

MEDIA

THE CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF JOURNALISTS • SUMMER 2009 • VOLUME 14, NUMBER TWO •



A Pig's Tale

THE STORY BEHIND *The Hamilton Spectator's* AWARD-WINNING SERIES

Steve Buist and Barry Gray

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COVER PHOTO

The Hamilton Spectator won the CAJ's overall investigative award for its series that followed a pig's journey from conception to the dinner plate.

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WHAT ARE JOURNALISTS FOR?

In these days of cutbacks and plunging bottom lines, the question is not as heretical as it may have once seemed

David McKie



David McKie edits Media. He is an author and award-winning journalist with the CBC's investigative unit. David also teaches at the schools of journalism at Carleton University and Algonquin College.

As we close out another year, journalists have had a lot to think about. For starters, we've been a large part of the story that has dominated the headlines of late: the poor state of the economy. It's a topic that has dominated political discussion at home and abroad, and has pushed journalists outside their comfort zones in that we've become victims of the economic downturn we've been forced to

write about. Suddenly, we must tell stories about stimulus packages, bankruptcies, and bailouts. And what it all means.

Politicians at all levels have been talking about the need for government spending to help create jobs. But just how effective has that spending been? Companies in industrial sectors such as the auto industry have also needed government money—in the case of Chrysler and GM, in order to stay alive. Just how effective has that money been spent? And are these bailouts the equivalent of corporate welfare, or are they investments? Numbers. Numbers. Numbers.

There was a time when answers to these questions would have been that sole preserve of the business pages, or business shows. But in these days of stagnating bottom lines and sky-high government debt that are affecting almost every aspect of public life, reporters have had to grapple with numbers that defy easy explanation, as numbers often do.

Journalists frequently joke that they got into the business to avoid math. But as Don Gibb rightly points out in his writing column, "If you can't speak math, you have no business being in journalism because that is much of the ballgame."

But it also turns out that we are not only reporting about that ball game, we're a part of it. We are players. Broadcasters and newspapers are hurting financially and worrying about staying in business. **Canwest**, the **CBC**, **CTVglobemedia**, among many others in Canada and the United States are smarting from declining ad revenues. Much of the pain is being felt by journalists—many young, capable and full of potential—who have either lost jobs because they were the last to be hired in ageing newsrooms, or are being told there are no jobs.

The state of affairs has prompted much angst-ridden discussion about the future of journalism. When American journalism scholar, Jay Rosen, wrote the book *What are Journalists?* the question seemed heretical, perhaps because we've always taken journalism for granted. Not any longer. As a matter of fact, there is an American-based Web site that has dedicated a lot of its space to exactly that—the **future of journalism**. And though the title would seem to be suggestion in a discussion about reform than a requiem for a fallen icon, it is disturbing that we're been forced to even ponder the future of what we do for a living. In an interview with Sandra Ordonez, who edits the Future of Journalism Web site, it's clear that some of the best minds in the business have been giving the matter a lot of thought. If anything, this is good news: People are fighting back with answers rather than lying down and accepting the inevitable.

So the future of journalism is the theme

of this edition, both as an abstract, somewhat academic discussion. And as a practical exercise in learning some of the skills we'll need to deal with what is becoming a new world order. You'll learn how to deal with numbers in stories, what Web sites to visit when researching companies and how to hone the research skills that will increase your marketability by becoming familiar with social networking sites. Our approach in this edition is philosophical, in that it's critical to think hard and imaginatively about the future; and practical, in that it's also important to learn concrete skills for our increasingly multi-media universe.

And speaking of multi-media and cutbacks, *Media* magazine is also suffering through some of the same hardship of declining ad revenue. A reality that has forced us to produce this edition strictly online. While you won't have that hard copy to carry around, you'll still have access to the same solid and thought-provoking content that has always characterized *Media*. In turning more towards the Internet, *Media* is following the example of other journalism magazines produced by the **IRE/NICAR** and other organizations that have been forced to take similar steps.

The online world carries many advantages as we find out in Kimberly Brown's article about sites such as **The Tye**: more timely articles, more content and more of a multi-media platforms using photographs, sound and audio. So with our migration to the online world (we won't abandon print), there will be a commitment to deliver more and even better content, not less.

That job could be made easier with your feedback. So if you have ideas for stories, new columns, or if you simply want to draw our attention to issues, please feel free to contact me at: david_mckie@cbc.ca

Have a good read. **M**

THE COLOUR OF MONEY

“If you can't speak math, you have no business being in journalism because that is much of the ballgame”

Don Gibb



Don Gibb conducts seminars and one-on-one coaching at newspapers across Canada. He is a visiting writing coach at The Globe and Mail. He can be reached at dgibbi@cogeco.ca

I'd venture to guess most journalists would say they are fine working with words, but lousy with numbers.

In fact, it's often a reason they got into journalism in the first place—to flee math.

But today more than ever, the craft of writing and editing requires journalists to acquire the skills of numeracy because much of our work requires an un-

derstanding of basic mathematical concepts.

Reporters and editors in every area from politics to sports to the arts need these basics if for no other reason than to protect themselves and their audience from those who would use numbers the same way they use words—to obfuscate, to spin, or to purposely mislead and manipulate.

Numbers are often abused and misused to fit a person or organization's particular agenda. But journalists seem not to put them to the same test as words when the same degree of skepticism needs to be applied. Numbers just seem to have a ring of absolute truth about them.

In a 2005 public editor's column in *The New York Times*, Daniel Okrent pointed out the need for such skepticism with these examples—the story of a \$250 million drug trafficking industry in Mexico, and the story of a politician's pronouncement that a new stadium was expected to generate \$400 million a year through various economic activities:

Numbers issued by those measuring criminal enterprises or the economic impact of a new stadium don't deserve to be published without challenge; it doesn't serve agencies who want to fight drug trafficking to underestimate the problem, nor can any politician support a development project without hyping its potential benefit.

We need to remember this when governments begin deploying billions of dollars to pull us out of the current economic crisis.

from covering stories that revolve around numbers. Often, numbers are the story.

This doesn't mean reporters must master the skills of accountants, mathematicians or auditors, but they must develop an intuition about numbers. We have to learn to apply logic and common sense to the task of interpreting numbers.

I recall the sharp eye and wise words of one editor. Reviewing a complicated interest rate repayment schedule on a major tax-funded project endorsed by local politicians, she concluded it looked “too good to

Part of our job is to view these numbers with a critical eye and ask: What does the source get out of providing this information?

Deploying numbers skillfully, says a former *New York Times* editor, is as important to communication as deploying verbs.

In his book, *News and Numbers*, Victor Cohn writes:

“We journalists like to think we deal mainly in facts and ideas, but much of what we report is based on numbers. Politics comes down to votes. Budgets and dollars dominate government. The economy, business, employment, sports—all demand numbers...Like it or not, we must wade in.”

Like it or not, it's time to get over our math phobia because the current economy mess demands it. No reporter is immune

be true.” And it was. For any journalist, this should be the starting point. Just having a sense that you need to take a hard look at numbers. Question, question, question. Challenge, challenge, challenge.

And we shouldn't be afraid to ask for help from other sources—those without a vested interest in a particular story. Which numbers are significant? What do they mean? Which ones are meaningless? Which ones do readers and listeners need to know? We often choose to print or broadcast them all, leaving readers and listeners to figure it out. But it's our job to first understand, then make sense of them.

Given the fact that today's economic downturn has an impact on everyone, you need to:

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- question every number;
- understand what you are reporting;
- write with clarity;
- put the numbers in context;
- make stories interesting and free of jargon and technical terminology;
- seek help when needed to explain the complex in simpler terms.

This requires a change in thinking. If you believe city council, board of education, government budget documents, annual real estate reports, stock market figures and the like are boring, institutional stuff, then the resulting stories will be boring and institutional. The challenge is to see the story as

512 suicides and in 2008 there were 533 suicides. Of those combined years, 45 per cent of those deaths were people between the ages of 25 and 44, 25 per cent were between 45 and 64, 16 per cent were 65 and older, and 14 per cent were under 24.

Most of these numbers are irrelevant in a story that focuses on the suicide of a young woman on a university campus. The relevant figures are those dealing with suicides in the 15-24 age group. Stringing a pile of numbers together confuses readers and suffocates the real story. Only use numbers that are meaningful and relevant to your story. If you want to run a list, do it outside of the main story as a sidebar or graph.

sake of this example, we'll just say 2008 —showed that 347 motorists had been charged with alcohol-related offences compared to 381 in 2007. The reporter took the numbers at face value. But the raw figures didn't reveal the fact that fewer vehicles were stopped in 2008. Such a direct comparison only makes sense if police stopped the same number of vehicles in both years.

In fact, based on the number of cars stopped and the number of motorists charged, alcohol-related offences were actually higher in 2008.

The reporter simply had to divide the number of motorists charged by the number of car stopped to get a ratio. For each

Numbers are often abused and misused to fit a person's or organization's particular agenda. But journalists seem not to put them to the same test as words when the same degree of skepticism needs to be applied.

any other story that needs to be explained in a clear, interesting and informative way.

You achieve this by first understanding what you are writing about. Writers shouldn't hide behind the jargony, stiff quotations of the so-called experts. If understanding the story means asking dumb questions, you ask dumb questions. You'll feel a lot smarter when you start writing.

Writers sometimes hide behind numbers, throwing lots of them into stories without much regard for making sense of them.

Here's an example: In 2007, there were

Because we are skittish about numbers, we rely heavily on our expert sources to provide the correct information. But part of our job is to view these numbers with a critical eye and ask: What does the source get out of providing this information?

During a press conference, a police inspector bragged about the "success" of that year's RIDE (Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) program. "You can't knock success," he said. "RIDE definitely has curtailed drinking and driving on our roads."

Figures for the current year—for the

person charged, police stopped X number of cars. In 2008, police charged one motorist for every 716 cars stopped. In 2007, they charged one motorist for every 768 cars stopped. It was, of course, in the best interest of the police to show that a program funded with tax money was a success.

Learning to handle numbers is crucial to good reporting. One former journalist math phobe put it bluntly: "If you can't speak math, you have no business being in journalism because that is much of the ballgame." **M**

SUGGESTED BOOKS

* Cohn, Victor. *News & Numbers*. (Ames: Iowa State University Press)

* Dewdney, A.K. *200% of Nothing*. (New York, Toronto: John Wiley and Sons Inc.)

* Meyer, Philip. *The New Precision Journalism*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press.)

* Paulos, John Allen. *A Mathematician Reads the Newspaper*. (New York: Doubleday)

*Tobias, Sheila. *Overcoming Math Anxiety*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company)

*Woodruff Wickham, Kathleen. *Math Tools for Journalists*. (Marion Street Press, Inc.)

SUGGESTED WEBSITES

www.robertniles.com/stats

www.math.temple.edu/~paulos

www.notrain-nogain.org

www.poynter.org

TIPS ON WORKING WITH NUMBERS

Avoid the temptation to load your story with too many numbers. Understand which numbers are meaningful and which are meaningless. If you have to include more numbers, then sprinkle them through the story and limit them in every sentence. No more than two per sentence.

In The Art and Craft of Feature Writing, William Blundell says: "In placing numbers in a story, the good writer tries not to stack too many in one paragraph (...) It becomes impossible to breach the wall when two or more such paragraphs are butted together, a construction that may lead to more unread prose than any other writing fault."

