TNT

21

2013

Top submissions to
Teaching News Terrifically
in the 21st Century

Vol. 2

Newspaper and Online News Division
Association for Education
in Journalism and Mass Communication

About TNT21

This booklet shares teaching ideas honored in 2013 in Teaching News Terrifically in the 21st Century, the teaching ideas competition of the Newspaper and Online News Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. TNT21 was founded in 2009 to publicly acknowledge good ideas for foundational journalism courses: newswriting, reporting and editing.

Ideas are accepted in three divisions:
— Full-time faculty members
— Adjunct professors
— Graduate-student instructors

The competition awards prizes of $100 for the best teaching idea from each group and gives certificates to others whose work is honored.

Deadlines for contest entries typically are in the summer, to allow instructors to enter materials outside the rush of fall/spring semesters, and are announced on the Newspaper and Online News Division listserv and on the JOURNET listserv. Teaching tips submitted should be suitable for use in newswriting, reporting or editing courses, though they may be tailored for specific versions of those courses. For example, tips for teaching newswriting across media would be welcome, as would tips for teaching a specific type of reporting, such as public affairs reporting, business reporting or environmental reporting.

Tips can address practical skills or conceptual knowledge, showing, for example, how to teach students to report ethically or edit to avoid libel. Tips that help professors address the challenges of teaching in a world where technologies are rapidly changing are especially welcome.

Ideas are judged for their originality, innovative nature, ease of application, completeness, writing and whether they would work in more than one course and/or at different types of schools.

TNT21 has been administered since 2009 by Susan Keith, an associate professor in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies in the School of Communication and Information at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J., and one of the Newspaper and Online News Division's teaching chairs.

2013 judges

Erin Coyle, Louisiana State University
Joel Campbell, Brigham Young University
Patricia Dobson, Eastern New Mexico University
Pamela B. Fine, University of Kansas
Kyle Heim, Seton Hall University
Kevin Lerner, Marist College
David Loomis, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Mitchell McKenney, Kent State University
John Oudens, The New York Times
Craig Paddock, University of North Carolina Charlotte
Bill Reader, Ohio University
Scott Reinardy, University of Kansas
Chris Roberts, University of Alabama
Lisa A. Romero, University of Illinois
Carol Schlagheck, Eastern Michigan University
Robert N. Spicer, Millersville University
Leslie-Jean Thornton, Arizona State University

Short and Tweet

By Sue Burzynski Bullard
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Types of courses the idea could be used in: newswriting, reporting, editing

Target level: freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, graduate students in a professionally oriented program

What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?

The goal is to help students learn to write clearly and concisely. It reinforces William Zinsser's advice in "On Writing Well." He said, "Examine every word you put on paper. You'll find a surprising number that don't serve any purpose." The exercise helps students learn to find the focus of stories. It helps editing students write concise, clear headlines that pull readers into stories. It also helps reporting students learn to summarize stories accurately and briefly — a skill they need as they craft their own ledes.

How does the assignment or exercise work?

Students are given copies of the same stories. Each student must write a headline (in tweet form) summarizing a story in 120 characters or less. Students then must refine the headline to 100 characters or less. Although Twitter allows for 140 characters in a tweet, editors often provide links to stories with their tweets, which means they can't use all 140 characters for headlines. Smart editors also allow extra space so tweets can be easily retweeted by others.

The professor provides copies of stories for students. Ideally, the stories are features that can entice readers via well-written headlines. The assignment takes one class period, depending on how may rounds of stories students are assigned. Students are given a limited amount of time – about 20 minutes — to read each story and write tweets.

Students practice writing tweets in Microsoft Word, using word count to check the number of characters they use. Forcing students to go from a "first draft" of 120 characters to a final tweet of 100 or less teaches them to omit needless words and edit themselves. They post final tweets on Twitter using a class hashtag i.e. #201short.

How is the assignment innovative? What makes this idea good for teaching in the 21st-century or preparing 21st century journalists?

After students post "short and tweet" headlines, the professor pulls up Twitter, searches for the hashtag and show the entire class their work. This allows for an easy discussion of what makes a clear but concise headline. It demonstrates how headlines can be clever and interesting within tight constraints. It forces students to edit their own work. And it demonstrates how Twitter is a 21st century news wire because news outlets frequently post headlines and links. The assignment outcome: Students learn the need for clear, concise writing and understand that a social media site can be a critical information-sharing tool.

How do you overcome pitfalls?

Students need familiarity with basic headline concepts and also need some understanding of Twitter before the assignment. I've used Twitter in other assignments in the class before the Short and Tweet assignment, which helps save time since they already have accounts and familiarity. Occasionally, a tweet won't show up under the hashtag on the Twitter stream. I've overcome that by having students read their tweets aloud if they aren't on the screen.

What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?

Students learn quickly that concise, clear writing draws you into stories. It's easy to recognize good work. Students vote on best tweets/headlines. (Best headline writer wins candy). The exercise proves strong writing can be done in few characters, essential for editing and reporting classes (headlines and ledes). One student wrote in a reflection: 'Journalistic tweeting is a lesson in brevity and hooking your audience simultaneously. When the limit is 100 characters, creativity and efficiency are forced to develop. The most challenging aspect of journalistic tweeting is word choice. Every word must be chosen to convey an emotion, action or idea."

