Attitudes Toward News Content, News Practice and Journalism's Future

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Abstract:

This paper explores journalists' attitudes toward journalism and individual workplaces, their perceptions of likely trends in employment, and which services those journalists value and need. By examining multivariate relationships rather than univariate measures in an online survey of professional organizations, it looks at how different groups within journalism perceive trends in news content and news practice. The paper offers suggestions for journalism educators, organizations, employers and others interested in how journalists assess the profession's present and future.

Introduction: Journalists look at the future

The things that journalism does right – or should do right – are proclaimed in textbooks, in news outlets' codes of practice and ethics, in journalism organizations' statements of purpose. Often unexplored, though, are the views of journalists themselves about how their content and routines of practice are adapting to the current age, and those perceptions are central to how journalism educators approach their own practices. This paper surveys members of journalism organizations about which areas of content and practice they consider underdone or overdone and how they see those needs being met in the future, while also asking about how those organizations meet members' needs for training, support and other functions. Whether the press pays too much attention to technology as a topic, or whether technology-driven practices like interactivity take up too much professional and classroom time, is a different question altogether – even before journalists ask themselves whether they are spending too much time or not enough on issues like diversity in the workplace or what could be seen as wasting time repairing split infinitives.

The economic and technological factors that have pressured journalism over the past decade have raised questions for institutions that teach journalism and for organizations that work to support the profession or advance the interests or skills of its members. Thus the idea for this study: A survey of members of journalism organizations examines not just how well those organizations do their jobs, but what journalists, educators and others in allied roles think about where the profession is headed and how its broader needs are addressed. Although this purposive sample should not be used to generalize to all practitioners, its reliance on multivariate relationships rather than univariate measures (Basil et al., 2002) allows for comparing those predictions among demographic, employment or membership categories. After examining what is known about content areas like world and statehouse

coverage and issues of practice like diversity, this paper will outline the survey procedures and present and discuss the findings.

Gatekeeping:
News content, news processing, diversity

News content has been a source of pride and contention even before Cary Grant, as the roguish editor in "His Girl Friday," threw the earthquake off the front page but kept the rooster – "that's human interest!" That was likely the first exposure of American popular culture to gatekeeping: the study of how and by whom news is shaped and channeled to audiences. The overarching question of gatekeeping is in many ways the chief question of the classroom as well: "How does news turn out the way it does?" (Vos & Heinderyckx, 2015, p. 3). Understanding how content is selected is a precondition for understanding how – and by whom – it is processed.

Traditional newspapers, magazines and broadcasts have hard limits as to how much content can be included, yet the Internet does not. Time or space available must equal time or space spent. Textbooks acknowledge that the online news is fundamentally different (Thornburg, 2011) but at the same time point out that it must play by familiar competitive rules. International coverage is a longstanding example of the balancing acts created by the needs of news judgment. In his pioneering study of how news agency copy is accepted or rejected for publication, White (1950, p. 386) commented on "how highly subjective, how reliant on value-judgments based on the 'gate keeper's' own set of experiences, attitudes and expectations the communication of news really is." Adams (1986) found that, even if international news selection is not driven entirely by coups and earthquakes, it does rely heavily on where – thus how culturally salient to American audiences – those events take place. Thus, even as audiences might tell survey researchers how highly they value world news, and even as journalism programs continue to require second-language instruction, this worldliness is rarely reflected in real life. Any intrusion of the world outside into the domestic sphere is still likely to bring fresh examinations of how "underreporting" made it such a surprise (see, for example, McClellan, 2001).

Most categories of news were cut amid the general meltdown occasioned by the 2007-09 recession (see, for example, Newspaper Association of America, 2013) even as online publication made news appear "free." International news, at least, had other homes: audiences that had relied on major regional newspapers for a balanced news diet could find international coverage at the BBC or at the dwindling number of US organizations that undertook their own world coverage. State government was a different matter. Though the statehouse too has long been a neglected zone – "state governments are the stepchildren of American politics, and of American journalism," the Columbia Journalism Review complained five decades ago (Hoffman, 1967, p. 21) – the current decline in statehouse coverage did not have a bbc. com available to take up the slack. The shortages of staffing, expertise and technology that had been annoyances in 1967 were even worse by the end of the recession (Dorroh, 2009), despite potential benefits of public-affairs television (Rowley and Kurpius, 2005) and the occasional appearance of websites devoted to covering state government.

