

Our Community

The Community Journalism Interest Group Newsletter

2024 Mega Edition

Outgoing head chair says goodbyes

By Dr. Aaron Atkins
Head Chair

I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued support and involvement with this group. Community is at its core, and you all have made this a welcoming and inclusive environment for both faculty and graduate students. We had an excellent number of top-tier research submissions across the spectrum this year, and are committed to continuing that trend.

This past year our interest group has put together several compelling initiatives, sessions, and panels, and has seen high-quality research exploring everything from news deserts to ghost papers to AI-generated news, continuing the ongoing challenge of investigating a small but vital corner of the journalism world in a rapidly evolving, saturated media environment.

As an interest group, we met many of our goals for the year. We continued to strengthen our presence at AEJMC's two regional conferences, fielding top paper sessions at both Southeast Colloquium and MidWinter. We slightly increased membership among both faculty and grad students. We continued to develop relationships with other divisions and interest groups, and filled out a stellar series of panels and presentations for Philadelphia.

I want to highlight both our top faculty and top student papers here as well. First, our top faculty paper is a collaboration out of Michigan State, led by Tim Vos and supported by Taewoo Kang, Rachel Mourao, Esther Thorson, and Marialina Antolini: "Place Matters: Variations on U.S. Journalism Culture". Second, our top student paper is a collaboration between Matthew Goldsmith and Shuning Lu of North Dakota State: "Constructing Resilience after Tragic Incidents: Analyzing News Coverage of 2018 Parkland and 2022 Uvalde School Shootings". They will present their work during our top paper session on Friday at 6:30 p.m.

Not all our goals were met, however. We did temporarily shelve our off-conference Brown Bag series, which we intend to bring back next year – I am really looking forward to what our incoming chairs will put together for it. If



any of you have ideas or pitches for sessions, let us know.

We are continuing our pre-conference collaboration with PJIG, MC&S, and the Engaged Journalism Exchange project, which focuses on bridging the divide between practitioners and scholars with engaged and experiential programming. Jacob Nelson of Utah and Andrea Wenzel of Temple are moderating, and it'll take place on the Temple University campus. If you are going to be in Philadelphia on Wednesday, it's a pretty exciting opportunity – registration is \$25 for faculty and free for grad students.

Lastly, I want to welcome our incoming chair, Dr. Nick Mathews. He is a strong proponent of community journalism, an avid researcher and educator, and I look forward to seeing what he brings to the table next year.

See you all in Philly,
Aaron

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COMJ panels for 2024 conference

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 7

WHO: The Center for Community News, University of Vermont and The Knight Foundation

WHAT: A workshop called “Powering Local News: Universities Making a Difference.” Topics include statehouse reporting, election reporting, public media collaborations, environmental reporting and funding.

WHEN: Noon to 5 p.m.

WHERE: Off-site. Contact Richard Watts (rwatts@uvm.edu) for more information.

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WHO: Mass Communication & Society Division, Participatory Journalism Interest Group, and Community Journalism Interest Group.

WHAT: A workshop called “Connecting Journalism Research and Practice.” Moderators include Jacob Nelson of Utah and Andrea Wenzel of Temple. Panelists include Danielle K. Brown of Michigan State, Sandra Clark of StoryCorps, Letrell Crittenden of the American Press Institute, and Tamar Wilner of Texas at Austin.

WHEN: 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

WHERE: Off-site. Contact Jacob Nelson (jacob.l.nelson@utah.edu) for more information.

THURSDAY, AUG. 8

WHO: Community Journalism Interest Group and the AEJMC Council of Affiliates.

WHAT: A Professional Freedom and Responsibility panel called “Pricing Digital News: Strategies, Structures, and Impacts.” It will be moderated by Huyen Nguyen of Kansas State, who will also be a panelist. Other panelists include Aaron Atkins of Weber State, Burton Speakman of Kennesaw State, Samuel Mwangi of Kansas State, and Samantha Peko of North Georgia.

WHEN: 10:30 a.m. to noon.