Blundell doesn't advocate leaving out numbers just because they might bore readers. "I only argue that we be choosy in selecting figures and careful in their treatment."

- Make sure the numbers add up. If you are writing about a \$1 million project and you are making references to its various components, then those components should add up to the same \$1 million.
- In most cases, round off numbers: \$1,326,710 becomes \$1.3 million. If something increased by 36.5 per cent, you can say it rose by more than a third. If it increased by 98 per cent, you can say it almost doubled. Let common sense prevail, however. If there is a specific reason to include the precise number, then don't round off.
- If you're not familiar with financial terminology, take a crash course and learn to explain it in simple terms. Avoid the jargon and technical language of those who bury their heads in all things financial.
- Understand the numbers you are working with. What do they show? What do they mean?
- Never ask readers to work out the math themselves. You do the addition, subtraction, percentage change...
- Avoid excess detail. You need to know the details to write your story with confidence, but don't regurgitate everything. Pity on the poor reader.
- A number by itself—without context—is useless. Compare it to something else. Is it a lot or a little?
- Help readers understand numbers by relating them to something they can picture. A \$1.2 billion loss might best be compared to how much a government spends annually on health care.
- Seek out help when the issues get tough. Call a business professor at your local university or look for the financial whizzes in your news operation to help you understand and explain numbers.

FIND REAL PEOPLE

- Too often we go back to the same old reliable sources. Limit the talking head experts who often say the same thing time and again. Find sources with an arm's length relationship to the everyday world of finance. Develop new sources.
- Interview real people. They can tell you what it's like for the little guy trying to weather the economic storm. In fact, they are the experts because they are living it. Find those who represent the statistics and show us precisely what the numbers mean in human terms.
- Make your sources "earn" a good quote. Reporters tend to hide behind the words of their sources rather than take the time to explain what they mean to their readers and listeners. As long as you know what you are talking about, you can turn that wooden quote from some financial spokesperson into a much clearer paraphrase. When you allow your source to quote technical jargon, you exclude readers and listeners.
- Write for your readers or listeners—not to impress those you interview.
- Focus your story on one issue and develop it well. You cannot possibly cover the entire financial mess in one story or one broadcast.
- Get sources to be specific. Press them to explain concepts in clear, simple language: "What do you mean? Can you give me an example to illustrate your point?"
- If you don't clearly understand what sources are telling you, ask more questions. Don't be afraid to ask dumb questions. Understanding the information will lead to better and sharper questions.

HOW TO HELP YOUR NEWSROOM

Math 101. Bring in a high school math teacher, university professor or someone else with numeracy skills to give reporters and editors a basic primer on what they need to know to work with numbers. Journalists need math skills to make sense of numbers the way they need language skills to make sense of words.

Put together a math SWAT team in the newsroom. Recruit number-savvy reporters and editors who are always available to troubleshoot when their colleagues get attacked by too many numbers or get an attack of math anxiety.

NAVIGATING RECESSIONARY SEAS

Covering the economic crisis on the web

Julian Sher



Julian Sher, creator and Web master of Journalism Net, does Internet training in newsrooms around the world.

For those of us who are not economic specialists, covering business and finance can be challenging in the best of times. In these worst of times, it can be downright confusing. Even many business journalists—like most prognosticators—got the current crash wrong.

The web won't offer any you any special investment tips or

a crystal ball about when or how the economy will recover. But here are some web sites that will help you navigate through the stormy months (and years) ahead.

NEWS AND BACKGROUND

All the standard news aggregators—like Google News and Yahoo new—run decent business news tickers. And the obvious business news sources, such as the Economist.com and the Wall Street Journal (wsj.com) have beefed up their coverage.

But away from the beaten path, I always found Stockwatch (at www.stockwatch.com/) to be one of the most valuable sources: It is more than a great stock and news service. It is one of the only ways to search by directors and to check cross-ownership. The real treasure comes in its deep archives of business press releases and new stories, plus insider trader reports and much more. Not free, but not expensive and well worth the price. You can also try it for free for 30 days.

If layoffs or shutdowns are announced at a major plant in your city and you need

to get a quick rundown on the owners, try the CNW Group at www.newswire.ca/en/extras/snapshot.cgi for a snapshot of any publicly-trading Canadian company.

In the United States, this website offers a handy list of the basic resource sites to cover business: www.powerreporting.com/category/Beat_by_beat/Economics/. Some of my favourites include Hoovers at www.hoovers.com and BigCharts at www.bigcharts.marketwatch.com.

For some resources on global corruption issues, check out www.journalismnet.com/tips/corruption.htm. And for more general business resources, see JNet's main business page at www.journalismnet.com/business.

Even many business journalists – like most prognosticators – got the current crash wrong.

ALTERNATE NEWS

Times of crisis in the financial system are always a good opportunity to check out what long-standing critics of that system have been saying.

There are the reliable Canadian left-of-center sites such as the Canadian Centre

for Policy Alternatives (www.policyalternatives.ca/) and Rabble.ca. Some of the best economic analysis can be found at Corpwatch (www.corpwatch.org).

You don't have to agree with their politics to appreciate this site: well-documented and well-sourced investigations, with an easy way to track down the researchers for more information.

Doug Henwood, who made his name as the author of the Left Business Observer, (www.leftbusinessobserver.com) has a blog worth checking out at www.doughenwood.wordpress.com.

Economic hardship tends to increase society's inequalities. A good place to dig for stories on that angle is www.demos.org/inequality.

You'll find nuggets like this one: The top one percent of American households received 21.8 per cent of all pre-tax income in 2005, more than double what that figure was in the 1970s.

Finally, the Alternet news service brings together many resources, opinions and analysis. You can follow the world crisis at www.alternet.org/wire/economyincrisis

You can find these and more suggestions at JNet's Alternate News Page at www.journalismnet.com/alternate. **M**



Photo illustration: Rafia Mahli, with images from iStockphoto

WHERE HAVE ALL THE JOBS GONE?

The Bank of Canada says the recession is over. Now all media outlets have to do is start hiring again

Elizabeth McMillan



Elizabeth McMillan, a graduate of the University of King's College, is happy to report that she is living in Yellowknife and is a reporter with the Northern News Services.

This past spring, Claire Biddiscombe was graduating from Carleton's Bachelor of Journalism program, and one of the only people in her program with a summer job, but not in journalism.

After hearing that many newspapers cancelled their summer jobs, she accepted a communications position. Since it involved

presenting information on the Web, she was satisfied, for the moment.

"The economy started tanking and when I heard about this job, I figured I should take it as I might not have another opportunity."

Biddiscombe's practical approach isn't unusual. Journalism students across Canada are still scrambling in the wake of cuts across the industry.

"A lot of people are getting themselves into the mindset where they know they're not getting work right away," says Steven Woodhead, who graduated from the University of King's College this spring. "It's absolutely discouraging."

Many students sent applications only to find that jobs no longer existed. Newspapers like the *Hamilton Spectator* cancelled their internship program. Canwest put a freeze on all hiring, and students waited months not knowing if their summer positions still existed.

"We're doing crisis management right now. I think everyone is a little shell-shocked by what happened," says Mitch



Uncertain Future: Recent graduates such as Claire Biddiscombe (pictured on the right) are facing a volatile job market.

Diamantopoulos, an assistant professor and department head at the University of Regina's School of Journalism, where some organizations cancelled students' work terms. The paid internship is a mandatory part of the school's degree.

Diamantopoulos says the cutbacks are unfortunate, but not surprising. "If you're ending careers of working journalists in the newsroom it's hard to keep the frills, which I think, unfortunately, interns are viewed as."

Journalism schools are taking new approaches to prepare students for the job market.

Kim Kierans, director of the journalism school at King's, thinks the challenge facing journalism programs is how to prepare students for an industry in transition.

"Not only is there a recession, there is a whole new media model that's happening. Nobody knows where it's going," she says.

"There are still journalism jobs out there, they're just changing."

Bank of Canada Governor, Mark Carney, declared the recession over earlier in the summer. Still, those affected by the economic downturn such as journalism schools and those looking for jobs are struggling to find reasons for optimism.

Instead of focusing on the grim job market, many journalism instructors are focusing on the potential students have to produce new types of journalism.

"People who make decisions need reliable information. People need reliable information to live their daily lives, not just chat and gossip that they don't really trust. One assumes that some kind of market will re-emerge," says Ryerson's director Paul Knox "Somebody, driven by that process, will refine models and develop new models."

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Economic downturn: Canwest president and CEO Leonard Asper's financial difficulties in part symbolize what ails the business of journalism. CP PHOTO: Adrian Wyld

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Maxine Ruvinsky, chair of the School of Journalism at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, thinks more newspapers and news organizations will shift to the non-profit model with less focus on advertisers, fewer distribution costs and more “actual journalistic copy.”

“I see it as an opportunity to re-invent journalism, to reform journalism, to redeem journalism, even to rationalize journalism,” says Ruvinsky.

NEW APPROACHES

For those students still hoping to work in the business, journalism schools are arming graduates with a new set of digital skills. There is an increased focus on multimedia storytelling. Even the language of journalism is changing. It’s no longer print, radio and television. It’s text, audio and video.

Programs are changing to focus less on an individual medium and more on integrating online components into the existing courses. The separation between print and broadcast is blurring. Every-

thing is going online.

“Increasingly, people in journalism are having to operate on more than one platform... one medium. The idea that forcing people to make a choice to specialize in one of them seemed to make less and less sense,” says Knox.

Students must approach stories from a multimedia perspective—choosing the strengths of each medium to tell the best story.

But while more students may be comfortable producing audio slideshows and developing Web sites, journalistic foundations remain the same.

“Journalism isn’t static. It’s not like teaching history or philosophy where you’ve got the primary sources that are static. Journalism is changing all the time. Our examples change. Our focus changes. Underlying it all, that never changes, is the emphasis on clear thinking, critical thinking, interviewing skills. That’s the bedrock of good journalism,” says Kim Kierans of the University of King’s College.

In addition to multimedia skills, students will have to be prepared to work on

contract or as freelancers and be flexible.

“The more versatile you are, the more skills you have. The more different ways you can make yourself useful, and the more portable you are. The more willing you are to go anywhere in search anywhere and go anywhere to take a job, the better it will be,” says Knox.

ONLINE FUTURE: TWITTER IN THE CLASSROOM?

With more and more news moving online, journalism schools are adapting their approach to include skills that will attract readers.

Tim Currie started teaching online journalism at King’s 10 years ago. He says that journalism schools can help students learn to develop and sustain online readership.

“One of the things I think is in demand is the idea of community management and building communities. One of the big challenges facing newspapers and news organizations in general is that communities are fragmented. They’re going to different online sites or staying in TV but going to specialized cable services,” he explains. “We know that employers are looking for grads

who can help them build that audience. It's a challenge for journalism schools."

Currie expects that the real growth will be in online, niche publications.

Kierans agrees that changing business models mean that news organizations will need to reconsider how they're going to serve the public interest and how they're going to make money. She sees hope. Local media co-operatives (employees at CHCH in Hamilton fought to keep the station alive. It is surviving. Other journalists might take a more active role in changing the way their organizations work.), a printed blog in Chicago with a hyper-local advertising model and low-powered community radio stations all provide alternatives.

In the United States, ProPublica offers a new model for investigative reporting.

Independent and non-profit with a staff of 28 full-time journalists, they're the largest investigative unit in the country, including newspapers and broadcast outlets.

