the capability and capacity they need to put them on the path of sustainability.

- The objective of this fund is to support nonprofit newsrooms delivering local, beat and investigative reporting. To be eligible to participate, nonprofit newsrooms must be full members of the **Institute for Nonprofit News** in September 2017. The program will begin in the fall so that the matching gifts program can be used as a way to reach new donors and appeal to recent donors during the critical end-of-year fundraising season.

- To support the matching gifts program and help put nonprofit news on the path to sustainability, Democracy Fund and Knight have committed $750,000 dollars to support the most effective strategies, tools and best practices for long-term sustainability. These investments will allow the Institute for Nonprofit News, **Local Independent Online News**, and the **News Revenue Hu**b to help local newsrooms expand their donor base, develop successful membership programs, and make the case for supporting journalism in their communities.

Knight Foundation Prototype Fund (announced June 2017)

Description from Chris Barr, "20 Projects Will Address the Spread of Mis-information through Knight Prototype Fund," **Knight Foundation**, 22 June 2017:

- Today, timed with the Investigative Reporters and Editors conference in Phoenix, we are announcing support for 20 projects aimed at combating the spread of misinformation online and increasing trust in journalism. The winning projects will receive a share of $1 million through the Knight Prototype Fund, a program focused on iterative and human-centered approaches to solving difficult problems.

- The winning projects:
  - **Breaking filter bubbles in science journalism** by the University of California, Santa Cruz (Project lead: Erika Check Hayden | Santa Cruz, California @Erika_Check, @UCSC_SciCom): Producing visually-engaging science journalism around topics such as climate change and genetics, to determine whether content delivered by a trusted messenger in a culturally-relevant context has greater reach. The articles will be tested through the digital platform EscapeYourBubble.com, which distributes curated content to users across ideological divides.
  - **Calling Bullshit in the Age of Fake News** by the University of Washington (Project lead: Jevin West | Seattle @jevinwest, @UW_iSchool): Developing a curriculum and set of tools to teach students and the public to better assess quantitative information and combat misinformation, with a particular emphasis on data, visualizations and statistics.
  - **ChartCheck by Periscopic** (Project lead: Megan Mermis | Portland, Oregon | @periscopic): Addressing the spread of misinformation through charts, graphs and data visualizations by fact-checking these resources and publishing results. The team will also build tools to evaluate the spread of these charts on social media and the Internet.

- **Crosscheck by Vanderbilt University** in collaboration with First Draft (Project leads: Lisa Fazio and Claire Wardle | Nashville, Tennessee | @lkfazio, @cward1e, @firstdraftnews, @crosscheck): Using design features to make correct news more memorable, so that people can recall it more easily when faced with false information, using a platform initially developed in France to address misinformation around the country's election.

- **Facts Matter by PolitiFact** (Project lead: Aaron Sharockman | St. Petersburg, Florida | @asharock, @PolitiFact): Helping to improve trust in fact-checking, particularly among people who identify as conservative, through experiments including in-person events; a mobile-game that tracks misconceptions about specific facts; diverse commentators who would assess fact-checking reports; and a study of the language used in these reports to determine their effect on perceptions of trustworthiness.

- **Glorious ContextuBot by Bad Idea Factory** (Project lead: Daniel Schultz | Philadelphia | @biffud, @slifty): Helping people become better consumers of online audio and video content through a tool that provides the original source of individual clips and identifies who else has discussed it on the news.

- **Hoaxy Bot-o-Meter by Center for Complex Networks and Systems Research** (Project leads: Filippo Menczer and Valentin Pentchev | Bloomington, Indiana | @Botometer, @truthyatindiana, @IUNetSci): Developing a tool to uncover attempts to use Internet bots to boost the spread of misinformation and shape public opinion. The tool aims to reveal how this information is generated and broadcasted, how it becomes viral, its overall reach and how it competes with accurate information for placement on user feeds.

- **Immigration Lab by Univision News** (Project lead: Ronny Rojas | Miami | @ronnyrojas, @UniNoticias): Engaging undocumented immigrants on issues that affect their lives by creating a reliable news resource to help them access and gather information. The project team will do on-the-ground research in communities with a high percentage of undocumented immigrants and learn about their media literacy skills, news consumption habits and needs, and trusted information sources.

- **KQED Learn by KQED** (Project lead: Randall Depew | San Francisco | @randydepew, @KQEDEdSpace): Encouraging young people to ask critical questions that deepen learning and improve media literacy through KQED Learn, a free online platform for students and teachers that reveals ways to ask good questions, investigate answers and share conclusions.