Sue Burzynski Bullard teaches editing, reporting and multimedia classes. She joined the Nebraska faculty in August 2008 after a year as a visiting editor-in-residence at Michigan State University. Sue held a variety of editing positions during 21 years at The Detroit News, including three years as managing editor. In that role, she was responsible for the day-to-day operation of the newsroom. She supervised nearly 300 journalists and helped to integrate print and online newsrooms. She also worked as a reporter and editor at newspapers in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., Lansing, Mich., and Port Huron, Mich.

First place, adjunct-faculty division

Impact journalism: Learning from real-world public service reporting cases

Roy J. Harris Jr., who has taught as an adjunct professor at Emerson College in Boston, has been a journalist for some of the nation's most respected news organizations for four decades. From 1971 to 1994 he served as a reporter and editor for the Wall Street Journal, including six years as deputy chief of its 14-member Los Angeles bureau. He spent 13 years as senior editor of The Economist Group's Boston-based CFO magazine and CFO.com. He was national president of the 800-member American Society of Business Publication Editors from 2006 to 2007. He is the author of Pulitzer's Gold (www.pulitzersgold.com), a history of the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service.

By Roy Harris
Emerson College

Types of courses the idea could be used in:
reporting
Target level: juniors, seniors or graduate students in a professionally oriented program

What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?

The assignment's goal is to allow each student in a class to totally immerse herself or himself in a case of public service journalism that is being considered for a major prize – either a Pulitzer, an Emmy, or an Online News Association award, for example. The class first identifies finalists or probable candidates for the awards, and each student chooses one candidate to learn about. Having taken "ownership" of that project, she or he is then responsible for explaining why the project won or lost the contest in which it competed.

How does the assignment or exercise work?

The individual student presentations on the journalism project work against a backdrop in which the class has looked at the recent history of award-winning public service journalism across a variety of print and electronic media. Concentrating where possible on the school's own area, the entire class also has gotten to see and hear reporters and editors face-to-face in the classroom, describing how one actual reporting project was proposed, took shape, and was successfully pursued to achieve a public service result. The students get to know the journalists and the projects in which these journalists were involved. This may take several class sessions, so that all the students get to hear about the project inside and out.

Thus, the students have a "model" to use in learning about the individual projects that are up for national awards. They learn about their candidate, and prepare a presentation for the class – win or lose – after the awards are announced. This approach "personalizes" the project work of newspapers, online organizations, or television or radio news operations, and lets each student get to know the reporters and editors involved. The class benefits when it sees and hears the individual presentations, and can compare and contrast them with the one presentation, or the award-winning local project, that all students see.

How is the assignment innovative? What makes this idea good for teaching in the 21st century or preparing 21st century journalists?

My observation has been that far too few journalism classes take advantage of the investigative reporting resources in the area where the school exists. Making these connections between news organization and school results in a mutually beneficial arrangement, since the news organization gets to use the classroom to review its successes. It is a natural outgrowth of this approach that journalists stress the online aspects of their print or broadcast journalism. Thus each presentation will have a cross-functional look.

How do you overcome pitfalls?

Students often are embarrassed contacting local journalists. Thus, the professor needs to act as a matchmaker – something that generally works well, because local journalists are proud of talking about their successes with students.

What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?

I was fortunate enough to have a terrific central case for students to learn about: the Boston Globe's Pulitzer-winning reports on the sexual abuse of parishioners by Catholic priests, and the church coverup of that abuse. The students came away fascinated with that work, and driven to learn as much as they could about the award candidates they chose to study individually, using the model for understanding the work that the Globe case offered them. This approach definitely helped students by letting them see real-world reporting approaches up-close, and meet actual reporters and editors – who in some cases made job offers to the students eventually.

First place, graduate-student division

Today's journalist challenge: Write better, adapt faster, promote smarter

By Ioana Coman
University of Tennessee

Types of courses the idea could be used in: newswriting, reporting, editing
Target level: freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors and graduate students in a professionally oriented program

What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?

Learning how to write and report news in today's constantly changing and challenging media environment is essential to any media student's education. Students attain how to collaboratively report news in today's challenging media environment. I designed this "writing assignment" portion of the grading schema with three student-learning outcomes in mind: Media writing best practices, adaptation of writing to multiple platforms and promotion of news stories online.

How does the assignment or exercise work?

First phase: I divided the class into two teams, and I verified that both teams contained at least one person with copy-editing experience and one person with photo and video-editing experience. Both groups then established their team name and created a blog using Wordpress.

Second phase: Teams were responsible for uploading stories onto their blogs and promoting these posts using Twitter, Facebook and other applicable social media. I mandated that students post one story per week, but their particular roles in content creation were guided by a weekly rotation: Editor, writer, photographer/videographer. The lab portion of class was designated as a time for "editorial meetings," when students could edit and upload stories while under supervised interaction.

