Multimedia Journalism Professors on an Island: Resources, Support Lacking at Small Programs

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This exploratory study examines how professors teaching multimedia journalism courses at programs of varying sizes describe the level of institutional support they receive, the pedagogical challenges they face, and what they hope their students learn at a time when industry demands are shifting rapidly and journalism educators are expected to keep pace. In-depth interviews and a review of syllabi reveal that professors at many of the small journalism programs frequently described operating on an island with little oversight or support—unlike their colleagues at large programs. Multimedia journalism courses focused primarily on high-demand digital skills rather than ethics and theory. Commonly referenced challenges included a lack of institutional resources and difficulties keeping up with the latest industry tools. Implications for the future of journalism education are discussed.

Journalism educators no longer seriously debate the merits of offering undergraduate courses in online, convergence, or multimedia journalism.[1] News has moved online, prompting changes in readership habits and the journalism workforce. Nearly three-fourths of American households have some form of Internet access at home (U.S. Census, 2014) and nearly two-thirds of Americans have a smartphone (Smith, 2015). Digital news consumption now outpaces print news consumption (Media Insight Project, 2014). While legacy print news outlets continue to make newsroom cuts, digital news outlets have produced roughly 5,000 full-time editorial jobs (Jurkowitz, 2014). News organizations expect multimedia journalism proficiency from new graduates (Powers, 2012).

Faced with a fast-changing landscape, journalism educators have long sought to keep pace.

[1] For the remainder of this article, the phrase "multimedia journalism" is used to mean journalism that is published online, and encompasses similar terms such as "online journalism," "digital journalism," and "convergence."

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Between 1998 and 2002, at the outset of the transition to digital news, 60% of journalism schools in the United States redesigned their curricula or developed new courses to prepare students for producing news on multiple platforms (Huang et al., 2006). The most recent survey of journalism and mass communication administrators (Becker, Vlad, & Simpson, 2014) found that the vast majority of programs[2] continue to update their curricula to reflect changes in the media landscape. More than 90% of administrators reported that their programs teach courses such as writing for the web, using the web in reporting, and social media (Becker, Vlad, & Simpson, 2014).

Still, many journalists, scholars, and media analysts argue that incremental changes are not enough and that fundamental shifts are necessary for journalism education to remain relevant (Finberg, 2013a; Claussen, 2009). Calls to "blow up" the curriculum "convey the urgency many journalism educators feel as they face students who must gain new skills, often skills their middle-aged professors don't possess, while also learning the fundamentals" (Martin, 2011, para. 1). Making such changes at institutions that are typically slow to adapt presents an immense challenge for journalism educators.

> The pedagogical and administrative courage necessary when journalism education was established in the United States will continue to be needed as educators find ways of sending successful graduates into media industries that are shrinking, shifting and shaking with tremors of profound change. (Longinow, 2011, para. 1)

While surveys, news stories, and editorials about multimedia journalism education tend to focus on curricular changes (are journalism programs doing enough to stay relevant?) and brick-and-mortar investment (who's opening a new multimedia studio?), few studies have examined how professors[3] tasked with implementing new or newly redesigned multimedia journalism courses assess their work environment. And while the resource-rich flagship state universities and top journalism schools garner much of the attention for their investment in multimedia journalism (Funt, 2015; Marcus, 2014; Herskowitz, 2011), less attention is typically paid to small journalism programs fighting for resources within larger departments or colleges.

The relevance of journalism education will depend on the ability of programs to utilize and support multimedia journalism professors and to ensure that teaching multimedia journalism becomes a widespread mission among faculty members. Through in-depth interviews (n=21) and a review of syllabi (n=11), this exploratory study examines how professors teaching multimedia journalism courses at programs of varying sizes describe the level of institutional support they receive, the pedagogical challenges they face, and what they hope their students learn at a time when industry demands are shifting rapidly and journalism educators are expected to keep pace.

Literature Review

Research about multimedia journalism pedagogy tends to focus on what professional journalists say students (and by extension their professors) need to know to be attractive to employers (Finberg, 2013b; Fahmy, 2008). For example, job advertisements may suggest the skills employers require (Carpenter, 2009; Wenger & Owens;, 2012; Massey, 2010). Recent studies (Finberg, 2014; Blom & Davenport, 2012; Du & Thornburg, 2011; Sarachan, 2011; Huang et al., 2006) have examined who teaches multimedia journalism, whether professors and journalism practitioners

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[2] The term "program" is a catch-all term that includes journalism education as presented in any number of ways in the academy—stand-alone schools or colleges, departments, etc.

[3] The term "professor" is a catch-all term that includes anyone who teaches multimedia journalism, including lecturers, instructors, adjuncts, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors.

agree about pedagogical priorities, and the extent to which professors feel equipped to teach courses that are heavy on multimedia skills.