Not all cuts are created equal. Celebrity coverage "has become omnipresent and pervasive even to the extent that it constitutes a new normality in the contemporary media world" (Dubied and Hanitzsch, 2014, p. 137). Sports, education and crime news were among the few categories seeing gains in resources at many newspapers in a 2012 summary from the Project for Excellence in Journalism. "Infotainment" might be a way of introducing challenging issues – topics like financial or political analysis – into news, but it brings along a set of practices and procedures that themselves challenge ideas of how "news" ought to be told (Melinescu, 2015, p. 3). Turner suggests that the increased reliance of celebrity news on promotional agencies and "an increasingly well-organized set of paparazzi agencies" (2014, p. 144) are contributing to changes in the broader practice of news itself.

A related challenge is the allocation of professional attention: is the cause of the content helped or held back when journalists spend less time obsessing over the AP Stylebook's decision to stop capitalizing "Internet"? Questions like that go directly to classroom practice: balancing the treasured "basics" with the production and audience needs of a different era and fitting all that into a three-credit class in a potentially shrinking curriculum. Thus, the study's interest in how the routines embodied in gatekeeping practices affect audience perceptions of quality and professionalism.

Processing, content and quality

The ratio of international news to sports is measurable, as are the proportion of image to text and the number of words processed today compared with yesterday. Studies of news quality are more complicated. Matters of quality, effort and resources are different but not separable from questions of content itself. Asking whether journalism in general devotes too much attention to technology is both a content question – is there too much news about smartphone release dates? – and a process question: is too much attention paid to how technology is applied to journalistic processes?

The allotment of resources is more than a matter of instinct. In a time-series analysis examining the impact of content on revenue at a single newspaper, Li and Thorson (2015) found that not just more news, but more types of news within broader categories like "news," was associated long-term with revenue gains. More broadly, studies by Cho et al. (2004) and Chen et al. (2005) found associations between newsroom investment and revenue, profit and circulation.

Indications that quality drives audience preferences or perceptions of value have been found in areas of professional performance as well. Chen et al. (2015) looked at the role of length and quality in news videos, finding not only that audiences prefer better quality but that lower quality can damage a brand. Vultee (2014) found that edited versions of online news articles were perceived as more valuable as well as more professional than the unedited versions that had originally been posted. Appelman and Schmierbach (2017) found that the sorts of text errors identified by journalists and journalism textbooks affected judgments of "quality, credibility, and informativeness" (2017, p. 1). But the economic pressures that have led to wide-scale reductions in news staffs and the concentration of functions like editing in "hub" sites have hurt content as well. The increasing use of video and image pool feeds in political coverage has contributed to "a cultural production system that favors those who control physical access to events" (Bock, 2009, p. 258). And while local news online is "obviously attractive" because it appears free, an extra burden is placed on users to actively select it amid all the other options – mostly nonjournalistic – found online (Engan, 2015, p. 149)

These findings suggest that concerns in the classroom about the allotment of time and resources is well placed; audiences consistently seem able to tell content done well from content done less well. Such judgments about form as well as topic raise further gatekeeping questions: who is chosen to stand at the gate, and how are they trained?

Thinking about diversity

The federal Kerner Commission report that followed the urban unrest of 1967 identified newsroom diversity among national issues that needed to be addressed in order to fix the nation's racial ills (Stewart, 2015; Trayes, 1979, Witcover, 1969). The representativeness of U.S. newsrooms has been a topic of constant examination since; indeed, it is hard to find a study of diversity that does not point back to the Kerner Commission's findings. Similarly, whether diversity is a required course or an element of classes stacked through a curriculum, it is unusual to find a journalism program today that is not attentive to its concerns. Thus, the survey also asked how well journalists and others think the profession – and the organizations meant to help its practitioners – was doing at mid-decade

A study that focuses on the proportions of different ethnic groups "manning" the gates of news (e.g., Trayes, 1979) carries a sense of anachronism today. Similarly, diversity has become a broader subject in the decades since the founding of the National Association of Black Journalists in 1975. In addition to keeping an account of employment diversity, research has examined issues like job satisfaction, education, training, and retention. Bramlett-Solomon (1992) found that Black journalists' job satisfaction was related to positive feedback, involvement in the personnel process, and a sense that their organizations are doing well professionally; other survey research also suggested that Black and Hispanic journalists found much the same things to like about their jobs that White journalists did (1993a, 1993b). Considine (1984) found that Black journalists were generally satisfied with training at the college level but far less so at the high-school level, and they were quick to recall shortcomings of education at all levels.

