



## BOOK REVIEWS: Making Non-Profit News

Reviewed by Jack Zibluk

Patrick Ferrucci (2022), *Making Non-Profit News*. Routledge. ISBN-10: 1032338032. Paperback: \$24.95, 128 pages. <https://www.routledge.com/search?kw=1032338032>

As traditional “legacy media” outlets continue to struggle and shrink, many voices and organizations continue to fill the informational, rhetorical and social void left in the vacuum. Many, and probably most, new sources of information eschew traditional news values of accuracy, objectivity, fairness and other professional ideas and practices. Too often, misinformation, rumor, invective and worse fill the now-empty societal spaces.

One model that strives to uphold the old values is the non-profit news organization. The non-profits largely grew out of formerly alternative newspapers that thrived from the 1960s to the early 2000s, though each has its own unique story. They are generally smallish. A staff of a dozen is tantamount to a major metro in this field. Their focus is invariably local. As non-profit organizations, they are funded by a variety of grants, private donations and fund-raising events. The advertising department has been replaced by various coordinators and managers.

While the non-profits are a different animal from the traditional newsrooms in broadcast and print, the reporting and editing staff are often former traditional journalists making their way in the new digital world. But the green-eyeshade bunch meet Silicon Valley tech wizards at the mostly digital non-profits. If it's a new animal, it's an evolving one. But at least these new news pioneers are providing accurate local information in “news deserts,” areas without local reporting because of the decline and withdrawal of local newspapers.

There is only one author, a former journalist, of course, taking a broad look at local non-profit news organizations. Patrick Ferrucci, associate professor of journalism at the University of Colorado, Boulder, has written the only book on the subject. *Making Non-Profit News* is part of Routledge's Disruptions: Studies in Digital Journalism series. Originally published in 2019, it came out in paperback in 2022. It remains the one and only book on the subject.

Ferrucci, a former arts reporter for the *New Haven Register* (full disclosure: I was a copy editor for the *Register's* sister paper the *Journal-Courier* in the 1980s), witnessed the growth of non-profits from the beginning. New Haven, home of Yale University, is also home of one the first and oldest non-profit organizations, the *New Haven Independent*. The *Independent* was the focus of Dan Kennedy's *Wired City* in 2013.

While *Wired City* was mostly a case study, *Making Non-Profit News* takes a far longer and wider view. Ferrucci spent five years in the mid and late 20-teens interviewing more than 100 journalists at non-profits from coast to coast. Nevertheless, *Making Non-Profit News* reads like an ethnography. It focuses on the culture of the non-profits through the testimony of reporters.

While news organizations in Ferrucci's native Connecticut figure prominently in his list of sources, as well as Margaret Frievoegel at the *St. Louis Beacon*, he doesn't identify his sources in true academic fashion. The result is the impression that non-profits are

largely similar to one another.

But that's just a quibble. Ferrucci provides a broad and deep overview of the non-profit journalism world and the issues these organizations face. As with any good story, Ferrucci starts off introducing the characters, the journalists, mostly the younger ones striving to balance their own inquisitive nature with the routines practiced by the old codgers. The new perspectives drift into advocacy over just the facts. They see themselves as watchdogs of the public trust, assuming that politicians and businesspeople are generally self-serving if not downright corrupt. From climate change to abortion rights, the newer journalists admit they often look for perspectives and sources to support their own preconceived ideas whereas the older generation strives for neutrality. They cover third-party candidates in elections, giving coverage to people often ignored by their ink-stained forbearers. They look for community impact over pronouncements by officials.

From people, Ferrucci describes their practices and routines. He notes the frisson between the newcomers and the older generation who are often the

editors, founders and even backers of the non-profits. Yes, the newcomers care about accuracy in their reporting, and other news values such as proximity matter, particularly in hyper local settings. But prominence is a far-less-important issue.

From the people, Ferrucci goes into the nuts and bolts of the organizations. Often, a single editor oversees the whole organization and the product and rituals reflect that person's character, for both good and ill. At the same time, he notes that market forces such as technology, audience, other media and especially funding affect the culture and the product.

These forces and actors, Ferrucci says, leave the non-profits vulnerable and even unstable.

So, Patrick Ferrucci remains a reporter at heart. The story here is the people at non-profit news organizations and the issues they face. The author admits these organizations remain works in progress. If non-profit news organizations represent a new world, it is a world in flux.

*Jack Zibluk is professor of communication at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga. Zibluk can be reached at [john-b-zibluk@utc.edu](mailto:john-b-zibluk@utc.edu).*

## An Ideal Textbook Resource for Student Interns

Reviewed by Cessna Winslow

Robert J Khoury (2021), *How to Intern Successfully – Insights and Actions to Optimize Your Experience*. ISBN-10: 9781956503005 Paperback: \$16.95 232 pages. <https://www.agilerainmakers.com/books> Also available on Amazon in a paperback or Kindle version.

As our department's internship coordinator and internship course instructor, I needed a book that students could read to help them make the most of their internship experience. *How to Intern Successfully – Insights and Actions to Optimize Your Experience* has proven to be an excellent resource. In past semesters, I required students to read and summarize articles that related to interning and provided tips to help them succeed. Finding those sources and designing assignments around them was, at times, laborious. This book puts everything I need into one easy-to-read and affordable format.

Starting with finding an internship, this 228-page paperback helps students understand how to best position themselves to ensure they make the most out of

their internship experience. It is broken into 13 concise, but rich in content, chapters.

First-time interns often initially view the internship experience with a mix of anxiety and excitement. This book helps students ensure that they are empowered to make the most of this fast-paced applied learning experience—regardless of whether it is a rewarding or boring semester.

Throughout the book, author Robert J. Khoury uses real-world and personal illustrations to support his insights and advice. For example, in Chapter Five—Being Authentic the author discusses networking, passion, and being likeable. Each chapter encourages students to go deeper with “Pause & Reflect” directives and questions.

*How to Intern Successfully* is loaded with bite-size helpful nuggets and provides (what may be described as) mini-lectures and along with helpful reminders for students to process and consider. To illustrate, in the Making Mistakes section in Chapter Six, Khoury talks about how interns may sometimes focus too much on not making mistakes where they should instead turn those uncomfortable moments into teachable experiences. Khoury reminds on page 121:

No one is perfect, least of all me. ... I assure my interns that they have plenty of room to make mistakes. And when they do, they shouldn't beat themselves up about it – they should just pause, reflect, learn what they can, forgive themselves... and move on.

In my internship course, I divide the book into three Reflective Reading assignments. Along with summarizing what they learned, students are required to note a take-away from each chapter. Here are few highlighted take-aways:

- My biggest takeaway after reading Chapter eight would be the confidence that is needed to speak up when your career aspirations are not being

met.

- Chapter 10 has really challenged me to step out to volunteer within the community. "It feels good to do good." (Pg. 183)
- Chapter 13 leaves me with this: I am at this internship for a reason. I am learning, growing, taking risks, receiving, benefitting this company and my future.

If you're looking for a good resource to help students prepare and successfully complete an internship, this book will meet those objectives while easily allowing you to design assignments tailored to your academic discipline.

*Dr. Cessna Winslow is an Associate Professor of Public Relations & Social Engagement at Tarleton State University where she also serves as the Internship Coordinator for the Department of Communication Studies. In addition to teaching internship courses, Winslow recruits and advises employers on creating positive internship experiences. Winslow can be reached at [cwinslow@tarleton.edu](mailto:cwinslow@tarleton.edu).*