The Multimedia Journalism Professoriate
Du and Thornburg's (2011) survey of multimedia journalism professors found that 18% self-identified as "instructors" who are not on the tenure track; 61% were assistant, associate, or full professors; and 21% listed "other." Eight percent had no professional journalism experience, 38% had between one and five years, 21% between six and nine years, and 30% had at least a decade of newsroom experience. The study found "some level of unfamiliarity with real newsroom routines among the instructors" (Du & Thornburg, 2011, p. 227). Sarachan's (2011) survey of journalism professors found that 64% teach hands-on "skills" courses, many of which integrate multimedia reporting.

More than half of journalism programs responding to the Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Enrollments (Becker, Vlad, & Simpson, 2013) reported hiring new full-time faculty members with digital media skills. More than three-quarters had hired adjunct faculty with multimedia skills, nearly 70% said they had sent faculty members to digital media training programs, and one-fourth said they were using digital media skills as a criterion for promotion of faculty members (Becker, Vlad, & Simpson, 2013).

Pedagogical Priorities of Professors and Practitioners
Several studies have found that professional journalists and journalism professors often disagree about pedagogical priorities, including how much to emphasize multimedia skills in reporting and writing courses (Finberg, 2014; Du & Thornburg, 2011; Royal, 2005; Huang et al., 2006). Finberg's survey (2014) found that professional journalists do not rate the importance of multimedia storytelling skills (video, audio, photo, design, etc.) as highly as educators and students.

Du and Thornburg (2011) found that although there is a gap in the perceptions of journalists and educators regarding key skills and workplace duties, that gap is not as wide as many believe. Both groups emphasized the importance of traditional journalism skills such as news judgment, grammar, and style over multimedia skills.

A survey of directors of undergraduate journalism programs found that roughly half selected multimedia and storytelling journalism courses as constituting core undergraduate journalism courses, behind only media ethics and law, and reporting and newsgathering/storytelling (Blom & Davenport, 2012). Huang et al. (2006) found that the vast majority of college journalism professors agreed that journalism students should learn both technical skills and critical thinking skills. Practical skills and the theory behind them are often comingled in multimedia journalism courses (Sarachan, 2011). The Annual Survey of Journalism and Mass Communication Enrollments (Becker, Vlad, & Simpson, 2014) found that the vast majority of programs offered courses that cover writing and editing for the web, using audio and video on the web, and web layout, design, and graphics.

A survey of journalism and communication graduates (Rosenstiel et al., 2015) found that while ethics, writing, and subject matter expertise were the most important skills for the field, graphic and web design, social media, video shooting and production, and data visualization were among the areas of greatest interest for additional training. Less than one-fifth of respondents said they were "very comfortable" with design software, HTML, or other programming languages—and the more recent graduates were no more comfortable (and in some cases less comfortable) than older graduates with these multimedia skills (Rosenstiel et al., 2015). Carpenter (2009) found that the multimedia skills most in demand at news organizations were HTML, CSS, posting of content, and image editing. These results suggest that employers want to hire journalists with a broad range of skills, not

just people trained in one specific area (Carpenter, 2009; Powers, 2012). Likewise, Wenger and Owens (2012) found that 42% of newspaper job ads and 29% of broadcast job ads specifically stated that applicants needed web and multimedia skills, behind only "previous professional experience" and "strong writing."

There is widespread agreement that journalism programs could do more to stay current (Lynch, 2015; Funt, 2015; Finberg, 2014; Finberg, 2013b). Finberg (2013b) found that 39% of educators and 48% of practitioners said journalism education is keeping up with industry changes "a little" or "not at all." Among the primary concerns: whether faculty members at journalism programs are equipped to teach multimedia journalism.

Concerns about Faculty Preparedness
A Knight Foundation report on the future of American journalism education (Lynch, 2015) concluded that "for the most part, faculty have been comfortable teaching what they know" but that "those times are behind us. Today, many faculty acknowledge that it's all but impossible to teach the tenets of a digital-first news culture they have neither experienced nor studied."

This has long been a concern within academia. Huang et al. (2006) found that far more journalism professors (81%) considered themselves theoretically equipped than technologically prepared to teach students how to report news across platforms at a time when their programs had redesigned or created courses to reflect media convergence. Voakes, Beam & Ogan's telephone survey of journalism professors (2003) found a high level of self-confidence in their ability to learn new technology. However, only 46% agreed that "most faculty members learn new software easily" and 50% said faculty members are "willing to teach courses with new software." Journalism professors commonly reported feeling a great deal of stress from technology in their daily work. In fact, they cited stress from technology more frequently than they did stress over

tenure and promotion concerns and personal issues (Voakes, Beam & Ogan, 2003).