Third phase: I determined the winning team as the group with the best news content (quality of the story, news values, etc.) combined with the highest blog traffic and online promotion

execution. Members of the winning team received an A (90–100 grading scale) for the "writing assignment" portion of their class grade. Members of the non-winning team were graded individually on their story content (quality of the story, news values, etc.).

How is the assignment innovative?

The assignment teaches students how to be good writers while focusing on how to promote their news stories in an environment where the competition is fierce and being social-media savvy is a required skill. I also noticed that they paid more attention to proper attribution of their sources since the finished product was not contained in the class setting.

What pitfalls have you encountered in using the idea and how did you overcome them?

A struggle for me was to have less control of the finished product because I did not assign, read, or edit the stories before they went live on each team's blog. Additionally, students were not used to having so much control over their work and had to shift into the decision-maker role. Having lab time to work on the stories helped bridge this gap because I was there to answer any question and help them through.

What is the impact of the assignment?

The students loved the assignment. They had the chance to take ownership of the work since they were deciding on the stories, writing them, and promoting them. The assignment also allowed them to easily show peers, friends, family, etc. the skills they were learning in school. Quotes from students' feedback include:

— "I like the blog project. It gives us management experience along with reporting."

— "It's like real world experience but on a small scale."

— "I actually really enjoy the project we're doing, I feel a lot more productive now than I did before we started the project."

Ioana Alexandra Coman is a Ph.D. student and graduate teaching associate in the School of Journalism and Electronic Media at the University of Tennessee. She studies crisis and risk communication, social and new media, international communication, and mass media and political systems.
She earned her master's degree at Tennessee and her undergraduate degree from the University of Bucharest in Romania.

ProWatch: Critically thinking about reporters' work

By Carla J. Kimbrough
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Carla J. Kimbrough teaches reporting and editing at UNL, which she joined in August 2008 after a career in journalism. She worked as a reporter at the Lincoln (Neb.) Journal; as a reporter, copy editor and fill-in assignment editor at the Arkansas Gazette in Little Rock; and as a regional editor, city editor, or night metro editor at the Jackson (Tenn.) Sun, Marietta (Ohio) Times, Cincinnati Enquirer and Dayton Daily News. At the Denver Post, she was part of the senior management team and was responsible for newsroom recruitment and staff development.

Types of courses the idea could be used in: newswriting, reporting, editing

Target level: freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, graduate students in professional programs

What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?

ProWatch, an activity in critical thinking, is an assignment that I use in beginning reporting and editing classes, but it can be adapted easily for use in editing and advanced reporting classes. It is designed to make students read the newspaper, identify sources of story ideas, develop interviewing skills, identify Associated Press style, think about presenting stories across platforms and strengthen story organization skills. This assignment is used throughout the semester so that students can gain these skills by critically examining the published work of professional journalists.

How does the assignment or exercise work?

To complete the ProWatch assignment, students need access to a print edition of a daily newspaper. The professor provides the questions students should answer and may offer guidance of story type (see instructions). The ProWatch assignment should be repeated several times to cultivate the skills mentioned above.

Students choose several published stories to examine, write a response paper in a question-and-answer format, and attach the article used. For example, when I used this assignment previously in a five-week summer reporting course, I asked the students to find two stories weekly: a story that caught their attention and a story that they normally wouldn't read. A professor can specify the newspaper section or story type to match lessons – speech; meeting; crime/police; feature; event; profile; business; sports, etc.

Each homework assignment takes an hour or less. To broaden the learning, students discuss their stories in small groups or a few students tell the class about the stories they examined. Students receive completion points rather than a grade. Students collect their stories in a three-ring binder to refer to later. It takes minimal time for maximum payoff in student learning.

How is the assignment innovative?

Regardless of the century, journalists need basic interviewing and writing skills. They need to know what basic questions are necessary to develop a story and then

To build your skills as a reporter, find one newspaper article each week to examine closely. Answer the questions below (do not exceed two pages) and attach the article you selected.
– Publication date and newspaper name
– Origin of story (where do you think the reporter found it?)
– What sources and how many did the reporter use to gather the information? Describe the role/title of the source. (Examples are officials, real people, documents).
– Identify 3 to 5 questions the reporter asked of each source.
– What question do you wish the reporter would have asked?
– What source/s was/were missing or would have improved the story?
– What type of lede did the reporter use and was it effective/ ineffective, why?
– Circle the nutgraph.
– Find three examples of AP style.
– If this story has no visuals (graphics or photos), what could be added to illustrate this story visually? Be specific.
– If this story appeared online, what elements would you use to

they need to write the information in an organized way. But what "updates" this assignment is the thought process of telling traditional print stories online. Would it be best to tell the story with video or a photo slide show? If the story has no visuals, what could be created? Asking students to determine what visual and online options exist for print stories, helps them to think the way they must in a newsroom.

How do you overcome pitfalls?

This assignment is easy, but students need some background information to complete the assignment successfully. For example, do they have the vocabulary to discuss the quality of a lede or nutgraph? If not, give them those tools and then let them demonstrate an understanding by finding examples. Other than that, giving students detailed instructions on how to complete the assignment should be sufficient for students.

