CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE CASE STUDY CONNECTION: THE EFFECT OF THE INTERNET, DIGITAL JOURNALISM AND NEW TECHNOLOGY ON STUDENT MEDIA ETHICS

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts in Mass Communication

By

Kenneth Bringelson

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The graduate project of Kenneth Bringelson is approved:

__________________________________________
Linda Bowen, M.A.                                Date

__________________________________________
James Hill, M.A.                                Date

__________________________________________
Melissa Wall, Ph.D., Chair                        Date

California State University, Northridge
DEDICATION

To Jessie for all your support and sacrifice
and to my Grandfather and Grandmother
for helping me achieve this goal
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This project developed an interactive case study website to be used as a resource for student and professional journalists. The website provides a case study of an ethical issue involving confidentiality and retraction of a source’s name that took place at the Daily Sundial student-run newspaper at California State University, Northridge. It includes video, audio interviews with the student journalists involved, decision making tools that journalists can use when being faced with ethically challenging situations and interactive multimedia to enhance the reader’s experience (images, polls, a discussion forum and hyperlinks). The case study analyzes various ethically challenging situations that arose throughout the editorial process and can be used as a teaching tool in an undergraduate journalism class.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Journalism” and “ethics” are two words that are frequently mentioned together. Journalists are constantly being judged in terms of the intentions, morality and amount of sensitivity used when producing a news story. Students who are studying journalism go through educational programs that are intended to provide the skills needed to be successful professionals. Investigative reporting, writing techniques and broadcasting skills are all emphasized throughout these curricula while media ethics deserve the same attention.

Deciding what to do in a situation that is ethically challenging can be difficult. Making an unethical choice in the field of journalism may have extremely negative repercussions on the journalist or even the organization. Credibility, objectivity, and overall reputation can all be lost by one ethical mistake. For example, journalists who decide to respond to negative feedback in the comments section of online articles can be subjected to ethical scrutiny based on the fact that they are no longer remaining objective and impartial.

The purpose of this thesis project is to develop an interactive case study that can be used for teaching new media ethics in journalism programs at the university level. This case study will give journalism students a chance to see what types of ethical decisions professionals have to make in the newsroom. The case study will provide “real life” examples of ethical dilemmas that occur in both online and print media. This case
study is also intended for use by professional journalists as a resource for dealing with ethically challenging situations.

In order to develop a case study that better prepares student journalists, the following research questions were asked:

RQ1: How can a case study website be used to help current journalism students and professional journalists make better ethical decisions?

RQ2: How do you format a case study website so that it is simple to navigate but still completely functional?

RQ3: What are the required components of an interactive/multimedia case website about student journalism ethics?

RQ4: When designing a case study website, what are the biggest challenges?

RQ5: How do you create a successful lesson plan based on a case study website?

Significance

This case study, along with the website and all of its contents, will be used by educators as a tool for teaching journalism ethics. The case study itself is one example of a real life situation where a journalist was presented with numerous ethical challenges. Future and current journalists will learn how to better deal with ethically challenging situations.
Outline of thesis

Chapter two of this thesis is a review of literature concerning journalism ethics and the rise of digital journalism. The goal of this literature review is to establish an overall awareness of new media ethics and digital journalism.

Chapter three of this project explains how the interactive case study was created. First, I explore what the different components of a case study are. Then I summarize the particulars of the case making up the interactive website.

Chapter four contains the interactive case study. This includes content obtained through interviews with the reporter and editor involved with the article the ethics case is built around. The audio and video content from these interviews, along with background information about each case, information from the literature review and additional content has been developed into an interactive web site. Pages from the website are located in this section. Finally, a detailed curriculum and lesson plan have been included so that the website can be used in journalism courses at the undergraduate level.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The first section of this literature review discusses the journalistic evolution of ethics education at universities in the United States. Landmark research from Carey illustrates how the evolution of professional journalism education has lead to some serious ethical dilemmas. Then, a brief history of shared information is explained including how the digitization of journalism has led to the emergence of a new media journalist. Next, the structural changes in journalism that have led to ethical problems are explained (economic, organizational, narrative and relationship structures). The final section of the literature review discusses decision-making tools (legal and theoretical) that can be used for handling ethically challenging situations for both student and professional journalists.

The Evolution of Journalism Education from Print to Online

The profession of journalism has undergone a transition from the time when a “ragtag collection” of printers like Benjamin Franklin used newspapers for publishing editorials or official documents. The production of news is now in “the age of the reporter”, where the newspaper is primarily used for sharing newsworthy information (Carey, 1996, p. 3). Carey (1996) uses an analysis of Columbia College, University of Chicago and University of Illinois to illustrate the evolution of journalism education that then directly relates to the problems and ethical dilemmas that have risen in the profession of journalism.
The Age of the Reporter

The age of the reporter describes the prominence news takes over other types of articles in any given publication. Carey (1996) writes that the journalist is forced into the “center of the enterprise” to make “the newspaper an instrument of news gathering and writing rather than an excuse for editorials or printing official documents” (p.3). Carey then states, “Professional education and the ideology of professionalism that backed it always has been driven by more than the quest for knowledge and professional standards” (p. 3). According to Carey, the professionalism that journalism has been founded upon is more importantly based around an ethical code that is moral, orderly, habitual, and conservative.

Columbia College

In Carey’s (1996) work, Columbia College is first used to explain how the age of the reporter came to be. The earliest form of journalism education started with educators who were considered outcasts of English departments. Without a department to consider their academic home, they decided that the humanities would match with the objectives and goals of journalism. History, ethics and law had to be directly tied into what was taught in order for journalism to be considered a profession. Journalism scholars hoped that the humanities would provide this sense of professionalism.

University of Chicago

In this study, Carey (1996) discusses the University of Chicago and its lack of a formal journalism program. While the journalism school at Columbia had found a home in the humanities, the subject had never been taught at the University of Chicago.
Instead, the closest form of journalism school was the Benton Fellowships for Broadcast Journalists, which rested its foundation in the social sciences. Educators from this institution, such as Everett Hughes, made sure that students had a strong sense of “social relations among the people” when describing events in a journalistic manner. Carey (1996) refers to this as a “sociology of place” which was “deeply grounded in its city” (p. 4), establishing the sociological aspect of journalism in education. Here, at the University of Chicago, the study of Communications was informally established.

*University of Illinois*

The University of Illinois was the final college used to help show the evolution of journalism education in the United States. Carey (1996) writes that the students in journalism programs at the University of Illinois lacked technical journalistic skills and ethics. The first courses established for this journalism school were designed to transform irresponsible writers into responsible journalists. Again, the educators for the journalism school were drawn from the English department. The program at the University of Illinois evolved beyond the English department in order “to teach not only a craft but a politics and ethics congenial to the needs of college presidents seeking, like all administrators, more order and docility” (Carey, 1996, p.5). This evolution established a journalism school whose program had more stability and supervision than previous departments.

Journalism educators eventually decided that if they were to ever gain “prestige for their humble enterprises” then journalism needed to be split from the English department (Carey, 1996, p. 6). The study of Communications was formally established.
as journalism education extended to cover both news gathering and reporting along with advertising. While further deviating from English departments, the major parts of journalism education became ethics, history and the law. Both the humanities (where journalism education originated) and law departments saw this as an “incursion of the low culture of journalism into the nobility of the professions and the most ancient of academic crafts” (Carey, 1996, p. 6).

*World War II*

World War II and the late 1940s provided an opportunity to secure journalism education at universities (Carey, 1996). During World War II the popularity of journalism reached a new level. The discovery of signaling systems like radar and sonar, according to Carey (1996), led to broader audiences than ever before. It was realized that government-sponsored messages could be used in propaganda efforts against the enemy. Journalism courses (and any included ethical studies) were now being shaped in a way that would benefit the propaganda agenda of the government.

*Resulting Ethical Problems*

Carey (1996) illustrates how this evolution of journalism education has caused some ethical problems to arise. Journalism is incorrectly used as an umbrella term for advertising, communications, media studies, public relations, or broadcasting. He argues that instead journalism needs to remain a distinct practice apart from these additional communicative components (Carey, 1996). The media are organizations, bureaucracies, and technologies in which or with which journalism takes place. When journalism is directly tied in with these other terms, the objectives of the journalist can change. A
journalist becomes less concerned with informing the public in an objective way and more concerned with gaining advertisers, getting clicks online and subjecting themselves to the business side of mass communication.

Additionally, according to Carey (1996), the democratic process of journalism has become an extremely important value to the institution of professional journalism. Journalism itself provides a “vent to the felt indignation of large numbers of people” while creating a genuine process that forms a “common mind through exchange” (Carey, 1996, p. 7). For example, Carey (1996) explains that in the old Soviet Union, there was not any journalism because democracy just didn’t exist. Without this democratic process of journalism, there is no chance for sections of the news like editorials. This means that the opinions and considerations of citizens are left out of the news giving journalists an extremely large amount of power over their audience.

Carey’s (1996) research tells us that journalism education transitioned from being placed in the humanities to the social sciences and finally into communications, into a sort of hybrid between the two. World War II caused the objectives of the social sciences to become directly tied into the war effort. This shift caused journalism students to learn different objectives and, as a result, ethical dilemmas arose in journalism as a profession. Journalism was mixed in with advertising, marketing, public relations and many other subjects that have different objectives than to strictly inform the audience about important news. This evolution has led to additional ethical challenges beyond Carey’s (1996) research, such as can be seen in the history of shared information.
The “New Media” Journalist

The Internet has changed not only how information is shared but also how people decide to engage with journalism. The readily available nature of news has created a media environment where people can experience the news literally all of the time. Websites, mobile devices and social media technology allow for readers to constantly be switched on to the media’s message and even to chose when they want to check the news. The old idea that broadcast media was viewed every night at a certain time no longer exists in the digital age where information is ready to be experienced at your disposal.

The use of digital technology has dramatically changed the way that journalism is produced and consumed (Perigoe, 2009). Digital journalism has empowered each user to make their own personal decisions about what news they want to get, how they want to get it and when they want it.

By the beginning of the 20th century, audiences expected news to be readily available through networks whose only focus was to provide 24/7 news (Perigoe, 2009). CNN and the BBC continually ran news-oriented broadcasts throughout the day so that a person could get the day’s biggest headlines without having to worry about what time it was. Perigoe explains that three elements occurred that have changed the need for this format. The development of competing news coverage, the availability for amateur journalists to produce content while being armed with mobile devices and the reliance on a diversified news platform online.

Backpack journalists have also been born out of the development of cheap technology that can be used to record video. These specialized reporters travel to many
different regions of the world seeking stories that TV networks are unable to hire traditional journalists for (Perigoe, 2009). While having no obligation to air a backpack journalist’s content, organizations are given the freedom to use the gathered material as they please or not at all. Backpack journalists are also beneficial to media organizations because they do not cost anywhere near the amount as an in-house journalist that requires a desk, health plan and other benefits normally existing in the professional world.

Professional journalists in the digital age are overwhelmed with work (Perigoe, 2009). The possibility to always be connected has turned the life of a journalist into a 24-hour personal news servant. Emails are supposed to be answered at any time because of the possibility of accessing them through mobile devices. On the way home from interviews, journalists are expected to tweet or blog about their day’s experiences for promotion and marketing reasons. Perigoe (2009) suggests that this is a recipe for a nervous breakdown.

Along with Carey’s research (1996), Perigoe (2009) explains how journalism education has evolved as a result of all of these changes. Perigoe (2009) refers to a study done at Concordia University in Montreal where student’s study and personal habits were analyzed (Perigoe, 2009). Students now prefer to receive their news on computer screens, iPhone screens and other digital devices. Journalism departments have struggled while trying to keep up with the technology that has becomes such a large part of students’ lives. While preparing students for their future professions, it has become difficult to gauge what type of skills will be needed. The teaching of broadcast skills seems to be no longer relevant and instead, the focus should be more on how to use portable media to produce audio and visual content.
Thus, technology has been part of the reason for a new media journalist to emerge. Inexpensive video cameras and the simplicity of uploading content have created citizen-journalists who are less costly than professionals and more likely to capture breaking news stories. As a result, investigative journalism has changed in the eyes of editors who are trying to find any way to cut costs. Future journalists might be learning how to use websites such as YouTube and mobile phones instead of being taught how to write an article or use a video camera. The next section will discuss the structural changes that have occurred in journalism – many of which are a direct result of the digitization of journalism.

Ethical Challenges - Structural Change

The economic, organizational, narrative and relationship structures of journalism all have tremendously evolved over the last decade due in part to the rise of digital journalism. It is these “four aspects of occupational change” that have affected the “ethical beliefs and behaviors of journalists” altering the profession of journalism forever (Singer, 2010a, p. 89). Each of these changes has its own ethical implications causing the “traditional ethical guidelines” in the newsroom to be reconsidered, say researchers (Singer, 2010a, p. 89).