ProPublica partners with media organizations like CNN and the *Chicago Tribune* who publish the work. ProPublica posts all stories on their own Web site.

"Some of it is offered in newspapers. Some of it can be published directly on the Web, some of it in magazines," explains managing editor Richard Tofel. "We try to be flexible with how we approach stories because we have different partners and they have different needs and that dictates different approaches and stories."

Another example of niche publishing is *AllNovaScotia.com*, an online newspaper that follows the Halifax business community. Launched three years ago, it now employs seven people.

Managing editor Kevin Cox, who

spent 23 years working for *The Globe and Mail* says that 10 years ago, no one could envision the online product. Launched in 2001, *AllNovaScotia.com* grew from fewer than 1,000 subscribers three years ago to 3,200 subscribers. They pay \$30 per month for up to three subscriptions. Interest is growing. So far, whenever there's been surplus money, they've hired new reporters.

Cox agrees that the future is in niche publications. He says they don't require deep pockets, but they do require ingenuity.

"Online takes it away from the macro thing and makes it very micro thing and says what group can I go to? There's thousands of 'them' out there. The challenge for journalists now is to find out who 'they' are," Cox says. "Our problem is not just

Changing business models mean that news organizations will need to reconsider how they're going to serve the public interest and how they're going to make money.

some strange economic blip that no one really understands. Our problems are the same problems we've always had: being relevant; not being a bore."

He says online is the best training ground for young journalists because it teaches them to "write quickly, and write smart." Even though they're now competing for jobs with laid-off journalists with more experience, Cox thinks students have an edge.

"When I have a breaking news story, I don't want to give it to some 55-year-old guy who still thinks in the 12-hour news day. I want to give it to some bright person whose attention only goes for five minutes so she can turn it around and put it on my Web site in five minutes," he says. "The

business we came out of is not the business students are going into."

But as the business of news adapts to a 24-hour news cycle, accuracy and the lack of context compete for attention in the rush for readers and immediacy.

In February, the *New York Times* ran into that very problem. When covering Caroline Kennedy's attempt to secure a Senate seat, the newspaper posted a story on its Web site, "Housekeeper and taxes are said to derail Kennedy's bid." The brief included an anonymous source saying Kennedy was unprepared for the Senate and never a real contender. The information in the article did not relate to, or support, that headline. Only later did an update explain the context of that quote.

The *Times'* public editor, Clark Hoyt, wrote in a column about the incident that the Internet is "undermining the values of the print culture." He said Kennedy took an "unfair hit" when "nor-

mal news reporting, in which a story changes in content, tone and emphasis as more is learned, played out in front of the whole world, instead of in the newsroom before publication."

Despite this concern, even at traditional newspapers across Canada, there is more and more emphasis on producing online content. (The Canadian Press, for instance, insists that despite losing clients such as Canwest, it is read by more people than ever before, now that much of its emphasis has shifted to providing newspapers with immediate content for their Web sites.)

"Most journalists in our newsroom consider themselves print and digital," *The Globe and Mail's* former editor Edward Greenspon wrote in a January Editor's

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forum discussion. “That said, just as there will always be the need for certain people dedicated to producing the print product, such is the same for our digital products, especially given the rapidly-developing technologies and story-telling techniques.

Greenspon added that integrating the print and online sections of newspapers generates creativity.

“Newsroom integration can be linked to redundancies and reductions in staff, but it can also be linked to the demands on us to also produce even more and ever more variety of content off at least the same editorial base.”

Kenny Yum, the managing editor of digital news at the *National Post*, says there is a misconception that all online journalists need Web-programming skills.

Just as Facebook was once a new technology and is now a research tool, he thinks journalists need to know how to adapt to technology and know how to use it to do good reporting. They may not need to know how to write code, but they will have to work in 24/7 newsrooms.

Yum says with no shortage of aggregators of blogs, newsrooms need to focus on creating original content to attract readers.

“No one model will be the solution. What the Internet shows you is that you can have a unique idea and be successful at it so why fight the same battle?” he explains. “You don’t have to do exactly what your competitor is doing. You can focus on what you do well.”

ARE JOURNALISM SCHOOLS RELEVANT?

Even though journalism jobs are anything but certain, professors remain confi-

dent that journalism schools will continue to be relevant.

At King’s, professors have organized a “Life After J-School” series. In addition to advice on job interviews, resumes and freelancing, guest speakers from a variety of backgrounds including NGOs, law and public relations have talked to students about their career options.

“One of the things we’re trying to stress is that a journalism degree is very helpful even if they don’t go into journalism,” explains Currie. “Ideally we’d like to send every student to a news outlet. That’s the goal of the school, to teach that kind of journalism. But we’re also happy when people do work at industry-type publications. I think we need to broaden that a

Instead of focusing on the grim job market, many journalism instructors are focusing on the potential students have to produce new types of journalism.

little more.”

Carleton’s journalism director Chris Waddell says that typically only a quarter of undergraduates in journalism want to work in journalism jobs, though they do find employment in related fields. He doesn’t expect this trend to change.

Ryerson’s Paul Knox hopes news organizations and non-profits will look to journalism schools when they’re considering new media models. “We want to position ourselves as the place people come to test out ideas, and we want to involve our students in this.”

So far, Canadian journalism schools are receiving the same number of applications as past years, if not more.

“It’s a bit of a trap to say, well we’ve failed if a person doesn’t get a job in jour-

nalism,” Knox says. “The skills that you learn here are applicable in a wide variety of jobs and places.”

But Mike Gasher, director and associate professor in the department of journalism at Concordia University fears the current job market could mean that better students may start choosing other fields.

“It might be more of a qualitative thing with some of the better students choosing other fields,” he says.

“A good place to hide from a recession is a university,” says Diamantopoulos of the University of Regina’s School of Journalism. But he thinks the current cuts could turn people off journalism in the coming years.

“There was that period in the 70s when Watergate really excited and aroused young

people’s romantic possibilities of working in journalism and journalism schools were flooded with applications. This is the anti-Watergate.”

“I can’t imagine journalists being encouraged by this.

On the other hand, no one goes into journalism for the money,” he adds.

Carleton graduate, Claire Biddiscombe says she would have reconsidered a journalism degree had she known the job market would be this bad.

“Every year journalism schools are pumping out hundreds of people into a field that is going through a major restructuring. I would definitely give it more thought,” the 22-year-old from Guelph explains. But she says she was lucky enough to find something she enjoys and she still hopes to work as a journalist. “Do I regret doing (a journalism degree)? No. Definitely not.”

She’s still optimistic.

“People who can find innovative stories are always going to be in demand.” **M**

THE FUTURE OF JOURNALISM

*It sounds far-fetched to be considering such a question,
but a Web site has done just that*

David McKie

With all the talk of the future of journalism, which also happens to be a sub-theme of this edition of *Media* magazine, it was with interest that we discovered a Web site based in Florida that tackles that very subject. The Web site, called OurBlook (www.ourblook.com), describes itself as “a Web site combining the dynamic online atmosphere of a blog with the researched, in-depth analysis of a book.”

One of the topics that has been front and centre since the site began operating slightly more than a year ago is the Future of Journalism project, an online discussion that has assumed a life of its own.

OurBlook is funded by Paul Mongerson who, among other things, wrote a journalism textbook called *The Power Press: Its Impact on America and What You Can Do About It*. Sandra Ordonez is one of the site’s two employees, responsible for conducting the interviews with some of the business’ leading experts and posting their observations on the site in a number of formats, including transcribed interviews and an online book that is constantly revised. As such, Ordonez has achieved an interesting perspective on the business and some of the directions in which it may be heading.

It is for this reason that *Media* magazine decided to invite Ordonez to share some of her thoughts. The following is an edited version of our conversation.

DM: How significant is it that your OurBlook comes along at a time when journalists and other people in the business are questioning what they do and why they do it?

SO: We started focusing on this topic for



“The Internet is fine, but we risk losing sight of the need to upload the kind of content that separates us from citizen journalists.” – Sandra Ordonez

various personal reasons. Everybody involved with the site has a long history with journalism. When we came on to the scene, the future of journalism was a hot topic, and we believed we could contribute something valuable to this conversation. Most of the information we collect is available on the Internet, but I think what makes our site unique is that it comes directly from the horse’s mouth. We conduct and publish interviews with industry experts, and then

summarize those interviews in an online book. We don’t want to interpret. We don’t want to paraphrase. Our job is to provide a forum where those individuals can share their thoughts.

DM: What is your organization all about?

SO: In very simple terms, we’re an online forum where individuals can exchange research and dialogue on various issues.

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DM: And can those issues be wide-ranging?

SO: Most definitely. Right now, we're focusing on three main areas. The future of journalism and related issues such as citizen journalism, social media, and sustainability issues such as health care and energy, and the economy.

We continue expanding the future of journalism with subtopics, and I expect this will be an area we continue to explore for a very long time.

DM: Who are the contributors?

SO: For the future of journalism, we have industry leaders such as John Yemma from the *Christian Science Monitor*, and Gordon Crovitz, former publisher of *The Wall Street Journal*. We also have various journalism academics, and new media experts such as Mitch Joel, www.ourblook.com/Social-Media/Mitch-Joel-on-Social-Media.html) who is a journalist and considered a social media guru. As a result, we really have a wide array of individuals who bring different skills and thus different views to the table. Usually, we conduct interviews through email.

However, in the future, we hope to gather more video and audio interviews. There are instances where individuals feel so passionate about a topic that they want to write an op-ed piece, but I would say that 95 per cent of our contributions are currently text interviews.

DM: And I imagine this allows you to control the format and have continuity.

SO: That's correct. All the interviews are

available on the site. Additionally, once enough interviews are collected, we write an online book that summarizes the collected input. This book is constantly updated with new information. Right now we have over 50 interviews that focus on the future of journalism, citizen journalism, and social media. www.ourblook.com/component/option,com_sectionex/Itemid,200076/id,8/view/category/#catid69.

DM: Who's your audience?

SO: I would say our audience is an older, more educated crowd who is interested in issues related to journalism and public affairs.

DM: Why not journalism students?

SO: Honestly, because I think that the interviews are too long to catch their interest. In my experience, when you're

There are instances where individuals feel so passionate about a topic that they want to write an op-ed piece, but I would say that 95 per cent of our contributions are currently text interviews.

writing for a younger audience, your content has to be shorter and thus less in-depth. We don't do that. We understand that complex conversations require a lot of research and information. Having said that, we do have projects planned with journalism classes where the students will be using the site to learn Web skills and tools, and explore whatever topics their professors assign. I imagine this might help with media literacy, such as understanding what is considered to be an authoritative source.

DM: I just ask that because when we talk about the future of journalism, we're also talking about jobs for students when they graduate.

SO: I was speaking to a journalism professor here at USF [University of South Florida], who had expressed interest in collaborating with us. He said many of the journalism students he is now seeing are so used to texting, that their knowledge of the Internet and essential Web skills is quite low. His desire to collaborate with projects like OurBlook is related to his strategy to help students acquire those marketable Internet skills which will be a requirement for all future journalists.

DM: The Internet is fine, but do we risk losing sight of the need to upload the kind of content that separates us from the citizen journalists and individuals out there who would consider what they do to be journalism?