Shumow & Sheerin (2013), who conducted surveys and focus groups with multimedia journalism students, found that particular challenges of teaching this subject included different starting levels of computer competencies among students in an introductory course and the vast amount of material that must be covered in the wide-ranging topic.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
This study contributes a qualitative perspective to the growing body of literature devoted to multimedia journalism pedagogy. The research seeks to understand how professors at programs of varying sizes assess their experiences teaching multimedia journalism and the extent to which they feel supported or are left to fend for themselves. These issues are examined through the following questions:

RQ1. How do multimedia journalism professors from both small and large programs describe their goals for students taking their courses?

RQ2. How do multimedia journalism professors from both small and large programs define the primary challenges in teaching their courses?

RQ3. How do multimedia journalism professors from both small and large programs describe the oversight, support, and resources they receive from administrators and colleagues?

METHOD
Instrument
Qualitative interviews, as opposed to a survey, were conducted for this exploratory research in order to provide context and a more comprehensive understanding of the issues, as well as give voice to the research participants. The in-depth, semi-structured telephone interviews (Appendix)

consisted of 16 questions. Four questions covered demographic information about the participants, including academic title as well as experience teaching and engaging professionally in multimedia journalism. Six questions covered curriculum questions, including whether the course is a requirement for majors, where else in the curriculum students learn about multimedia journalism, and to what extent professors said that their programs emphasize multimedia journalism and support their teaching efforts. Six questions covered pedagogy, including goals for students, teaching challenges, and the philosophy behind how to structure the course and balance skills, theory, and ethics. While the interview instrument constructed by the researchers could not anticipate every response, issue, or concern voiced by participants, most questions were open-ended, allowing participants to provide unprompted answers. If a participant's initial answer needed additional context or explanation, the researchers asked follow-up questions. Thus, semi-structured interviews were a useful way to explore the research questions and understand the pedagogical and institutional experiences of the research participants.

Sample
The researchers sought participation from professors who teach courses that introduce undergraduates to the concepts and storytelling skills associated with multimedia journalism. The only requirements were that the courses meet face-to-face and are primarily focused on multimedia journalism. In order to compare the experiences of journalism professors at programs of varying sizes, the researchers sought out an equal number from "small" and "large" programs—categorizations that were based upon the most recent Annual Survey of Journalism

& Mass Communication Enrollments (Becker, Vlad & Simpson, 2014). For the purpose of this study, "small" programs were defined as having fewer full-time faculty members whose primary responsibilities focus on teaching, advising, and mentoring undergraduates than the mean of all journalism programs. Large programs, by contrast, had an above-average number of full-time faculty, and were often based at large and/or public research-driven institutions that also offer graduate degrees. The mean number of full-time faculty members[4] at journalism programs was 14.4, according to the most recent Annual Survey of Journalism & Mass Communication Enrollments[5] (Becker, Vlad, & Simpson, 2014). Programs that fell below the mean, with 14 or fewer full-time faculty members, as determined by visiting each program's website, were considered "small programs." Those above the mean, with 15 or more full-time faculty members, were considered "large programs."

The researchers considered the number of full-time faculty members to be a proxy for program size. This decision was made for several reasons: (1) This study is focused on the faculty experience and the size of each program's faculty is a key data point; (2) data on the number of full-time faculty members at each program is regularly updated and available online, whereas data on part-time faculty members is often not kept or is incomplete; and (3) undergraduate enrollments, while available on the macro level, are difficult to parse because journalism students are commonly mixed with other mass communication/communication studies students in hybrid departments or colleges that do not make specific enrollment breakdowns readily available. Programs are not identified in the study as having a specific number of faculty members because that could compromise the anonymity of study

[4]This includes full-time lecturers, instructors, and tenure-track or tenured professors.
[5]This survey includes programs that are listed in the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication's "Journalism & Mass Communication Directory" and/or "The Journalist's Road to Success: A Career Guide" from the Dow Jones News Fund. AEJMC's report invites all degree-granting senior colleges and universities with courses in journalism/mass communication to be included in its directory.

participants. An effort is made, however, to identify the relative size of a program when that information is important to disclose in the context of reporting results.

Procedure

The researchers used the 2014 Journalism & Mass Communication Directory to obtain a stratified random sample of participants. Programs were randomly selected from the directory. The researchers used each program's website to identity the faculty member(s) responsible for teaching the introductory undergraduate multimedia journalism course. All faculty members in that program who appeared to have taught such a course within the last two years were e-mailed an invitation to participate in the study. The e-mail specified that the researchers sought one professor from each program to take part in an in-depth telephone conversation and to e-mail his or her course syllabus.