It is these changes that have made it increasingly difficult for journalists to adhere to the norms and values that have consistently been staples of the profession. Changes in the economic structure caused by a loss in advertising revenue and the use of an old business model (designed for print media, not online/new media) have resulted in journalists having to fight for financial survival by making some ethically questionable
decisions. A change in the organizational structure of the newsroom has caused the authenticity, accountability, accuracy and fairness to falter (Singer, 2010a). The transition from print to online media has caused the narrative structure of journalism to change, bringing new decision-making challenges to journalists. Finally, the relationship structure between journalist and audience has changed making it difficult to distinguish the professional from the amateur. These changes will now be discussed at length.

**Economic Structure**

The economic crisis occurring in the United States has contributed to changes in the economic structure of journalism. A brief history of failed attempts during the early stages of digital journalism will help to explain how the economic structure of journalism has been challenged. Finally, a loss in advertising combined with the rising popularity of aggregate news sites will be the attributing causes used to explain the difficulties that journalism is experiencing in this digital age. All of these changes have resulted in less funding available for journalism to succeed (Singer, 2010a).

The rise of the Internet has caused a dramatic change to occur in journalism over the past 20 years. The value and quality of news has faltered, as editors no longer can control the flow of information like in the past. Scott (2005) examines the brief history of digital journalism in order to identify the influence that the Internet has had on media organizations around the world.

According to Scott (2005), the political and economic structure of the media system and its commercial architects are to blame for the crisis that journalism is experiencing now (Scott, 2005). Scott is referring to the difficulties that media
organizations have had while trying to use old business models to be profitable in an online obsessed world. “News on its own has never been profitable” (Scott, 2005, p. 94). Making actual money has proved troublesome, as the major source of income has traditionally come from advertising.

A brief history of digital journalism points to failed efforts that have led to the current economic crisis in the news industry. In the 1980s there were failed attempts at making text-based content digitized. In the early 90’s, commercial web browsers such as Netscape and Internet Explorer allowed for journalism to start appearing online. Most publications had their own websites by 1996, although content was very limited. Deuze (2008) explains that journalism cannibalized its core product in the 1990s by trying to use online news as an advertisement for the offline product. Content was “repurposed” meaning that whatever images, video or audio that was originally shot for television or radio broadcasts was converted into a format that could be used online. This content was never intended to be placed online and therefore was not maximized for web usage (Scott, 2005).

Also during this time, editors started to realize that a 24-hour cycle of news was possible. The digital format provided a venue for breaking news that was much cheaper and had less production costs than traditional broadcasts on television or the radio. Another unique feature was realized in the interaction that readers could now have with each other and with journalists (Scott, 2005). It seemed like these benefits would be revolutionary in carrying journalism through the next few decades. Unfortunately, making money became the biggest problem.
A huge decrease in advertising has lead to a loss in revenue making it very difficult to keep media organizations in business. The value of advertising online has come into question for many different reasons (Scott, 2005). Advertisers seek out publications that will have the most exposure. Traditional news websites have lost readership and overall views on their sites to aggregate news sites. These websites tend to have users who visit them more frequently while returning daily for their intake of news. In comparison, mainstream media sites are frequented, at the most, only every few days.

Aggregate news sites such as AOL, Google and Yahoo use hyperlinks to stories completed by traditional media outlets. Readers have found these aggregate news sites more appealing because they enable you to sift through brief headline and synopsis to find exactly what is the most interesting. Audiences no longer have to graze around newspaper websites that contain lengthy stories to find what they are looking for (Scott, 2005). These sites make all of their money from multimedia/entertaining content, user fees (who pay to utilize other services like personal email accounts) and advertising (Scott, 2005). This customized aggregate news service undercuts traditional news outlets that try to charge for similar content. As a result, advertisers seek out these aggregate websites for launching their banner-based and pop-up style advertisements.

Along with these aggregate news sites, other ways of obtaining free news have become possible. Blogs (who used hyperlinks to news stories), noncommercial enterprises (such as IndyMedia) and specialized non-profit websites (built around political, social and religious issues) make it more difficult for traditional news websites to make any money (Scott, 2005). This has caused media organizations to scramble in
order to find a way to make money online. It was realized that producing content online was just as expensive as creating print or broadcast media. The only catch was that there was no financial support from readers or advertisers.

Of the variables mentioned, the use of old business models in the age of digital journalism has proved to be the most troublesome. Over the last decade, “news outlets gambled that an advertising model that had paid most of the bills for 150 years” would still work in the age of the Internet (Singer, 2010a, p. 90). Publishers have been building readership by offering most or all of their content online for free. These efforts have been successful in gaining a large number of readers but created an entire generation of news consumers who are used to having readily available free information at their fingertips. These news consumers have the expectation that all of it is and always will be free, making it extremely difficult to begin charging readers.

The ethical implications created by these financial pressures relate directly to editorial independence (Singer, 2010a). For example a publisher, head editor and reporter at the Washington Post organized a plan where lawmakers, administration officials, business leaders and other people would be allowed to spend $25,000 to have an on-and-off the record conversation about topics that they hoped would be reported on. Buying a voice like this instantly creates a problem of mixing news with business propositions. The Washington Post publisher and head editor received negative press regarding this proposition and decided to abandon the idea.

Bob Steele (2008) also discussed the implications and effects that economic change have had on ethical values and behavior. Steele acknowledges that the fight for
financial survival has caused an erosion of ethical standards across the journalism profession as shown through thousands of personal ethical queries he has received from editors, reporters, producers, photojournalists and a good handful of news corporation executives.

Steele (2008) gives the example of an editor of an online publication who was questioning the use of a hate crime story from a community blog that contained controversial information. The editor knew that the story would generate significant views and clicks but also considered the story to be “not-very-good” due to the fact that the blog only “ostensibly described what the alleged victim of the hate crime had done to prompt an attack” (Steele, 2008, p. 57). Since the information provided was hearsay and not concrete detail, it could harm the credibility of the publication for reproducing the story, according to Steele (2008). Steele (2008) argues that that newspapers are under immense economic pressures but still, traditional standards need to be maintained.

In other cases, the proper ethical responses to issues of journalistic independence are more open to debate. When journalists consider giving more coverage to high interest items, “traffic whoring” may take place (Singer, 2010a, p. 90). Another problem rests in commercial sponsorship of websites. On some websites, a travel agency may sponsor a newspapers’ online travel section, a local medical center its health section, or an investment company its financial section. This shows how forces outside the newsroom can have a direct influence over content.

Organizational Structure
According to Singer (2010a), the organizational structures of newsrooms are physically changing and the “roles within them are being rethought” (p. 89). Economic pressures and the need to maintain a website along with the traditional physical news product are the two main causes for this organizational shift. While there are fewer journalists in the newsrooms, there has been an increase in the number of duties that need to be accomplished. It is these new responsibilities and altered working environments that have contributed to ethical issues for journalists.

When news websites first started to become popular, organizations were able to afford staff members who only handled online media (Singer, 2010a). Singer (2010a) explains that these journalists were “segregated from reporters and editors in the main newsroom” and typically were regarded with disdain (p. 91). These online journalists would usually not create original content and instead, repurposed and reformatted articles so that they could be optimized for web use. They would add hyperlinks and visual enhancements while handling any other formatting issues.

Economic pressures have made it difficult for organizations to resist downsizing. As a result, there are fewer journalists who now have to do more tasks. This “multipurpose” journalist produces an article, optimizes it for web use by adding multimedia enhancements (audio, video, etc.), writes a blog entry to promote the article and even uses social media to generate additional exposure. Singer (2010a) explains, “the skills of remaining journalists have been stretched in unfamiliar directions to meet the expanding content requirements” (p. 92).

There are ethical implications that have resulted from these organizational changes. With journalists being pulled in so many different directions, reporters are now
forced to complete tasks without having enough time to master the skills necessary to be completely proficient. This has caused the quality of work to falter while journalists rush through their daily routines just so that they can get the story out (Singer, 2010a). In addition, journalists are so busy trying to handle all of their responsibilities that stories now make it online without ever being formally edited. Instead of following traditional editorial standards, corrections are made after-the-fact.

Additional research explains how these shifts in the organizational structure of journalism have created new ethical dilemmas. Traditionally, the credibility of professional journalists was inherited from the organization that they worked for (Hayes, Singer & Ceppos, 2007). For example, when a newly hired journalist would start at the Washington Post, audiences would trust them just based on the fact that they were hired by a reputable organization. News stories were seen as being trustworthy because of the organization, not the individual journalist. The changes in organizational structure have had a direct affect on the authenticity, accountability, accuracy and level of fairness at some media organizations.

**Authenticity**

Authenticity is used as a “framework for assigning credibility” (Hayes et al., 2007, p. 269). Journalists who create original and authentic work help to establish themselves as a credible source of information. Traditional newspapers had a format that catered to authentic pieces of journalism because articles were basically surrounded only by other articles.
While institutional authenticity was previously used as a basis for credibility, it is difficult to use this as a tool in today’s media environment. Almost three-quarters of Americans see the press as slanted, possibly due to the organizational changes explained previously. Readers now typically access aggregate websites for gathering news such as Google News, AOL News, or Yahoo! News (Hayes et al., 2007). The content found on these sites is not original to them and consists of articles aggregated from the Los Angeles Times, Washington Post and other publications. Because of this, the idea that authenticity is used as a framework for assigning credibility cannot be applied to media online (Hayes et al., 2007).

**Accountability**

Authenticity as a means to measure credibility has dwindled during the evolution away from a traditional format. Thus, accountability has become a more reliable way to do this. Accountability directly relates to transparency and the idea that journalists must now use personal disclosure as evidentiary support in their news stories in order to be seen as credible (Hayes et al., 2007).

Transparency is “most closely connected with the traditional journalistic norm of accountability” (Singer, 2010a, p. 95). This term is used to explain how journalists are kept accountable through the transparency of the Internet. Direct hyperlinks are integrated into online media and used as references to back up news stories. Ideally, audiences are now able to find out where the information was obtained; creating this sense of transparency (Singer, 2010a).

**Accuracy and Fairness**
The journalistic values of accuracy and fairness have eroded in the quest to draw in more readers. Website hits and viewership have become increasingly important for news websites to stay in business. Journalists have become caught up in questionable stories where the characters don’t always get a chance to defend themselves or correct statements that could damage their reputations. Editors and journalists are under immense pressure to save their franchises by taking huge risks in a time where decreased editorial oversight and diminished checks and balances occur.

The accuracy of stories is directly affected by these shifts in the organizational structure. As mentioned previously, time constraints have led to unedited content being published online first while being checked for problems at a later time. Also, journalists must be able to produce content that covers a wide range of topics. The quality of work being published may suffer because the journalist may lack a background in the content they are writing about. As accuracy deteriorates, organizations lose the credibility and solid reputations that were traditionally so important.

**Narrative Structure**

In traditional journalism, the formulaic process in the writing of a news story consists of an inverted pyramid structure, where the facts that are seen as the most important are placed at the top or beginning of a story (Singer, 2010a). This is then followed by less important facts. Also, “journalists are trained to make themselves as nearly invisible as possible to the reader” (Singer, 2010a, p. 93). This is looked at as a core aspect of objectivity in which the journalist remains distanced from his/her audience. Constraints, such as page length for print, time limits for television, and deadlines along
with the process of writing mentioned above, all affect the narrative that is produced by journalists.

The stories online do not always fall under this same formula because there are fewer space limitations. Also, hyperlinks allow readers to see where sources of information came from, meaning the journalist is no longer the sole controller of content. The interaction between journalist and audience alters the narrative when anyone who reads a story online has the ability to make his/her own comments and judgments. The journalist no longer carries the power of determining what is meaningful, as readers can construct their own ideas. The comments sections remain controversial interactive elements of news websites. Not everyone comments or reads the comments section on a website.

News online is much more fluid than traditional media. Stories are continually updated and revised as events unfold in real-time. Stories are now looked at as “works in progress” that exist on “a canvas that never dries” (Singer, 2010a, p. 94). Traditional deadlines are no longer an issue as these stories are covered while they are happening. As news stories unfold, people who are outside of the newsroom can become co-shapers of information. The media contribute after-the-fact commentary where their interpretations (rather than acting solely as a supplier of facts) can become the basis of discussion. These new narrative structures offer context in order to help the consumer better understand the facts. This is a step away from a neutral, objective and facts-centered approach that journalists typically have taken in the past.
The rise of the j-blog has also caused a change in objectivity. The term blog originated from the world “weblog” which basically means online log. A j-blog (or journalist blog) is run by a professional journalist. Traditionally, journalists were asked to keep their personal views and backgrounds out of stories. With j-blogs, journalists display profiles containing information such as birthplace, hobbies, interests and even snippets of political or social views. Journalists are urged to showcase both their personal views and voice in their work. The narrative language has changed from “third person” reporting to using words like “I” and “you” (Singer, 2010a, p. 94).