DETAILS: This panel will discuss the average digital subscription prices and typical paywall policies of news organizations in the US – both community newspapers and metro dailies, both clustered and non-clustered newspapers – based on relevant pricing theories.

THURSDAY, AUG. 8 cont.

WHO: The Center for Community News, University of Vermont and The Knight Foundation

WHAT: A Research panel session called “What are Colleges and Universities Doing to Address the Crisis in Local News? Impacts, Audiences and Reach of News-Academic Partnerships.” It will be moderated by Richard Watts, director of the Center for Community News, who will also be a panelist. Other panelists include Kathleen McElroy, chair of the Center for Community News Board, and Meg Little Reilly, managing director of the Center for Community News.

WHEN: 10:30 a.m. - noon

DETAILS: A lack of local news undercuts democracy reduces citizen engagement and leads to greater polarization. What is the role of colleges and universities in addressing the crisis? In this panel we present the latest research on more than 120 programs from different colleges and universities that are providing local news, filling news gaps and partnering student reporters with local media organizations or providing content directly through university directed newsrooms.

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WHO: The Newspaper & Online News Division and the Community News Interest Group.

WHAT: A Research panel session called “News Desert Solutions.” It will be moderated by Teri Finneman of Kansas. Panelists will include Chris Evans of Howard, Beth Potter of Colorado-Boulder, Buck Ryan of Kentucky, and Xu Zhang of Austin Peay State.

WHEN: 12:30 p.m. - 2 p.m.

DETAILS: How can we better teach students about news deserts and how to solve them? How can we better help the industry with practical research and getting our research to them?

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WHO: The Participatory Journalism Interest Group and the Community Journalism Interest Group.

WHAT: A Professional Freedom and Responsibility panel called “The Emotional Toll of Community-engaged Journalism: How Journalists Navigate Bandwidth, Boundaries and Burnout.” It will be moderated by Jillian Bauer-Reese of Temple. Panelists will include: Derek Cain of Resolve Philly, Siani Colon of Kensington Voice, Nora Elmarzouky of Friends, Peace, Sanctuary Journal, Nick Matthews of Missouri, Emma Restrepo of VozColectiva, and Afea Tucker of The Trace.

WHEN: 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.

DETAILS: This panel explores the emotional labor to which journalists embedded in and engaged with communities are exposed, putting them at increased risk of burnout. Panelists from various Philly-based projects share their experiences navigating emotional labor, bandwidth, boundaries, burnout, effective coping mechanisms, and more.

FRIDAY, AUG. 9

WHO: The Law and Policy Division and COMJIG

WHAT: A Professional Freedom and Responsibility panel called “Prison Journalism: For, By and About the Incarcerated. Who Gets to Tell Their Stories?” It will be moderated by Karin Assmann of Georgia. The panelists will include Ryan Moser, a journalist who was formerly incarcerated and the first graduate of the Prison Journalism Project, Shakeen Pasha, director of education for the Prison Journalism Project, Jon Peters of Georgia, and Rahsaan Thomas, a journalist who was formerly incarcerated and producer of the Eat Hustle Podcast about San Quentin.

WHEN: 4:40 p.m. to 6 p.m.

DETAILS: This panel considers the incarcerated as members of a community with shared interests, rights and voices. Reporting about this community – both by prison journalists and by news media outside of the criminal justice system – is treated as a form of community journalism. We invite scholars and professionals to discuss different perspectives of reporting about and from prison.

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WHO: All your favorite Community Journalism Interest Group members.

WHAT: Merriment, snacks and beverages.

WHEN: 8:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.

DETAILS: Meet at Bar-Ly Chinatown, 101 North 11th St.

SATURDAY, AUG. 10

WHO: The Community Journalism Interest Group and the History Division.

WHAT: A Teaching panel called “Partisan Media and Its Roots in American Journalism.” It will be moderated by Burton Speakman of Kennesaw State. Panelists will include Marcus Funk of Sam Houston State, Sharon Meraz of Illinois-Chicago, A.J. Bauer of Alabama, and Andie Tucher of Columbia.