- **Media Literacy @ Your Library** by American Library Association in collaboration with the Center for News Literacy (Project lead: Samantha Oakley | Chicago | @ALALibrary, @NewsLiteracy): Developing an adult media literacy program in five public libraries, including a series of online learning sessions, resources and an in-person workshop to train library workers to help patrons become more informed media consumers.

- **News Inequality Project** (Project leads: Hamdan Azhar, Cathy Deng, Christian MilNeil, and Leslie Shapiro | Portland, Maine | @HamdanAzhar, @cthydng, @c_milneil, @lmshap, @pressherald): Developing a web-based analytics dashboard to help media organizations and community organizers understand how – and how often – different communities are covered in news outlets over time.

- **News Quality Score Project** (Project lead: Frederic Filloux | Palo Alto, California | @filloux): Creating a tool to surface quality journalism from the web, at scale and in real-time, through algorithms and machine learning. The tool will evaluate and score content on criteria ranging from the notoriety of authors and publishers to an analysis of various components of the story structure.

- **NewsTracker.org** by PBS NewsHour and Miles O'Brien Productions (Project lead: Cameron Hickey | Washington, D.C. | @cameronhickey, @newshour): Developing a tool that combines online news content with engagement data from social media and other sources to help journalists and others better understand the scale, scope and shape of the misinformation problem. The tool will enable

content analysis by gathering data about what is being written, by whom, where it is distributed, and the size of the audience consuming it.

- o **Putting Civic Online Reasoning in Civics Class by Stanford History Education Group, Stanford University** (Project lead: Sam Wineburg | Palo Alto, California | @SHEG_Stanford, @samwineburg): Creating professional development resources for teachers to become better consumers of digital content, in addition to classroom-ready materials that they can use to help students find and assess information online.

- o **Social Media Interventions by Boston University** (Project leads: Jacob Groshek and Dylan Walker | Boston | @jgroshek, @EMSatBU, @dylanwalker): Experimenting with the effectiveness of combatting the spread of misinformation through real-time online interventions, such as direct messages to users who post or share false information.

- o **The Documenters Project by City Bureau** (Project lead: Darryl Holliday | Chicago | @d_holli, @city_bureau): Strengthening local media coverage and building trust in journalism by creating an online network of citizen "documenters" who receive training in the use of journalistic ethics and tools, attend public civic events and produce short summaries that are posted online as a public resource.

- o **Veracity.ai** (Project lead: Danny Rogers | Baltimore): Helping to curb the financial incentives of creating misleading content with automatically-updated lists of "fake news" websites and easy-to-deploy tools that allow ad buyers to block, in bulk, the domains where misinformation is propagated.

- o **Viz Lab** (Project leads: Susie Cagle, Caroline Sinders and Francis Tseng | San Francisco | @susie_c, @carolinesinders, @frnsys): Developing a dashboard to track and visualize images and 'memes,' as common sources of fake news, to enable journalists and researchers to more easily understand the origins of the image, its promoters and where it might have been altered and then redistributed.

- o **Who Said What by Joostware** (Project lead: Delip Rao | San Francisco | @deliprao, @joostware): Helping people more easily fact-check audio and video news clips with a search tool that annotates millions of these clips and allows users to explore both what is said and the identity of the speaker.

- o **Technical Schema for Credibility by Meedan** in collaboration with Hacks/Hackers (Project lead: Xiao Mina | San Francisco | @anxiaostudio, @meedan, @hackshackers): Creating a clear, standardized framework to define the credibility of a piece of content, how conclusions about its credibility were reached, and how to communicate that information effectively.

FactCheck Initiative Japan (announced June 2017)

Description from Masato, "A new fact-checking coalition is launching in Japan," [Poynter](#), 21 June 2017:

- A network launched by a group of academics, journalists and nonprofit organizations which aims to encourage media organizations and others to fight "against the diffusion of false and highly questionable information."

- Founders: Hitofumi Yanai, who runs the media watchdog GoHoo; Kentaro Inui, a communication science professor at Tohoku University; Atsuo Fujimura, the senior vice president of media business development at the popular Japanese news curation app SmartNews.

- Data scientists from Inui's [Communication Science Lab](#) and engineers from SmartNews will try to build an API-based database system that automates some steps of fact-checking using machine learning, artificial intelligence and natural language processing technology.