A specific example of this occurs on the Washington Post’s website (Rubin, 2010). A journalist named Jennifer Rubin writes for a j-blog titled “Right Turn”. At the top of the j-blog, a link called “About Jennifer Rubin” takes readers to a page written in the first person format, by Jennifer Rubin, telling all about who she is, where she came from, and even what her political beliefs are. This j-blogger explains how her family left California in order to “phase out” her career as a lawyer while living in Virginia. Rubin even answers her own question, “What do I believe in?” – giving readers a transparent view of exactly who this journalist is before even reading a piece of her work.

Authenticity, accountability and autonomy are three traditional journalistic norms that can be used to analyze how the credibility of the journalist has changed and, as a result, how the narrative structure of news content has evolved (Hayes, et al., 2007). Students in journalism programs constantly define a professional journalist as someone who gives information that can be trusted. These researchers suggest that the information itself is not as important as the reputation of the journalist. Credibility comes from the values of the person who created it.
Journalists have been trusted because they continually provide information that is found to be credible by the readers. Professional journalists now work alongside other providers of information (independent bloggers, citizen journalists, and social media contributors), which dramatically changes the narrative structure of news.

However, this relationship can negatively affect the authenticity, accountability, and autonomy of news production. Round-the-clock news networks like CNN find themselves having to provide content 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. As a result, these networks began meeting their programming needs by relying on less-expensive talk shows that have blurred the distinctive line drawn between traditional objective news reporting and opinion. This blurring means consumers may be unaware that the show they are watching is providing commentary (which can be opinion or interpretation) rather than strict fact.

**Authenticity**

Reich (2005) details an evolution from the telephone to more modern technologies in obtaining information from sources, another form of narrative change for journalism. The telephone was once the only communication tool available for contacting sources without being physically present. Today, text obtained from a source can now be directly linked or pasted into a news story. In addition to these new technologies that are used to gather more authenticated information, hyperlinks also help to increase the credibility of digital journalism. Hyperlinks increase credibility because readers can now check sources, making the argument that these are ethically sound practices. This also allows for the process by which journalists obtain information to be
more transparent than in the past. Readers should be able to clearly identify sources and, ideally, check out those sources for themselves (Hayes et al., 2007).

**Accountability**

In the modern digital age, many different parties serve as sources, audiences, and information providers (Hayes et al., 2007, p. 274). With this addition of information providers, journalists are now challenged in regards to how credible is a piece of information. Bloggers have become self-appointed watchdogs attempting to find any issues of untruthful reporting on the Internet while holding journalists accountable for their news stories. These watchdogs scan news feeds and social media sites looking for false or careless reporting. Bloggers make sure that journalists remain credible reporters of the news.

Deuze, Bruns and Neuberger (2007) investigate how amateurs (bloggers, online commenters and citizen journalists) participate in the gathering, sharing and publishing of information right alongside traditional journalists. This convergence has actually helped to relieve some of the economic pressures that journalism is being faced with. This converging culture helps to increase revenue and further the agenda of the journalism industry by enabling citizens to “enact some kind of agency regarding the omnipresent messages and commodities of this industry” (Deuze, et al., 2007, p. 324). Both professionals and amateurs are able to interact in a new way that promotes a more cost-effective approach to news in a bureaucracy with declining revenues.

These changes in narrative structure have caused journalists to start to question the ethical standards implemented in online journalism. Traditionally, news reporting was
more of a one-way street where accountability existed within the organization. Readers were allowed to interact but not on such an instantaneous level. It has now become a forum of open communication with the public where discourse occurs between the professional journalist and the audience. Singer (2010a) argues that neutrality results in credibility. In the case of the Internet and blogging, more specifically, neutrality is looked down upon as readers look to news reporting as a two-way communication vehicle where commentary plays a significant role in the sharing of news.

**Autonomy**

The final way in which the change in narrative structure can be seen is through autonomy. “Journalist’s independence has been interwoven with their social obligation to be loyal first and foremost to the citizens who rely on them for the information needed to be free and self-governing” (Hayes et al., 2007, p. 273). Journalists see themselves as correctly reporting impartial truth while sometimes even being referred to as the Fourth Estate of the government. Reports were the eyes and ear of justice while being a voice for the voiceless. Traditionally, news organizations controlled the access to how information was being distributed. In today’s news reporting, bloggers become immediate watchdogs that challenge content and act as a governing force over journalists.

**Relationship Structure**

Singer’s (2010a) final explanations of the changes in journalism that have led to ethical issues are seen within the relationship structure between audience and professional. In traditional newsrooms, the interaction between readers and journalists was typically minimal. Now there exists a networked environment where the “interaction
with audience members has become integral to the journalistic process” (Singer, 2010a, p. 95). This new relationship occurs in the form of user-generated content, citizen journalism and participatory news.

Singer (2010a) proposes that the real value of journalism lies in the ability for a journalist to “remain free from outside pressures that shape information” (p. 95). Singer (2010a) states that in certain circumstances, the Internet encourages the personal values and views of the journalist to be shared. This can lead to a transparent view of not only what information exists but about how the story was discovered and verified. Journalists even provide their own insights into how stories should be interpreted, when conversing with audiences through online commenting, playing a direct role in the synthesis of material.

Singer (2010a) explains that the ethical dilemma arising from this transparency is how journalists and editors no longer get to decide who controls content. Transparency has led to a lack of control and may cause content to suffer. This new relationship with audiences has caused journalists to patrol their articles making sure that the comments being made aren’t negatively affecting the message.

On the other end, audience contributions to news stories can create an untruthful or skewed piece of journalism. A balance between freedom and responsibility as well as independence and accountability must exist. Achieving those balances becomes extremely difficult when audiences are unaware of the outcomes that can occur because of poorly executed citizen journalism. As a result, both a positive and negative relationship can occur.
The Positive Relationship

In the realm of digital media, news and the sharing of information has become decentralized, collaborative, and nonproprietary. Journalists and citizens share resources while linking back and forth to each other in their work. The audience is now a participant in the process of “gathering, selecting, editing, producing, and communicating news” (Deuze, et al., 2007, p. 323).

Participatory journalism, as Deuze et al. (2007) explain, appeared as a direct response to shortcomings in mainstream news media coverage. Over the last few years, a fine-tuning has occurred that allows for a balance to take place that enables citizens to share the news in an open and direct way that adds to traditional journalism publications. There is a need for this interactive relationship to occur in order for audiences to continue to be interested in the news.

This interaction has resulting ethical implications. A different study outlines the ethical situations that can occur when citizens are allowed to participate in news production (Singer & Ashman, 2009). Britain’s Guardian newspaper and its affiliated website are used to show how user-generated content, a product of participatory journalism, challenges the personal and social ethics of journalists. A steady decline in the amount of editorial content that journalists produce has been caused by the growth of user-generated content.

As the emergence of the digital age has changed the face of journalism, The Guardian still seeks to maintain core journalistic values. Singer and Ashman’s (2009) study focuses on interviews done with Guardian editors and journalists. One editor
explained that there is an emphasis on its independence of ownership, behavior and belief. Additionally, transparency, collaboration and open discussion help to keep the values of this publication in tact.

The Guardian launched a new section on its website titled *Comment Is Free* where print columnists and outside commentators come together to produce content. This section allows for open-ended debate to occur. Comments are moderated through a user-based system where any citizen who sees a remark that appears to be abusive can “flag” it in order for a staffer to give it further review. The comments are never “premoderated” or processed through any type of editorial system (Singer & Ashman, 2009, p. 5).

Numerous journalists at The Guardian truly believed that by allowing user-generated content, their employer was providing a high-quality product that allowed for a diversity of voices (Singer & Ashman, 2009). This study showed journalists were not there to give people definitive answers. Instead, the open discussion platform has helped to establish a new form of democratic journalism.

These interviews also helped to explain how disagreements and disputes raised by users that challenge journalistic authority can be handled sufficiently. One online editor said, “if you’re aggressive and high-handed back, it will inflame them even more” (Singer & Ashman, 2009, p. 14). When the disagreements expressed were honest and civil, it was seen as providing a healthy opportunity for engagement and self-reflection. As a result, these challenges performed a watchdog role on the media by making journalists pay extra attention to getting it right in the first place.
Accuracy, honesty, balance, fairness, independence, and credibility were all key traits seen as essential hallmarks of good journalism, according to Singer and Ashman (2009). When asked about concerns with the ethical issues related to user-generated content on The Guardian’s website, most of the journalists focused on credibility and civility. Singer and Ashman (2009) note that the journalists felt that providing an open forum for debate was valuable but that an abuse of privilege was starting to take place:

“The platform gives credibility to people whose comments may be completely inaccurate, offensive, or without foundation in fact. It arguably undermines the work of professional journalists by placing the words of people who have no training or professional responsibility alongside, or even on par with, those who do” (pp. 12-13).

There was a major concern that user-generated content could challenge and undermine credibility. These journalists felt confident that they could make sure their own work was credible, but did not feel as though they had much control over the content created by users. As a result, the institutional credibility was at stake.

Another negative aspect to this interaction between journalists and users lays within the threat to authority that takes place. “Users do not hesitate to challenge journalists” (Singer & Ashman, 2009, p. 14). Personal attacks, disagreements over opinion and disputes about facts are all challenges that take a sufficient amount of time and energy to deal with. Editors felt as though it was not part of their job to handle these types of situations.
While the format of online journalism can provide a newly appreciated freedom for journalists, it can also erode professional autonomy. The journalists at The Guardian stated that they treasured the amount of autonomy that they had and especially the freedom they had to write about what they liked. In comparison, print media did not allow for such freedom and autonomy. Although this freedom is seen positively, user generated content impinges on their autonomy because of the need for comment counts and website hits. Interviewees reported being appalled at what they had to do in order to gain popularity online by sometimes reporting on issues that they thought only belonged in tabloids (Singer & Ashman, 2009).

One final journalistic value is affected by user-generated content. Journalists are responsible for upholding The Guardian’s reputation and are held accountable when mistakes occur. An interviewee stated, “There’s a responsibility to maintain civilized discourse” and to maintain the core values of journalism (Singer & Ashman, 2009, p. 15). Accountability among journalists was seen as a key force to keep The Guardian’s reputation intact.

Anonymity on the Internet allows for users to say things in content and style that they wouldn’t normally do if they were publishing the work along with personal information. Citizen journalists can remain anonymous while professionals must be honest and transparent (Singer & Ashman, 2009).

Singer and Ashman’s (2009) research helps to explain that user-generated content on websites like The Guardian’s digital version of their publication has
caused journalists to reconsider the relationship that occurs between professionals and audiences. Reading through user comments can cause journalists to get “very depressed” on one side, but can also help to create a democratic platform for discussion on the other.

Overall, these studies suggest that journalists will attempt to handle ethical dilemmas occurring on the Internet by using the experiences that have been learned while working in the field and from journalism school. Journalists will also abide by moral mandates from their organizations that can be found in the guidelines and handbooks provided to them. The addition of user-generated content has created a participatory environment that will continue to challenge the ethics and values of journalism.

Structural size of the newsroom

In addition to the four aspects of occupational change that affects the ethical beliefs and behaviors of journalists, newsroom size is a major influence. Reader’s (2006) research explains how ethical dilemmas differ depending upon the size of a newspaper. For example, a large newspaper, such as The New York Times will have different ethical situations than a small newspaper, like a student publication at a university.

Journalists at smaller newspapers are more likely to be in touch with and concerned with community values than journalists at larger newspapers. The study found that larger organizations tend to handle ethical dilemmas with an approach concerned with the professional reputations of the organization. By contrast, “journalists at small newspapers are more concerned about their newspapers’ relationships with their
Reader found that smaller papers cannot afford high wage, experienced journalists and advanced trainings. A level of intimacy also exists based upon the relationship between small newspaper journalists and the surrounding community. Because of this connectivity, these journalists are less likely to report on controversial issues such as publishing gay-wedding announcements because editors know they will receive responses directly from readers who could threaten to cancel subscriptions and advertisers who could pull funding.

Smaller newspaper journalists abide by an easy-going ethics code. Sports departments at small newspapers were less likely than their big-paper counterparts to use ethics codes. These journalists felt that “freebies” obtained from members of the community would not affect the objectivity of a reporter. In addition, they felt that supporting the home team through “boosterism” was not against the ethical code of journalists (Reader, 2006, p. 862).

Larger newspapers differed in their use of an ethics code in the newsroom. Editors from the big papers believed that their communities have an institutional respect for their organization. These journalists were confident that the community respects the newspaper even if they don’t always like the content that is produced. These assumptions lead to large newspapers needing to adapt a strong ethics code in order to keep this respect in order. Reader (2006) found that all but two of the interviewed editors
in the study were able to recall an example of having to discipline or fire a reporter based on a poorly executed ethical decision.