Solicitation e-mails were sent to professors at 37 journalism programs. If a professor or professors at one program did not respond or declined to participate, the researchers attempted to find a program of a similar size in order to ensure stratification of the sample. Ultimately, 20 interviews were conducted. Professors who agreed to participate in the study were e-mailed and returned the online consent form (approved by the researchers' Institutional Review Board). Participants were assured confidentiality—neither they nor their institution would be identified by name in the study. Telephone interviews, lasting 20 to 40 minutes each, were conducted and audio recorded by the researchers. At the end of the interview, participants were asked to submit their course syllabus for review, and 11 syllabi were collected. Data were collected over the course of two years, between 2013 and 2015.

Data Analysis

The researchers transcribed the telephone interviews and individually analyzed the transcripts, using quantitative and qualitative methods as appropriate. Answers to demographic questions covered at the beginning of interviews were coded quantitatively, using descriptive statistics. Transcribed responses to curriculum and pedagogy questions were coded qualitatively. After discussing initial reactions to the transcripts, the researchers used emergent coding to decide upon key themes that were referenced in both the literature and our interviews. Examples of themes include: balancing technology and core journalism skills, managing students' range of technological skills, keeping current on cutting-edge technology, and dealing with lack of support and interest from colleagues and administrators.

The researchers used a textual analysis approach and a shared coding key in order to identify and compare keywords, concepts, themes, commonalities, and outlier responses. This reading and re-reading followed an inductive approach to detecting themes. The researchers individually coded each transcript and marked important passages and quotes. Formal code sheets were compared for consistency, and a consensus was reached on any coding inconsistencies.

Finally, the researchers performed a content analysis of the syllabi obtained from participants, paying special attention to the language used to describe the focus and/or goals of the course, as well as the schedule to determine the course structure, the progression through material, the amount of time spent on various areas of the curriculum, and the nature of assignments. Because syllabi were not consistently provided by all research participants, a formal code sheet was not used in this portion of the analysis. Instead, the content analysis from the syllabi was primarily used to provide context and greater depth of understanding to the underlying commonalities regarding course goals, content, and how these classes are structured in both "small" and "large" journalism and communication programs.

RESULTS

Twenty-one faculty members from 20 journalism programs participated in interviews.[6] Exactly half

(n=10) of the programs were classified as being "small" and half (n=10) were "large programs." Tables 1 and 2 profile the programs and faculty members represented in this study.

All but one of the faculty members from small programs were assistant, associate, or full professors. Four of the five professors who indicated having a mostly academic background

Table 1
Characteristics of small and large programs represented in the study sample

		Small Programs (n=10)	Large Programs (n=10)
Institution type	Private college/university	n=6	n=3
	Public college/university	n=4	n=7
Program type	Departments of journalism, communication, or mass communication within larger colleges/schools	n=8	n=3
	Journalism, communication, or mass communication colleges/schools	n=2	n=7
Accreditation status	ACEJMC accredited	n=3	n=9

Table 2
Characteristics of faculty members represented in the study sample

		All faculty members (n=21)
Faculty rank[7]	Full professor	n=3
	Associate professor	n=2
	Assistant professor	n=12
	Adjunct lecturers	n=3
	Directors of campus-based centers/institutes	n=3
Primary career experience	Mostly academic[8]	n=5
	Mostly journalistic	n=13
	Even split	n=2
	Neither[9]	n=1

[6] At one "large program," two professors who had taught the same course were simultaneously interviewed at their request
[7] This total does not add up to 21 because several professors held several positions—for instance lecturer and director of a journalism center—and thus were counted twice in this tally given their dual roles.
[8] This indicates that the majority of one's career was spent in academia.
[9] This faculty member had previously spent most of his career in the entertainment industry.

came from small programs. Experience teaching multimedia journalism[10] ranged from one semester to 20 years (M=5.4, SD= 4.95). Small-program faculty members had slightly less experience (M=5.1, SD=5.85) than the overall average.

The multimedia journalism courses were required of journalism majors at all but three of the programs. Professors generally said the course was made a requirement in recent years after curriculum changes (after previously being an elective or a requirement only for students in the online journalism track) and was now among the most popular courses in the program. The vast majority of programs (n=17) had other courses that also integrate multimedia journalism, and the lion's share of professors (n=12) said they like having one course devoted to multimedia journalism and others that require students to use the multimedia skills while focusing on other topics.

Goals for Students
The first research question asked: How do multimedia journalism professors describe their goals for students taking their courses? Interview responses and syllabi language showed that there was little difference among professors from small and large programs. Professors primarily viewed multimedia journalism courses as a chance to introduce students to a range of digital tools that are used in professional newsrooms. Eleven professors listed as a priority preparing students for the workforce, as illustrated by the small-program professor who noted:

> I want them to be familiar with the basics of multimedia tools so that if an employer asked them to do work in that area, they would feel comfortable.