In addressing the direct goals of the diversity movement, Benson (2005) found mixed results overall: The goal of proportional representation in US newsrooms had not been met, and progress in changing the nature of news topics had fallen short of hopes, but notable gains were seen in influencing the language of news. Williams (2013) suggested that ethnic diversity had yet to reach coverage of LGBT communities. Still, questions about the scope and

meaning of diversity itself have remained relevant: "There is no necessary connection between physical and ideological diversity, and the gap between the two is widening as diversity journalism is increasingly allied to multicultural marketing and public relations" (Benson, 2005, p. 9). Such questions underscore the relevance of examining perceptions of practice and content together.

Like the content, and process-specific processes discussed earlier, diversity came under economic pressure from the combination of recession and the collapse of advertising revenue; minority representation in US newsrooms declined in rough proportion to overall employment, though it began to gain ground again as the economic expansion continued.[1] Those issues too are reflected in how current journalists look at their jobs, and their importance is reflected in the array of organizations that represent journalists' general and specific interests.

The importance of organizations like the Society of Professional Journalists, for example, is illustrated in the idea of standardized codes of practice and ethics, like SPJ's and the guidelines of the Associated Press stylebook. These remain important influences on how the practice of journalism is taught. These organizations do not always enjoy the professional or organizational harmony they seek to foster, as in the decision of the National Association of Black Journalists to leave the larger Unity: Journalists of Color organization (Davis, 2011). But that points to the broader importance of understanding the roles of these organizations not only in providing services for their members but in helping influence the course of the profession. The missions and services of specialized organizations might differ from those of their broadly based counterparts, but they touch on all the topics described above: content, professional practice, and audience understanding as reflected through diversity.

This discussion sets up the questions the survey explores:

RQ1: How do journalists and advocates/observers of journalism describe current practice at journalism in general and at the organizations at which they work?

RQ2: How do journalists and advocates/ob-

servers of journalism interpret current approaches to news topics at journalism in general and at the organizations at which they work?

RQ3: How do respondents assess future hiring at their organizations?

RQ4: How do respondents describe their expectations of journalism organizations and what those organizations provide?

RQ5: How do respondents evaluate various sources of current information about journalism?

Methods

The study originated after the Excellence in Journalism 2014 conference with a request to survey members of participating organizations to see how well their needs and interests were being met. An initial survey was circulated among organization leaders, seeking their views on challenges and advantages they faced as well as their perceptions of member needs and interests. The larger survey was designed from those results in consultation with journalists and other journalism educators.

The resulting survey was posted in March 2015 and remained open until July, though 99% of responses were gathered between March 24 and May 24. The 20 participating organizations were asked to email their members a link and a request to participate, then to remind them midway in the collection period. Participants could report membership in multiple organizations, so a precise response rate cannot be calculated.

The resulting nonrepresentative sample would not generalize to the opinions of a population of journalists at large, but analyzed in multivariate relationships – for example, comparing those opinions across group memberships or levels of media use – a convenience sample can produce results that reflect the sorts of comparisons made in experimental designs (Basil et al., 2002). For example, Basil et al. (2002) compared an undergraduate sample with a random adult sample and an international Internet sample to examine participant identification with Princess Diana and found that, although the samples differed in identification, relationships between media use and identification were similar in all three. That does not, as Basil et al. (2002) point out, mean representativeness is irrelevant, and the age and racial homogeneity of the present sample should be borne in mind. But the concept of multivariate relationships does support

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1. This observation is drawn from the American Society of News Editors' annual diversity survey, which no longer tracks overall newsroom employment by job category but provides longitudinal information on newsroom diversity: asne.org/newsroom_diversitysurvey.

the use of age, occupation, workplace and professional group identification as factors in perceptions of news practice and news content. These participants cannot see into the future, but they can effectively describe from an array of perspectives the contemporary – at least, as of 2015 – expectations for which journalism students are being prepared.