WHEN: 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.

DETAILS: This panel will address these elements and help faculty understand the history of partisan journalism, their similarities to the present, and how best to approach teaching these connections and influence on the modern media environment.

Community Journalism Interest Group research sessions cheat sheet 2024

FRIDAY, AUG. 9

Community Journalism Interest Group's Top Papers
6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Moderator: Aaron Atkins, Weber State
Discussant: Clay Carey, Samford

"Place Matters: Variations in U.S. Journalism Culture"

Tim Vos, Michigan State
Taewoo Kang, Michigan State
Rachel Mourao, Michigan State
Esther Thorson, Michigan State
Marialina Antolini, Michigan State

"Constructing Resilience After Tragic Incidents: Analyzing News Coverage of 2018 Parkland and 2022 Uvalde School Shootings"

Matthew Goldsmith, North Dakota State
Shuning Lu, North Dakota State

"In AI We Trust (Not): Metajournalistic Discourse of Local News Automation"

Wen Lei, Colorado-Boulder
Shreyoshi Ghosh, Colorado-Boulder

"Needs and Value of Local News Among Young New Mexicans: Building Engagement in Racially Diverse Communities."

Ilia Rodriguez Nazario, New Mexico
Arif Md Tareque Habib, New Mexico
Mike Marcotte, New Mexico
Gwyneth Doland, New Mexico
Chelsea Roe, New Mexico

SATURDAY, AUG. 10

Scholar-To-Scholar (Posters)
10:30 a.m. to noon

Theme 1: "Local Journalism and Trust"
Discussant: Nick Mathews, Missouri

"We Do Not Trust in Journalism: A Randomized Controlled Trial on Farmers' Trust in News Media"

Kang Namkoong, Maryland

Kathryn Thier, George Mason
Rick Burke, Wisconsin Department of Health
Burney Kieke, Marshfield Clinic Research Institute
Bryan Weichert, Marshfield Clinic Research Institute

"How News Organizations Are Responding to Eroding Audience Trust in the U.S."

Benjamin Toff, Minnesota
Elliot Edsall, Minnesota

"Remoteness and Rural News: A Computational-Ethnographic Approach to Local News on Facebook in Michigan's Upper Peninsula"

Ava Francesca Battocchio, Michigan State
Brandi Stover, Michigan State
Jean Hardy, Michigan State
Kjerstin Thorson, Michigan State

"'I'm Not the Environment Reporter': Climate Change Reporting Perspectives Among Rural Journalists"

Jessica Walsh, Nebraska
Mildren "Mimi" Perreault, South Florida
Gregory Perreault, South Florida
Louisa Lincoln, Pennsylvania

"Journalists' Emotional and Logistical Reactions to a Police Raid"

Stephen Wolgast, Kansas

Theme 2: "Solutions for Local News Loss"

Discussant: Ivy Ashe, Florida Atlantic

"'They Are Just Going With The Times': Exploring Rationalization, Loyalty and Continued Subscription of a 'Ghost' Newspaper"

Sydney Boeger, Missouri
Nick Matthews, Missouri

"Journalism Doesn't Always Love Back': Rural Journalism and Resourcefulness at The Periphery"

Gregory Perreault, South Florida
Celeste Gonzalez de Bustamante, Texas at Austin

"Collaborative Reporting in South Asia: Cross-Border Journalism an Antidote to Local Media Capture"

Prashanth Bhat, Houston

"Student Journalists and News Deserts: How Student Reporters Can Help Fill the Void in Community News"

Joseph Kasko, Winthrop
Katharine Hubbard, Winthrop

"Sustaining Community News Outlets: Editors' Perspectives of Participating in News-Academic Partnerships"

Lara Salahi, Endicott
Christina Smith, Georgia College

COMJ feels like family

By Dr. Nick Mathews
Vice Chair

Five years ago, I landed in Toronto, lost and alone, unfamiliar with academia and without a familiar face in sight. I submitted a paper to AEJMC before starting my doctoral program — and before fully grasping what AEJMC was — and was fortunate it was accepted by the Community Journalism Interest Group. I vividly remember sitting at the desk in my hotel room, typing this as a Facebook status: “I am about 20 minutes away from giving my first presentation at an academic conference. Send prayers that I don’t throw up from nerves.” I added this a few hours later: “Update: I didn’t throw up. I consider that a victory.”