- Apart from Yanai, Inui, and Fujimura, seven other individuals—three academics including journalism professors, a freelance journalist, an independent military analyst and two nonprofit organization directors—are the founding members. Although all 10 members will take part in the network in their individual capacity, their affiliated organizations could also support the cause. Yanai says the network will explore funding opportunities and tries to raise 10 million yen (about U.S. $90,000) in the first year to start.

2. Older Initiatives (Ongoing)

The News Literacy Project (launched 2006)

Description from "Origin and History," "Program," **The News Literacy Project**:

- In 2006, Alan Miller, then an investigative reporter in the Washington bureau of the Los Angeles Times, was invited to speak to 175 sixth-grade students at his daughter's middle school about what he did as a journalist and why it mattered. He received 175 handwritten thank-you notes and began to think about the impact that many journalists could have if they shared their expertise and experience with the nation's students. Two years later he founded the News Literacy Project.

- The NLP classroom program is designed to give teachers and students a concise and comprehensive survey of news literacy. NLP offers its classroom program in New York City, Chicago and the Washington DC area.

- NLP teaches young people how to evaluate the credibility of news and information as a student, consumer and citizen. It has created a new model that provides real-world learning experiences for students and connects them with journalists who reinforce these lessons by drawing on their own experiences and on recent examples from the news media.

- Partner news organizations: ABC News, Associated Press, Bloomberg, BuzzFeed, CBS News and "60 Minutes", Chicago Sun-Times, Chicago Tribune, CNN, International Reporting Project, Financial Times, Futuro Media Group, Houston Chronicle, Los Angeles Times, Mic, NBC News, NPR, The New York Times, Online News Association, The Philadelphia Inquirer, POLITICO, ProPublica, Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, Reuters, Slate, Southern California Public Radio/KPCC, Univision, USA Today, Vice News, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post.

Ethical Journalism Network (launched 2013)

Description from "Building Trust in Media in South East Europe and Turkey**,"** **Ethical Journalism Network**, 2016:

- With financial support from the EU and UNESCO, the EJN is working with other partners to promote freedom of expression and press freedom in South East Europe and Turkey.

- The ***Building Trust in media in South East Europe and Turkey*** project seeks to strengthen freedom of expression, access to information, free, independent and pluralistic media, ensuring that journalists and media are key drivers for democratic, sustainable and peaceful development. Region: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

- In line with the guidelines for EU support to media freedom and media integrity in the enlargement countries, the project will seek to build trust and restore confidence in the media in South East Europe and Turkey through activities in 3 areas.

  1. Supporting efficient and sustainable self-regulation mechanisms and the inclusion of professional standards, freedom of expression and media integrity in the basic education of journalists.

  2. Improving the internal governance of media organizations through the implementation of internal rules and good practices that recognize human rights and labour standards, as well as improved levels of transparency in ownership, management and administration, and the enforcement of ethical codes within media outlets.

  3. Increasing public demand for quality media and empowering citizens through media and information literacy.

Description from "Watching the Watchdog: Launch of EJN International Report on Self-regulation," Ethical Journalism Network, 24 February 2015:

- The report—**The Trust Factor**—highlights how the unity and solidarity of people across all platforms of media is the key to building public trust in journalism. The report outlines a brief checklist for effective self-regulation and argues for action to promote self-regulation at all levels. It particularly calls for strengthening systems of self-policing inside every media house.

- The system works best in Norway and a few other countries because all media players—in television, online and print—pull together. They follow one, single code of conduct which is recognised and respected inside journalism and which applies to media on all platforms. In addition, Norway is also a pioneer of ground-breaking transparency by allowing public access to complaints hearings.

Description from "Combating Hate and Building Trust in Reporting of Migration," Ethical Journalism Network, 22 October 2016:

- **Migration reporting**: The EJN and all partners agree to promote an African journalism award for ethical coverage of migration which should aim to enhance the standing of migration reporting and reward good journalism. Finally, we thank the Ugandan Journalists Union and the Ethical Journalism Network for the organisation of this meeting and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its support. We urge them to broaden support for the campaign through further co-operation with media groups across to exchange information and work together to combat hate speech in media, improve coverage of migration and to use the ethics of journalism as an inspiration for free expression and media ethics.