SO: Yes, we do. One of the most fascinating interviews we conducted was with Adam Stone, simply because he responded in a way that I

wasn't expecting. Stone, who is 31 years old, is a journalist-turned-publisher. In 2007, without financial backing, launched *The Examiner* newspaper in Westchester County. Since then, he has launched an additional newspaper in Putnam County. Circulation continues to increase. I expect he will open more papers. (To read Stone's views on citizen journalism, please go to: www.ourblook.com/Citizen-Journalism/Adam-Stone-on-Citizen-Journalism.html)

His paper can be found at: www.theexaminernews.com)

When we questioned him about his success, I immediately thought he was going to say 'I started working with technology and had this amazing social media strategy.' But, instead, he answered the opposite of what I expected from someone in that age group. He said, 'I just started focusing on basics. I just went back to creating really good local papers and that's what has made me successful.' This really took me back. I think he recently started using Twitter to provide people with news alerts. However, 90 per cent of his efforts are dedicated to creating a good local paper that has quality information and is community centered.

DM: There has been some talk about the need to go hyper-local, something that the chains won't do. Is this publisher symbolic of this kind of trend?

SO: I think so. I've had several conversations with him, and I think he is someone who is really in love with journalism. For him it's much more a passion about honoring those important journalistic principles. In other words, to him, journalism is there to inform and protect the public, and to create community. I don't know if that answers your question.

DM: In part. Seems to me what's missing from this debate about the future of journalism is the passion that you've just described. The reason many people get into journalism is not to get rich, but to help make things better for citizens. And I'm wondering whether we risk losing some of that passion in this cerebral discussion about the future of what we do for a living.

SO: I think so. But it's also that people are so focused on debating this to death that you really don't see that many people thinking outside the box, and just acting.

With the Web, you can get strategize, test and launch items almost spontaneously, or at least in a relatively short period of time. In my opinion, inaction is the biggest obstacle. However, if you think about it, passion and action are directly related. You need a vision that you feel passionate about to be effectively active.

The social media expert I mentioned, Mitch Joel, raised a very good question. Why didn't newspapers do Craigslist, Skype, or eBay? His basic message was that nothing was stopping publishers from offering cool platforms like Skype, and then using that money to support and bring together journalism. I think he has point. If technology is the solution you choose, then you have to be just as passionate about it, as you would be about journalism.

DM: Based on the interviews you've conducted to date, is there a consensus on where we're heading?

SO: Obviously, that newspapers will have to dedicate more time and energy to their Web presence. Also, that newsrooms are going to be very different. They will be more collaborative, community-based and multi-platform. Journalists will need to have more technological skills, to create things like video or slideshows.

DM: What do you mean by collaborative?

SO: Newsrooms are going to have to find ways to work with other newsrooms.

DM: Even if they're competitors?

SO: Even if they're competitors.

DM: And why is that?

SO: Well, it's like Wikipedia (where Ordonez used to work). Collaborative environments produce better products and

reduce the number of resources. The Internet is about being collaborative and sharing information. The next newsroom model will probably reflect this philosophy simply because of the emphasis that newspapers are placing on having a Web presence. In regard to the business model, i.e., how money is actually brought in, well, that has to change as well. Exactly how? Well, that's up to debate. We have received many opinions. Everything from being government-supported to being owned by non-profits. *The St. Petersburg Times* is one of a few newspapers run by a non-profit group. It's owned by the Poynter Institute, a journalism school. Other popular opinions include focusing more on citizen journalism, as well as going back to basics and emphasizing local news.

DM: What is the mood of these prognosticators about the future of where we're heading?

SO: I'm glad you asked that question. There's a fear because the industry is changing and people are worried about their job security. However, a large percentage of the people interviewed are really excited about the transformation that's taking place in terms of information. They're happy that the Web is helping to democratize information. They're happy that there are areas where you can go for specialized information. Our assumption is that there is a transformation taking place, and the only way to get to the other side is to ensure that certain things get done. It's not my place to say what the best options are ... however, people who work in the industry have great ideas, and it is apparent that technology is not the only solution. However, action is need now. It's important to remind people that there will always be a need for good journalism. Change is always painful, but the end result could be something that is quite beneficial to both journalists and the public. **M**

PRINT: NOW CONSIGNED TO THE NICHE?

That's a question that many people are pondering

Kimberley Brown



Kimberley is currently studying English literature at the University of Edinburgh, and also works as a freelance journalist.

The World Wide Web is the dominant information delivery system. Anyone can start a Web site, blog, podcast, or post videos on Youtube. I recently learned of a new magazine being put together that will be printed out of Vancouver, which has a strong focus on being an international publication. But what are the incentives to

going print in the digital age?

“What we’re going to see is the more specialty niche magazines that are going to stay in print,” according to Jordan Simmons, creator and editor of *Dada* magazine in Vancouver.

Dada Magazine—named after the Dadaism art movement in the early 1900’s—is a new art, fashion and entertainment magazine based in Vancouver, with another division in New York. The first edition of the monthly magazine will be released early in 2010. *Dada* will be launched online in September and will host a photo exhibit as its first public event to preview some of the work that will be featured in the magazine.

Why *Dada* is choosing to go print is fairly simple. As an art and fashion magazine, a lot of what it depends on for content is large-scale, high-quality photographs that don’t transfer well online (i.e., long downloading times, endless scrolling to see an image, and the inability to view an image in its entirety can add to the frustration). So to be established as a

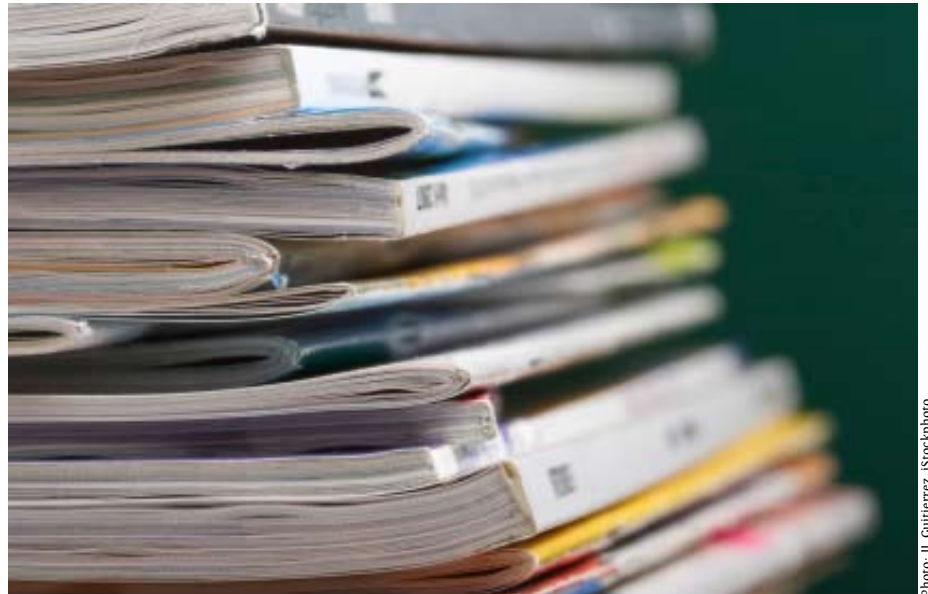


Photo: J. Gutierrez, iStockphoto

quality art and fashion news magazine, it’s essential that *Dada* goes print.

Why *Dada* is choosing to start a magazine at all is much the same as any other independent newspaper or magazine—out of some sort of pent-up frustration. A handful of creative individuals see potential in Vancouver’s art and fashion scene, but no outlet for it. With very few city-supported venues for concerts and other shows, an underground culture has emerged in Vancouver. *Dada* would like to see Vancouver’s cultural side connected with other major art and fashion hubs in the rest of the world like New York, Berlin, or even Montreal and Toronto. This is especially important in Vancouver right now, when the city is trying so hard to be recognized as an “international city” before hosting the Olympics next year. This includes providing an art, culture and entertainment side, to have an appearance of soul and life in the city.

LIVING LIFE COMPLETELY ONLINE

Comparatively, *The Tyee* and *The Ob-*

server are two local, online, independent news sites based in the Vancouver area. Both have a heavy focus on local news. The motivation for starting their respective websites was out of frustration with their options (or lack thereof) of news outlets for Vancouver (with local news being largely owned and controlled by CanWest). (*The Globe and Mail* featured Beers in a profile on August 22.) David Beers of *The Tyee* and Linda Solomon of *The Observer* started their respective news sites because of unpleasant experiences with the *Vancouver Sun* (www.democraticmedia.ca).

After working inside the *Vancouver Sun* for some time and seeing the workings of the industry as a whole, Beers quickly decided that people needed an alternative to mainstream media that tends to be more bottom-line driven and advertising-centric than a viable news outlet.

Solomon’s motivation was slightly out of frustration with lack of inspiring, well-written information about Vancouver, which motivated her to start her own online news site. She became more serious

about the site after an unpleasant run-in with the *Vancouver Sun*. Solomon at one point submitted an article to the *Vancouver Sun*. The paper never responded.

“Three days later,” says Solomon, “the lead editorial, the unsigned lead editorial... I thought that it sounded like my piece.” After questioning the *Sun* about this and why her name wasn’t attributed to the article, the *Sun* took the defensive.

“I got a call a few days later from the editor-in-chief and she was really mad about that and she explained to me that I was wrong, that I had accused them of plagiarism and that I need to apologize and if I didn’t then I would hear from their lawyers... That’s when I learned a little bit more about the media landscape in Vancouver.”

That’s when Solomon stopped submitting articles to mainstream newspapers, “I didn’t have that trust. There was that level of integrity missing to the game in Vancouver.”

Both news sites rave about the Internet as a great means of getting an alternative perspective to the public—created for free, accessible for free. The online landscape has evolved with more interactive and creative interfaces. Most sites

provide additional links to related stories, blogs, other news sites, and video clips that can explain complicated issues. This landscape allows readers to engage with the news. The timeliness of the Internet is also a key factor for generic news sites. They can post news immediately. Reader and engagement and timeliness are two of a number of traits that are important to serious news/current events Web sites. By contrast, these traits are rare in magazines.

Solomon loves the flexibility of the medium, how “fun and powerful” it is

appealing to news organizations, might not be so important for specialty niche magazines. While key elements to online news are timeliness and interactivity, *Dada Magazine* intends to provide stories and interviews that more in-depth and less time-sensitive. The magazine will also host live events that will allow personal interaction with readers and the members of the wider public, rather than immediate interactivity through the Internet.

Of course another deterrent to going print is the funding. Half of *Dada Magazine’s* money comes from Simmons himself; the rest from local advertisers. As a niche, specialty topic magazine, *Dada* has the advantage of being able to approach specific companies

and, and the way it creates a community for herself and for the writers.

“Of course, if someone approached me with 100 million dollars and said, ‘Here, expand your media company,’ I would do a print version... but otherwise I would not trade print for the freedom and independence publishing online offers,” she responded in an email correspondence.

INCOMPATIBLE WITH ONLINE

But the tools that make the Internet so

for advertising dollars who have a high interest in being exposed to the magazine’s target audience. This is an advantage that generic news companies cannot achieve as easily with advertisers.

While it’s still true that people like having that tangible object in their hands, it appears that the incentive to being a print medium is largely reserved for specialty niche topics: fashion, design, cooking, literature, art and culture. **M**

“What we’re going to see is the more specialty niche magazines are going to stay in print,” according to Jordan Simmons, creator and editor of Dada magazine in Vancouver.

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A PIG'S TALE

Steve Buist and Barry Gray, *The Hamilton Spectator*
Winners of the Don McGillivray Award for Investigative Journalism
and the open newspaper/wire service category

On November 22, 2007, Steve Buist became Canada's smallest pig farmer, the owner of one newly-born baby piglet.