Dr. Nick Mathews

The reason I didn’t throw up was because of how welcomed, encouraged and supported I was by the scholars in the room that night. Not only did I achieve a personal victory, but I also found my academic family. Now, a half-decade later, as I take on the role of Head Chair of this extraordinary group of scholars, I want to emphasize the first word of our interest group’s name. The Community Journalism Interest Group community means everything to me.

I know for certain that I would not be where I am today — at Mizzou, my dream school, my undergraduate alma mater — were it not for this group of friends.

At the Toronto AEJMC conference, Christina Smith was the first interest group member to welcome me, inviting me out for coffee and showing support for my research interests in rural journalism and weekly newspapers. Burton Speakman and Clay Carey took me to lunch and later encouraged me to join other interest group members at a Toronto Blue Jays game. Monica Chadha became an incredible mentor, marking the first of many valuable conversations we’ve had over the years. Ivy Ashe, in particular, helped keep me calm before that first presentation. Since that memorable first conference, this community has supported through my doctoral program, through my dissertation, through the job market (twice). Community members reached out during the toughest times, including

Community journalism alive and well in Texas

By Austin Lewter
Director, Texas Center for Community Journalism

At the risk of plagiarizing an old Mark Twain quote, I’m happy to report that the death of community newspapers has been greatly exaggerated.

I know this to be true— in Texas anyway.

The Texas Center for Community Journalism was founded at Texas Christian University about 15 years ago.

My predecessor and mentor, Dr. Tommy Thomason, looked around the industry and saw what many of us already know.

Many Texas community newspapers are staffed by people who lack classical journalism training.

Tommy saw a need to provide mid-level professional training to folks already in the industry.

That is what he set out to do back then, and that is the legacy and mission we carry on today.

Tommy retired in 2019. The center moved to Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas.

And then COVID happened.

Like many things, the Center was dormant for a few years.

I was hired as the in fall 2021. Prior to the classroom, I spent my entire professional career at community newspapers.

I also spent more than a dozen of those years attending Tommy’s workshops at the Center as a professional.

In my three years here, we have revitalized our in-person multi-day workshops where we invite folks from around the state to Stephenville or Fort Worth for top-notch journalism training.

We’ve produced workshops in podcasting, sports writing, page design and social media— just to name a few.

Our programs are offered at no charge to the participant or their company.

We are underwritten by grants from the Texas Newspaper Foundation and Texas Press Service.

We have also taken trainings on the road.

Over the past year, we have hosted a series of traveling news writing workshops at different locations across the state.

We have presented workshops at every regional press association convention in Texas and are a mainstay at the Texas Press Association trade show each summer.

See Family page 8

See Texas page 9

Partnerships help communities stay informed

By Dr. Karin Assmann
Teaching Chair

News deserts, rural community information needs, struggling local news outlets – those active in the world of community journalism are all too familiar with these issues. Many of you teach students from counties at risk of becoming news deserts, or your institution is in a community with few or no independent news outlets. As journalism educators we want to see our students gainfully employed in newsrooms that produce much-needed information, especially to under-served communities. Helping them create a portfolio that showcases their talents and abilities is one way we help them achieve that goal. Their work as part of a university's broadcast, digital or print outlet is vital, but it is the journalism published for local news outlets that is most meaningful and beneficial. Ideally, we create for our student journalists a realistic professional experience while serving the community they live, learn and work in.