Another small-program professor used the term "combat-ready" when describing his goals for students when they hit the job market and are asked to use multimedia tools.

Professors overwhelmingly reported devoting the majority of their classroom time to teaching multimedia skills rather than theory or ethics. Fourteen professors identified as among their primary goals students learning specific editing and writing platforms, and learning how to code websites and use cascading style sheets.[11] They described a tension between focusing classroom time on teaching students how to use software and teaching foundational reporting, writing, and editing skills—the latter of which was mentioned by nine professors as a course goal. Several noted that the digital tools are means to a greater end—teaching multiplatform storytelling. One professor, after listing the digital tools she uses in the classroom, was quick to note that "this isn't a software class."

Several professors mentioned that although teaching students how to use industry-standard reporting and editing tools is critical, those tools are constantly changing. As two professors noted:

> I think for me the most important thing is that [students] know how to learn, because when I teach them anything online in another year it could be completely different.

> I want [students] to be really flexible. They need to be the kind of people who don't get bent out of shape if someone takes away their Final Cut.

Syllabi reflected professors' emphasis on teaching the practical applications of multimedia tools. Nearly every syllabus used similar language

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[10] Professors were asked to consider overall years spent teaching multimedia journalism, not just years teaching it at their current institution.

[11] Professors were asked an open-ended question and were not provided with a list of possible answer choices and were not primed about any answer. The listed goals are a compilation of what professors stated during interviews. Some listed several goals on this list.

to describe course objectives, as illustrated by the following two examples from different syllabi: "produce basic multimedia stories incorporating elements such as slideshows, audio, maps, data visualizations and video" and "tell interesting stories and convey factual information online and for print and broadcast media, using words and digital technology." Several course objective statements emphasized the importance of curation and fact-checking, an example of which is "the ability to use the Internet to research stories, analyze news sites and to tell what constitutes credible information." Just two course objective statements referenced "apply(ing) ethical principles in gathering and presenting information on the Web" or "understand(ing) online ethics and the basics of copyright law, design, typography, color and photo."

Class schedules revealed a tendency to start with the least-technical multimedia tools such as social media and blog platforms, move to photography, audio and video editing, and save the most technical and typically unfamiliar tasks, HTML and CSS, until the end of the course. Several professors stated that they wanted to first introduce students to what it means to be a journalist in the digital age, specifically how to gather and evaluate information online, before covering the more technical aspects of the course. Most courses were project-based rather than reliant on exams and research papers to evaluate student learning. The culmination was typically the submission of a final, multimedia package or portfolio combining a variety of diverse elements (photo slideshow, video, sound, interactive elements, etc).

Few multimedia journalism courses spent significant time on journalism or communication theory. If theory was discussed in any way it was in the context of explaining early in the course why journalists are engaging more with digital audiences. Just three professors who shared their course syllabi devoted a full class session to ethics. Others generally referred to it in

the class objectives. One professor said he does not cover ethics in the course because his college has a separate course devoted to the subject. Another professor noted:

> It's hard to teach students all this stuff and leave room for theory and ethics and communication law and all the things they need to be a good journalist. If you're a small program like us you're especially limited.

Challenges in Teaching Multimedia Journalism

The second research question asked: How do multimedia journalism professors define the primary challenges in teaching their courses?[12] Responses differed little among small- and large-program professors. Professors most commonly mentioned technological challenges. Specifically, 10 respondents cited students' technical abilities (or lack thereof). Several commented that students begin the course lacking confidence in their ability to learn new software programs and require lots of "hand holding." Stated one professor:

> Students are challenged to learn a program like Final Cut Pro if they haven't used it and only have a few weeks with it. A lot of my students are first-generation college students from low-income families, and perhaps they don't have confidence to do computer stuff. Some are hesitant to learn.

Professors cited a common misperception that, as so-called digital natives, college students have an inherent ability to master technology and learn multimedia journalism skills. Several professors said they face the challenge of lesson planning for students who are just learning the technology and reporting techniques alongside classmates already well-versed in them. They

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[12] Again, respondents were asked an open-ended question about challenges and not provided with a list of possible answers.

noted that the one-size-fits-all curriculum is ineffective and that they try to tailor the course to individual students so that aspiring coders learn more technical skills while aspiring reporters focus on the basics. But respondents said that giving students the necessary amount of individual attention can be challenging in larger courses.

Six professors cited a steep learning curve for mastering new multimedia tools themselves and struggling to stay up to date on industry standards, as illustrated by the following two comments:

> I've had to learn how to shoot video. I'm trying to teach it and feel confused.