What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?

Students no longer simply read stories, but learn to dissect stories and extract lessons about reporting and writing.This assignment allows professors to introduce a critical thinking skill that young journalists will be able to use for years to come. When the assignment editor says, "I want a story something like this," a reporter can dissect the story. In a course that requires a great deal of feedback, this assignment silently teaches students how to improve their work.

Second place, graduate-student division

Many eyewitnesses … but did they see the same thing?

By Robin Blom
Ball State University

Types of courses the idea could be used in:
newswriting, reporting
Target level: freshmen, sophomores

What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?

This exercise gives students a taste of reporting in a hectic and messy news environment, in which they constantly receive new details through a variety of channels (in-person interviews, Twitter, Facebook, etc.). Importantly, they need to figure out rapidly whether those information pieces are true or false, especially eyewitness reports. The performance of eyewitnesses in correctly remembering and describing events is often not covered in basic reporting courses. This exercise can lead off a lecture about the difficulty for people to remember important events in their lives and how question framing by journalists can lead people to create false memories.

How does the assignment or exercise work?

Outside the classroom, three volunteers are told that they are having lunch in a pub and then watch a 2-minute clip of a bar fight. They are the eyewitnesses. The other students are reporters for a local newspaper and can interview the eyewitnesses to get information for a news story.

After the interviews, the students are writing their story. They get additional information on a projector screen that shows an iPad and a cell phone. The iPad features a Twitter feed that is prepared for the exercise with PowerPoint. The instructor can manually add new tweets on the screen. They contain additional eyewitness accounts and updates from other news organizations. Meanwhile, on the cell phone, the reporters receive text messages, Facebook updates, and an email from the police with a press release about the case. Importantly, a lot of the information is false!

When the reporters are done writing, several students read their stories out loud. Soon enough, it becomes clear that there are "different stories" and that the students included incorrect information, which leads to class discussions about the exercise

goals mentioned above.

The length of the assignment depends on the amount of writing time and the analysis afterward.

How is the assignment innovative? What makes this idea good for teaching in the 21ˢᵗcentury or preparing 21ˢᵗ century journalists?

The exercise gives student journalists a realistic example of how social media can bombard them with information, but with the instructor in charge of the news flow (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, press releases). Traditionally, reporters always needed to decipher what is correct or incorrect information, but the amount and speed has increased. Students learn to revise their stories quickly after receiving new details during the exercise. This forces them to keep (re)analyzing all information. Yet, they are also forced to report the news as fast as possible: the screen once shows an angry editor that is demanding the story "right now!"

How do you overcome pitfalls?

The eyewitnesses are told that they are having lunch in a pub before they see the video. They do not have much more background information, which becomes a bit problematic when they receive questions they cannot really answer (how long it took before the police arrived, if they were questioned by the police, etc.). In that case, the instructor has to jump in and help the eyewitnesses "to remember" what happened to keep the cover story plausible. The "reporters" also may need some hints about what essential information they need to write a complete story, depending on the course level.

What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?

The exercise has functioned as an eye-opener for many students to realize that it is not easy to get all the facts right in a frantic news environment. The students have become aware that journalists frequently receive incorrect information from eyewitnesses and other (news) sources that, nonetheless, is used in news content.

It has helped them to fully understand the importance of verifying information with multiple sources. The exercise also helps to identify students

Robin Blom graduated in 2013 from the Ph.D. program in Media and Information Studies at Michigan State University, where he taught introductory mass media and newsriting courses and developed this teaching idea. He began work in fall 2013 as an assistant professor in the Department of Journalism at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind. His research interests include journalism education, news media perceptions, memory and cognition, eyewitness identification and media law. He has professional journalism experience from the Netherlands, where he wrote about government, courts, drug and alcohol addiction, the arts and multiculturalism for national and regional newspapers.

The Red Line Project: Teaching in the 21st Century

Mike Reilley teaches Online Journalism I and II, News Editing, Multiplatform News Editing, Reporting for Converged Newsrooms and Online Sports and advises DePaul's Society of Professional Journalists chapter. The organization was named SPJ National Campus Chapter of the Year in 2011 and 2013. He is a former reporter and copy editor at the Los Angeles Times and was one of the founding editors of ChicagoTribune.com. He's a former news editor at WashingtonPost.com and ran the 2000 Summer Olympics copy desk for AOL. Reilley also founded the journalism research site, The Journalist's Toolbox, which he sold to the Society of Professional Journalists in 2007 and continues to update for SPJ.

By Michael Reilley
DePaul University

Types of courses the idea could be used in:
newswriting, reporting
Target level: juniors, seniors

What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?

Provide in-depth coverage of an urban issue using multimedia storytelling tools. Typically, it's a group of students covering a topic (such as gun violence in Chicago) using digital storytelling tools.

The goal: a published piece about Chicago's gun violence problems on our community news and urban issues website, The Red Line Project (http://www.redlineproject.org), which I built with my Online II students two years ago. (The gun violence project was in Winter Quarter 2013, during the middle of one of the largest spikes in gun-related homicides in the city's history. President Obama came to the city to discuss gun control, and we covered it along with our in-depth package on gun violence.)