Media Insight Project (launched 2014)

An initiative of the American Press Institute, the Associated Press, and NORC Center for Public Affairs Research at the University of Chicago. Attempt to understand trust in media, methods of promoting and teaching it, and ways in which newsrooms can do more to create trust and build their audiences.

Description from "**About**," "**Projects**," the Media Insight Project:

- Objectives: Conducting high-quality, innovative research meant to inform the news industry and the public about various important issues facing journalism and the news business; undertaking a series of major studies on the habits of news consumers in the United States.

Description from "A new understanding: What makes people trust and rely on news," **American Press Institute**, 17 April 2016:

- A new comprehensive study shows that trust and reliability in news can be broken down into specific factors that publishers can put into action and consumers can recognize. It finds that in the digital age, several new factors largely unexamined before—such as the intrusiveness of ads, navigability, load times, and having the latest details—also are critical in determining whether consumers consider a publisher competent and worthy of trust.

- Consumers rate in-depth reporting and expert sources more highly. In others, ease of use is of higher value. For still others, being entertained is more important. And in social media, consumers are fairly skeptical of content and want cues of trustworthiness such as clear identification of the original reporting source.

- People are significantly more likely to say that expert sources and data are an important reason they turn to a source for news about domestic issues than about lifestyle news (76 percent vs. 48 percent). People are far more likely to want their source to be concise and get to the point for national politics (80 percent) than sports (61 percent). Similarly, people care more that their sources for sports and lifestyle present the news in a way that is entertaining (54 percent and 53 percent) than say the same about political news (30 percent).

The Trust Project, Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University (launched 2015).

Founding funder is Craig Newmark (founder of Craigslist) under CraigConnects' Trustworthy Journalism Initiative. The project is also supported by Google and the Markkula Foundation.

Description from "**Pilot Projects**," "**Trust Protocol**," Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, Santa Clara University:

- Trust Project develops digital strategies to signal trustworthiness in reporting to both audiences and search engines. It aims to fight fake news, pop filter bubbles and elevate high quality, ethically produced news so both the public and news distribution platforms can find it easily.

- Pilot initiatives at partner media include citations and annotations, fact-checking, methodology.

- The team developed eight Trust Indicators, which offer transparency across multiple dimensions, and offered editorial definitions and guidance for each. These indicators were identified from user research and defined by working groups of top editors around the world.

The Listening Post Collective, supported by Internews (launched 2013)

Description from "**Just Launched: Tools and Advice for Newsroom Engagement**," Internews, 22 June 2017; and "**Projects: Macon, Georgia**," The Listening Post Collective:

- The Listening Post Collective is a community media initiative formed to connect media makers and their communities. Via its new web site, The Listening Post Collective provides mentorship, resources, tools, and peer-to-peer support for journalists, newsroom leaders and community groups looking to revitalize their local news and connect more directly with the public.

- First project launched in New Orleans in 2013. The project started with an assessment of the information needs of neighborhoods left out of the city's post-Katrina development. Partnering with WWNO, the local public radio affiliate, the project began to give residents opportunities to receive news via SMS, and also record reflections on issue-focused questions at stand-alone recording devices set up in libraries, community centers, and local businesses. The community conversations created through the Listening Post project are regularly shared through WWNO.

- Listening Post projects look slightly different in each town or neighborhood, but they share a common purpose: to revitalize or create conversation between local media, civil society, and citizens; to connect people with each other and with sources of information and action on local issues; and to give people a voice in the issues that matter to them in their communities.

APPENDIX III. ANNOTATED LITERATURE REVIEW: MEDIA LITERACY SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

Beatrice Santa-Wood

With the fast-paced growth of media in the mid-20th century came more calls for arming citizens with the tools to process information. From print news to radio and film, it was increasingly clear that understanding media content required specific critical thinking skills. Media theorist Marshall McLuhan's 1964 book *Understanding the Media* was particularly influential, first coining the phrase "the medium is the message." Different forms of media, McLuhan argued, could have very different impacts on consumers. From there, scholars have continued to research people's ability to understand different forms of media as well as their power to influence their audiences.

Media Literacy Definitions and Framework[37]

The works below offer commonly used definitions and conceptual frameworks of media literacy. In the last two decades, these definitions have become more cohesive, bridging together multiple competencies into a general catch-all term "media and information literacy." There is increasing transnational cooperation on the issue, as global organizations like UNESCO create general guidelines on media literacy education.