The most common problems exhibited at the large newspapers were plagiarism, deceptive reporting, and editing practices. Formal discipline, as mentioned previously, was the most common response. Suspensions, reprimands and personnel changes all were possible outcomes handed down to journalists who made poorly executed ethical decisions. Editors also explained that they had to address unethical reporting on numerous occasions by “killing or holding articles, retracting articles, or writing apologies to their audiences” (Reader, 2006, p. 855).

The main difference between small and large newspapers lies within trying to find a balance between community involvement and editorial independence (Reader, 2006). Smaller newspapers are more concerned with how the community perceives the organization while larger newspapers felt that the reputation and professionalism of the organization requires strong ethical codes. Larger newspaper editors brought up the theme of race and ethnicity when trying to explain whom the strongest critics of the newspaper were while their smaller counterparts believed that their critics were readers wanting more professional journalism.

The idea of who the strongest supporters of their papers were also tended to differ. Editors from the larger newspapers framed who their strongest supporters were in terms of social class (business people, working class, highly educated). Smaller newspapers mentioned their supporters based upon how long they had been involved in the community (Reader, 2006). This creates an ethical dilemma when two reporters, one
from a larger newspaper and one from a smaller newspaper, publish an article on a topic but slant their stories to appeal toward their known supporters.

**Decision Making Tools**

An ethical dilemma can be handled on two different levels. On the first level, someone faced with an ethical dilemma should look to the law in order to uncover possible litigation that can occur because of his or her actions. On the second level, journalists should have a checklist to go through that will outline the different repercussions of each decision they may or may not make. This section will explain the Cybershield Law (along with some specific court cases involving the law) and some other tools that can be used by journalists being faced with ethical dilemmas.

**Cybershield Law**

Online publications are held to a lower standard of liability than print versions because of a federal law passed in 1996. Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act specifically states, “providers and users of interactive computer services are not liable for posting information provided by other sources” (SPLC Whitepaper, 2009, p. 1). Certain content that may have caused a journalist to be sued in a traditional print publication can now be made part of the public discourse based on this law. This means that journalists are given more freedom as to what can be printed in online stories. Section 230 grants student media a broad immunity to post and allow comments on content that has been created outside the newsroom or by non-staff members.

To better understand the differences that came about with Section 230 or the Cybershield law, it is important to look at how rules of libel existed in the past. Prior to
the Communications Decency Act (CDA), courts would just apply the traditional rules of libel law to any content on the Internet. Publisher liability applies to reporters, authors, editors and publishers as well as the publications that they all work for and states “publishers are liable for defamation because they are creatively involved in the process of publication” (SPLC Whitepaper, 2009, p. 2). Commercial printers, bookstores, libraries and newsvendors all are legally bound to distributor liability. This law states “distributors are liable only if they know or have reason to know that information is defamatory” (SPLC Whitepaper, 2009, p. 2).

_Cubby v. CompuServe and Stratton Oakmont Inc. v. Prodigy Servs._

Courts would apply both of these laws to the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that would monitor the content on their message boards, similar to publisher’s role in the process of news making. The court cases of Cubby v. CompuServe (1991) and Stratton Oakmont, Inc. v. Prodigy Servs. Co. (1995) both had significant rulings that caused traditional laws to no longer apply. The courts found in Cubby that CompuServe was not liable for defamation because the company itself had no reason to know about content being posted on the discussion forums.

On the other hand, the Prodigy (1995) case resulted in a very different ruling. The courts said that the ISP Prodigy was found to be a publisher because it claimed to be a “family oriented network” that advertised monitoring its own bulletin boards and using filtering software to manage offensive content. Prodigy exercised “editorial control much like a newspaper or magazine and therefore should be treated as a publisher”. They were found liable for defamatory postings.
As a result of these conflicting rulings, Congress passed the Section 230 law to create a standardized rule for deciding who was legally responsible for defamatory content on the Internet. This section of the CDA law is called Protection for Private Blocking and Screening of Offensive Material. It states: “no provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher of speaker of any information provided by another information content provider” (p. 2). Even when a moderator takes steps to manage certain messages and content, they are not legally held responsible.

Zeran v. America Online, Inc.

The first case to interpret this law was Zeran v. America Online, Inc. (1997) and this set the tone for further situations involving the Cybershield law. This interpretation established (1) Who is protected and the (2) Scope of protection. Under the first stipulation, large ISPs (AOL, Time Warner, Earthlink, Verizon, etc), smaller websites and email lists (operated by large companies or even individuals), and “any user of an interactive computer service who merely re-posts content from someone else” are covered (p. 2). The second stipulation states that this law “protects only against certain types of legal claims, and it applies only to content provided by someone other than the person claiming immunity” (p. 2). The legal claims covered are defamation, fraud, negligence and false light “when those claims arise from information in third-party content” (pp. 2-3).

Section 230 does not protect anyone who manages “conduct beyond a publisher’s traditional editorial functions” (p. 3). This means, “although service providers cannot be
liable for refusing to remove third-party content, they might be liable if the promise to
remove content and then fail to do so” (p. 3). In addition, if a journalist or editor
attempts to edit the content for spelling, sloppy writing or other corrective functions, they
may lose their protection under this law. While this can appear to limit protection on
digital media providers, the law continues to state that service providers are not liable
merely for passing along someone else’s expression.

Relation to Student Media

The importance of Section 230 of the CDA can be seen in the impact on student
media. There is a well-established understanding amongst media professionals and
students of journalism that “the statute covers virtually all websites” (p. 4). Student
media will not be protected under Section 230 in any defamation situation where a
student reporter created the content, even if that story was published online. In order to be
protected under the Cybershield and qualify for immunity, student media must prove that
the content at issue was created by an entity distinct from the publication. Student
journalists take on the same role as ISPs do because they are content providers.

Student journalists and the publications that they work at (universities, high
schools, middle schools, etc.) “will not be liable for user-posted comments or similar
materials” (p. 4). This applies to letters to the editor, message board statements, cartoons
and columns as long as someone outside the newsroom creates them. What this means is
that the exact same letter to the editor that may have caused a print publication to be held
liable for defamation, can now be printed online and leave the providers who share the
content completely immune to any legal issues that may arise.
Even though Section 230 gives protection to student media for just simply being a transmitter of possibly defamatory information, legal protection remains the strongest when student journalists avoid correcting mistakes in this content. It is suggested “student editors who avoid adding content and rewriting sentences will have stronger protection under the law” (p. 4). Editors are supposed to fix sloppy writing, correct errors and fill in gaps in reporting but this may cause a lapse in Cybershield protection. While this is a possible repercussion for managing content, editors who stop serving these functions can cause the quality of student media to suffer. Inaccuracies can damage the credibility of student publications and student editors who are uncomfortable with a post will be much safer if they just remove the post entirely.

The Cybershield law provides legal protection for student journalists. In cases where a decision needs to be made regarding an ethical dilemma, looking to the law for answers may not always give you the greatest moral results. In some cases, a decision may be legal, but not necessarily ethical.

*Fla. Publishing Co. v. Fletcher*

For instance, in the case of *Fla. Publishing Co. v. Fletcher* (Fla., 1976), a newspaper photographer took a picture of a silhouette left on the floor of a young girl who was burned to death in a fire. A fire marshal on the scene of the accident had asked the photographer to take a picture because his own camera had run out of film. The mother sued the publication for having this photo on the basis that this was an invasion of privacy. The mother believed that this matter should remain private and that the press had no right to gather a photo of this nature in the privacy of her home. The U.S.
Supreme Court decided that there was no reasonable expectation of privacy on the basis that fires are a disaster of public interest and the photographer was there at the invitation of an official, leaving the journalist free of any legal charges.

Society of Professional Journalists - Code of Ethics

In situations similar to those above, a journalist may get protection from the law but there still exists a need for a way to decide how to handle an ethical dilemma on a moral level. The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) is “dedicated to the perpetuation of a free press as the cornerstone of our nation and our liberty” ("Society of professional journalists," 1996). The society was founded in 1909 and currently has over 9,000 members nationwide. The goal of the Society of Professional Journalists is to “ensure that the concept of self-government outlined by the United States Constitution remains a reality into future centuries, the American people must be well-informed in order to make decisions regarding their lives and their local and national communities” ("Society of professional journalists,” 1996).

The SPJ have established a code of ethics that has been adopted throughout professional journalism as an acceptable resource for dealing with ethically challenging situations.

The following is taken directly from the Society of Professional Journalists website:

Seek Truth and Report It

Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.
Journalists should:

— Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.

— Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.

— Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.

— Always question sources’ motives before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.

— Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.

— Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.

— Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.

— Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained
as part of the story

— Never plagiarize.

— Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.

— Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.

— Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.

— Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.

— Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.

— Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.

— Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.

— Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.


Minimize Harm

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect.

Journalists should:
— Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.

— Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.

— Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.

— Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone’s privacy.

— Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.

— Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.

— Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.

— Balance a criminal suspect’s fair trial rights with the public’s right to be informed.

Act Independently

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know.
Journalists should:

— Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.

— Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.

— Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.

— Disclose unavoidable conflicts.

— Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.

— Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.

— Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

Be Accountable

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other.

Journalists should:

— Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
— Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
— Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
— Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.
— Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others.

Ethical Guidelines

There are many different theories that have been researched and analyzed in journalism schools nationwide. A journalist must decide which “road” to travel down when making difficult decisions.

The SAD Formula

Day (2005) explains a formula and model of moral reasoning that can be used by journalists to interpret ethical decisions. The SAD formula stands for: Situation definition, Analysis of the situation and Decision or moral judgment. Along with being a way to handle ethically questionable situations, the SAD formula can also “be a valuable tool in creating a discourse among media professionals” during sessions or discussions on ethical problems (Day, 2005, p. 64).

Situation Definition

The situation definition portion of the formula is used to help “identify the ethical issue and to list or examine those facts, principles, and values that will be important to the decision-making process” (Day, 2005, p. 65). The main objective of this step is to figure out the relevant conflicting values and principles that occur in each situation. Such things as “truth telling, the right to privacy, conflict of interest, the right of the public to receive
information, fairness, justice, loyalty, media credibility, harm to others, confidentiality, and economic concerns” are defining situations that can be realized during this step (Day, 2005, p. 65).

Analysis of the Situation

After a journalist has defined the situation, the next step is to analyze the various internal and external factors that will be affected by your ethical decision. Journalists must look at how a decision will impact the following six categories of individuals and groups: their own individual conscience, objects of moral judgment (groups most likely to be harmed or affected by the decision), financial supporters, the institution or organization, professional colleagues and society as a whole. Each group must be looked at in terms of the effect the decision may have on them with firm attention to professional obligations that may exist.

In addition to analyzing the internal and external factors, Day (2005) suggests that during the analysis step a journalist needs to look towards three ethical theories to help guide a decision. The first, called the teleological theory, asks the journalist to look at a decision based upon the consequences it will have on the six groups listed above. The second, called the deontological theory, is duty-based meaning the journalist should respond to the ethical situation in a manner that respects the duties and obligations that a reporter has to share information and news with the public. The last, Aristotle’s Golden Mean theory, combines both the teleological and deontological approaches in order for a journalist to use a moderate approach during an ethical decision.

Decision or Moral Judgment
The final step of the SAD formula is to make a decision based upon the information you have gathered during this process. The journalist should be able to defend their decision and reinforce their argument with great “moral certainty” (Day, 2005, p. 67). Any course of action should be based upon an ethical decision that is made in alignment with the journalists’ moral values and objectives. In summary, working through the SAD formula during cases of ethical dilemmas can provide the journalist with a successful tool for preventing ethical dilemmas from arising in the newsroom and causing harm to the professional or the organization.

**Ethical Roadmap**

In addition to the moral choices listed previously in the SAD Formula, the following “Ethical Roadmap” explains an additional collection of theories (Christians, Fackler, Richardson, Kreshel & Woods, 2009). A journalist must always analyze the possible consequences when choosing from the following approaches and it may be possible to select certain criteria from each to make an ethical decision.

*The Middle Ground: Aristotle’s Mean and Confucius’s Golden Mean*

By taking this ethical road, the journalist has decided, “moral virtue is a middle state determined by practical wisdom” (Christians et al., 2009, p. 11). Basically this means that balance, fairness, and equal time are all recognized. For example, when faced with a decision of whether to completely ban all production of tobacco or to allow unregulated promotion, the FTC operated in a middle state by banning cigarette ads on television and placing warning labels on cigarette packaging. As a note: Aristotle explained that not every action or every emotion is appropriate for a middle state and that
it is possible to lean more towards one side. Confucius believed that the person must analyze both extremes in order to make a reasonable decision.