**How does the assignment or exercise work?**

We started by researching the issue of gun violence and divided up the assignments among the students. Then, I started training them on various multimedia tools we used: video (Final Cut Pro), Meograph, Google Fusion Tables. I brought in journalists and experts as guest speakers. I took some of the students to a Community Media Workshop panel on gun violence in week 4 of the quarter to research and make contact with sources.

We met outside of our weekly Wednesday night class (typically on Friday mornings) to go over progress and sketch out project structure. The students not only reported and produced the work, they also built it on the site in our Surreal CMS content management system. The professor acted in the role of editor and tech trouble-shooter.

The project was published in early March at http://www.redlineproject.org/gunviolence.php It has received nearly 35, 000 page views as of May 28.

How is the assignment innovative? What makes this idea good for teaching in the 21st century or preparing 21st century journalists?

It combined great news reporting and writing skills along with visual storytelling skills. Students used Google Fusion Tables and searchable map templates to track homicides in Chicago and tell the story visually. The searchable map template (give it a try) allows you to sort by the victim's age, etc. We mapped it over Chicago's political wards to find areas with the worst gun violence.
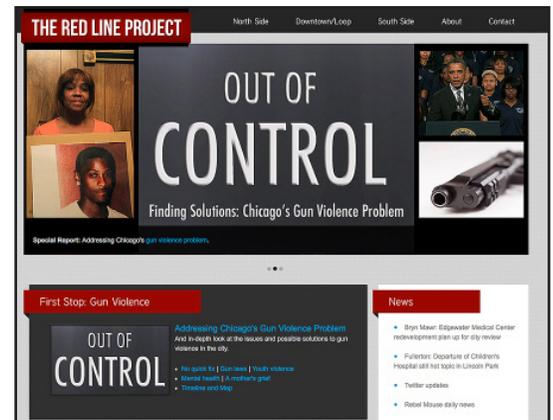
Fusion Table maps and data visualization examples:

http://www.redlineproject.org/gunschicago.php
http://www.redlineproject.org/claytonmap/index.html
http://redlineproject.org/2013chicagogundeaths.php
http://redlineproject.org/gunmentalhealth.php
http://redlineproject.org/andrewmap/index.html

How do you overcome pitfalls?

The biggest challenge was the Google Fusion Tables and getting the searchable map template to work. It was a challenge, but we made it happen. The students and I even stayed on campus after it was shut down because of a blizzard to work on the maps. (Note: Security let us stay.) The students and I all knew we were blazing a new trail in our journalism program with this, so it was worth the extra time and effort.

What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?

This project helped all of us in many ways. I'm participating in hackathons (I have one this coming weekend) to learn more about Fusion Tables and develop ideas for future projects. It has encouraged me to push the envelope even further.

The eight students who worked on this project? Two are currently working in the Chicago Tribune Interactive dept. and a third is choosing between the Tribune and Sun-Times. Others are beginning their search for full-time work in major markets.

Third place, full-time faculty division (tie)

The amazing Twitter list race

By Michelle Carr Hassler
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Types of courses the idea could be used in:
newswriting, reporting
Target level: sophomores, juniors, seniors or graduate students in a professional program

What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?

The goal of this assignment is to show students how curating lists on Twitter can help them discover news sources, monitor what is happening in their community and develop story ideas. They complete the assignment as part of a friendly competition in which each student tries to develop a Twitter list with the most news sources.

Students often do not follow local news closely and struggle to come up with strong story ideas. This assignment helps them focus by creating one place where they can keep current on events and be inspired.

How does the assignment or exercise work?

To prepare students for the assignment, I demonstrate how Twitter lists work and show examples of how beat reporters use them. I discuss how students can mine social media for credible sources in several ways: by using search applications such as Listorius, WeFollow and Twellow; by identifying valuable sources and examining who they follow; by monitoring pertinent hashtags to see who tweets to them; and by "raiding" other people's Twitter lists. I also give them examples of viable story ideas that I culled from my own local news Twitter list.

The assignment requires students to compile in a Twitter list as many valuable local news sources as possible. To make it fun, I pitch it as a contest in which students compete to gather the most sources by the next class period. To get them thinking about specific sources, I designate class time to brainstorm ideas of followers from different facets of the community.

When class reconvenes and they return with their lists, we compare them and talk about the quality and helpfulness of sources. We also discuss the importance of monitoring their lists so they can periodically weed out unhelpful sources and replace them with new ones.

How is the assignment innovative? What makes this idea good for teaching in the 21st century or preparing 21st century journalists?

While students use social media for personal reasons, they often don't realize its potential for reporting. By creating a Twitter list of credible sources, they discover how easy it is to monitor breaking news, keep track of events and spot trends – all in one place. With a tsunami of information to sort through daily, today's journalists need to know and use strategic curating techniques.

This assignment gives students a concrete example of how Twitter can help them as journalists. Now they can see the potential and may be inspired to develop other ways to use social media for journalistic purposes.