Results

There were 509 usable or partly usable responses. To avoid forcing confounding answers, some scale items included a "not applicable" option; this allowed those responses to be selected out for analysis when relevant. Some participants omitted answers anyway, particularly among the demographic questions at the end of the instrument. Occupation and workplace questions were placed earlier.

Respondents' average age was 48.86 (median 50.5, standard deviation 15.31); a fourth of respondents were 36 or younger, and a fourth were 61 or older. Of those who responded on gender identification, three-fifths (60.1%) were female and 37.1% male. Women were large majorities in most age groups: 36 and younger, 72.2%; 47 to 50, 64.5%; and 51 to 60, 62.9%. Men were predominant in the 61 and older category, 57.7%.

Those selecting an ethnic identity were overwhelmingly White (87.1%), with the second largest category being "other/prefer not to say" (6.9%); 1.3% of participants described themselves as Asian or Asian American; 1.7% as Hispanic or Latino, and 1.2% as Black or African American. Most respondents reported having a bachelor's (41%) or master's degree (32%), with 13.3% having some postgraduate education and 8.3% having a terminal degree; 5.5% reported a high-school degree or some college work.

Asked to identify the participating professional organization that "most closely reflects the interests your answers will address," 49.3% (n = 251) selected the Society of Professional Journalists, 29.3% (n = 149) ACES: The Society for Editing, 8.7% (n = 44) the Journalism and Women Symposium, and 2.0% (n = 10) the Online News Association and Public Radio News Directors Association. Some participants reported belonging to as many as five organizations; counting multiple memberships, the most widely represented organizations were SPJ, 321; ACES, 163; JAWS, 63; Investigative Reporters and Editors, 61; ONA, 49; the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 45; and the Radio

Table 1:
Comparing journalism to individual workplaces on features of media practice

This table combines two questions: "Now, thinking about journalism in general, please tell us whether you think journalism is providing too little time and effort, about the right amount, or too much time and effort on the following areas," and "Now, please tell us if the organization you work for is providing too little time and effort, about the right amount, or too much time and effort on the following topics"

(1, too little attention; 3, about right; 5, too much; compared with paired-samples T-tests)

Practice	Journalism in general	+/- "about right"	Your workplace	+/- "about right"	p
New media skills	2.50	-0.50	2.33	-0.67	.006
Illustration	2.54	-0.46	2.26	-0.74	<.001
AP style	2.67	-0.33	2.55	-0.45	.038
Traditional grammar	2.14	-0.86	2.46	-0.54	<.001
SMO	3.01	+0.01	2.62	-0.38	<.001
Staff diversity	2.24	-0.76	2.31	-0.69	.209
Diversity in content	2.23	-0.77	2.38	-0.62	.008
Visual journalism	2.77	-0.23	2.53	-0.47	<.001
Interactivity	2.84	-0.16	2.45	-0.55	<.001
Clicks/metrics	3.46	+0.46	2.99	-0.01	<.001
Comments/feedback	3.06	+0.06	2.73	-0.27	<.001

Television Digital News Association, 37.

To allow for comparisons based on interests, these organizations were also divided into general service, such as SPJ and the Poynter Institute; diversity-focused, such as JAWS, the National Association of Black Journalists, and the Native American Journalists Association; and specialty-focused, such as ACES, IRE, and organizations for designers, ombudsmen, and business and religion journalists. Multiple memberships reflected combinations of those interests; participants might belong, for example, to groups reflecting professional specialties and diversity interests as well as journalism in general. Women made up a large minority in the specialty organizations and a slight majority in general organizations; it is worth noting that no male respondents identified a diversity-related organization as the one that most closely reflected their interests. (See Appendix 1).

Although the survey was based on the interests of journalism organizations, it also sought to capture the views of respondents in related professions. An organization like ACES began with a focus on newspaper copy editing but has recently found larger proportions of its membership in freelance work or corporate communication – a finding that itself cannot be ignored in today's editing classroom. Thus, participants were also asked to categorize their work.