> I have no professional experience in online journalism—it's all in broadcast. When I came to [my college] I saw there was a course and no one knew how to teach it. I took over but it's been a learning process for me.

Several professors noted that multimedia journalism courses are constantly being updated to stay relevant, with major overhauls needed as often as every semester to keep up with new and revised multimedia tools. One professor commented:

> Right now I think the way things change so fast, I can never have the curriculum keep pace with it.

Six professors identified the scope of material covered in multimedia journalism courses as a major challenge. Several reported "cramming" content into 15 weeks or fewer, having to sacrifice depth for breadth, and relying on students to learn how to operate some of the multimedia tools on their own time, as illustrated by the following comment:

> It's just really, really hard to make sure that they get that emphasis on writing and then add in all the multimedia stuff.

Oversight, Support, and Resources

The third research question asked: How do multimedia journalism professors describe the oversight, support, and resources they receive from administrators and colleagues? In terms of oversight, answers were nearly universal: The vast majority of professors (*n*=17) had complete leeway to create and teach their courses. They reported having "a blank slate" and being "completely free to develop curriculum the way I want." The autonomy cut both ways: Professors commonly said they appreciated the freedom to innovate but also viewed the lack of oversight as an indication of a low level of interest in multimedia journalism. This is where discrepancies emerged between the experiences of small- and large-program professors. Several small-program professors said multimedia journalism remains largely ignored and colleagues are stuck in their print/online/broadcast silos, as illustrated by the following comment:

> In a recent e-mail to a colleague I wrote that I feel like I'm in the desert wearing a sack cloth with ashes on my head… We have a great newspaper here but the mentality is still that the web is an afterthought sometimes.

A common perception among those at small programs was that faculty and administrators were content to let the dedicated multimedia journalism professor handle the new media component, freeing them to focus on more familiar endeavors. One small-program professor noted:

> I really think the faculty cares a lot about [multimedia journalism]. I don't think they are interested in implementing it themselves. They created a new position in our department and have realized the importance of online media. Give them credit for that. But they said, 'Ok, we've hired someone. We trust her to do

whatever she is going to do.' There's not a lot of oversight.

Seven professors—four of whom were from small programs—noted a lack of expertise among colleagues in multimedia journalism and/or a lack of interest in learning how to integrate multimedia journalism into their courses as impediments to growing the multimedia part of their curriculum. Several commented that they are the only ones in their program qualified to teach multimedia journalism. A small-program professor who described his department's focus on multimedia journalism as "minimal" said few colleagues have any professional experience with the tools covered in the course. Another commented that when he arrived, there was little emphasis on multimedia journalism because the person who taught the course before him "literally had no experience" professionally.

Some professors noted that their colleagues are intimidated by the prospect of learning how to teach a multimedia course, with one small-program professor reporting that many colleagues "have a limited understanding" of multimedia journalism and would need to "retool" in order to be an effective teacher. Other representative comments from small-program faculty included:

Faculty are fearful because of what they perceive to be a lack of skills…Because they have never produced anything online, they are fearful students will come with questions.

Most of the faculty have been trained in print quite awhile ago. Quite a few are nearing retirement. They are feeling they aren't qualified and they aren't willing to learn the digital stuff. That's why they hired me. There's not a lot of interest from anyone else.

I created the course when I got here. Usually it's just me teaching it. [A colleague] told me 'I can't teach this again because I don't understand how CSS3 works.' So I teach the course because I'm the person who keeps up on this stuff.

Not all small-program professors agreed that support was lacking in their programs, as illustrated by the two following comments:

I don't think we have any faculty in our department who are unwilling to delve into or teach new technology. That may have been the case 15 years ago but not today.

Seventy-five percent of the department is interested in doing more things with [multimedia journalism]. The other 25% are just going through the motions…It's taken awhile to persuade people but most of our faculty are now on board.

Complaints of lack of faculty interest in or experience with multimedia journalism were not limited to small-program professors. One professor at one of the largest programs said he was frustrated because he regularly worked with faculty members who have no experience working in multimedia journalism. Two others commented that:

We're still too tied to traditional media in how we present the curriculum.

There's a great desire among the faculty [to improve multimedia journalism instruction] but they don't really know how to accomplish it. I see how slowly the wheels of academia turn.

On balance, however, those at small programs were far likelier to report lacking support from colleagues and being hampered by lack of institutional resources. One small-program professor noted that "it's been a struggle for me in terms of the software" because the university does

not have a license for Adobe Premier or Final Cut Pro. Another noted:

> We have issues with computers all the time. We're on Macs but I swear every other week the server goes down. …We have problems with our infrastructure.