This is where news-academic partnerships come in. COMJIG has been collaborating with the University of Vermont's Center for Community News for several years and has seen partnerships grow between universities and local news outlets. In some cases, journalism programs have become the community's only news outlet. We celebrate successful collaborations and acknowledge the benefits for student journalists whose capstone class has them working in their local newsroom.

Once established, the challenge for educators is to meet industry and pedagogic standards while maintaining the same level of engagement and participation from students. There is no template for a successful news-academic partnership. Our circumstances, resources and communities are too diverse. What we can do is offer best practices as educators. To that end, Dr. Amanda Bright and Andy Johnston, my colleagues at the University of Georgia's Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication met with me for a conversation about what they have learned during the three years of operating The Oglethorpe Echo as a working news- and classroom. Amanda Bright is the instructor and assistant editor for the Echo. Andy Johnston serves as the paper's editor. Here are some of their take-aways:

Q: What where the pedagogical concepts you brought in to make this concept work?

Bright: First, we had to develop learning outcomes that really focused on what we wanted the kids to be able to get out of the experience. That was tricky. The second was community orientation, which is, how do we get the kids



Students in the Oglethorpe Echo JOUR 509I class led by Amanda Bright and Andy Johnston peruse the news on Jan. 11.

to know what Oglethorpe County is and who it is and get them into that county as often as possible. Three is professional development. How do we actually create students that are not just putting on a newspaper but learning and growing. How do we develop them professionally? Four is assessment. How do we actually give feedback on this work knowing that it's not your typical classroom environment. The last one has kind of developed into a sense of how do we also innovate and save the industry?

Johnston: When the capstone classes start, the students have about two weeks to immerse themselves into the county, either through research or driving out there, or we bring county officials into the class. The first semester we actually did a driving tour. So, they have a few weeks to get their feet on the ground and learn about the county before they start their beat reporting.

Bright: We also invite the county to come meet the new reporters, we have these physical encounters. We also have a Google Doc called the Community Audit that the students add to every semester. So, they research, they're busy, they talk to people on their beat, they do visual work around their beat, photo, video, graphics and then I supplement that with a ridiculously high rhetoric about purpose.

Johnston: The feedback I get from students is like, oh, this person was great to talk to or it was so neat to hear their

See Partnership page 9

Center for Community News takes reporting out of the classroom

By Dr. Richard Watts
Founder, Center for Community News

In 2019 – we launched the community news service at UVM, following the teaching hospital model and inspired by a presentation from Jeff Riley at a COMJIG session at AEJMC in Toronto. The idea was simple, instead of a class where students write stories for a teacher, let's have a class where students write stories for local community papers. Students get applied learning experiences, build their networks and clips AND local papers get trusted local content.

The concept also had its roots in the lack of mentored internship experiences for students, with the idea being to bring those extra-curricular experiences into the curriculum, broadening the experience for more students and using university resources to teach and manage them.

Our first cohort in the summer of 2019 launched a five-year journey as we sought to find and connect other news/academic programs across the country, culminating in the July announcement of a new \$7 million grant to the Center for Community News at UVM, to document and encourage more university-led student reporting programs. Universities

have resources, including our students and local news needs our help, the thinking goes.

This fall, CCN has four priorities:

Democracy – Democracy needs trusted local sources of public information. Universities can play a critical role. This fall many of these programs are sharply increasing their election and local government coverage and we'll be there with them in a new faculty cohort led by CCN Managing Director Meg Little Reilly.

Faculty -- At the core of these programs are innovative and entrepreneurial faculty. In the last year we've recognized 62 faculty champions from 39 states. In the next few weeks we will announce an additional 51 champions – faculty committed to creating or growing their student reporting programs. Going forward we will provide additional funding to faculty champions and a whole slew of resources, from cohort meetings to 1:1 mentoring to site visits. Check the page here.

Public Media:

With about 186 university licensed public radio stations, often housed at a university but not connected with the students there is a big opportunity for collaboration.