Most respondents (60.6%) described their work as being mostly in journalism; 14.4% in education or training; 14.2% in corporate or strategic communication; 10.1% other. About a fourth (25.2%) reported working at newspapers or magazines; 19.5% as freelancers; 18.5% at colleges or universities; 14.3% at online publications; 13.2% in strategic, corporate or government communication offices; 9.2% in radio, TV or cable. Respondents' average time in their current profession was 19.2 years (median 17.0, SD 14.54), and average time in their current job was 8.11 years (median 5, SD 8.70). Women were a large majority in all job categories except online, where they were a slight majority, and broadcast/cable, where men were a slight majority.

RQ1 asked broadly about how professionals see the allocation of time and resources, both at the sites where they work and in the profession generally. Questions were posed on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating not enough time/attention, 3 indicating about right, and 5 indicating too much time/attention.

Asked to compare journalism in general to their own workplace, respondents saw individual workplaces as falling behind the profession – closer to "too little" than "about right" – on new media skills, illustration, AP style, social media optimization, visual journalism, interactivity and attention reader comments/feedback, though they rated their own workplaces as farther ahead of the profession on both staff and content diversity and attention to traditional

Table 2:
Comparing older and younger participants on features of media practice
(1, too little attention; 3, about right; 5, too much; compared with paired-samples T-tests)

Practice	Journalism overall		Your organization	
	50 or younger	51 or older	50 or younger	51 or older
New media skills	2.57	2.59	2.20	2.48*
Illustration	2.56	2.55	2.17	2.30
AP style	2.79	2.56*	2.61	2.46
Traditional grammar	2.28	2.97*	2.58	2.37*
SMO	2.94	3.11	2.49	2.75*
Staff diversity	2.03	2.45*	2.17	2.45*
Diversity in content	2.11	2.40*	2.30	2.48**
Visual journalism	2.64	2.94*	2.35	2.70*
Interactivity	2.80	2.95	2.28	2.59
Clicks/metrics	3.54	3.49	2.96	2.97
Comments/feedback	3.17	3.09	2.78	2.64

* = p < .05; ** = p <.10

Table 3:
Comparing older and younger participants on attention to news topics
"Thinking about journalism in general, please tell us whether you think journalism is providing too little attention,
about the right amount, or too much attention to the following news topics"
(1, too little attention; 3, about right; 5, too much; compared with paired-samples T-tests)

Topic	50 or younger	+/- "about right"	51 or older	+/- "about right"	p
Education	2.34	-0.66	2.26	-0.74	.415
Technology	3.12	+0.12	2.95	-0.05	.086
State government	2.30	-0.70	2.18	-0.82	.153
Local government	2.21	-0.79	2.11	-0.89	.288
International news	2.39	-0.61	2.27	-0.73	.218
Washington news	3.09	+0.09	3.07	+0.07	.875
National news	2.88	-0.12	2.65	-0.35	.005
Entertainment/arts	3.99	+0.99	4.15	+1.15	.127
Sports	3.97	+0.97	4.08	+1.08	.284
Religion	2.75	-0.25	2.79	-0.21	.724
Lifestyles	3.44	+0.44	3.86	+0.86	<.001

grammar. The profession was rated toward the "too much" end on attention to clicks and metrics, while individual workplaces were about right. (See Table 1)

Respondents older than 50 were more inclined than those 50 or younger to say too little attention was given to AP style (2.56 to 2.79) and traditional grammar (1.97 to 2.28), and both those differences were statistically significant. Younger respondents were more likely to say too little attention was given to staff diversity (2.03 to 2.45) and diversity in content (2.11 to 2.40), as well as to visual journalism (2.64 to 2.94), and those differences were also statistically significant. Respondents 50 and younger were more likely to think journalism overall paid too little attention to traditional grammar, while those older than 50 were more likely to say their own organizations did; those differences were also statistically significant. Age groups differed little on attention to interactivity in the profession, but older respondents were more likely than younger ones to think their own workplaces were about right on interactivity. (See Table 2)

RQ2 asked about specific types of news: state and local government; national, international and Washington coverage; entertainment/arts, sports, and religion coverage; and education and technology. On the same 5-point scale (1 = not enough time/attention, 3 = about right, 5 = too much time/attention), respondents overall saw coverage of technology (3.05), Washington news (3.07), religion (2.78) and nation-

al news (2.77) as closest to "about right." Toward the "too little" end of the scale were international news (2.34), education (2.30), state government (2.25) and local government (2.16). Topics seen as receiving too much coverage were lifestyles (3.63), sports (4.03) and entertainment/arts (4.07). See Tables 3 and 4.