*The Universal Approach: Kant’s Categorical Imperative and Islam’s Divine Commands*

By taking this ethical road, the journalist has decided “what is right for one, is right for all” (Christians et al., 2009, pp. 12-13). According to Kant, if the underlying principle of your decision can be applied universally, you have made the correct choice. On one level, this means, “right is right and must be done even under the most extreme conditions” (Christians et al., 2009, p. 13). Based on Islam’s Divine Commands, making a decision while taking the universal approach requires the journalist to make sure justice, human dignity and truth remain in tact.

The universal decision must respect all parties involved and enhance the well being of everyone. For example, when choosing whether or not to publish a photo of a victim of a tragic crime, the journalist must make sure that everyone involved in the story (parents, friends and the victim) will not be harmed in any way by making such a decision.

*The Utilitarian Approach: Mill’s Principle of Utility*

With this ethical road, the journalist has made a choice based on the thought that “we are to determine what is right or wrong by considering what will yield the best consequences for the welfare of human beings” (Christians et al., 2009, pp. 15-16). What is decided is morally right and produces the “greatest balance of good over evil” (Christians et al., 2009, p. 15).
For example, when burglars broke into the Democratic Party’s National Committee offices in the Watergate Hotel in 1972, the press’s aggressive coverage did not yield a high amount of pleasure for supporters of Richard Nixon. But in the end, the overall consequences were valuable enough to outweigh good over evil. A journalist using this approach must analyze the consequences of the various options and figure out how much harm would result in the lives of everyone affected.

*The Veil of Ignorance: John Rawl*

Under this theory, the journalist “steps back from real circumstances into an original position behind a barrier where roles and social differentiations are eliminated” (Christians et al., 2009, p. 16). Race, class, gender, group interests and other real conditions are never considered and everyone is seen as “equal members of society as a whole” (Christians et al., 2009, p. 17). When making a decision behind this veil, a journalist seeks to protect the weaker party and to minimize risks.

In high-profile cases, the public’s right to know supersedes any right of privacy. For example, in the case of OJ Simpson, the extensive media coverage was justified because of the enormous amount of interest shared by the public. If the journalists involved had used the veil of ignorance, then Simpson would have been seen as a private figure (without fame and recognition) and his case would have remained only a private affair.

*Relational Ethics Judeo-Christian Persons as Ends and Noddings’ Relational Ethics*

The final road sees the journalist treating others how they would want to be treated. Routed in Christian tradition, this theory involves loving “thy neighbor as
thyself” and basically making a decision by putting yourself in the shoes of your story subject (Christians et al., 2009, p. 18). Researchers (Christians et al., 2009) refer to this as being a particular relationship between two parties. One party is the “one caring” and the other is the one “cared-for” (p. 19). The decision making process must be looked at as an interdependent relationship where both parties benefit from the outcome. Under this theory, the journalist establishes a decision that will be nurturing, caring, affectionate, empathetic and inclusive.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will explain the methods that I used to complete this thesis project. I will first discuss how I gained a better understanding about what a case study is. Then, I will display and review an article produced by a student journalist that was used as the basis for this case study. Interviews with a reporter and editor at the Daily Sundial student newspaper at California State University, Northridge (CSUN) were then conducted. The audio and video content obtained through these interviews was edited and formatted to be compatible for website usage.

A case study website has been developed to include the following: background information about the case, biographies of the key characters in the case, a detailed description of the setting, tools available to journalists when making ethical decisions, questions for students to answer regarding ethical dilemmas and a discussion forum. Finally, a detailed curriculum and step-by-step lesson plan for teaching the case has been included at the end of this thesis project.

The plan for this project was the following:

Understanding Case Studies

To gain a better understanding about case studies, I first accessed the Knight Case Study Initiative on the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism’s website on Jan. 3, 2011. The specific website I visited was https://casestudies.jrn.columbia.edu. I analyzed this website to help me discover the different elements of case studies. I listened to an
informative podcast, looked at various sections of the website, submitted an email inquiry to the creator of the initiative and then analyzed real examples of case studies.

In addition to the Knight Case Study Initiative website, I looked at two physical case study books that are used in journalism ethics courses:


“The Case Method, A New Approach” introduction podcast

To get a synopsis about case studies, I listened to an embedded podcast titled “The Case Method, A New Approach” (2009). This podcast consists of a discussion between the host Sree Sreenivasan (digital media professor and Dean of Student Affairs at Columbia), Shiella Cornell (Director of Investigative Journalism at Columbia) and Kirsten Lundberg (originator of the Knight Case Study initiative at Columbia and a case study writer at Harvard). Cornell and Lundberg were invited to be on this program to explain the origins of the case study method, the basics of case studies and the overall impact it can have on faculty and students.

In addition to journalism schools, case studies have been used to teach students of business, medicine and law. Business school case studies are very popular and have been around for decades. This interactive, discussion-based approach to learning confronts
students with real life dilemmas on leadership, management and ethics. Case studies are used as a tool to train students how to act like managers and industry leaders.

Dean of the journalism school at Columbia, Nicholas Lemann, thought that business schools helped prepare people to be better businessmen. On the other hand, journalism schools tried to only train graduates to be excellent writers and reporters. These journalism students were not given the essential tools to make high-end decisions that could someday help them to become staff managers or editors. As a result, in February 2007, Columbia University created the Knight Case Studies Initiative in order to establish a new way of thinking for the faculty in the journalism school.

Case studies consist of an abstract, background section, explanation of conflict and a final thought or question. The abstract helps to tell the instructor what the case is about, what students will get out of the case and what class it would be used in (crisis management, reporting from war zones, etc.). In the background section, biographies of participating reporters and editors are included, the setting is established and any other elements that can better help explain the case are described. A case writer is assigned to do interviews in order to gain the facts about the conflict. These interviews generate audio and video content to be used for the case study. The case writer then describes the conflict in detail so that the evidence does not tip the reader towards one answer or another. Finally, the case study ends with an open-ended question to generate discussion.

“About the Program” and “Case Collection” Website Sections

The second resource used to obtain more information was found at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism website’s “About the Program” and “Case Collection”
sections. The “About the Program” section of the website explained that case studies were uploaded online in order to share them with other institutions around the world. The case studies from the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism have been used in 65 institutions as of June 20, 2010 including: University of Texas-Austin, Arizona State University, UC Berkeley School of Journalism and New York University. Cases presented online include multimedia elements such as embedded audio, video and direct hyperlinks that help to improve the learning experience of each student.

The “Case Collection” section is where each case study can be found. The Knight Case Studies Initiative website consists of 35 total journalism cases. These 35 cases are divided into 6 different categories: Free Cases, Multimedia Cases, Video Cases, Text-Only Cases, Spanish-language Cases and Contributed Cases (submitted outside of Columbia University and adapted into their style and formatting). The Free Cases can be accessed immediately while the other five categories require a paid subscription service.

*Email inquiry with director Kirsten Lundberg*

After looking at the website, I sent an email to Kirsten Lundberg, director and creator of the Knight Case Studies Initiative, on January 15, 2011. Lundberg oversees case conception, production, sales and marketing while still producing and maintaining cases. This inquiry was submitted to Ms. Lundberg to provide more information about the conception and genesis of a case study project. I specifically asked for direction in how to begin a case study. Ms. Lundberg recommended the following steps and order as essential for successful case study writing:

(1) gather ideas for possible cases
(2) approach the news organization to seek agreement on writing a case about them

(3) send out a case writer to gather interviews with participants

(4) use all of this information to develop a thoughtful case study.

Analysis of example case studies

Four existing cases were analyzed to gain a better understanding of the integral parts of each case study on January 16, 2011. These four case studies were obtained through the Knight Case Study Initiative website. Each of these four cases was specifically chosen because they were part of the Free Cases section of the website. I was able to access these cases without requiring a paid subscription at:


A comparison matrix was developed to organize the content of these cases into specific parts (Appendix). The matrix consisted of an axis with the following sections: topics, content of title page, introduction, biographies, links, embedded content, pictures, conclusion, collected (what data was collected in terms of interviews and articles) and other notes. The other axis divided the case studies up by title: *The facebook conundrum, A life on the line, Settle or fight and The last abortion clinic*. Similarities were compiled to establish the format that each case study should follow. Every case study included: an abstract, introduction, biographies, hyperlinks, embedded content, pictures and a conclusion.
Review and Analysis of Student Journalism

The Daily Sundial is the student newspaper at CSUN. With both a print and online version, this publication produces journalism content daily. A discussion with publisher Melissa Lalum helped me to uncover an article produced by a student journalist that raises numerous ethical questions. The following article is the basis of my case study.

Retracting content in the age of digital media

The article headlined “Two CSUN students witness, stop kidnapping in residential neighborhood near CSUN” was produced on Oct. 8, 2009 by Adolfo Flores. This article explains an instance where student-athletes at CSUN witnessed and stopped a kidnapping from occurring. An ethical dilemma occurred when the student-athletes asked to be removed from the story after the article had already been produced online. In this case, the journalist had to decide how to retract the story when it had already been produced online – where content can never be completely removed.

A female CSUN student was walking back to her car parked on Rathburn Avenue after attending class one Thursday evening. However, this student was not alone on the dark street. A man dressed in all black pursued the student down the street as two CSUN water polo players looked on. After gaining ground on the student, the man revealed what appeared to be a pipe and told the victim to “be quiet, unless you want to die tonight.”

The two water polo players rushed over to the scene and asked the man and female student if everything was all right. Without any reply, the man turned around and
ran to a black SUV parked a few hundred feet down the street. One witness attempted to get the license plate number from the vehicle, according to Daily Sundial reporter Adolfo Flores, but was unsuccessful due to the dim lighting on the street. According to the article published by the Daily Sundial, the victim explained to the witnesses, “she was walking to her car and the next thing she knew, she hit the pavement.”

The witnesses took the victim to a nearby neighbor’s house. An ambulance was called and the victim was taken away in order to get treated for injuries. According to the witnesses, the neighbor explained that in 18 years of living on Rathburn Avenue, nothing like this had ever happened before.

Witnesses were able to describe the suspect as a 6-foot-1 skinny male wearing all black (including a black beanie and hooded sweatshirt), but did not have any additional information. Campus authorities explained that the incident had been confirmed, but they were unable to comment on the matter pending the on-going investigation. To date, no suspects have been taken into custody for this crime.

Flores asked the water polo players directly if their names could be used in the article. Both said “yes,” and there was no mention of confidentiality or privacy. Flores produced the article and then uploaded the content to the Daily Sundial website. Prior to the article making it onto the Daily Sundial website, Flores and editor Jonathan Pobre had to make some challenging ethical decisions.

This case clearly demonstrates a situation where two student journalists were faced with a number of difficult ethical decisions. In order to deal with these dilemmas, Flores and Pobre had to ask themselves the following questions:
1. Is it a journalists’ responsibility to erase a source’s identity from an article after permission has already been given to use the source’s name?

2. Should a journalist choose to exclude the names, take out all identifying characteristics, or completely cancel the story?

3. Which is more important, the obligation of the journalist to report the story accurately or the obligation of the journalist to minimize any possible harm as a result of releasing information?

4. What level of protection do the individuals involved in the story deserve?

5. Once information has been published online and later been retracted, what do you do if that content somehow makes it way back into the public’s view?

6. After a story has been published, what rights or obligations does a journalist have to interact with their sources?

7. What are the roles and responsibilities of the editor (specifically during ethically challenging situations)?

Interviews

In order to gather audio and video content for the websites, interviews were conducted during the end of summer and early fall 2011. The interviews were with the reporter of the article, Adolfo Flores and editor, Jonathan Pobre.

The main goals of these interviews were to: (1) gather background information about each participant; (2) distinguish what ethical dilemmas arose during and after reporting the story; (3) what influenced their decision making process; (4) discover any ethical training each participant may or may not have had and (5) better understand each
person’s motivations for acting as they did. These five points were used to keep the interviews focused. The content obtained from these interviews has been included on the website.

Interviews were shot with a Canon EOS 7D Digital SLR camera in order to produce high definition video. The interviewee was framed in the shot so that the background would contain no distractions. Only the interviewee was present in the shot. Video and audio content obtained from these interviews was edited, mixed and finalized using Final Cut Pro 7 on a Macbook Pro computer during the end of fall 2011. I am well versed in using Final Cut Pro 7 as a result of numerous seminars required by my current employer.

Development of Case Study Websites

During the summer of 2011 and continuing through fall and winter, the case study was developed and hosted at [www.CSUNCASESTUDY.com](http://www.CSUNCASESTUDY.com).