But this pig was not intended to be a pet. This pig was destined from birth to become food. For Buist.

This marks the starting point for *A Pig's Tale*, a unique journalism project that combined meticulous reporting, brilliant storytelling and amazing photography. The series was produced by Buist, a veteran investigative reporter, and photographer Barry Gray.

Both are previous winners of National Newspaper Awards. *A Pig's Tale* was also nominated for an NNA this year in the Special Projects category.

In the six months following the birth of his pig—named Piggy—Buist would make the nearly one-hour trip to the farm of Curtiss Littlejohn, chairman of Ontario Pork, to help raise this pig.

The pair then chronicled in words and pictures for *Spectator* readers the life of Buist's pig from birth to slaughter to the dinner table, including a final meal featuring the meat from his animal.

The result of their efforts was a 13-chapter innovative series never before attempted in Canadian journalism.

As he helped feed and care for Piggy, Buist watched it grow from a piglet that could almost fit in his hand to a thigh-high eating machine that weighed as much as a Canadian Football League linebacker.

This is an important story that needed to be told. Some people are reluctant to think about where their food comes from, or how it arrives on their table.



A Precarious Existence: Piggy's life was short, but eventful. Photo: Barry Gray

But this is much more than a story about one pig. It's a story about the broader issues affecting agriculture, our economy and our environment.

How much does it cost to raise a pig? What does it do to the environment? How do they grow so big, so fast? How are

they cared for and treated? How are they killed?

A Pig's Tale is written in a narrative style, but it's a mixture of investigative, news, personal, explanatory, and science writing—with even a touch of humour thrown in once in a while.

The series was timely, as well. Through the final months of 2007 and the first half of 2008, Ontario's hog farming industry teetered on the edge of collapse. Low pork prices, the high value of the Canadian dollar, skyrocketing costs for feed and an oversupply of pigs meant farmers were losing as much as \$40 or \$50 on every hog that went to market.

The Littlejohns, owners of the farm where Buist's pig was raised, lost more than \$600,000 during a 12-month period. "This is not a business for the faint of heart," said Curtiss Littlejohn.

A Pig's Tale was nearly 40,000 words in length, spread over 13 days and 28 full pages of the *Spectator*.

Gray took more than 3,600 pictures during the six-month project, including unprecedented photos of the slaughter process, which appeared in the publication and on its website. More than 100 photos in total were published in the newspaper over the course of the series, and more than 200 photos were available through the *Spectator's* website.

In addition, Gray produced a number of video presentations and slideshows for the web. A creative designer in the *Spectator's* advertising department even developed an interactive game about *A Pig's Tale* that could be played by children.

So what did Buist learn about pigs along the way?

For one thing, they eat like, well, pigs. A hungry nursing sow can make eight pounds of feed disappear in less than 10 minutes.

They smell awful. A day of handling pigs will leave an odour on your hands and in your hair that will outlast several showers.

It's not easy to move a dead 400-pound sow.

After 300 small pigs have been housed for about two months in a confined room, some pig excrement somehow manages to reach the ceiling.

A 250-pound hog is a lot quicker and a lot more agile than you might think, especially when you're trying to get it to go somewhere it doesn't want to go.

Pigs are inquisitive. At two months, they'll follow you around like a pack of puppy dogs, nipping at your boots.

They're clever, too.

"I think if we ever able to create a genetically modified pig by giving them thumbs, I think they'd be building rocket ships," joked Robert Friendship, a professor of swine research at the University of Guelph.

"They do very well trapped in that body."

A 250-pound hog is a lot quicker and a lot more agile than you might think, especially when you're trying to get it to go somewhere it doesn't want to go.

One of the biggest obstacles facing this project was simply finding a farmer willing to act as a host.

RESISTANCE TO THE IDEA

Buist's idea to raise a pig from birth to slaughter was initially met with stony silence by farmers who feared such a project was no more than a thinly veiled attempt to focus only on animal welfare concerns.

Buist turned to the Ontario Pork office in Guelph for help.

"Basically, you're down to me or no one, and I have to think about it," a wary Littlejohn said at one point before the project started. "Everyone I talk to about your project tells me to run as fast as I can the other way."

Thankfully, he didn't.

After nearly six months of care and feeding, here's what Piggy's life was ultimately worth from a cold, hard financial perspective: \$124.66.

On May 9, 2008, the day Piggy was slaughtered, that was the going rate for the 190 pounds his carcass yielded.


It doesn't seem like much money in exchange for a life. Less so when you consider the effort it takes to raise a pig from birth to table.

When Buist did the final tally of all the costs associated with raising Piggy, it cost him \$161.04 to raise Piggy.

He lost \$36.38 in his one and only attempt at pig farming.

"I think I'll stick with my regular desk job," Buist concluded.

You can read the series by logging on to: www.thespec.com/specialsections/section/apigstale

And for more stories on the CAJ award winners, please visit: www.caj.ca/mediamag/Cover_page.htm 

Steve Buist is a two-time winner of National Newspaper Awards in the Investigations category, and was nominated last year for a third NNA, in the Politics category. He was also named the Ontario Newspaper Association's Journalist of the Year in 2004, and has been nominated 18 times for ONA awards in the past six years.

Barry Gray grew up on a farm in southern Ontario. He is a former NNA Sports Photography winner, and has been the Ontario, Eastern Canadian and Canadian News Photographer of the Year. He is a multiple winner of Ontario Newspaper Awards, including Photojournalist of the Year.

WORTH THOUSANDS OF YOUR WORDS

Steve Russell explains why it's important for his colleagues at The Toronto Star to include photographers as an initial part of the reporting team



Steve Russell is a photojournalist with The Toronto Star.

Photographers at the *Star* take great pride in being journalists. We love to be included in a story idea from the beginning, or as close to the beginning as possible.

I'm not sure why it is such a struggle to try to get the dreaded

"Words" people to buy in. The rewards for the reporter could mean that the inside story gets bumped to a section front or A1.

The sooner someone with a visual edge is included in the process, the better chance we have in producing the best work, whether it be one picture, a photo essay or a multimedia presentation. I'm not even sure why the divide between reporters and photographers exists. Maybe it is because there is no formal photojournalism degree at a Canadian university. Some colleges have two-year programs. Many of the big American journalism schools have photojournalism courses that expose university students to good images and design rather than snapping and slapping a headshot on a page to break up the type.

Reporters and editors at *The Toronto Star* are encouraged to approach the photo assignment editors as soon as they begin working on a story. Photographers routinely chat with reporters, asking what they are working on, offering ideas.

We like to be a resource because we cover a lot ground in the city. We are the paper's eyes and ears in the community. Reporters don't always have the luxury of getting out and being on the street. We do. Our whole job is outside the building!

So, what's in it for reporters? Everything. Studies show that a good picture increases readership. People remember more about an article that is accompanied by a picture.

A reporter or editor can give two gifts to a photographer.

The first is time. The sooner we know what is being worked on, the quicker we can get going. Time allows us to get out there and best help tell your story.

The second gift, especially if time does

The picture, which was slotted to be an inside picture, ends up running on the business section front, dragging the story with it.

not exist, is information. Each paper has various ways of passing on information to photographers. At the *Star*, reporters and editors fill out a photo request that includes a description of the story.

We encourage people to give us as much information possible. Unfortunately, a lot of the time we get a description of what the reporter or editor envisions the picture should be. This limits us. Describe the story, not the picture! Why are you writing about this person,

group, animal, place or thing?

I'll give you an example. We once had a photo request with the story background that read along these lines. "Picture of John Smith (name changed) in his office. Smith runs a mutual fund, maybe on the phone?"

Wow! Is that how the John Smith story was pitched? The reporter was unavailable and the story wasn't in the system. We had to contact Mr. Smith directly about an hour before the scheduled assignment to ask why we were doing a story.

Turns out that Mr. Smith sells funds that deal with the airline industry. After asking more questions, we discover that Mr. Smith actually lives near the Pearson International Airport. We ask if we can push the assignment back to the end of

his day and photograph him somewhere at the airport. He agrees. "I know a great place to do it. My son and I love to go to the end of the runway to watch planes land," he says.

Perfect. We avoided the standard business guy in an office picture and

produced a compelling portrait that gave us a little glimpse into Mr. Smith's character. The picture, which was slotted to be an inside picture, ends up running on the business section front, dragging the story with it.

When possible, we like to take pictures of people when they are doing the activity that the reporter is writing about.

We are looking for opportunities to photograph people when things are happening. **M**

See the following pages for a selection of Steve Russell's photojournalism with commentary in italics.



Some of the 250 balloons strung up over Dundas Square with 10,000 feet of rope for the Luminato festival reflect on the ground, as Toronto had a brief relief from the high temperatures Monday afternoon with showers during the evening rush.

Rarely does an advance story for an event produce a good picture. In fact, I had gone out to shoot a rainstorm and got this picture which replaced a portrait of an artist and took the section front.



At the end of the inter-faith service, people make offerings and take the aura from the light of the Artee. The Artee was waved around images of the deities at the end of an inter-faith service at the Hindu Sabha Temple for those who have suffered in the Mumbai terrorist attacks.

Localizing world events is a very important aspect of the job, especially in a region as culturally diverse as the Greater Toronto Area.



Working from the dining room table, 15 coats of paint are used on the vinyl baby head to give the doll a realistic look before a matte finish is applied to complete the illustration. Sherry Anne Albi makes life-like dolls. She recently sold one of her works on eBay for \$4,000. The married mother of four mostly grown kids always liked crafts and dolls and fell into this. She is self-taught.

Perfect example of a reporter letting the photo assignment desk set up a time when the subject is doing what the reporter is writing about. The subject basically opened the door to let me in and went back to work.



A crawfish surprises Lizzie Avery as Grade six students study the ecology of a creek. The students also released fish they hatched back into the wild. The grade six students from Coronation Public School in Oshawa released 27,000 Atlantic salmon fry into Duffins Creek. *The assignment was to shoot the release of the fry. Way too many media types had shown up at the event and I wandered over to where another group of kids were doing another activity while they waited to release their fish.*



A doll rests on Sherry Anne Albi's dining room table, awaiting a torso after 15 coats of paint are used on the vinyl baby head and the arms and legs.

When the story ran, everyone talked about this picture.



“The Canadian Kid” Steve Molitor, left, (27-0, 10 KO) retains his Junior Featherweight IBF Title by beating Fernando “Wary” Beltran Jr. (30-3-1, 18 KO) at the “Rumble at Rama IV” where Canadian World Champ in the IBF Junior Featherweight Division made his fourth title defense at Casino Rama.

Boxing is a difficult sport to cover, especially when the main event starts late at night. The photographer has to gamble and miss a round and file quickly to make deadline.



Michael Phelps (on the right) and the team’s second swimmer celebrate their come-from-behind victory in the 4x100 m freestyle relay by less than a tenth of second. They smashed the old world record by four seconds at finals at the National Aquatics Center at the XXIX Olympiad in Beijing.

Photojournalists have to be on the scene to be a witness to history.



Canada’s David Ford makes his way smoothly through the vortex that haunted him in his second run yesterday and again in the final. Ford qualified sixth in the semi-final and maintained that position in the final of the men’s K1 slalom in the white water at Shunyi Olympic Rowing-Canoeing Park at the XXIX Olympiad.