Journalists were slightly more inclined than non-journalists to say that topics received too little attention, but those differences were nonsignificant. Only on sports coverage, where nonjournalists (4.14 to 3.97) saw coverage as more excessive, did the difference approach statistical significance (p = .092).

Asked to compare the performance of their organization with journalism in general, participants were more lenient toward individual workplaces; journalism was rated as farther toward "too little" coverage of education, state and local government, and international news and farther toward "too much" in entertainment/arts, sports and lifestyle coverage. Journalism overall was closer to "about right" than individual workplaces on coverage of technology, Washington and national news, and religion. Compared by age, few differences emerged on topic coverage in journalism as a whole. (See Table 4.) Looking at their own workplaces, respondents were more likely to say too little attention was paid to local government and international and Washington news; those differences were statistically significant, and perceptions of too little attention to state government and national

news, as well as perceptions of too much attention to lifestyles, were marginally significant (p = .06-.09).

RQ3 asked respondents to assess expectations of future hiring in different specialties at their workplaces. Overall, respondents in journalism and outside it expected hiring of people to produce text content to be about the same in the next few years, compared with the past few years. That was broadly true of hiring of people to produce images or perform text editing as well, though nonjournalists were more likely than journalists (23.1% to 14.5%) to expect more hiring in editing; that difference approaches statistical significance (p = .108). Overall, more hiring was expected of people to do designing or coding (45.5%) and to produce audio/visual content (53%). Respondents at newspapers were more likely to expect less hiring (23.7%) than more (15.1%), as were those in academia (34.0% to 11.3%); those in broadcasting (29.7% more, 10.8% less), online publishing (42.9% more, 8.9% less) and strategic/corporate/government communication (42.0% more, 20.9% less) were more optimistic.

Table 4:
Comparing journalism to individual workplaces on attention to news topics

This table combines two questions: "Thinking about journalism in general, please tell us whether you think journalism is providing too little attention, about the right amount, or too much attention to the following news topics" and "Thinking about the organization you work for, is it providing too little attention, about the right amount, or too much attention to the following news topics?"

(1, too little attention; 3, about right; 5, too much; compared with paired-samples T-tests)

Topic	Journalism in general	Your workplace	p
Education	2.41	2.69	.002
Technology	3.10	2.58	.002
State government	2.32	2.66	.031
Local government	2.22	2.76	<.001
International news	2.47	2.60	<.001
Washington news	3.14	2.80	<.001
National news	2.94	2.71	<.001
Entertainment/arts	3.92	3.09	.001
Sports	3.85	3.28	.002
Religion	2.61	2.47	<.001
Lifestyles	3.45	2.95	.063

Asked whether they would encourage a college student to go into journalism, respondents overall seemed optimistic: 60.7% said yes, 11.9% said no and 27.4% were not sure. Older respondents were more likely to say yes (60.0% yes, 11.7% no, 28.3% not sure) than younger respondents (56.4% yes, 10.4% no, 33.2% not sure). Those identifying general-purpose journalism organizations as most closely matching their interests were the most likely to say yes (69.5% yes, 9.4% no, 21.0% not sure). Among diversity-focused organizations, the proportions were 50.0% yes, 15.2% no, 34.8% not sure; among specialty organizations, the proportions were 52.9% yes, 14.4% no, 42.6% not sure.

RQ4 looks at the expectations that respondents have for journalism organizations in general as well as for the organization they identify as most closely matching their interests. On a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important), training was considered the most important service that organizations provide (4.40/5), and there was almost no variation among groups. Conferences were the second most important service overall (4.22/5), though respondents identifying primarily with general organizations rated conferences lower than specialty or diversity-focused organizations. Advocacy was the third most important service overall (4.09/5), though it was rated significantly higher by general organizations (4.24) than by specialty (3.97) or diversity-focused (3.87) organizations. Member benefits were fourth (3.86/5), with no statistically significant variation among organizations, followed by research and fundraising.