In many countries, the last 50 years have seen media education become more integrated into primary education, though the forms and extent of media literacy still differ from classroom to classroom. The state's role in media literacy programs can vary greatly across countries, as the 2017 **study** by the Council of Europe found was the case in the EU. The study noted that in the EU, civil society groups often take the lead in media literacy, and most stakeholders do not have any statutory responsibility. These trends are mirrored in the United States, where programs lack uniformity in curricula and funding.

Aufderheide, Patricia. "Media Literacy: A Report of the National Leadership Conference on Media Literacy," [the Aspen Institute](#) **(1993)**.

The Aspen Institute put forth a definition of media literacy that has become the standard for western practitioners and policymakers. Articulated at the 1992 National Conference on Media Literacy, it said: "A media literate person—and everyone should have the opportunity to become one—can decode, evaluate, analyze and produce both print and electronic media." The conference aimed to develop a framework for media literacy in the United States, and its participants included academics, media professionals and educators.

UNESCO. *Global Media and Information Literacy Assessment Framework: Country Readiness and Competencies***, France: Paris (2013).**

This general guide for policymakers and educators offers methods of integrating media literacy into national frameworks. It includes guides to evaluate whether a country has the infrastructure and the means to support media-focused educational programs as well as ways to monitor and evaluate them. The publication's definition of media literacy is revised for the 21st century to encompass Media and Information Literacy (MIL) and include multiple "competencies" ranging from media to information or digital literacy. UNESCO argues that any effective program must include a range of literacies to account for the many types of information we consume today. It also stresses that media literacy is critically important to addressing global inequalities with regard to freedom of expression.

The Potential and Pitfalls of Media Literacy

Although the definitions of media literacy have today largely converged, the ways in which these skills should be taught are still hotly debated. Why some approaches succeed and others fail has proven frustratingly difficult to determine, since many studies are conducted in one-off environments, rely almost entirely on qualitative data, and have little ability to measure long-term impact. Moreover, the majority of such studies and programs focus mainly on youth (primary school through college).

There seems to be some agreement that media literacy can spur civic engagement and improve public appreciation of the media, but whether education programs actually teach students to think critically remains an open

question. In particular, there are concerns that media literacy as it was understood in the past is no longer adequate for more sophisticated challenges posed by the digital environment of today that affects every facet of our lives.

One of the biggest prevailing concerns in the field is whether media literacy education is striking the right balance between teaching students an appreciation for media and giving them the tools to critique it. Some observers also worry that filter bubbles prevent education from being truly effective. One recurring theme is the importance of connecting education to individuals' lived experience in order to build critical thinking skills they will really use.

Hobbs, Renée. "The Seven Great Debates in the Media Literacy Movement." *Journal of Communications*, **48, no. 1 (1998): 16–32.**

Acclaimed media literacy educator and academic Renee Hobbs tackles the broad concept of "media literacy," taking the many different views and boiling them down to seven key arguments. These include: 1) Whether media literacy should account for the dangers of media; 2) Should any program include media production? 3) Should it be grounded in popular culture; 4) Will it include a defined ideological agenda? 5) Is it necessary to embed it in K-12 education? 6) In the classroom, will it be integrated into subjects or taught as a standalone class? and 7) Should media organizations financially support media literacy programs? While Hobbs considers these arguments to be a sign of interest and dedication to media literacy, she also worries that too many approaches could be competing against each other. She also expresses concern that too many programs are funded only for children or ignore the importance of teachers. She defines media in this case to include any form of technology that delivers information. This paper is notable in that the arguments it poses have continued to dominate academic and educational discourse around media literacy for 20 years since, as evidenced in many of the other works included below.

Potter, W. J. *Theory of Media Literacy: A Cognitive Approach*. **Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications (2004).**

Potter's influential theory of cognitive media literacy isolates five areas that dictate information processing: media content, media industries, media effects, the real world and the self. He examines how we understand and consume information and how we filter and assign meaning to media. Potter argues that because we face such a massive flow of information day to day, we turn to automatic processing to protect ourselves. However, in the process, people may

often assign faulty meanings to media messages. As a result, media literacy needs to be more focused on strengthening our cognitive ability to consume information.

Rogow, Faith. "Shifting from Media to Literacy: One Opinion on the Challenges of Media Literacy Education." *American Behavioral Scientist* 48, no. 1 (2004): 30–34.