How do you overcome pitfalls?

So they don't simply copy sources they've seen by looking at each other's lists, I ask them to keep their Twitter lists private until class time. And to avoid having students "stack" their lists with meaningless accounts, I warn them that the quality of sources will be closely scrutinized by me and the other students during the class discussion. I suggest that students be prepared to defend why they added each source.

What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?

Students said the lists helped them learn more about the community and develop better story ideas. I noticed improvement in a subsequent assignment that required them to propose three story ideas gleaned from their Twitter lists.

After the exercise is completed, I encourage students to share the sources they've found so they can build even better lists. In essence, they develop "super lists" that they can tap into for future assignments in this class and others. And their new understanding of how to use social media for reporting and story development will help them someday on the job.

Michelle Carr Hassler teaches multimedia and online journalism at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she has been a faculty member since 1998. She regularly teaches the journalism capstone course and recently created and taught UNL's first social media course for journalism majors. Before coming to UNL, she was a reporter and editor for 16 years at newspapers in suburban Phoenix and Lincoln, Neb. In 2011, she and colleague Sue Burzynski Bullard won third place in the Teaching News Terrifically competition. Another of Hassler's teaching ideas was recognized in 2013 by Journalism Interactive.

Storify and Twitter for reporting and curating a meeting story

Michael Fuhlhage is an assistant professor in the School of Communication and Journalism at Auburn University, where he teaches multimedia journalism, media history and mass communication theory. He has 17 years of experience in news, sports, and feature editing, design, and writing, including work at the Santa Fe New Mexican, Des Moines Register, Lawrence (Kan.) Journal-World, Palm Springs (Calif.) Desert Sun, and St. Cloud (Minn.) Times. He taught newspaper editing, news design, and general semantics for five years while serving as a professional practice assistant professor at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. There, he was a news editor at the Columbia Missourian and taught in MU's Dow Jones Center for Editing Excellence.

By Michael Fuhlhage
Auburn University

Types of courses the idea could be used in:
reporting
Target level: sophomores, juniors, seniors, graduate students in a professional program

What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?

This assignment helps students learn to write an SEO headline, use Twitter to cover a newsworthy event as it happens, and use Storify, a free and easy-to-use platform for curating social media and online content such as infographics, photos, maps, diagrams and links to text and multimedia content. Students sign up to use Storify at www.storify.com.

How does the assignment or exercise work?

The assignment presumes students have written a conventional news story about a previous city council meeting. It also presumes the professor has introduced students to the use of Twitter as a reporting tool for sharing information and finding human sources.

We devote a class to examining good journalistic uses of Storify by the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. and learning how to use it to curate social media and other online material.

Before the meeting, the professor leads students through the council agenda and supporting documents that the city posted online before the meeting. Potentially controversial and newsworthy agenda items are discussed, including how to identify newsworthy information. Students are reminded of tweeting conventions and the importance of accuracy.

At the meeting, students use a predetermined hashtag with each tweet to make it easy to find tweets for curation.

I provide feedback on Twitter as I sit in on the meeting with them. I leave it to the students to decide what to tweet but drop hints along the way, e.g., "See if you can link to a map of the 5k the city's closing streets for this weekend." Students then create narratives of the meeting using one another's tweets in Storify.

How is the assignment innovative? What makes this idea good for teaching in the 21st century or preparing 21st century journalists?

Storify is being used by leaders in online news such as the CBC and the New York Times. Recruiters now list curation as a desired skill, yet journalism texts omit it. This assignment pushes students beyond Twitter basics toward construction of narratives. Using Storify helps students master organization of like material with like material and helps recognize where to place transitions. It encourages them to think about all the possible online materials they could use to help readers understand the story. And it helps us, as educators, to meet students on their own digital turf where they are most comfortable.

How do you overcome pitfalls?

We have to face the reality that not all students can afford smartphones, so we must offer workarounds to the problems some students face in completing the assignment. Just about everybody has a phone that can be used to send tweets and texts, and we can assume nearly every student has a wifi-capable laptop and a digital camera, but not everybody has camera phones. So we need to suggest that students use these tools separately, and then upload images after the event is over and they have time to transfer photos from the camera to the laptop for uploading.

What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?

Many students complain covering City Council is boring. Many have confessed confusion about identifying the most newsworthy aspects. By crowdsourcing information gathering, students get a chance to see whether their news judgment conforms with that of their peers. When they see they are not alone in their decisions about newsworthiness, their confidence increases. Students tell me they actually had fun doing this assignment. Before they did it, they didn't realize city government could actually be interesting. As a bonus, students aren't distracted by their smartphones because they're too busy using their smartphones productively to complete the task.