Asked to rate the performance of the organizations they identified their answers most closely with,

Table 5:
Importance of organization services

"Now we're going to list some services provided by organizations like the one you selected above. Please rate these services or functions on a scale of 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important)"

	Overall	Gen	Special	Diversity
Conferences	4.22	4.10	4.34	4.39*
Member benefits	3.86	3.84	3.87	4.07
Advocacy	4.09	4.24	3.97	3.87*
Research	3.63	3.66	3.67	3.33**
Training	4.40	4.40	4.42	4.42
Fundraising	2.95	2.96	2.87	3.27**

One-way ANOVA; * = p < .05; ** = p <.10

respondents overall gave the best marks for conferences (4.22/5); general organizations were rated the lowest (4.09) compared with specialty (4.37) and diversity-focused (4.43) organizations, and that difference is statistically significant. Training (3.82/5) was next, with no significant differences among groups. Advocacy was the service rated third (3.77/5), with general organizations (3.97) rated significantly higher than specialty (3.63) or diversity-focused (2.79) organizations. (See Table 6.)

In many cases, women rated both the importance of a service and the way their organization handled it better than men did. Women rated the importance of training (4.52 to 4.25), conferences (4.31 to 4.10), member benefits (3.79 to 3.69) and research (3.76 to 3.48) higher and gave better marks to the organizations they identified with on benefits (3.68 to 3.37), research

Table 6:
How members assess organizations' performance
"Thinking about the organization above that most closely addresses your interests, please rate how well it does at these services or functions"

(1, not very well; 5, very well)

	Overall	Gen	Special	Diversity
Conferences	4.22	4.09	4.37	4.43*
Member benefits	3.55	3.53	3.58	3.72
Advocacy	3.77	3.97	3.63	3.40*
Research	3.24	3.23	3.36	2.79*
Training	3.82	3.76	3.92	3.76
Fundraising	3.05	3.08	3.07	2.86

One-way ANOVA; * = p < .05

Table 7:
Evaluation of value and quality of organizations' services, compared by gender
Women rate both the importance of the service and the way their organization handles it higher

	Importance		Your organization	
	F	M	F	M
Conferences	4.31	4.10*	4.28	4.14
Member benefits	3.97	3.69*	3.68	3.37*
Advocacy	4.14	4.10	3.83	3.74
Research	3.76	3.48*	3.30	3.06*
Training	4.52	4.25*	3.90	3.75**
Fundraising	3.00	2.91	3.12	2.89*

Independent-sample T-tests; * = p < .05; ** = p <.10

(3.30 to 3.06) and fundraising (3.12 to 2.89); those differences are statistically significant. (See Table 7)

RQ5 asked respondents to evaluate various sources of information about journalism. Overall, personal contacts were rated the most important (4.49/5) source of information "about current developments in journalism," though members of diversity-focused (4.66) and general (4.57) organizations rated this source significantly higher than members of specialty (4.36) organizations. The second most important source was professional websites/blogs (4.31), followed by conferences (4.05), trade journals (3.73) and academic research (3.33). Asked to assess a set of statements about professional information, respondents most strongly agreed that "the best information comes from people inside the professions" (3.98/5). They were neutral when asked if academics are too distant from the professions to provide relevant information (3.01/5), whether journalism schools "are up to date with the kind of information professionals need" (2.97/5), and whether online workshops are as valuable as in-person workshops (2.92/5).

Several differences emerge in comparing responses to two statements: "My employer is good at keeping me up to date on developments in my profession" (2.68/5) and "I have access to the kinds of training I need to stay up to date" (3.20/5). Respondents who worked at newspapers gave their employers the lowest score on keeping workers up to date (2.45), and freelancers (2.80) and those at online publications (2.89) gave significantly higher scores. Newspaper employees were also the least likely to agree that they have access to needed training (2.93/5); mean differences with those at online publications (3.29), in strategic,

Table 8:
Are employees kept up to date and do they have access to training?

Category:	Employer good at keeping me up to date	I have access to training needed to stay up to date
Newspapers/magazines	2.45	2.93*
Radio/TV/cable	2.72	3.15*
Online	2.89	3.29*
Ad-PR-corp/govt	2.68	3.53*
College/university	2.69	3.31*
Total	2.68	3.20*

One-way ANOVA; * = p < .05

corporate or government communication (3.53), and at colleges and universities (3.31) were statistically significant (Table 8).