Rogow takes a critical eye to the greatest challenges to media literacy in the 21st century. One key insight is that educators should be aware that when we teach students to think critically, they may come to conclusions very different from our own. Rogow stresses that the teacher-student relationship needs to be understood better for media literacy programs to work. She also criticizes the sometimes excessive focus on the perceived dangers of media at the expense of teaching students to thoughtfully analyze the content. When educators overemphasize research on how audiences get manipulated by media, she writes, "students often become cynical instead of skeptical. This is the natural result from an educational approach that does not provide students with any sense of agency."

Cappello, Gianna, Damiano Felini, and Renee Hobbs. "Reflections on Global Developments in Media Literacy Education: Bridging Theory and Practice." *Journal of Media Literacy Education* 3 no. 2 (2011): 66–73.

The authors provide a broad overview of media literacy approaches, successes and challenges. Two relevant takeaways are that education needs to be rooted in students' lived experiences to succeed, and that it should encourage individuals to evaluate their own biases. Although the Internet has helped forge a dynamic cross-border network of media literacy educators and experts, the authors note, it has dictated that digital literacy skills be incorporated into the framework. The authors also stress that despite educators' crucial role in these efforts, the teachers also need to let students experience and practice critical thinking on their own. In the end, media literacy education must allow students to reach "their own conclusions on a certain issue by going through a process of deconstruction/ reconstruction of knowledge, learning and social action, a process constantly and thoughtfully scaffolded by the crucial, authoritative (never authoritarian), intervention of the teacher in the classroom so that they learn to situate their media experiences within wider social and cultural contexts."

Thoman, Elizabeth and Tessa Jolls. "Media Literacy: A National Priority for a Changing World." *American Behavioral Scientist* **48, no. 1 (2004): 18–29.**

Thoman and Jolls identify prevailing challenges and areas for growth in media literacy in this piece. They argue that successful media literacy should come from a wide variety of players, including advertising, media, education and health, continuing well into adulthood. Echoing some of W.J. Potter's theories, they believe that media literacy education should teach individuals to process information as it is received. This means equipping individuals with the skills to evaluate new information based on their own experiences, before formulating and sharing a response.

Martens, Hans. "Evaluating Media Literacy Education: Concepts, Theories and Future Directions." *Journal of Media Literacy Education* **2, no. 1 (2010): 1–22.**

The Danish media literacy expert Hans Martens argues that in classroom settings, existing programs show that media literacy programs do help youth embrace media. Programs that are less adversarial towards media and focus on media creation have had successful results. Martens also argues that consensus on media literacy must include an understanding of how media works as well as of how information is critically consumed. More research is needed on what cognitive skills are most important to becoming media-literate. The author notes that it can be difficult to evaluate "successful" programs, given the difference in ages, socio-economic status, location and other factors that could impact effectiveness.

Martens, Hans and Renee Hobbs. "How Media Literacy Supports Civic Engagement in a Digital Age." *Atlantic Journal of Communication* **23, no. 2 (2015): 120–137.**

This study looks at the potential of media literacy to promote civic engagement. Focusing on a large sample of racially diverse high-school-age youth in a selective media literacy program, Martens and Hobbs find positive correlation between understanding and appreciating news and civic engagement. However, they also note that having the skills to analyze misleading information is not necessarily tied to civic participation. Rather, programs must be designed with civic engagement as a stated end goal. Building critical thinking skills does not guarantee that people will become more invested in their communities, but it can help.

Ashley, Seth, Adam Maksl, and Stephanie Craft. "News Media Literacy and Political Engagement: What's the Connection?" *Journal of Media Literacy Education*, **9, no. 1 (2017): 79–98.**

The authors define civic engagement as knowledge of current events coupled with a sense of political agency. They find a positive correlation between U.S. college students' news media literacy and civic engagement. They also find, however, that higher levels of media literacy correlate with higher political distrust. They surmise that understanding how news media works allows individuals to better gauge the news media's overall veracity. There is little evidence that participants' improved internal political efficacy translated to outward political activity. Authors acknowledge that socio-economic factors may play a role, so it is difficult to say how definitive these results are.

Boyd, Danah. "Did Media Literacy Backfire?" Medium **(2017).**

In this op-ed, media educator and academic Danah Boyd argues that media literacy education has yielded unintended consequences. A focus on media creation, she writes, has convinced many young students that their own knowledge is more valid than that of professional journalists. As a result, youth feel no need to look at their own news consumption critically, instead seeking out media that supports their preexisting beliefs.