I try to take readers to new places in order to see things a little differently. Here, we see the intensity of David Ford’s one visible eye.



The moon rises over the The Bird's Nest and the Water Cube in Beijing at the Olympic Games.

One of the career events for a photojournalist would have to be covering an Olympic Games. Like the athletes, we have to be on the top of our game and find pictures to illustrate a variety of stories.



Erin McLeod watches a ball just miss the near post as Canada loses to Sweden 2-1 at Worker's Stadium at the XXIX Olympiad in Beijing on Tuesday. Canada's fate is now in other teams' hands. A win or a tie would have advanced them automatically to the next round.

Athletes at the top of their game always make for compelling moments. The pressure to capture that when covering an Olympic games is huge.



Monika Rizui, an aunt to the surviving children of deceased parents, is comforted after speaking to reporters covering the funeral. Nazifa and Rahimullah Shahghasy were stabbed last week. Peel police have charged 28-year-old Dwayne Robert Palmer with two counts of murder. *Funerals are always a difficult aspect of the job to cover. Emotions run high and access is tough.*



With her coaches celebrating in the foreground, Canadian Carol Huynh wins the gold medal match against Chiharu Icho of Japan in the 48 kg weight class in wrestling competition at the China Agricultural University Gymnasium at the XXIX Olympiad. *This was the first gold medal for Canada at the games. When an athlete gets on a roll, photographers begin an obsessive cycle of trying to pick the best spot of "the Picture." Here, I put myself on the same side as her coaching staff, hoping that if she won she would celebrate for her coaches.*

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF FACEBOOK

Journalists should always remember its potential for finding sources and story ideas

Mary Gazze



Mary Gazze is a Toronto-based freelance journalist.

Remember New Year's Day 2008? While most people were still getting over the previous night's hangover, a 14-year-old Toronto girl lay dying from stab wounds on a cold street. Three days later she was identified as Stefanie

Rengel. That day, it was my job to find out everything I could about her through social networking website Facebook.com. After getting over the unusual spelling of her first name, it became pretty easy. As many Torontonians expressed their grief at candlelight vigils outside her home, her classmates and friends turned to Facebook. They posted photos of the girl, which we used on our newscast that night. Our competitors also helped themselves. Facebook made finding photos of the girl, the name of her school, and other information easy. But it also helped those classmates post the full name of Melissa Todorovic, the teenage girl who at the time was suspected of pressuring her boyfriend to kill Rengel, publication bans imposed by the Youth Criminal Justice Act. Todorovic was eventually convicted.

Just one week after Rengel's death, and days after the assassination of Pakistani politician Benazir Bhutto, her son Bilawal, still a teenager at the time, was anointed her successor. Reporters found a Facebook profile with his name on it. It appeared that he had posted a message saying "I am not a born leader. I am not a politician or a great thinker. I'm merely a student." What a scoop. The new leader of the party was apparently admitting to his inexperience.



Online remembrances: As many Torontonians expressed their grief at candlelight vigils outside Stefanie Rengel's home, her classmates and friends turned to Facebook. They posted photos of the girl, which we used on our newscast that night. Photo from Facebook.

The statements were splashed all over papers around the world, including London's *Telegraph* and wire-service Agence France Presse. Days later, those papers found out that profile they had lifted those statements from was actually a hoax.

These are just two examples of the problem with Facebook. It can be incredibly useful for journalists, but also a dangerous tool. With the explosion in popularity of Twitter, another social networking site, journalists shouldn't forget that Facebook has benefits of its own, including lengthier user profile information, access to photos, videos, and truer-to-life profile names, lists of groups that help identify user interests, and a list of what could be the person's real-life friends, and not just web buddies.

People regard Facebook in a variety of ways: anything from a tool to reconnect with long-lost acquaintances to a waste

of time. For me, it's a journalistic gold mine. You can use it for daily chase, to find original stories, and sources sitting in the open for everyone to see. And it's always adding new features.

It began as a way for university students to connect, but since it opened to everyone in 2006, it has grown to more than 250 million users. There are 12 million Canadians. That's a lot of potential sources. So if you still refuse to do so (and I know journalists who do), sign up for a free account. Facebook has a lot of frivolous features, but I'll try and help you best sort through it all so you can find original stories, and work fast.

THE PROS

A Facebook spokesperson says journalists are free to use the site for work purposes so long as they don't violate the terms of use or a user's privacy settings, and

can use any information posted in public areas of the website. Make sure you join a network or two when you are prompted upon sign up. I am a member of four networks: my city, workplace, and two universities of which I am a graduate. Joining networks will give you access to information that may only be visible to members of a particular network.

The great part about Facebook is that unlike its predecessor MySpace, people generally sign up using their real names, not aliases. This makes people easier to find. There's a search tool at the top right-hand corner of every page next to the logout button. You can use this to search for specific names or topics.



Building a network of friends will help you get the most out of your account and help you use the features to their furthest potential. To start off, type a friend's name in the search engine. For the sake of our example, I'm using the name Amy. The results page looks like this:



You can sort through the material by clicking on the appropriate tab on the left hand side of your screen. It's circled in the screenshot. Let's pick "People" which helps us find real users.

I'll explain more about the groups and events tabs later. The pages tab can often produce results from corporations or celebrities like Amy Winehouse in this screenshot. The applications tab brings up mostly Facebook games, personality quizzes and the like.

If you find the person you're looking for, click on "send message" to introduce yourself. Then click "add as friend," to send them a request. Once they accept, you can

view information in their profile.

Profiles: Every Facebook member has their own profile. This is mine:



See the tabs at the top? The Wall tab shows all the recent activity I've had on the site. If you click on the info tab, you can discover people's hobbies, volunteer work, or workplace. In our newsroom, we often used profiles to find out more about crime victims. It helped us find photos, workplaces and volunteer work. We then would go to those places to find people who knew the victim. It helps avoid bothering a grieving family for photos or information when they may not want to talk. Do a search for the name and click. If the account is open, their profile will look similar to mine. Look around. The smaller circle that is highlighted on my profile shows you where to click to find photos. If the profile you're looking at is closed, you will only be able to see their name, photo, and a few of their friends, but that doesn't mean you're out of luck.



Click on the "See all" link, which will let you see a link of all that person's friends. Look for open profiles. You'll often find photos of the victim, or other clues through looking at a friend's account. Armed with a friend's name, you may even be able to look them up on Canada 411.

When it comes to crimes, it's best not to contact Facebook friends of victims directly. Your account could be suspended for sending unsolicited messages. I explain more in the "cons" section.

And also be careful of what you use from profiles in a story. A Facebook spokesperson said that as a general guideline, content from a profile must be cleared with an individual user before it is reprinted. So don't limit yourself to profiles. Make sure you try the name in groups too.



Groups: Put any keyword into the search engine and select the groups tab on the results page to sort.

You'll find a group for just about anything including journalism, school alumni, associations and pop culture groups about Britney Spears. Find a group you like and join it. Once you're in the group, scroll down past the descriptions and read the comments.

Sometimes people start a "memorial group" for crime victims (as they did for Stefanie Rengel) and post photos or information about vigils or upcoming court dates for the accused. The photos are usually right at the bottom of the group's page.

You must have joined a group to write on its "wall" or the discussion board. Both are virtual bulletin boards. Here's the discussion board in a group about the death of Robert Dziekanski, the man hit by a Taser by RCMP at the Vancouver airport:



When I am looking for someone who is a member of a group to use as a source, I leave my work email address and news-

continued on page 26

continued from page 25

room extension to prove my legitimacy. With larger groups you could hear back from dozens of passionate group members willing to talk in time for deadline. You can always leave a group the same way you joined it once you've filed the story.

But stay in the group if you're on a beat or plan to follow up. Periodically go back and check for any new topics. If you're lucky, the administrator may send updates to your Facebook inbox, or invite you to rallies, boycotts, or other events.

Groups with a large membership help keep your ear to the ground on what the public feels passionately about. In late 2008, the Ontario government proposed unpopular changes to the province's youth driving laws. Someone started a Facebook group that at its peak had more than 150,000 members. The premier took notice of the backlash and changed the proposed laws.

News Feed: This is the page you see as soon as you log in:



It keeps track of your friends' activities. The more friends you have, the more information you'll get. To me, it's like people talking in a crowded room. Lots of different conversations are going on at the same time and the tabs at the side can help you sort them. Each one filters information in a different way so play around with them and see what you like best. You can always return to this page by clicking "Home" on the top, left-hand corner of your screen. It is mundane to sort through everyone's vacation pictures, but is a great tool when paired up with status updates.

Status Updates: This is the box on the homepage that asks "What's on your mind?"



This is my favourite feature for breaking news or daily chase. It's similar to

Twitter. People type up a sentence into the box and then it appears in their friends' news feeds. Friends can then leave comments. When I chase, I often type in a question and get suggestions. I find it is faster than leaving a voicemail message.

Here's a sentence I typed into my status bar for a chase I was conducting.



As you can see from the time stamps, I got my first reply in just eight minutes. Imagine how long it would've taken to start calling every mall in the city and wait for a PR person to find out if they had the special kind of bench we were looking for.

Events: Type your city in "search", then select the "events" tab. You'll find tons of birthday parties, but keep scrolling because you could hit something newsworthy. You could find events created by picketers or boycotters. Word of Canada's inaugural Earth Hour made its way through Facebook as an event months before it hit the mainstream media.

A Facebook spokesperson said journalists are free to use the site for work purposes so long as they don't violate the terms of use or a user's privacy settings.

Don't rule out doing general searches on keywords that interest you and just looking at the results without restrictions. Whenever I am short a "real" person for a story, such as a parent concerned about H1N1, or finding someone who celebrates Seinfeld's fictional holiday of Festivus, I often find something in the search results that helps me along the way. Most of

the time, it's a group. I go in, read the wall, and look for anyone local and send them a message, asking if they'd like to be interviewed. One story I found using this technique was about a boycott against a local restaurant that allegedly turned away a man because of his wheelchair. Facebook no longer allows users to sort by city, but there are still many other filters to choose from.



THE CONS

If you don't want your information looked at, just as you have been looking at the information of others, make sure you change your settings. Facebook has gotten into trouble with Canada's privacy commissioner over the collection of information, and has agreed to comply within a year with recommendations to enhance the users' privacy. The recommendations primarily apply to the collection of information by third party application developers. It is still

unclear as to whether these changes will affect the way journalists can use Facebook. Changing your user settings is very convoluted. This **recent article** from a respected technology news website should help.

I've explained the utility of sending messages, but don't do it if you think that the individual may not want to be contacted. Paisley Woodward, a producer at

CBC News in Vancouver learned this the hard way when her account was suspended. She had little personal information in her account and no profile photo, but did indicate she was a journalist.

"I think what may have happened is that someone I was trying to make contact with on a particular story was irked that I had tried to reach them through Facebook," recalls Woodward.

Facebook accused her of using her account for commercial purposes. She had to get in touch with a Facebook PR person who eventually got her reinstated. Prevent this hassle by also using your account for personal purposes like messaging your friends.

The main thing was to have a photo of myself posted, and have friends," says Woodward. "Not look so mysterious."

And obviously, be a vigilant journalist. Anyone can sign up as anyone and post false information like they could in the real world. Just try asking Bilawal Bhutto and the 120 Wayne Gretzkys who have Facebook accounts. But celebrities are starting to take action. Earlier this year, Italian soccer star Alessandro Del Piero announced he would

Be suspicious of profiles that claim to belong to people in the public eye, or don't have photos or a lot of friends connected to them.

take legal action against the site after someone opened an account with his name and photo and put up links to Nazi propaganda.