Discussion and suggestions for future research

What, then, does a survey of practicing journalists and their colleagues in related professions have to say to their future counterparts? Much as it is often said that voters hate Congress but love their own representatives, respondents were often more charitable to their own workplaces than to journalism in general. Employers should note that this charity is not universal; newspaper employees assigned the lowest scores to questions about whether their employers were good at keeping them up to date on developments and about whether they had the training they need to stay up to date, but this imbalance held across all job categories. Because previous research has shown that job satisfaction is associated with a sense of being equipped to a job well, that finding suggests that even if news staffers are keeping their own skills up to date, they appreciate consistent signals that the organization is interested in doing so as well.

Respondents' views of news content, news practice and the role of journalism organizations do not suggest tearing down structures – educational or professional – as much as they do thinking differently about balances. Although traditional news space is a zero-sum game, priorities are not. There is room for both more diversity and more attention to grammar – as it turns out, reflecting respondent suggestions in Considine's (1984) survey of Black journalists' recollections of college training. Respondents are uniform on the need for attention to diversity, with individual workplaces seen as closer to "about right" than journalism as a whole. Workplaces are closer to "about right" than the profession on attention to traditional grammar, with an intriguing division by age: older respondents see their own organization as farther from the mark than younger ones, but those positions are reversed for journalism overall. If there is pressure to get away from "the basics," it is not coming from younger participants. Outside of newspapers, there appears to be optimism about hiring, particularly in multimedia and production areas. These expectations, it should be noted, do not necessarily reflect management decisions on resources, but they do suggest how respondents are forming opinions about what they will do in the future – as well as what they might advise a potential next generation to do.

Journalism as a whole is closer to "about right" than individual outlets on the broad topic of interactivity, with exceptions in the details; journalism is seen as overshooting on attention to clicks and metrics but closer to the ideal on the more personalized concept of attention to feedback from readers. Here, participants seem to suggest they would rather that they – and their craft – be judged on genuine interactions rather than on impersonalized metrics.

Of note is the striking lack of divergence by age on attention to news topics. Younger and older participants alike agree that state, local and international news are undercovered and that entertainment, sports and religion are overcovered. When differences between groups are statistically significant, disagreement is a matter of degree. Again, there seems to be no suggestion from the rank and file that a change in priorities would be appropriate, and there seems to be a shared worry that the rooster will always be human interest.

As they continue their efforts to reach future journalists still in the classroom, journalism organizations can find value in the emphasis that their members place on training. The Radio Television Digital News Association might tweet an opinion column that reflects the need for journalists to "double down on transparency and accountability"; Tables 5 and 6 make clear that such advocacy is valued, but that a higher frequency of Twitter reminders in a week about online or in-person training opportunities more closely reflects the needs that members prioritize. [2]

Academics might be disappointed at the low regard in which academic research is held and the general ambivalence toward the academy's ability to provide up-to-date information. An end to that impasse seems unlikely, no matter how many correlations are uncovered between increased quality and increased income. One possible solution is further outreach from the academic side, with professional organizations as the bridge; more groups could offer summaries like the American Press Institute's regular blog on news-related research.

It seems of some concern that younger respondents were less likely than older ones to encourage students to enter journalism. If indeed members of diversity-focused journalism organizations are the least likely to offer that encouragement, that outcome might reflect the dissatisfaction with the status quo –

2. Tweets from the RTDNA account July 13-20, 2018, were observed July 21, 2018.

and a sense of the need for realistic mentoring – that gave rise to such organizations in the first place. Like other findings, these perceptions might have changed since the survey was conducted, and follow-up research could address those changes.

Because this survey was conducted with a self-selecting sample, the generalizability of its findings is limited. Those who did respond – when they did address demographic questions – were overwhelmingly White and older; the mean and median ages are both around 50. While the division of organizations by broad subject area seems appropriate, the specialty and diversity categories are strongly tilted toward single organizations. Should these topics be explored again, attention to the representation of different organizations as the ones most reflecting respondent interests would be valuable as well. Given the continuing changes in news practice as well as the ways organizations portray themselves, any further attempts to build on the data presented here can help to inform journalists themselves, the professional organizations that support them, and the educators who train them.

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