Copeland, Paul. "Factual Entertainment: How to Make Media Literacy Popular." Legatum Institute **(2016).**

Copeland looks at ways to make media literacy popular and more relevant, particularly in Ukraine and the Middle East, where the need for better media literacy is pressing. He argues that the definition of media literacy has evolved as it acquired a valuable role in protecting democratic freedoms. He believes that media literacy education could be valuable as it becomes integrated in new media forms, like chat shows, online games or satirical news shows. Copeland argues that media literacy education is vital in countering misinformation, but notes that education must be better integrated into popular mediums to truly work.

Digital Literacy and Combatting Misinformation

As social media increasingly becomes the way people (particularly youth) access information, educators are seeking to better understand how we interact with social media networks and how to protect people against misinformation online.

One overarching question is whether the way we teach media literacy fully accounts for the fast-paced changes in technology in the last two decades. The following pieces focus on digital literacy within the context of media, and the particular challenges it poses today.

Livingstone, Sonia. "Media Literacy and the Challenge of New Information and Communication Technologies." *The Communication Review* **7, no. 1 (2004): 3–14.**

Livingstone identifies the ways in which concepts of media literacy have changed with the advent of digital technology. She advocates for a "pan-media" definition of literacy, encompassing many different forms of media. She also argues that literacy in this context means our ability to process any kind of information we receive. Livingstone proposes that more information and research is needed on how the Internet mediates representation and framing of knowledge and the conduct of communication. She also notes the need for a better understanding of whether we interpret online media differently than print or audiovisual, to develop more effective education programs.

Buckingham, David. "Digital Media Literacies: Rethinking Media Education in the Age of the Internet." *Research in Comparative and International Education* **2, no. 1 (2007): 43–55.**

Buckingham has been at the forefront in defining media literacy within a digital context. In this piece he outlines a theoretical framework for practitioners. This includes 1) production—meaning, how the web is used as an influencer; 2) Language—meaning, how language is used for specific purposes and how media is coded and constructed to deliver a particular message; 3) Representation— meaning, why media content is created and what the creators' own biases are; and 4) Audience—what are the consumers' internal views and how does media target content to specific audiences? Buckingham believes that promoting digital literacy in classrooms could help bridge divides in the varying levels of youth digital literacy. In particular, more emphasis on group work and creating media for outside audiences (beyond a teacher) can increase effectiveness.

Buckingham, David. "Defining Digital Literacy: What Do Young People Need to Know about Digital Media?" *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy* **1, no. 4 (2006): 263–376.**

Buckingham takes a critical look at digital media literacy, arguing that because we believe youth to be adept with digital tools we tend to assume that they can

critically analyze content they receive through them. Yet our deeply personal relationship with modern tech platforms actually makes it more difficult to think critically about our media consumption. Buckingham identifies several studies that prove a disconnect between digital savvy and critical thinking skills. He argues that most classrooms focus simply on how to use technology, rather than considering how students engage with it and why: "Media literacy provides a means of connecting classroom uses of technology with the 'techno-popular culture' that increasingly suffuses children's leisure time—and it does so in a critical, rather than a celebratory way."

Ito, Mizuko et al. *Hanging out, Messing around, and Geeking out*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press (2009).

This MIT anthropological experiment studied youth and digital literacy. The authors' research showed that youth are adept at creating peer-to-peer learning networks, a type of learning that builds greater expertise. Their work also revealed a generational divide in technological skills between youth and parents, which causes both groups to miss out on valuable learning opportunities together.

Jenkins, Henry, Ravi Purushotma, Margaret Weigel, Katie Clinton, and Alice J. Robinson. "Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century." *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy* 2, no. 2 (2007): 97–113.

The study looks at the intersection of youth, "participatory culture" and media literacy. Participatory culture is defined as a community where individuals can easily make and share media content, have opportunities for civic engagement and share and teach each other new skills on social networks. The authors argue that participatory culture can have many benefits in building peer-to-peer learning networks, promoting creative self-expression and an empowered sense of citizenship. However, they find skill gaps when it comes to navigating participatory culture. This includes a participation gap (disparate opportunities and access to improving skills); a transparency gap (in knowledge of how media can impact our worldview or how our own biases color the way we consume media); and ethics challenges (a breakdown of the old opportunities and socialization that once prepared them for their roles as media creators and community participants).