Despite the noted challenges at small programs, there were signs of optimism. Several professors said either that they had recently been hired or their program planned to hire someone else who could teach multimedia journalism. Others said they appreciated that their courses had recently become requirements for all majors.

The picture painted by large-program professors was even more optimistic. The vast majority said their programs were placing an increasing emphasis on multimedia journalism–hiring new faculty members, adding courses, and integrating multimedia projects into existing courses. They generally considered colleagues supportive of their efforts, willing to provide the necessary resources, and even willing to invest time into learning about multimedia. Said one professor at a program with plentiful resources:

> In the last few years there's been a sea change. In the previous decade, some instructors viewed [multimedia journalism] as that thing you do over here. I don't think anyone believes that anymore.

Professors at another resource-rich large program commented that as far as integrating multimedia journalism into the curriculum, their program was "extremely progressive" and their faculty "receptive." A professor at yet another large program said of multimedia journalism:

> It's a total way of life. It's embedded in every single thing we do. Even our degree structure—students get a degree in multimedia journalism.

DISCUSSION

At a time when news is increasingly consumed on digital platforms, this study found that professors tasked with teaching students about journalism in the digital age devote the vast majority of class time to multimedia journalism skills rather than theory and ethics. Assignments, which typically range from setting up a blog to learning video editing software, often culminate with a capstone project intended to demonstrate students' mastery of specific software programs, as well as multimedia journalism skills and concepts. Given that teaching specific multimedia programs and preparing students for the workforce were the professors' two most commonly stated course objectives, the emphasis on skills training and the requirement that students emerge with an online portfolio to send to potential employers seems to match pedagogical priorities.

However, some professors expressed ambivalence about spending so much time on teaching specific multimedia tools given that those tools often change and that classroom time could be spent teaching students core reporting, writing, and editing skills. The comment that "this isn't a software course" perhaps best illustrates the tension between teaching technology and teaching the storytelling applications of the multimedia tools. Further integrating multimedia pedagogy into the curriculum beyond the stand-alone course taught by professors in this study could alleviate the pressure to cover every aspect of multimedia journalism in one course. This aligns with the majority of professors' opinions that multimedia journalism should be its own course but not stuck in a silo.

Most multimedia journalism professors interviewed said their programs are placing an increasing emphasis on their undergraduate multimedia journalism offerings. Many programs have made existing courses a requirement for majors or added new courses, and have hired or are planning to hire new faculty members who can teach multimedia journalism. This supports recent national data (Becker, Vlad, & Simpson, 2014)

showing that the vast majority of programs are updating their curricula to reflect changes in the media landscape. The question is whether these changes are sufficient to keep up with fundamental shifts in journalism. The answer—in this study at least—differed greatly depending on the size of the program.

This study indicates that larger, resource-rich programs have made the greatest effort to support multimedia journalism professors. These programs typically have invested in new faculty hires, equipment, new facilities, and curricular overhauls. With a few exceptions, professors from large programs reported that multimedia journalism is embedded in their culture. It is not surprising that programs with greater financial resources, autonomy, and often prestige are better able to support multimedia journalism faculty members than comparatively resource-poor smaller programs, many of which are housed in colleges with dwindling enrollments and endowments. Still, the magnitude of the gulf between the two groups is noteworthy.

The overwhelming majority of small-program professors reported teaching in relative isolation from their colleagues. Interviewees commonly found their colleagues satisfied to cede the digital journalism part of the curriculum. Colleagues said they frequently lacked a personal interest in, or were intimidated by the prospect of, learning the tools needed to integrate multimedia journalism into their courses. Past studies have also found that journalism professors feel uncomfortable adopting new technology, but the fact that this remains a pressing concern at a time when multimedia journalism is not a specialty but the norm is a troubling sign for journalism education.

The feeling of being isolated within the academy may not be unique to multimedia journalism professors. However, their need for support and thorough integration into journalism departments is particularly great. For journalism education to remain relevant, it must teach the multimedia skills demanded by the industry. The feeling of isolation may also be exacerbated by

the natural tensions found in many journalism programs between the "old guard" professors who have long taught print courses and those who have recently entered the academy teaching multimedia journalism. The professors referenced in the Knight Foundation report on the future of American journalism education (Lynch, 2015) as having "neither experienced nor studied" a digital-first news culture may feel threatened by changes in the industry and new faculty members, and as a matter of self-preservation attempt to resist major teaching changes. This does not apply just to professors close to retirement age—anyone who has not worked in digital-focused newsrooms or received substantial multimedia journalism training in the past decade may feel this sense of fear about going outside their comfort zones.