The website has been divided into two different sites: (1) CSUN Case Study Connection and (2) Educator’s Resource. The first includes the following sections: abstract, introduction, decision making tools, biographies, setting description, Daily Sundial facts, ethical dilemmas regarding source confidentiality, ethical dilemmas regarding digital journalism, additional ethical challenges, a closing and a place where students can download the website in PDF format. The second site includes the following sections: introduction, general website objectives, successful use (system requirements), detailed lesson plan, text and web resources, a discussion forum and a place where educators can download the website in PDF format.
Additional embedded content has been added throughout both websites. This content consists of direct hyperlinks to related sources, such as maps of important locations mentioned in the case study, external website biographies of staff members and specific documents that will help the reader obtain a better understanding of the case. Embedded video and audio clips have been included to enrich the teaching process. These video clips range anywhere from twenty seconds to six minutes. The majority of video interviews are between one and two minutes to help keep the students engaged with the website. Images of the participants, settings and other important visuals have been added into various sections of the case to help improve the aesthetics of the website, as well as to help students gain a better understanding of the case.

An introduction summarizes the main topics and points of each section of the website. Open-ended questions have been used to promote thoughtful discussion. The reader has been asked to decide what they would have done in this situation if they were the reporter or editor. Responses to these questions should be answered in the discussion forum portion of the website which will serve two purposes: (1) as a resource for student journalists to use when faced with ethically challenging situations and (2) as a resource for professional journalists to look at when they are faced with difficult decisions.

In addition to this content, these case studies have added interactive features. Interactive polls give readers the opportunity to see how the majority of other students would have responded to the ethical dilemmas. These also help students to stay engaged with the website. An integrated discussion forum will give students the ability to interact with classmates and invited professional journalists to discuss this case study or other ethical dilemmas that occur in journalism. The goal for this forum is to produce a
resource for student journalists to have even when they no longer have classmates and colleagues to help them with ethically challenging situations. Each case study is available in this online format along with a .PDF that can be downloaded and used as an alternative method for teaching.

Curriculum and lesson plan development

Using the training I obtained during my undergraduate studies in education, I have developed a curriculum outline and detailed lesson plan. This curriculum outline will provide educators with the necessary information to successfully teach these case studies at the university level. The lesson plan details the main objective of the case, materials needed, the ethical dilemmas raised, possible discussion questions, links to the websites, suggested supplemental readings and other associated assignments that can be used for homework or in-class group exercises. The lesson plan serves as a guideline that will give any educator all of the tools needed to successfully teach a case study. A brief summary of the goals and objectives of this teaching method have also been included.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter includes the completed case study websites. The website can be accessed at www.CSUNCASESTUDY.com. The following content has been converted into an image file for the purpose of including it into this thesis project. The website should be viewed at the above address to experience the case study in the correct manner. Formatting of images, text, backgrounds, and other content will not be accurately portrayed in the following pages. In addition, interactive features such as video/audio interviews, polls, etc. are not optimized for inclusion in the physical form of this thesis.
Two CSUN students witness, stop kidnapping in residential neighborhood near CSUN

This case examines the difficult task of dealing with source confidentiality in stories that are published online. In October 2009, the Daily Sundial, the campus newspaper located at California State University, Northridge, ran a story about two students from the school who witnessed an attempted kidnapping. After the story was published, the names of the witnesses were asked to be removed. This case raises for discussion how to deal with source confidentiality in a world where content published online can never be completely removed.

Topics: source confidentiality, editorial management, digital media, ethics, student journalism

VIEW CASE
WHAT:
Two students at CSUN witnessed an attempted kidnapping in a neighborhood just a few blocks south of the campus. Both students, who were players on the women's water polo team at CSUN, were contacted by the Daily Sundial to comment on the story. Both students gave full permission and consent to use their names in the article. After the article had been published online, the head coach of the water polo team, Marcelo Leonard, asked that their names and any distinguishing characteristics be left out of the story — to protect the players from the kidnapper who was never brought into custody.

WHO:
Adrielle Flores, former reporter and city editor for the Daily Sundial, was asked to cover this story. Along with Flores, executive editor Jonathan Pobre assisted with this article. According to Flores, "This was breaking news. We got a call from a neighbor who said that these girls chased after him and did this amazing thing. We spent the whole day tracking down the players and it was all very exciting." Flores completed the story on Friday and uploaded the article to the Daily Sundial website. Pobre received a call almost immediately from the two players stating that their coach did not want names or any identifying characteristics to be used that could help the kidnapper track them down. Both Flores and Pobre agreed to change the online version and also create a print version that would respect the coach's wishes for the print edition on Monday.

WHY:
Flores asked the water polo players directly if their names could be used in the article. Both responded "yes" and there was no mention of confidentiality or privacy. Prior to the article making its way to the Daily Sundial website, Flores and Pobre had to make some challenging ethical decisions. After the article had been published, they were challenged with additional dilemmas that questioned the experience and training of the young student journalists.

HOW:
In order to deal with these dilemmas, Flores and Pobre had to ask themselves the following questions:
• is it a journalist's responsibility to erase a source's identity from an article after permission has already been given to use the source's name?
• Should a journalist choose to exclude the names, take out all identifying characteristics, or completely cancel the story?
• Which is more important, the obligation of the journalist to report the story accurately or the obligation of the journalist to minimize any possible harm as a result of releasing information?
• What level of protection do the individuals involved in the story deserve?
• Once information has been published online and later been retracted, what do you do if that content somehow makes its way back into the public's view?
• After a story has been published, what rights or obligations does a journalist have to interact with their readers?
• What are the roles and responsibilities of the editor (specifically during ethically challenging situations)?

Click on the arrow below to continue
A female CSUN student was walking back to her car parked on Baltimore Avenue after attending class on a Thursday evening. However, this student was not alone on the dark street. A man dressed in all black pursued the student down the street as two CSUN water polo players looked on. After gaining ground on the student, the man revealed what appeared to be a pipe and told the victim to “be quiet, unless you want to die tonight.”

The two water polo players, also students at CSUN, rushed over to the scene and asked the man and female student if everything was alright. Without any reply, the man turned around and ran to a black SUV parked a few hundred feet down the street. One witness attempted to get the license plate number from the vehicle, according to Daily Sundial reporter Adolfo Flores, but was unsuccessful due to the fog conditions on the street.

According to the article published by the Daily Sundial, the victim explained to the witnesses that “she was walking to her car and the next thing she knew, she felt the pavement.”

The witnesses took the victim to a nearby neighbors house. An ambulance was called and the victim was taken away in order to get treated for injuries. According to the witnesses, the neighbor explained that in all 18 years of living on Baltimore Avenue, nothing like this had ever happened before.

Witnesses were able to describe the suspect as a short, skinny male wearing all black (including a black beanie and hooded sweatshirt), but did not have any additional information. Campus authorities explained that the incident had been confirmed, but they were unable to comment on the matter pending the ongoing investigation. To date, no suspects have been taken into custody for this crime.
ADOLFO FLORES
DAILY SUNRISE - STAFF REPORTER

At the time that this article was published, Flores was a reporter and city editor for California State University Northridge's campus publication, the English-language student newspaper. Adolfo Flores is currently the city hall reporter for the News covering Pasadena, South Pasadena and San Marino. He previously worked for the Student Daily News and has been a reporter and online editor of El Nuevo Sol.

He received his bachelor's degree in journalism at California State University Northridge. Flores is an alumnus of Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity and former president of the student chapter of COLMA: Latino Journalists of California.

For El Nuevo Sol, Flores worked on a variety of topics affecting the Spanish-speaking community, such as AIDS in the Latino community, transnational families and how the recession affected Latinos.

Flores was an intern covering the Latina community at M.E. Estrella, the former Spanish-language weekly of the Ventura County Star. He spent the fall of 2007 covering politics in Washington, D.C., for National Life Weekly Report. During his time at El Nuevo Sol, Flores was in charge of covering the story at the Daily Sundial at the time this article was published.

JONATHAN POIBRE
DAILY SUNRISE - EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Jonathan Pobre started his career at the Daily Sundial as photo editor. After a year, he moved on to executive editor while taking on additional editorial responsibilities. Immediately after his run at the student newspaper, Pobre worked with the Los Angeles Daily News as a photography intern in the summer of 2009.

Pobre received his bachelor's degree in journalism at California State University Northridge. He is currently employed at the Santa Clarita Valley Signal, where he works as a staff photographer.

Pobre was the active executive editor at the Daily Sundial at the time that this article was published.

MARCELO LEONARDI
COLLEGE WOMEN'S WATER POLO - HEAD COACH
Manolo Leonard is the current head coach of the California State University. Leonard has completed three total seasons with the team while overseeing the development of 10 All-Academic players. During the 2011 season, the CSUN Matadors finished the year ranked 15th in the nation.

Prior to serving as head coach, Leonard contributed as assistant coach to the Matadors from September 2007 to October 2009. Leonard’s accomplishments include being honored as Coastal California Water Polo’s National Youth Zone Coach, a top 40 women’s Speedo Head Coach for Team Grifflin in 2004 and founder, director and coach for the El Rancho Water Polo Club. In addition, Leonard has been selected as the San Gabriel Valley Women’s All-Star water polo coach three times.

As a graduate of Whittier College, Leonard earned a bachelor’s degree in Biology and Spanish in 1998 and in 2001, a master’s degree in Education. Leonard was the active head coach of the CSUN women’s water polo team at the time of this article’s publication.

**ANONYMOUS STUDENT ATHLETES**

**CSUN WOMEN’S WATER POLO**

The names and identifiable qualities of the student athletes involved in this story have been left out in order to honor the request given by head coach Leonard. Only basic contextual information is available.

The two student athletes involved in this story were active players on the 2009 CSUN Matadors Water Polo team. The age range of players during this season ranged from 18-23. This roster consisted of 23 total players.

CSUN fields 18 sports at the NCAA Division I level. The university has won 30 NCAA national titles at the Division II level. CSUN fields teams in basketball, cross country, golf, soccer, track and field, volleyball, softball, baseball, tennis and water polo.

Matador Water Polo typically scouts players from high schools throughout California. Murrieta Valley, Irvine, La Canada, Thousand Oaks and China all had representation players during his season. Occasionally, a very small percentage of the team will originate from a location outside of California.

Two female student athletes from this women’s water polo team witnessed the attempted kidnapping in October 2009 which then became the basis for this article.
RATHBURN AVENUE - NORTHRIDGE, CA

Rathburn Avenue is one of many streets in Northridge, California. Northridge is located in Southern California's San Fernando Valley approximately 20 miles north of downtown Los Angeles. The population of Northridge, just under 60,000, ranges demographically with people from many different ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds. With a median household income of $69,000, the Northridge community has neither the highest nor lowest income earnings when compared to the surrounding areas (Van Nuys - $61,000, Encino - $79,000, Chatsworth - $66,000 and Granada Hills - $93,000).

The attempted kidnapping occurred halfway down Rathburn Avenue, directly adjacent to the CSUN campus. The street ends with a cul-de-sac and is hidden among the shadows of the many trees lining the street. Road noise can be heard at the busy intersection of Northhall St and Lindsey Ave, located just beyond Rathburn.

During the daytime, Rathburn has the same look as many other valley streets. Cars are typically parked both in the driveway and on the street, houses share similar sizes and aesthetics, and sidewalks are lined with hedges and leaves from the trees above. As dusk settles, Rathburn Avenue is almost unrecognizable as only a few tall street and porch lights provide the neighborhood with a dim glow.
The Daily Sundial is the student newspaper at California State University Northridge (CSUN). CSUN was originally intended to be a satellite campus for Los Angeles State College but separated from the school and became San Fernando Valley State College in 1958. The college name was changed to California State University Northridge in 1972. The Daily Sundial produces journalism both in print and online.

The Daily Sundial newspaper roots within the Mike Curb College of Arts, Media and Communication while calling Nazarathy Hall home on the CSUN campus. The students work in a 24/7 online environment during academic sessions, which includes fall, spring, and summer session, which is online only. The paper publishes a print edition Monday through Thursday during the fall and spring semesters. With a circulation of 6,000 readers, the publication reaches many students, faculty, staff and alumni ranging in age, ethnicity and social class. Last year, the website had more than 1 million page views and we were a finalist for the Associated Collegiate Press Online Prism award.

About 25-30 students enroll in the production course (J397K) each semester. In addition, many other students (Journalism majors or not) can contribute to the Sundial. There are 15-20 editors and senior staff members each semester. A publisher, also the faculty advisor to the Daily Sundial, oversees the operations (students, advertising, marketing and production departments). 10-15 students also work in these operations every semester.

Numerous contributors, both journalism majors and not (more than 100 students), participate in the Sundial each semester.

In 2011, the following sections are maintained at the Daily Sundial: Live News, Features, Sports, Opinions and Arts & Life. Along with these sections, the online version of the Daily Sundial also features content dedicated to local news. Videos and Photos that utilize many types of multimedia and data-visualization.