Rubric for grading Story and Twitter meeting curation assignment

LIVE-TWEETING CATEGORIES

	10	9	8	7	6	5
Number of tweets during event: 1. Student sent 1 tweet ever 3 to 5 minutes and at least one photo. Number and content of tweets was enough to tell the most relevant actions at the meeting.	Perfect	X	X	No photo OR too few tweets	X	No photo AND too few tweets
Attribution of quotes and info: 2. Tweets explain the source of information (e.g., a presentation, a citizen commenting during citizen's communications, a response to a question). and attribute quotations	Perfect	x	x	Some inconsistency	x	Poor
Info selection and quality: 3. Student tweeted appropriate/essential matter.	Perfect	X	X	Some problems	X	Did not tweet *anything newsworthy*
PROFESSIONALISM/ETHICS **Live-tweeting etiquette:** 4. Student used appropriate hashtags tone and alerted followers about live-tweeting (E.g.: "I'm live tweeting from the Auburn City Council. I apologize for jamming up your feed if you're not interested in this.) Student used common #j2310 #AubCC hashtags.	Perfect	X	X	No warning tweet OR poor use of hashtags	X	No warning tweet AND poor use of hashtags
Correction of errors, if any: 5. Live tweets were free of errors, and if not, they were corrected promptly when alerted	Perfect	X	X	X	X	Did not correct errors promptly

PART 2: STORIFY

	10	9	8	7	6	5 or less
Organization/structure: 6. Story flows logically from beginning. Story organizes like content with like content. than the sixth paragraph.	Perfect	X	X	Minor flaws (no lede graf)	X	Major flaws (disorganized, rambles)
Headline: 7. Headline uses principles of search engine optimization to tell readers what the Storify is about and is interesting enough to entice. the audience to continue reading. SEO includes putting keywords first.	Effectively optimized, interesting Headline that's more than just a label.	X	X	Poorly optimized OR dull headline	X	Poorly optimized AND dull headline (e.g., "My Storify about City Council")
WRITING 8. Style, grammar, spelling, punctuation are error free and content is accurate.	Perfect	X	X	A few problems	X	Many errors
ADEQUATE NUMBER OF TWEETS AND PICTURES: 9. Storify has at least 20 tweets, including 10 by the author who produced it	Satisfies all requirements	X	X	Too few total or own tweets	X	Too few total AND own tweets
10. Storify has at least 1 photo by author and 1 photo by another student	Satisfies all requirements.	X	X	Didn't include own photo OR didn't include photo by classmate	X	Neither photo included

Live tweeting score from front: _____ points

Storify score from back page: _____ points

Live tweet points _____ + Storify points _____ = _____ points out of 100

Grade: A= 90-100   B= 80-89   C=70-79 D=60-69 F≤ 59

Maximum live-tweeting score is 50 points.
Maximum Storify score is 50 points.
Total possible score is 100 points.

Byline: _____   Date: _____   Score: _____

Honorable mention, full-time faculty division (tie)

Editors as curators: Using new tools to deliver news

By Sue Burzynski Bullard
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Type of course the idea could be used in: editing
Target level: juniors or seniors

What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?

This assignment teaches students to understand digital tools used to research, gather and disseminate news. They learn to curate news using a foundation of traditional journalistic values including verification, fairness, judgment and attribution. Today, audiences are bombarded with information. They want journalists to make sense of it. News organizations providing comprehensive information from valued sources retain audiences. In many newsrooms, editors become aggregators. In this assignment, editing students learn to evaluate and verify sources of information, particularly social media. They study how news organizations act as curators and provide context. And they learn to properly attribute curated stories.

How does the assignment or exercise work?

The assignment provided comprehensive coverage of Election 2012 but can be adapted to any ongoing story. Teams of editing students were assigned regional, state and national races. Students used RSS feeds, Google alerts and social media search and bookmarking to track news. They curated coverage to create election backgrounder pages, published on a Wordpress website. Through lectures and hands-on activities, students learned to use digital reporting strategies. For example, they created Twitter lists of sources to monitor. Lists included Twitter feeds from candidates, campaigns, pundits and media.

The assignment offers opportunities for collaboration. Teams determined what information each backgrounder page should include. For instance, a student assigned a congressional race found campaign finance information for her candidate. Another found profile information on each legislative candidate. Students shared information and ensured all congressional races had similar coverage.

The instructor's lectures covered accuracy and verification, SEO headline techniques and news judgment. Students peer edited before posting.

The assignment spanned several weeks with waves of deadlines for posting information. Students followed a format for curated links, which emphasized credit to the original source.

The final product: comprehensive backgrounder pages with links to data and stories about numerous races.

How is the assignment innovative? What makes this idea good for teaching in the 21stcentury?

The assignment produced rich content for a student-produced news website, which is actually the product of a capstone class but was used as a home for the backgrounder stories. Most importantly, the assignment mimics actual newsroom behavior in today's digital world. Students learn a variety of digital techniques, but all of them are built on a strong foundation of traditional values such as attribution and verification. The opportunities for active and collaborative learning also make it innovative. Students learn from the instructor but they also learn from each other. Ultimately, they learn by doing and produce a valuable product.

How do you overcome pitfalls?

Although the election provided much material, some races had more coverage than others. Students assigned rural races had difficulty finding sources of news about their races. In the end, those students were assessed on the value of the package they pulled together — not the number of stories/data sources they found. In future semesters, the assignment will be used to cover ongoing stories — such as immigration reform or the impact of extreme weather. The instructor needs to carefully evaluate what sources of information might be available before the assignment begins.