Greater integration of multimedia journalism professors within their departments is a necessary step to increasing faculty cohesion. This is not a case of adjuncts or inexperienced professors being left behind—the smaller-program professors in this study were almost all full-time faculty members with at least several years of multimedia journalism teaching experience. The wisdom of concentrating multimedia expertise so heavily in a few faculty members seems questionable, even though there often are few choices to do otherwise in small programs. The expansion of the knowledge base to both program administrators and a broader range of faculty is needed to benefit multimedia journalism professors and to ensure the relevance of the entire department. Administrators and hiring committees cannot reliably identify the most highly qualified candidates for multimedia journalism teaching positions or support current professors without an understanding of the knowledge base and skill set the job requires. Multimedia journalism professors are likely to play an increasingly large individual and collaborative role in research and in curriculum development for all courses. It will be increasingly important over time for most, if not all, journalism faculty to have some reasonable

level of understanding about the technology and multimedia skills the industry demands. Journalism professors are unlikely to embrace, adopt, and integrate aspects of multimedia journalism into their curriculum without a sufficient comfort level with their command of the subject.

This study found that one of the primary challenges facing multimedia journalism professors is keeping up with ever-changing technology and following industry trends. In order to be effective teachers, these faculty members must be given adequate resources, including funding to attend conferences and training sessions. Attending such events also allows multimedia journalism professors the opportunity to collaborate with professors teaching similar courses at other institutions and to share information about pedagogy. This may be another way of alleviating online journalism professors' sense of isolation within their own departments.

That journalism programs must make a concerted effort to support professors' continuing development is perhaps best supported by the finding that even students, often assumed to naturally be the most adept at mastering new technology, have difficulty keeping pace with changes. Programs should consider offering a multimedia-journalism "boot camp" prior to students taking a full-length course. This would help ensure a baseline level of multimedia journalism competency and lessen professors' concerns about teaching students with widely varying skills.

LIMITATIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSIONS

This study provides a snapshot of how multimedia journalism professors define their goals and challenges, and how they are supported by colleagues and administrators. Because of the diverse nature of the individual courses and their placement in each program's curriculum, the instructors interviewed naturally expressed some differences in their objectives and challenges. Therefore, the classes compared were not necessarily identical in goals and the preparedness of

students. In addition, not all professors provided the syllabi to researchers. Had there been more accurate information about the number of part-time professors, journalism majors, or even the budget in each program, researchers could have made more nuanced classifications about what constitutes a "small" and "large" program. These terms, while helpful in categorizing programs, are binary and do not take into account the wide range of faculty members within each category.

Future research could extend the scope of this study to additional institutions and professors of multimedia journalism. It could also seek to identify the specific steps that multimedia journalism professors believe should be taken to improve the environment for them and for the curriculum to be more supported and integrated into the program. Researchers could investigate the views of faculty members who do not primarily teach multimedia classes on the status of multimedia journalism professors, curricula, and courses within journalism programs.

This study indicates a degree of disconnect between multimedia journalism professors and their colleagues and programs. While multimedia journalism may be widely recognized as a crucial component of journalism education, the teaching of it is frequently relegated to a professor who receives too little attention or support. While multimedia journalism is clearly being included in journalism education through the addition of courses, requirements for the major, and with new departmental hires, this study suggests that some multimedia journalism professors feel isolated—teaching material that is separate from and foreign to many of their colleagues, with little input from or cooperation with others.

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Appendix

<u>**Interview Questions:**</u>

Demographic questions:

Q1: What is the name of your course?

Q2: What is your academic title?

Q3: How many years have you taught multimedia journalism

Q4: What is your professional or academic background in multimedia journalism?

Curriculum questions:

Q5: Is your multimedia journalism class a requirement for the journalism major?

Q6: Is your course solely focused on multimedia journalism, or is it a course in which multimedia is a unit within a larger course?

Q7: Are there places in the curriculum other than your course where students learn about multimedia journalism? If so, where?

Q8: In your ideal situation, would multimedia journalism be taught as a stand-alone course or be integrated into the curriculum so it's taught as part of many courses?

Q9: How would you assess the amount of emphasis the college where you teach places on multimedia journalism?

Q10: Do you have the resources and support necessary to teach the course how you want?

Pedagogy questions:

Q11: How much leeway do you have in creating the curriculum for your course? Does your program or the university provide oversight or mandate certain learning outcomes?

Q12: What are your goals for students—the learning outcomes you would like to see?

Q13: What's your philosophy behind how you structure the course?

Q14: How do you determine how much time to spend teaching multimedia journalism skills, theory and discussing digital journalism ethics/issues? What percentage of time do you spend on each?

Q15: What changes are you thinking of making to your curriculum?

Q16: What are the biggest challenges in teaching the course?