There's really no surefire way to verify whether someone is who they say they are on Facebook. But try using the same criteria that

Facebook itself uses to judge. A spokesperson says they check content, and email addresses associated with the account, networks, and friends. Be suspicious of profiles that claim to belong to people in the public eye, or don't have photos or a lot of friends connected to them. When sending a message to someone, get their phone number, look them up on

Canada 411 and call them. And use your judgment. Does someone in a group about their love of Seinfeld really have reason to lie?

So the next time you are

online, log into Facebook, and play around. Send me a note. You can find me at, www.facebook.com/marygazze and add me as your first friend. Who knows, I might be able to help guide you through it for your next story. **M**

While Facebook is a useful tool, there are other goodies within the vast expanse of the Internet that can help you.

FORUMS

These are virtual bulletin boards where people with a particular interest start discussions or "threads" about particular topics. After signing up, you can start your own thread or send others private messages. These are great for finding private citizens who talk to each other about a particular issue but want to use a pseudonym. By logging onto a car enthusiast forum, we found a man who called himself an "extreme driver." He told us about street racing culture and took our cameras on a tour of speeding hotspots in the city. You'll need to bookmark your forums and check for new posts and replies. To find a pertinent one, just Google "forum" and your keyword.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

If you're on a beat, sign up for a listserv or discussion group—you'll have stories come right to your inbox. Get familiar with services like Google and Yahoo groups. You can do a search for groups, or simply browse at

www.groups.google.com/groups/dir or www.dir.groups.yahoo.com/dir/.

There are groups about anything from the Dow Jones to adopted children looking for their biological parents. And groups exist in almost every language, even Esperanto. If you post a question in a group that supports the feature, you can sign up to receive email notifications which you can't do with a forum. And you can always monitor what other people are talking about by going back to the original link.

Listservs are like discussion groups, but a moderator approves all content first. You may be familiar with the CAJ's listserv.

Caution: If you do make a post in a forum or listserv make sure you read the group rules or ask an administrator first. Some moderators can be unforgiving. You could get a hostile response from other members. Take it from me...I didn't read the rules and it angered one group so much that it ended up burning my virtual bridges and getting me banned.

READ THE INDICATORS

Paying attention to economic indicators and their proper context will help you make sense of the numbers

Kelly Toughill



Kelly Toughill teaches journalism at the University of King's College.

The trick for many news stories is finding the numbers that drive the narrative. The danger with stories about the economy is giving numbers more meaning than they deserve.

The key economic statistics used by most journalists are

gross domestic product, unemployment rates, housing starts, interest rates, currency rates, government debt and deficit, bankruptcy rates, inflation rates, exports, imports and various indices of the stock market. Each figure is useful, but none expresses a truth that is simply good or bad.

Take currency. Is it better for the Canadian dollar to be high or low relative to the U.S. dollar? If you are a Canadian tourist headed south for vacation, you want a strong loonie. If you are a Canadian exporter selling to U.S.

competitors, you want the loonie to stay low to keep your prices competitive.

Currency isn't the only number that varies in context. A booming gross domestic product doesn't always mean things are getting better and unemployment rates aren't a reliable misery index. In fact, sometimes unemployment rates don't even measure whether joblessness is growing or shrinking.

Here are a few examples of how key economic indicators and statistics are always governed by context.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measures all the goods and services produced by society. It is the foundation of most economic reporting. GDP is calculated by adding up consumer spending, investment, government spending and exports minus imports. When the GDP is growing, the economy is growing. When the GDP falls, the economy is shrinking. A six-month-long drop in GDP is the standard definition of recession.

The usual narrative is that GDP down is bad and GDP up is good. Not necessarily. GDP only measures the size of the economy, not why it is growing or who benefits from the growth. Disasters create a huge jump in GDP. Hurricane Katrina, the ice storm in Quebec and World War II all drove GDP growth in North America.

GDP rates also don't reveal anything

The danger with stories about the economy is giving numbers more meaning than they deserve.

about whether the people who live in a country or region are benefiting from the increase in economic activity. For example, Newfoundland saw a big increase in GDP growth when its offshore oil began to flow, but little of that money stayed in the province at first. It took years for that initial GDP growth to improve average household incomes.

Unemployment rates are often used as a proxy for the misery of society as a whole, but the way they are calculated obscures how many people are really working. Before calculating unemployment rates,

statisticians first calculate how many people want to work. That figure is called the **participation rate** and it varies wildly. In March, 2009, just 46 per cent of the people over age 15 in the Gaspé and Îles-de-la-Madeleine were willing and available to work. Compare that to the area around the mountains of Jasper and Banff, where 80 per cent of the adult population was in the workforce. Participation rates can be low because an area has a lot of seniors, because it has a culture of women staying home with children, because work is seasonal or because chronic unemployment has discouraged people from staying in the job market. The unemployment rate is not the percentage of total adults who are out of work, it is the percentage of adults participating in the workforce who are out of work.

The point is that participation rates dramatically affect unemployment rates, which makes unemployment hard to compare across regions or across time. The participation rate can also skew the picture of employment during a recovery. As

the number of available jobs increase, the number of people looking for work also increases. That means that the overall unemployment rate can remain stubbornly high even though the proportion of people working actually rises. A more useful number is sometimes the **employment rate**, which is a simple measure of the proportion of adults over age 15 are working. In March, 2009, 37 per cent of the adults in the Gaspé were working, and 76 per cent of the adults in the Banff-Jasper region were working.



The need for patience: Commuters wait for buses after the subway system was shut down as the power failures continued to affect Montreal during the ice storm's fifth day. The storm left one million households without electricity in the region. CP PHOTO: Ryan Remiorz, 1998.

Multipliers are particularly important because of stimulus packages created to reverse the recession. Economists calculate how much economic stimulus a project will create by looking at both direct and indirect impacts. Some kinds of spending help the economy more than others. For example, paying off credit card debt has little immediate impact on the economy, but a construction project flows money to workers, retailers and suppliers who then spend the money on their suppliers and so on, multiplying the impact of the original purchase. It is very common to exaggerate the multiplier effect of a project, particularly if a group is seeking government funding. Statistics Canada and many governments have tables that show the multiplier effect of different types of industry. They are a key resource when discussing proj-

ects being raised at city hall, the provincial legislature or in Ottawa.

Deficits are a great example of how economic statistics are dependent on context. Deficits used to be considered pure evil, the best evidence of a government that couldn't govern. Now deficits are applauded as a tool to help the economy recover. The truth is that they are neither good nor evil. In fact, sometimes it is hard even to tell when a deficit exists.

Deficits were demonized in the 1980s and 1990s because they created debt and debt forced governments to spend money on interest payments instead of health care, education and other vital services. Both former New Brunswick premier Frank McKenna and former Liberal finance minister Paul Martin built their careers on killing deficits.

But not every balanced budget is as bal-

anced as it appears. Changes in accounting rules brought in during the late 1990s allowed governments to put some expenditures directly on the debt. That meant that budgets could be balanced and show no deficit as the debt continued to rise. This is still happening in many provinces.

In other cases, budgets were balanced by incorporating unrealistic estimates and expectations. One provincial government produced a pre-election budget that showed huge new spending but a balanced budget. The fine print showed that the government projected that the GDP would double and that would bring in millions more in provincial income taxes. Banks and private forecasters were forecasting a drop in GDP even as the government predicted it would double. The banks were right, and the province plunged back into deficit. **M**

A MAJOR BARRIER TO COURT ACCESS

Court and justice officials should stop violating the spirit and letter of the law

Dean Jobb



Dean Jobb, an assistant professor of journalism at the University of King's College in Halifax, is author of *Media Law for Canadian Journalists*. For more information about the book, please visit www.emp.ca

In courthouses across Canada, journalists are routinely denied easy access to exhibits based on outdated and flawed interpretations of the law.

The culprit is the Supreme Court of Canada's 1991 ruling in *Vickery v. Nova Scotia Supreme Court (Prothonotary)*, which found that courts are the custodians of exhibits and have the power to control access to them.

Based on that precedent, courts in many provinces—including Ontario, Nova Scotia and British Columbia—have established rules that require journalists to ask the presiding judge for permission to view or copy exhibits.

In Ontario, for example, the Ministry of the Attorney General's access policy for court clerks acknowledges that "most court documents are publicly accessible." Yet journalists must ask a judge's permission to view any exhibit produced in court as evidence.

The media outlet will likely be obliged to notify any affected parties—in case the application raises privacy or confidentiality concerns—and ask for a hearing and a ruling. The process can take days. So much for meeting today's deadline for filing copy.

"It's completely at odds with all of the

(openness) principles the courts seem to have been handing down over the last 20, 30 or more years," says Tracey Tyler, the *Toronto Star's* legal affairs reporter. "You have to go through hoops—very time consuming and expensive hoops—in a lot of cases."

All this to see a document, photograph or other item produced as evidence in open court.

Media law experts dismiss these restrictions on access to exhibits as unworkable and an affront to the *Charter* right to freedom of the press.

"*Vickery* is out of step, and the policies and practices and training of court staff should reflect the broader understanding of the important role the press plays and the important role of open courts," says David Paciocco, who teaches constitutional and criminal law at the University of Ottawa.

The *Charter* was not argued in *Vickery*, he notes, and Supreme Court rulings since 1991 have imposed strict limits on when

Toronto's Humber College, says this should be the practice in all provinces. Exhibits should be "freely accessible to the media unless there's a court order to the contrary."

Most exhibits are documents and making them more accessible raises no privacy or confidentiality concerns. For the few that do—crime scene photographs, medical and psychological reports, personal financial records and the like—stricter access procedures may be warranted. Only then should a formal access process be triggered.

Reporters need to view or copy exhibits to ensure their reports are as complete and accurate as possible. Tyler has been in the business for more than two decades—long enough to remember when a reporter who wanted to review an exhibit during a trial simply approached the court clerk during a recess.

"It's difficult for reporters to write accurate stories based only on what's said in court," notes Tyler. "Most cases these days, even criminal cases, are document-intensive. What's discussed in court—by way of legal argument, for example—is often an incomplete picture of the case."

Counsel often ask witnesses to comment on passages in documents being used as evidence, but the passages themselves may not be read

aloud—the lawyers, judge and jurors all have copies, so there's no need. But reporters are left in the dark. And even when documents are read into the record, journalists may need to double-check facts or the spelling of names.

Outside the courtroom, a reporter sometimes can sweet-talk a lawyer involved

Most exhibits are documents and making them more accessible raises no privacy or confidentiality concerns.

documents can be sealed and information should be banned from publication, to respect the media's access rights.

In Alberta, by contrast, the party seeking to restrict access to an exhibit must apply for a court order restricting access.

Alan Shanoff, a former counsel to the Sun Media newspaper chain who teaches media law in the journalism program at



Opening the doors to the media: A Sheriff holds the courthouse door open for Media Facilitator Tom Collins left who carries exhibits back into the New Westminster Courthouse after Justice James Williams released the exhibits for recording by media during the trial of accused serial killer Robert Pickton Tuesday, February 13, 2007. CP PHOTO/Chuck Stoody

in the case into making an exhibit or a copy available. But as courts make access more difficult, lawyers have become more reluctant to oblige.