What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?

Students loved this assignment because they published content, which can be used in their portfolios. They learned to use many digital tools. They learned the importance of traditional values. And they learned to think critically — which stories would be valuable to readers and which wouldn't? As one student wrote in a reflection paper, "The ability to do something like this will be a good skill to have when looking for jobs in the future." Said another: "I think the Election coverage for this class has been a great learning tool for both reporting and digging up information on a subject."

Profile formatting example

U.S. Senate race, Nebraska
Deb Fischer vs. Bob Kerrey

Deb Fischer   Bob Kerrey

Deb Fischer, Republican

dfischer@leg.ne.gov
Fischer website

Bio: Elected to Nebraska Legislature in 2004, representing District 43. Elected previously to the Valentine Rural High School Board of Education. Became President of the Nebraska Association of School Boards and served as a commissioner on the Coordinating Commission for Post-Secondary Education. Bachelor's degree in education from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Fischer and her husband, Bruce, own a ranching business in Valentine. They have three children.

Honorable mention, full-time faculty division (tie)

Talking all at once: Managing simultaneous face-to-face, online discussions

By Jennifer Brannock Cox
Salisbury University

Types of courses the idea could be used in:
newswriting, reporting
Target level: freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, graduate students in a professional program

What is the goal of the assignment or exercise?

Discussion in the classroom has been a favorite tool for learning among educators and students, while technologies, such as laptops and mobile devices, have become more of a distraction. By combining the two, educators can improve learning outcomes, allowing students to share information and converse in ways that are familiar for them without interrupting the richness of the discussion. Students use different technologies to participate in and later reflect on discussions about journalism and media. Students use critical thinking to contribute thoughtful comments, both written and spoken, and deeper analysis to process the information learned on multiple levels and platforms.

How does the assignment or exercise work?

For class discussions, I separated 20 students into inner and outer circles. The inner circle participated in a face-to-face discussion, contributing a minimum of five meaningful comments that demonstrated their understanding of the assigned readings and ability to think critically about each topic. The instructor moderated the conversation, asking broad questions and guiding the discussion.

The outer circle was not permitted to speak at all, participating instead on Twitter using a shared hashtag. These students followed the inner circle conversation, tweeting 5-10 times using their phones or laptops. Their tweets included direct quotes from the conversation and their own critical analysis and reactions. Additionally, outer circle students had their own conversation online, addressing each other using the @ symbol and the group as a whole using the hashtag.

One hour into the class, the circles switched sides and repeated the activity using different questions.

Following the discussion, students used Storify.com to build an article exploring key arguments from the discussion. Students used at least 10 of their classmates' tweets and their own text to transition between points. Students also went beyond the discussion to incorporate

social media postings relevant to the topics, including YouTube videos, Instagram photos, and Facebook statuses.

How is the assignment innovative?

This activity requires students to use technology to facilitate critical thinking, reporting, and analysis they will be expected to do in 21st century newsrooms. Journalists are equipped with the latest networking tools and expected to use them to improve reporting and interact in innovative ways. Students blended their tech-savvy tendencies with traditional journalistic skills, including listening, questioning, reasoning, and processing. Now, instead of simply recording interviews with Smartphones, these students can listen critically and be present in the moment, brainstorming follow-up questions and analyzing information on the spot. These techniques are essential for journalists, no matter what century it is.

How do you overcome pitfalls?

Students in this class were equipped with mobile devices for reporting, making the temptation to text or check social media that much greater. By incorporating students' love of mobile technology into the discussion in a meaningful way, and choosing contemporary journalism topics that were interesting and engaging, students stayed on task and enjoyed participating in ways that were fun and familiar.

Discussions can also be difficult for students who are introverted and prefer not to speak up in class. The online portion of the discussion was also ideal for them, as they could make their voices heard without actually speaking.

What is the impact of the assignment or exercise?

The method proved more effective than regular note taking, in that students had to not only listen to the information being shared but also process it and add their own critical analysis. In their class evaluations, students felt they learned the most during these discussions. Their enthusiasm for the subjects increased, and students felt more confident speaking authoritatively about their future professions.

Students said they felt a new appreciation for the challenges journalists face, and they were eager to learn more. Their hunger for the material was more palpable during these multi-faceted discussions than I have seen before.

Jennifer Brannock Cox is an assistant professor of communication arts at Salisbury University in Salisbury, Md. She earned a master's degree from the University of Alabama and a Ph.D. from the University of Florida. She is a two-time winner of TNT21, having taking home first place in the graduate-student division in 2010 and the full-time faculty division in 2012.

TNT
21
2013
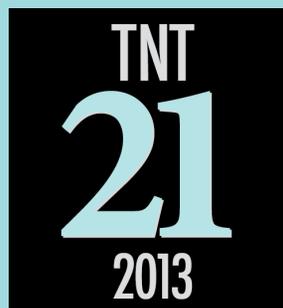
This booklet is set in Minon Pro Regular and Bold and Futura Condensed Medium.
Design is by Susan Keith, Rutgers University.