Research: And we will continue to accelerate our research on the im-



CCN Director Richard Watts with Tsitsi Wakhisi and students Guiselle Arciniega Gomez, Brandi Troup, and Carter Richardson.

pacts of student reporting. Last year we found more than 2,000 students saw more than 14 million page views on their 10,000 plus published stories. Those numbers are expected to increase this year. We also have a series of maps that help tell the story of the programs, and help them connect with local media partners and other programs around the country.

At the core of all of these programs are the student reporters and the creativity and ingenuity and different perspectives they bring. Which underscores one focus of all this work, we cannot simply bring back what was, but have to continue to reinvent how we deliver and develop trusted sources of local information that enable people to engage in their communities and in society as whole. Young people are the right ones to help lead that.

So now five years after first being inspired by a COMJIG panel at AEJMC – we continue to believe our universities and our students have a critical role in meeting local news needs.

Richard Watts is the Director of the Center for Community News at UVM and a member of the COMJIG Interest Group.



The Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism newsroom. (Photo courtesy Jere Hester)

Empowering community through collaboration

By Kaylan Martin
Georgia News Collaborative

A Collaborative Approach to Community Journalism

In a recent conversation with Canopy Atlanta, the need for a different kind of support for local news became clear. The Georgia News Collaborative isn't about adding more hoops to jump through for funding. It's about empowering newsrooms like Canopy Atlanta to focus on what they do best – reporting the stories that matter to their communities.

The question we're asking is: How can we collaborate to streamline operations, share resources, and build a more resilient and sustainable local news ecosystem? How can we leverage the knowledge and expertise of journalism educators and researchers to develop practical solutions that address the industry's most pressing challenges?

The following insights highlight the key challenges facing local news and how a collaborative approach, grounded and informed, can forge a path forward.

The Biggest Challenges

- **Financial Unsustainability:** Local news is caught between declining ad revenue (down 70% since 2005), dwindling subscriptions, and the dominance of digital platforms like Google and Facebook, which siphon off advertising dollars.
- **Shrinking Newsrooms:** Between 2008 and 2020, newsroom employment plummeted by 26%, leaving

many outlets understaffed and overworked. This brain drain especially affects journalists of color, further reducing diverse perspectives.

- **Information Deserts:** The rise of “news deserts” – communities with little to no local news coverage – is alarming. Nearly a third of Americans now live in counties with only one newspaper, often owned by large chains with limited local focus.
- **Misinformation and Polarization:** The current political climate, fueled by social media echo chambers, exacerbates the spread of misinformation. This erodes trust in local news, especially in communities already marginalized by mainstream media.
- **Relevance Gap:** Younger and diverse audiences often feel disconnected from traditional local news, which can struggle to adapt to changing consumption habits and address relevant issues.

Strategies for Success

- **Collaboration:** The GNC was designed to foster partnerships between newsrooms, universities, and community groups. By pooling resources, expertise, and content, we amplify our impact and create a more sustainable model.
- **Diverse Revenue Streams:** We're exploring innovative funding models like membership programs, philanthropic grants, and even government subsidies. These alternative revenue sources can reduce reliance

on waning advertising income.

- **Innovation:** A key driver for our members is their ability to leverage AI and digital tools for audience engagement, data journalism, and targeted advertising. GNC wants to support their individual efforts to help reach wider audiences and deliver news in formats they prefer.
- **Community-Driven Journalism:** We actively listen to our communities, involve them in the newsgathering process, and prioritize stories that directly impact their lives. This fosters trust and relevance.
- **Media Literacy and Fact-Checking:** We're committed to upholding high journalistic standards and educating the public about the importance of reliable information. By partnering with schools and community organizations, we hope to rebuild trust in local journalism.

The future of industry is not predetermined. Much of it in fact, rests in our hands, in our collective commitment to innovate, adapt, and collaborate. By working together, we can ensure that local news remains a vibrant and essential part of our democracy, providing a reliable source of information for all communities. As journalism educators, there's power to shape the next generation of reporters who will carry this torch forward and we look forward to working alongside you all in this important work.

FAMILY continued from page 5

when my dad died this year, and the best times, with congratulatory calls and gifts when I landed the job at Mizzou.