Mihailidis, Paul and Samantha Viotty. "Spreadable Spectacle in Digital Culture: Civic Expression, Fake News, and the Role of Media Literacies in 'Post-Fact' Society." *American Behavioral Scientist* **61, no. 3 (2017): 441–454.**

The authors evaluate existing approaches to media literacy education, especially for the youth. They find that most programs improve the students' appreciation of media and strengthen their media production skills. However, many youth remain ill-equipped to navigate the changing world of misinformation, particularly online. Focusing specifically on misinformation during the 2016 US presidential election, Mihailidis and Viotty argue that greater media literacy is needed, but that seeing it as a catch-all solution would be simplistic. To work, media literacy education must account for today's complex information ecosystem and the ways in which it interacts with social identity. The authors suggest that more research is needed on what skills young people gain from media literacy programs, and whether they can apply these skills outside the classroom. Media literacy is crucial for building critical thinking skills, they add, but it should be adapted to meet changing norms in media.

Hobbs, Renee. "Teach the Conspiracies." *Knowledge Quest* **46, no. 1 (2017): 16–24.**

Hobbs takes the view that rather than eschewing conspiracy theories and fake news, we should embrace them as a valuable way to bring media literacy lessons to the classroom. The author looks at the literature on conspiracy theories, pointing to their ability to proliferate on social media, as well as to cognitive science research explaining why we believe them. She argues that using fake news and conspiracies as case studies would sharpen young people's ability to discern internal and external bias in media content.

Cook, John, Stephan Lewandowsky, and Ullrich K. H. Ecker. "Neutralizing Misinformation through Inoculation: Exposing Misleading Argumentation Techniques Reduces Their Influence." *PLOS ONE* **12, no. 5 (2017).**

Cook et al. approach the problem of educating against misinformation from a psychological perspective. Their research indicates that providing individuals with fact-checking or facts refuting a false story often backfires, by simply reinforcing the preexisting belief. The approach they find more effective is "inoculating" individuals to false information before they encounter it. This method would involve warning people that misinformation surrounds a particular topic and refuting an expected argument that reveals its fallacies.

APPENDIX IV. MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS SURVEYED

Organization	Country	Contact Person	Description
Bristol Cable https://thebristolcable.org	UK	Alon Aviram	Citizens' media co-op with a focus on investigative journalism and the Bristol area
Center for Independent Journalism www.cij.hu	Hungary	Ilona Moricz	NGO that helps local media outlets build trust, combat disinformation and access legal assistance and training in ethical reporting
KRIK www.krik.rs	Serbia	Jelena Vasić, Stevan Dojčinović	Nonprofit investigative network that covers organized crime and corruption in Serbia
Južne Vesti www.juznevesti.com	Serbia	Predrag Blagojević, Dragan Petković	Independent online news platform focused on southern Serbia and covering business, sports and politics
Correctiv https://correctiv.org	Germany	David Schraven	Nonprofit investigative bureau with a focus on public interest and data journalism
Krautreporter https://krautreporter.de	Germany	Sebastian Esser	Independent news co-op that plans its coverage around its readers' interests
Chequeado www.chequeado.com	Argentina	Laura Zommer, Noelia Guzman	Fact-checking organization that produces news articles and multimedia and leads education projects
Echo Mobile www.echomobile.org	Kenya	Zoe Cohen	Platform for collecting data via mobile phones that helps companies, NGOs and media outlets interact with their audiences
Hivisasa www.hivisasa.com	Kenya	Enock Nyariki	News site populated by citizen reporters, focusing on Nairobi and 10 nearby counties
GroundUp www.groundup.org.za	South Africa	Nathan Geffen	Niche online outlet that publishes on health, education and greater Cape Town
263Chat www.263chat.com	Zimbabwe	Nigel Mugamu	Media producer, housed mostly on social media, that publishes short news videos
Premium Times www.premiumtimesng.com	Nigeria	Dapo Olorunyomi	News website with a civic journalism mission and a nonprofit arm focused on investigative journalism
Raseef22 https://raseef22.com	Lebanon	Abir Ghattas	News and advocacy site that pursues a pan-Arab approach to its content
Coral Project www.coralproject.net	United States	Andrew Losowsky	Nonprofit newsroom-resource collaboration that provides open-source tools and resources to help journalists connect with readers
Ujyaalo http://ujyaaloonline.com	Nepal	Gopal Guragain	News site and radio network
El Pitazo https://elpitazo.com	Venezuela	Cesar Batiz	News site

APPENDIX V. SURVEY QUESTIONS

A complete list of questions offered to media organizations we surveyed is included below.