The Daily Sundial, like most professional publications, allows for commenting from users on the online version of the newspaper. A section of the Daily Sundial website is dedicated to explaining how the publication "welcomes and encourages readers to comment." Furthermore, the Daily Sundial clarifies its rights to delete any comments that are threatening, violent, derogatory, fraudulent or contains any other type of defamatory statement.

Social media is used by the Daily Sundial staff to promote, share and create an interactive environment with current news stories. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and the Daily Sundial have been adopted by the daily composition of users stories. Links from these social media platforms are embedded within articles and can be found all around the Daily Sundial website.
DECISION MAKING TOOLS

Journalists have resources available to help guide them through making difficult decisions. The following are some basic summaries of some of the decision making tools available to both professional and student journalists. Use these tools, not only to help you answer the questions that follow, but to help you - the journalist - whenever making difficult decisions.

1. Society of Professional Journalists - Code of Ethics

   - The Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) is "dedicated to the perpetuation of a free press as the cornerstone of our nation and our liberty." The society was founded in 1908 and currently has over 10,000 members nationwide. The goal of the Society of Professional Journalists is to "ensure that its concept of self-government enshrined by the United States Constitution remains a reality into future centuries, the American people must be well-informed in order to make decisions regarding their lives and their local and national communities."

   - The SPJ has established a code of ethics that has been adopted throughout professional journalism as an acceptable resource for dealing with ethically challenging situations.

   - These guidelines are found within the SPJ Code of Ethics:
     SEEK TRUTH AND REPORT IT
     MINIMIZE HARM
     ACT INDEPENDENTLY
     BE ACCOUNTABLE

   - Click here to read the full SPJ Code of Ethics.

2. Employer Handbook

   - Journalists should turn to the handbook provided to them by their employer, institution or organization. Ethic codes can vary depending upon the beliefs and values of an organization. It is always important to check the handbook in order to protect not only your organization, but yourself.

   - The Daily Sandlot provides all student journalists, editors and other staff members with direct access to the handbook. Within this handbook can be found the SPJ Code of Ethics, General Newsroom Policies and specific rules regarding Online Ethics.

   - These guidelines are found within the Online Ethics portion of the handbook:
     NO PLAGIARISM
     DISCLOSE, DISCLOSE, DISCLOSE
     NO GIFTS OR MONEY FOR COVERAGE
     CHECK IT OUT, THEN TELL THE TRUTH
     BE HONEST
     SOCIAL MEDIA, COMMENTING POLICY

   - Click here to download the Daily Sandlot handbook.

3. Choose An Ethical Road
- There are many different theories that have been researched and analyzed in journalism schools nationwide. A journalist must decide which “road” to travel down when making difficult decisions. The following “Ethical Roadmap” explains one collection of theories (as used in Media Ethics: cases and moral reasoning). A journalist must always analyze the possible consequences when choosing from the following approaches and it may be possible to select certain criteria from each to make an ethical decision.

Road #1 - The Middle Ground:
Aristotle’s Mean and Confucius’ Golden Mean

By taking ethical road, the journalist has decided that “neutral value is a middle state determined by practical wisdom.” Basically, this means that balance, fairness, and equal time are all recognized. For example, in wrestling with a decision to either completely ban the production or tobacco or to allow unregulated promotion, the FTC favored a middle-state by banning cigarettes on an television and placing warning labels on cigarette packages. As a result, Aristotle explained that not every action or every emotion is appropriate for a middle state and that it is possible to lean more towards one side. Confucius believed that the person must analyze both extremes in order to make a reasonable decision.

Road #2 - The Universal Approach:
Kant’s Categorical Imperative and Islam’s Divine Commands

By taking ethical road, the journalist has decided that “what is right for me, is right for all.” According to Kant, if the underlying principle of your decision can be applied universally, you have made the correct choice. On one level, this means that “right is right and must be done even under the most extreme conditions.” Based on Islam’s Divine Commands, making a decision while taking the universal approach requires the journalist to make sure justice, human dignity and truth remain in tact. The universal decision must respect all parties involved and enhance the well-being of everyone. For example, when choosing whether or not to publish a photo of a victim of a tragic crime, the journalist must make sure that everyone involved in the story (parents, friends and the victims) will not be harmed in any way by making such a decision.

Road #3 - The Utilitarian Approach:
Mill’s Principle of Utility

With the ethical road, the journalist has made a decision based on the thought that “we are to determine what is right or wrong by considering what will yield the best consequences for the welfare of human beings.” “What is decided is morally right and produces the greatest balance of good over evil.” For example, when burglars broke into the Democratic Party’s national committee offices in the Watergate Hotel in 1972, the press’s aggressive coverage did not yield a high amount of pleasure for supporters of Richard Nixon. But in the end, the overall consequences were valuable enough to outweigh good over evil. A journal using this approach must analyze the consequences of the various options and figure out how much harm would result in the lives of everyone affected.

Road #4 - The Veil of Ignorance:
By John Rawls

Under this theory, the journalist “steps back from real circumstances into an original position behind a barrier, where roles and social differentiations are eliminated.” Race, class, gender, group interests and other real conditions are never considered and everyone is seen as “equal members of society as a whole.” Rawls explains that when making a decision behind this veil, a journalist seeks to protect the weaker party and to minimize risks. In high-profile cases, the public’s right to know supersedes any right of privacy. For example, in the case of OJ Simpson, the extensive media coverage was justified because of the enormous amount of interest shared by the public. If the journalists involved had used the veil of ignorance, then Mr. Simpson would have been seen as a private figure (without fame and recognition) and his case would have remained only a private affair.
Road 5: Relational Ethics

Judeo-Christian Persians as Ends and Needings: Relational Ethics

The final road sees the journalist treating others as how they would want to be treated. Rooted in Christian tradition, this theory involves loving "thy neighbor as thyself" and basically making a decision by putting yourself in the shoes of your story subject. Needings refers to this as being a particular relationship between two parties. One party is the "one caring" and the other is the one "care'd for." The decision making process must be looked at as an interdependent relationship where both parties benefit from the outcome. Under this theory, the journalist establishes a decision that will be nurturing, caring, affectionate, empathetic and inclusive.

4. The SAD Formula

The SAD Formula is a formula and model of moral reasoning that can be used by journalists to interpret ethical decisions. The SAD formula stands for: Situation definition, Analysis of the situation and Decision on moral judgment. Along with being a way to handle ethically questionable situations, the SAD formula can also be a valuable tool in creating a discourse among media professionals during sessions or discussions on ethical problems (Dey, 2005).

Situation Definition

The situation definition portion of the formula is used to help "identify the ethical issue and to list or examine those facts, principles, and values that will be important to the decision-making process". The main objective of this step is to figure out the relevant conflicting values and principles that occur in such a situation. Such things as "truth telling, the right to privacy, conflict of interest, the right of a public to receive information, fairness, justice, loyalty, media credibility, harm to others, confidentiality, and economic concerns" are defining situations that can be realized during this step.

Analysis of the Situation

After a journalist has defined the situation, the next step is to analyze the various internal and external factors that will be affected by your ethical decision. Journalists must look at how a decision will impact the following six categories of individuals and groups: their own individual conscience, objects of moral judgment (groups most likely to be formed or affected by the decision), financial resources, the institution or organization, professional colleagues and society at large. Each group must be looked at in terms of how the affect the decision may have on them with firm attention to professional obligations that may exist.

In addition to analyzing the internal and external factors, Dey (2005) suggests that during the analysis step a journalist needs to think towards three ethical theories to help guide a decision. The first, called the teleological theory, asks the journalist to look at a decision based on the consequences it will have on the six groups listed above. The second, called the deontological theory, is duty-based meaning the journalist should respond to the ethical situation in a manner that respects the duties and obligations that a reporter has to share information and news with the public. The last, Aristotle's Golden Mean theory combines both the teleological and deontological approaches in order for a journalist to use a moderate approach during an ethical decision.

Decision or Moral Judgment

The final step of the SAD formula is to make a decision based upon the information you have gathered during this process. This journalist should be able to defend their decision and reinforce their argument with great "moral certainty." Any course of action should be based upon an ethical decision that is made in alignment with the journalist's moral values and objectives. In summary, working through the SAD formula during cases of ethical dilemmas can provide the journalist with a successful tool for preventing ethical dilemmas from arising in the newsroom and causing harm to the professional or the organization.

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SOURCE CONFIDENTIALITY

When looking at this story from the perspective of the reader, it’s hard to imagine the number of decisions that had to be made by both reporter and editor. One might guess that they simply heard about an interesting story, tracked down some sources, gathered the facts, and then published the story online.

Flores and Peire, like many other journalists who interact with sources just like this on a daily basis, understood that source confidentiality is not as simple as it may seem. According to Flores, “From the standpoint of truth telling, the stakes are ethically high when journalists evaluate whether to use anonymous quotes.” The credibility of the journalist, and the story, can often hinge on how sources are used in anonymous ways.

The following challenges regarding source confidentiality were presented to these student journalists:

- Is it a journalist’s responsibility to erase a source identity from an article after permission has already been given to use the source’s name?
- Should a journalist choose to exclude the names, take out all identifying characteristics, or completely cancel the story?
- Which is more important, the obligation of the journalist to accurately tell the story well, or the obligation of the journalist to minimize any possible harm as a result of releasing information?
Above: Flores discusses his interaction with the source

Above: Pabre discusses the responsibilities of reporting.

SOURCE CONFIDENTIALITY

IDENTIFYING SOURCES

Journalists must assess the possible consequences that can occur when revealing information about sources. Every journalist should be aware of the resources available to help guide them through ethically challenging situations.

In the “Students Witness, Step Kidnapping...” case, permission had been given to allow the reporter to use the names of the witnesses. Both witnesses gave verbal approval that their names could be used. It was not until the article had been published online that the water polo coach had expressed concern regarding the possible identification of his players.

Adolfo Flores and editor, Jonathan Pabre, decided to remove the names from the article without any argument with the sources or their coach. In this instance, they believed that it was in the best interest of the witnesses, their team, the university and the Daily Sundial organization to leave out the names.

The two student journalists were not aware of it, but they chose to use the principles of utility (Utilitarian Approach) while deciding that the best decision was that which was good for everyone involved.

Which “Ethical Road” would you have taken?

- Road #1 - The Middle Ground
- Road #2 - The Universal Approach
Decision #1: Is it a journalist’s responsibility to reveal a source’s identity in an article after permission has already been given?

THINK ABOUT IT...

NO.

According to the Society of Professional Journalists’ Code, journalists should identify sources wherever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources’ reliability. Glenn F. Britt, national correspondent for the Los Angeles Times says, “You leave people kind of blind in terms of judging the veracity of what you’re saying.”

Above: Adolfo Flores explains his thoughts on using anonymous sources.

YES.

On the other hand, under a different section of the SEJ code, journalists should recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. In addition, journalists should show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.”
SOURCE CONFIDENTIALITY

AFTER THE FACT

The SPJ code explains that journalists are accountable not only to their readers, listeners and viewers but also to each other. They must admit mistakes and correct them promptly. While in this case, the reporter and editor were clearly given permission to originally use the names of their sources, the SPJ code states that the two journalists are accountable for what consequences may occur.

Adelle Flores had finished writing his article and decided that he would upload it directly to the Daily Sundial website prior to handing it to the editor. After the article was published online, Adelle and Jon both received phone calls asking that the names be excluded from the story. After agreeing to remove the names from the article, the two had to figure out how to deal with the fact that once something is put online, it can never be completely removed.

Decision #2: Should a journalist choose to exclude the names, take out all identifying characteristics, or completely cancel the story?

THINK ABOUT IT

ONLY EXCLUDE THE NAMES

One option is to simply remove the names of the water polo players. By including identifying characteristics, such as their occupation (student athletes on the women’s water polo team), they are still seen as credible information sources. Along with allowing readers to hear and understand the subjects of a story, quoting helps to establish the credibility of the reporting.

and understand the subjects of a story, quoting helps to establish the credibility of the reporting.

EXCLUDE ANY IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Another option is to completely strip the story of any characteristic that could be used to identify the sources. The water polo coach feared that the suspect could read the article and track down the two players in order to retaliate for naming who he was in the news. But, by removing all distinguishing characteristics, the story could lose credibility. Readers may question the use of sources that are unwilling to present themselves in an identifiable manner.

CANCEL THE STORY

A third option is to remove the story from the Daily Sundial altogether. According to the SPJ code, journalists should minimize harm. While the story may have already been hyperlinked and exist online forever, getting rid of the story completely would reduce the amount of attention brought towards the subject. As a result, this would decrease the chances of someone “stumbling” upon an older version of the article online that mentioned the names of the sources which could cause harm to the witnesses.