“If it’s a particularly sensitive or high-profile case, even the most media-friendly lawyers are skittish” about providing informal access, says Tyler. “They want you to get it from the court.”

Ontario’s access rules also barred access to court files in criminal cases when there was a publication ban on the identity of a

victim or witness—in effect, transforming a ban on one piece of information into a sealing order on the entire file.

This restriction had no basis in law and it’s not the practice of courts in other provinces, where a publication ban is no barrier to access. Earlier this year, thanks to some bad press and media lobbying, the Ontario government relented and lifted the restriction.

If such a flawed rule could be devised and enforced, what does that say about

the validity of the restrictions on access to exhibits?

Time after time, in the years since the *Vickery* ruling, the Supreme Court of Canada has stressed the importance of an open justice system and the public’s right of access to court hearings and records.

Court and justice officials in all provinces should review their access rules—and, in particular, restrictions on access to exhibits—and stop violating the spirit and letter of the law. **M**

FOLLOWING THE MONEY

Knowledge of key Web sites will help tell stories that companies would rather see buried in their financial statements

Fred Vallance-Jones



Fred Vallance-Jones is an assistant professor of journalism at the University of King's College in Halifax.

I was horrified when David McKie, editor of this esteemed publication, told me he wanted me to write about the economy. I have always found the blizzard of numbers in economic and business reporting intimidating. And the conflicting interpretations of those numbers has always left

my head spinning. One person's slam-dunk stock is someone else's dog. And trying to sort out the meaning of all those 10-K, 8-K and Special-K forms has been enough to send me fleeing to the cereal aisle. I have tended to leave the comprehension of balance sheets and proxy forms to the properly initiated, such as David, who wrote the business reporting chapter in our co-authored book *Digging Deeper*.

But an assignment is an assignment. So off I went looking for the best examples of data for reporting on the tanking economy, which is now said to be in recovery. Lo and behold, I found rich storehouses of information that could help numbers-phobic folks such as your loyal columnist survive what must be one of the most common assignments these days: "Get me something on the economy, stupid."

So here's a bit of a tour of the online world of information about the economy.

If you're doing a quick-hit story on the state of the economy now, one great place to start is the federal government's **Canadian Economy Online**. This one-stop shopping centre is the place to go if you want a lot of basic statistics and economic data at your fingertips. From the size of the federal debt to the rate of inflation to the monthly performance of the stock market, there's a good range of **data available**. There are

also links to a wide variety of other websites containing economic information, but many of them are outdated or broken. The best part of the site is the compilation of data on the front page. Once you find what you are looking for, you can copy and paste it into a spreadsheet such as **Excel**, or download the data in comma- or tab-delimited text, so you can sort and crunch the numbers. Of course, all of this comes with a healthy helping of spin, "read about our great GST cut," that kind of thing. But with the economy in a downturn and lots of debate about where it will turn next, this is a great resource for some of the basic numbers.

If that's not enough, then you probably want to visit **Statistics Canada**. Statscan as it is affectionately known is the mother lode of information on anything and everything about the economy that can be collected, weighed and measured. Here you can find the latest Consumer Price Index (inflation rate), Labour Force Survey (unemployment), building permits survey etc, etc. There's enough to keep a true numbers person going in perpetuity.

Industry Canada also collects a lot of information on the economy, including stats on bankruptcies.

If you want to get into the real nitty-gritty of personal and business bankruptcies in your area, you can search for bankruptcies on the main Industry Canada site. Just choose the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Records link. It costs eight dollars per search, and you can put it on your VISA or MasterCard. (Note: journalists can make arrangements to conduct these searches free of charge. To find out how to do this, contact the regional office at the Office of the **Superintendent of Bankruptcy**.) The actual records can be obtained from regional offices of the Superintendent of Bankruptcy. The file will be stored at the regional office serving the area where the bankruptcy


occurred. In many cases, the files will be in electronic form and you may get them on a disk. If you just want the basic filing, the office will often fax it to you.

Now, I am not a total numbers-phobe. Truth be told, I have used a great many numbers over the years. Like many CAR people I specialize in creating numbers.

One of my favourite trolling grounds for information on companies has always been **SEDAR**, the online system maintained by Canada's securities regulators. This is where you can find the documents that publicly traded companies are required to file in order to stay on the right side of the line. So, here you can find those aforementioned balance sheets and annual reports, plus press releases companies put out whenever something "material" happens that could affect the price of their stocks. If you dig deeply enough, usually in the management information circular, the one put out before the annual meeting, you can find out what the top leaders of the company are paid.

Hey, there's an idea for a quick spreadsheet story. During annual report season—what the business community calls spring—you could quickly take compensation information for, say, Canada's 20 biggest publicly traded corporations, and see what the big bosses are making. Come next year you'll be able to see how those pay packets changed, or didn't, with the plunging fortunes of corporate performance.

Could be a great story. And, you know, maybe I was being a little hard on all this economics stuff before. My forced tour (certainly not a tour de force) of the numbers has opened my eyes to a lot of possible stories I might not have seen before. Combined with a good spreadsheet program, it's a slam dunk.

For more information on computer-assisted reporting, including past media columns and this column with all the links, visit **CAR in Canada**. 

AN IMPORTANT VICTORY

An Ontario judgment will help journalists obtain databases to find stories that governments would rather keep secret

Fred Vallance-Jones

The need to sever exempt information from database records has created some interesting questions for the commissions and courts that make the law on access to information and freedom of information (FOI) in Canada.

Just how far do institutions have to go in creating computer programs and routines to sever information that can properly be withheld from release?

How this question is answered has important implications for the future of data access. On the one hand, if journalists and others seeking information can make the case that writing a severing routine is analogous to using a black marker on paper records, access is enhanced. On the other hand, if access bureaucrats can argue successfully that writing programs is extra work they are not required to do, the cause of openness suffers.

This year started off with news that, for journalists at least, the good guys won.

A three-judge panel of the Court of Appeal for Ontario threw out a 2007 decision that threatened to severely restrict access to electronic records in that province.

In the original decision, the Divisional Court ruled that the Toronto police had no obligation under the province's municipal FOI legislation to write a small computer program to extract data in an anonymous format. But the appeals court has thrown out that decision and given the lower court a judicial tongue-lashing in the process.

This case has been going on a long time.

Toronto Star reporter Jim Rankin asked for two Toronto police databases. To protect privacy, he requested the police replace identities of individuals with randomly generated numbers. Ontario's information commissioner ruled in favour of the *Star*, saying that the data sought by Rankin met the definition of a record under the act.

The adjudicator ordered the police to issue a formal access decision. That was 2005.

But the police weren't about to give in. They applied to the Divisional Court for judicial review.

Orders from the Ontario commissioner's office are supposed to be binding, but institutions can apply for judicial review if they contend the commissioner made an error in law. That is supposed to be a pretty narrow right, but institutions in Ontario have used it a lot, and have often won.

And that's what happened in this case.

In June 2007, the court ruled that if an institution had to write a small computer routine, that was enough to snuff out the request if writing the routine would require the institution to utilize software it didn't normally use. The ruling flew in the face of established practice for institutions to write small programs or queries to extract or sever data.

It was a horrible decision for those of us concerned about data access because it seemed to open the door for institutions to deny requests almost on a whim.

Fortunately, the appeals court has reversed the decision and underlined a few legal principles in the process.

Noting the Supreme Court of Canada's conclusion that the "overarching purpose" of access legislation is to facilitate democracy, and pointing out the "prevalence of computers in our society and their use by government institutions as the primary means by which records are kept and information is stored," the appeals judges said the Divisional Court had applied an overly narrow interpretation of the act. And then it delivered the coup de gras, saying this interpretation "provides government institutions with the ability to evade the public's right of access to information..."

Amen to that.

By underlining the importance of access legislation to democracy, and urging a liberal and expansive interpretation in the light of the importance of these laws to our democracy, the appeals court has sent an important message down the line about how it would like Ontario's two FOI laws interpreted.

This is important because of the growing number of requests for electronic data.

When I made my first such request in 1995, the initial response from the federal department involved was that it just wouldn't do it. And my experience through the years continued to be that bureaucrats treated electronic requests differently from others. For whatever reason, their position was that records stored in bulk form in computers were fundamentally different from those on paper. They would routinely throw up hurdles, be they fees, exemptions or delays that were far higher than if one had requested the same information in hard copy. Some cases took years to resolve. Other journalists who make such requests have faced similar battles, so this decision is heartening. It provides important support to the case journalists have made all along, that access to records in electronic form is fundamentally important in a day when so much government information is stored that way.

The decision in the Rankin case still required the *Star* to pay the charges that can be levied under the act for the creation of the software routine. And while a large fee estimate could well slow the process down again, the important principle set down in this case will be important ammunition as journalists continue the fight to keep public information public.

Go to www.carincanada.ca to read this and other legal decisions affecting the right to access data. **M**

PHOTOJOURNALISM: AN EMINENT HISTORY

In these days when anyone can snap a photo, it's important to remember the Golden Age when a picture really was worth a thousand words

Sarah Moffat



Sarah Moffat is a freelance photojournalist/videographer. You can see her work at www.sarah-moffatimagery.com.

The use of photos by newspapers at the beginning of the century was quick and utilitarian. Newspapers concerned themselves with recording the day's events, and they used photographs to help them do just that. Progress led to the Golden Age of photojournalism. Magazines distinguished themselves in

the middle of the 20th century by becoming the major venues for photojournalism.

However, the 1920s and 1930s, produced photographers who ventured outside their studios to photograph people, especially individuals struggling through the Great Depression. These photographs contained little "news," but they made powerful statements about the lives that Americans were leading. About the same time, publishers realized there was a market for the journalistic photographic essay, planning publications that would emphasize this genre of journalism. The **most famous was Henry Luce's *Life* magazine**, which came to life in 1936.

The magazine was designed on a larger-than-usual format, ideal for displaying good photographs. *Life* set the standard for photojournalism for the next 30 years. The Golden Age of Photojournalism ended in the 1970s when *Life* and other photo-magazines stopped publishing. They found that they could not compete with other media for advertising dollars to sustain their large circulations and high costs. Still, those magazines taught journalism much about



the **photographic essay** and the power of the still image.¹

Photojournalism has existed for the last 150 years. Photojournalists have spent that time on the front lines, not only in times of war, but in times of peace, recording the important events of contemporary history alongside the situations of everyday life, condensing the essentials of a story in just a few pages of pictures. The evolution of photojournalism beyond the Golden Age continues to the point where some news stations are now calling on audiences to become photographers, submitting timely images they may happen to witness. The technology of the camera, combined with the power of the Internet, has made photography accessible. Anyone can do it. This accessibility has given way to a whole new type of "journalism". Thus proving Marshall

Mcluhan's aphorism, "the medium is the message," quite correct.

So how does the photojournalist whose heritage is rooted in the Golden Age distinguish herself from the modern-day "citizen-journalism?"

A photojournalist is defined by the power, the subtlety, the emotion and the message her image conveys. The ability to tell the story depends on the technical knowledge of light and equipment and having patience to spend time with the subject, be it a person, structure or nature. The photojournalist has a pre-meditated idea—a mission, if you will—of the story the subject conveys, even if the subject can be unpredictable.

By being in a certain place at a certain time, the "citizen-journalist" can take a picture, using a cell phone or digital camera to simply *show* what has happened. The photojournalist's *tells* what happened with emotion and intent. **M**

¹This paragraph was built out of the article by Jim Stovall: *Magazines and Photojournalism's Golden Age*