I vow to uphold this tradition, offering as much support as I have received while continuing to benefit from this community's encouragement. Over the coming year, I hope to help strengthen our already robust community further. I invite you to share your advice and thoughts on this initia-

tive, and I look forward to many conversations around the subject in Philadelphia.

To that end, I want to invite all to join our community for an offsite social, immediately following our top-paper panel. I will serve as our eager host at Bar-ly Chinatown, which is a short walk from the conference hotel. I hope you can join.

PARTNERSHIP continued from page 6

side of things. So, you're actually interviewing real people with real lives. Not all of them buy in, but it helps them realize the importance of what they're going to be doing in the next 16 weeks.

Q: *Have your learning outcomes evolved?*

Bright: I had seven or eight, like all stupid college professors do at first and then realize no one can achieve that many in 15 weeks. There are just a couple now. It's more about repetition on individual things that I want them to get good at: reporting, a basic understanding of editing and producing and what goes on behind the scenes of a news organization. And then the ability to tell stories in a coherent, multi-platform way. What I want them to do is write eight stories over the course of the semester. One team story and seven individual stories. And I went them to just rep, rep, rep, and get as much feedback as they can every time.

Johnston: They may be more heavily edited in this capstone class than they ever will get professionally. Because Amanda generally reads everything on Monday. And then I'll read it, proofread it, check spelling, ask them to do more of the research on some things. Then I let Amanda know if a name or a place was misspelled, or they got the year wrong. So, they're getting real life, heavy editing by two established journalists who have done this for years. But I never see their grades.

Bright: We keep a nice little firewall. Their first draft is assessed. So, their first few grades are low, but they get it, and they end up doing fine from a conceptual standpoint and from a learning objective standpoint.

Q: *What is your advice or teaching tip for educators interested in doing this kind of work?*

Johnston: You have to know yourself. Know what your body and mind can handle. Otherwise, you will just immerse yourself in it. We are all workaholics and have that tendency ...

Bright: I think it's all about developing systems that are efficient and lean. It's about figuring out how to make something as lean and tight as possible, and how to put as much as possible back into students. They should be doing a heavier lift than their professor. If they're the learners, they should be the ones lifting.

Links:

Center for Community News (<https://www.uvm.edu/ccn/about>)
Slack Channel: <https://tinyurl.com/CCNSlackChannel>
The Oglethorpe Echo: <https://www.theoglethorpeecho.com/>

TEXAS continued from page 5

The work we do is important and I am humbled to be a part of it.

Without fail, every training we host sees about 40% of attendees who are at their first TCCJ workshop.

So new folks are finding us. That is good and inspiring.

We hosted a page design and layout workshop at our Fort Worth campus in June.

Looking ahead, we plan to take a series of feature writing workshops on the road to complement the news writing workshops already undertaken.

We are also planning workshops in solutions journalism, broadcast journalism for the community newspaper and generative AI.

I am meeting people all over the country who are interested in our work.

I have fielded several calls this summer from other parts of the world where folks are seeking to establish similar centers.

All this to say, again, community journalism is not dead.

If it were dead, we would not be as busy as we are at the Texas Center for Community Journalism.

To learn more about what we do and to stay up to date on our workshops, please check us out on Facebook, visit our website at www.tccjtsu.com or drop me an email to be added to our email list.

My email is alewter@tarleton.edu.

Best wishes for a wonderful upcoming semester and let me know how we can collaborate to do more work that matters.

Austin Lewter is Director of the Texas Center for Community Journalism and an Instructor of Journalism and Broadcast at Tarleton State University where he also serves as the faculty advisor of the Texan News Service.

Lewter's career, prior to education, included newspaper leadership roles at numerous community papers across North and East Texas.

He and his wife Jennifer own and operate the Whitesboro News-Record in Grayson County Texas. He can be reached at alewter@tarleton.edu.

We want you to be a part of Our Community

To contribute essays, ideas, analysis, or
comments for future editions, please
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