Above: Editor Jonathon Pelle discusses source confidentiality

NEXT
SOURCE CONFIDENTIALITY

WHERE THE OBLIGATION LIES

As with any good news story, attention to accuracy is important. The story must reflect reliable and accurate facts in order for the best information to be shared with the public. In the case of "Students Witness Spy Kidnapping...", the request of the water polo coach to remove the names of the sources was quite a problem. The journalist has to decide if letting out information reduces the accuracy of a story and whether or not this is more important than having an obligation to minimizing any possible harm to anyone involved.

Decision #3: Which is more important, the obligation of the journalist to accurately tell the story well, or the obligation of the journalist to minimize any possible harm as a result of releasing information?

THINK ABOUT IT...

OBLIGATION TO ACCURACY:
According to EJIC code, journalists should be honest, fair, and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information. Journalists should test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. They should identify sources whenever feasible because the public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources’ reliability.

OBLIGATION TO MINIMIZING HARM:
According to EJIC code, journalists should recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm. Pursuit of the news is not a license for vengeance. In addition, journalists should recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Most importantly, only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone’s privacy.

Above: reporter Adalfo Flores explains his decision
SOURCE CONFIDENTIALITY

PRIVACY PROTECTION

While the water polo coach requested that his players be protected by keeping their names removed from the story, Flores had to decide whether or not they deserved this privacy. By taking a look at how some professional publications deal with issues of privacy, we can better assess the situation.

Decision B4: What level of protection do the individuals involved in the story deserve?

THINK ABOUT IT.

Above: Flores discusses protecting sources responsibly

The following ethics code excerpts are excerpts taken from Journalism Ethics: a handbook of professionals directed for news workers.

SAND JOS MERCURY NEWS:

In cases where the subject can be put into physical danger by publication of their names and addresses, information may be left out but it must be approved by the Executive Editor or Managing Editor.

THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT:

Generally they try to name everyone involved in a crime serious enough to warrant a story. Names of victims or witnesses may be withheld if there’s a legitimate concern for their safety. Decisions to publish or withhold a name should be approved by a deputy managing editor.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS:

They do not generally identify those who say they have been sexually assaulted or pre-teenage children who are accused of crimes or who are witnesses to them, except in unusual circumstances. Senior editors/managers must be consulted about exceptions.

THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER:

Private citizens who have not sought public notice are frequently surprised, and sometimes upset, when they are approached by reporters or find themselves written about. This is especially true in tragic situations. Staff members should approach stories with both a desire to inform the public and compassion for the individuals involved. When it is decided that a person in a news story should be named, such as a rape victim or a witness in possible danger, thought should be given to other information, such as home address, place of work or school attended, which might tend to identify the person.
DIGITAL JOURNALISM

Journalism, traditionally found only in print, has now moved into the online/digital world. Any person, place, event or happening mentioned in an article online is given a digital imprint. Search technology, such as that used by Google, makes it possible to search for content at an incredible rate of speed. The digital revolution has also leveled the playing field making it possible for anyone to share information through the use of social media.

Flores and Pucino were faced with many challenges that in the past, were nonexistent. Technology and the internet have helped journalism in some ways such as increasing ease of gathering of content with portable equipment gathering information and finding sources. Editors can be made without having to retype the whole story - a challenge writers and journalists used to have to face with typewriters. But there are also great disadvantages. The following challenges face journalists in the age of digital journalism:

1. Once information has been published online and later been retracted, what do you do if that content somehow makes its way back into the public’s view?

2. After a story has been published, what rights or obligations does a journalist have to interact with their reader?

3. The use of user-generated content has become more and more popular in professional journalism. How does a journalist decide when user-generated content is eligible to include in a story?

Additional Challenges

What type of response can the journalist, who wrote the article, write back to a reader that has made derogatory remarks using social media?

Above: Flores discusses the digital vs. print editorial processes

NEXT
DIGITAL JOURNALISM
SEARCHING FOR THE FACTS

The digitization of journalism creates a problem when certain details of stories are asked to be deleted (having been retracted or corrected) but can be still found in internet caches with the simple click of a button.

While the ease of sharing information can benefit society, it has become increasingly difficult for journalists to deal with the fact that once something is put online, you never completely erase it.

In this case, Flores and Pobere were faced with retracting the names of their sources after the content had already gone “live” online. The version online was changed and the names were left out once the retraction was made. However, it is impossible for someone to use a search engine, like Google, or a tool like the Wayback Machine to hunt through the cache in order to find the names of the two water polo players.

**Decision #1:** Once information has been published online and later been retracted, what do you do if that content somehow makes its way back into the public’s view?

**THINK ABOUT IT**

Adopted in 2000, the Radio Television Digital News Association code of ethics states:

- Professional electronic journalists should recognize that their first obligation is to the public.
- Professional electronic journalists should pursue the truth aggressively and present the news accurately.
- Professional electronic journalists should present the news fairly and impartially, placing primary value on significance and relevance.
- Professional electronic journalists should present the news with integrity and decency, avoiding real or perceived conflicts of interest, and respect the dignity and intelligence of the audience as well as the subjects of news

What do you think is the MOST important?

- Journalists should recognize that their first obligation is to the public.
- Journalists should pursue truth aggressively and present the news accurately.
- Journalists should present the news fairly and impartially.
- Journalists should present the news with integrity and decency.

Vote

View Results  Share This Publicly.com
Above: Flores explains how to maintain credibility.

DIGITAL JOURNALISM

AUDIENCE COMMENTARY

Content can be "liked" or given approval by audiences which can give the story added credibility. On the other hand, articles and journalists that solicited comments from the audience to be displayed can suffer serious consequences. With online media, the journalists and editors don’t always control the discourse that occurs after the story has been published. The ability for users to voice their opinions right alongside a professional journalist takes away from a great power that the institution of journalism has always had being the primary voice of the people.

Readers now perform a watchdog role over the media. Audiences can double check the facts and call out any journalist who has made an error. In addition, when a reader feels passionately about a story, they can ignite a heated debate that can sometimes take away from the facts in the story.

The commentary in this case remained civil while readers called the writer “paci players” and “flamethrower”. One reader said, “they are just like Superman - only Apollo Flores at the Daily Sundial knows the truth.”

Decision #2: After a story has been published, what rights or obligations does a journalist have to interact with their readers?

THINK ABOUT IT...
Daily Sandel Handbook - Online Commenting Policy

The following is taken directly from the Daily Sandel handbook in regards to their social media/commenting policy:

"Also with the Internet there is the opportunity to interact with the readers of our articles through comments. Many people will not agree with what is written in our articles, or will post comments intended to elicit a response.

It is not your duty to respond to comments on the Daily Sandel website. Adding additional information or clarification is acceptable with an editor’s approval.

However, initiating or responding to arguments as part of the Daily Sandel staff is unacceptable and you could be subject to reprimand and/or dismissal for such actions."

Above: How the L.A. Times deals with anonymous user commenting

Above: Reme discusses removing abusive or inappropriate comments
DIGITAL JOURNALISM

USER GENERATED CONTENT

Technology has caused for a new media journalist to emerge. Instantaneous video content and the simplicity of uploading content have created citizen-journalists, who are less costly than professionals and more likely to capture breaking news stories. As a result, investigative journalism can now be performed by any everyday citizen who possesses a phone, digital camera or any other portable recording device. This advancement in technology has both positive and negative effects on journalism.

As a benefit, active citizens who capture breaking news on their portable devices can now gather content that was once unavailable. For example, the 2007汶川 earthquakes that occurred at Virginia Tech show how technology helped to obtain content that would normally not have been seen.

This story was one of the first instances where audiences turned to the Internet instead of traditional media in order to find out more information about a major event. Audiences were encouraged to participate in sharing videos, images and other content with the world. Video footage shot by a Virginia Tech student that showed police surrounding the campus as the shooting was happening became one of the most important pieces of content shared during this coverage.

While user-generated content has had positive effects on journalism, it can also cause for some challenging scenarios.

Consider this HYPOTHETICAL situation. After this story has been published, a different newspaper organization obtains video footage of a man, clearly identifiable, facing a black SUV on a city’s street. The anonymous citizen who provided the content claims that they served as an additional witness to the attempted kidnapping. The publication decides to include this video with the online article. After weeks of running the story, the video is found to be a fake while the creator admits that they were just trying to generate more hits for their YouTube channel.

Decision #3: HYPOTHETICAL: The use of user-generated content has become more and more popular in professional journalism. How does a journalist decide when user-generated content is worth to include in a story?

THINK ABOUT IT...

Prior to using any content obtained from sources outside the newsroom, the following ACCURACY CHECKLIST should be used. The full list can be found in the Association of American Editors. Checkboxes are professional conduct for news media:

- Have you attributed or documented all sources?
- Have you obtained an on-the-record signature or formal statement from the source?
- Have you verified the statements or information obtained from the source?
- Have you double-checked all facts?
- Can you provide the properly spelled name and accurate telephone number of every source cited?
- Are you highly confident that all the factual statements in your story reflect the truth?
- Are you prepared to defend publicly your fact-checking and whatever other measures were taken to verify your story?
- Are the quotes in your story presented fairly, and in context? Are you quoting anonymous sources? Why are you using those sources?
- Are you prepared to defend publicly the use of those sources?
- Are you using any material, documents or pictures provided by anonymous sources? Why? What is your level of confidence about the validity of the material? Are you prepared to defend publicly the use of that material?
- Have you described people, minority groups, races, cultures, nations or segments of society - e.g., businespeople, combat veterans, cheerleaders - using stereotypical adjectives? Are such descriptions accurate and meaningful in the context presented?
- Have you used potentially objectionable language or pictures in your story? Is there a compelling reason for using such information? Would the story be less accurate if that language or picture was eliminated?
- Do your headlines or broadcast promos or teases accurately present the facts and content of the story to which they are referring?

- Have you used potentially objectionable language or pictures in your story? Is there a compelling reason for using such information? Would the story be less accurate if that language or picture was eliminated?
- Do your headlines or broadcast promos or teases accurately present the facts and content of the story to which they are referring?

Above: Flows on using user-generated content
DIGITAL JOURNALISM

SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTION

Social media sites have created a new relationship between journalist and reader. Social media offers a low-cost way for organizations to develop better relationships with the public. The interaction that occurs through social media also plays a significant role in the traditional mainstream media. Finally, social media sites create a new, more transparent relationship between journalist and reader.

Even though social media platforms have become popular tools for journalists, there are issues with this integration. Facebook, Twitter and the like are not completely trusted. Readers find that mainstream media are still more accurate, credible and trusted than social media. Most readers also feel as though they are uncertain whether or not social media sites advocate a transparent and ethical culture. It becomes difficult to understand the true value of getting news from such an unreliable source.

An increased blurring of the line between professional journalists and audience has occurred with the emergence of social media platforms like Twitter. In the past, journalists were given the title of being the sole factfinders. Citizens are now able to share content with a wide audience just as easily as journalists, raising questions about who actually are reporters.

Many journalists use social media as a way to interact with readers in order to respond to comments or statements made about their own articles.

Above: Flores discusses the advantages of Twitter and other social media

Decisions #4: HYPOTHETICAL - On Twitter, a reader has made the comment "whoever wrote this in a list" and "everything in the last paragraph is untrue" with a direct hyperlink to the original article. What type of response can the journalist, who wrote the article, write back to the reader?

THINK ABOUT IT...

As a staff member how you act and how you present yourself reflects on the Daily Sandia.

This includes how you act online and with social media. Photos, videos, comments and web activity are viewable by anyone on your public social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.).

Your activity on social media sites should represent both you and the Daily Sandia in a professional manner.

This includes, but is not limited to photos involving illegal activity, racist or inflammatory comments or posts, or any irresponsible and unethical behavior.
ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES

This case study deals with more than source confidentiality and digital journalism. There were additional challenges that Adolfo Flores, Jonathan Pobre, and the Daily Sundial staff faced.

Editors play a significant role in deciding what finalized content will be included in a published story. By taking a closer look at the roles and responsibilities of Jonathan Pobre in this case, we begin to realize how important the editorial process is to journalism.

A proper ethical training is typically a requirement before graduating from journalism school. The second section will examine the need for professional journalists and even amateur journalists such as bloggers to be taught ethics.

The last portion of this section will take a look at some reasons why journalists have such a difficult time trying to make the right decisions. Many different changes in the structure of journalism that have led to ethical challenges will be discussed. The following questions will be examined in this section:

- What are the roles and responsibilities of the editor (specifically during ethically challenging situations)?

- How important is proper ethical training for anyone ranging from a professional journalist to a casual blogger?

- What structural changes, to the profession of journalism, have had an effect on Adolfo Flores’ experience as a journalist?
EDITORIAL PROCESS

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EDITOR

The Pew Center on the States is a school dedicated to teaching journalists and media leaders excellence and integrity in the practice of journalism. People meet, network, at high-impact sessions or topical conferences to learn from Payson's faculty of accomplished journalism professionals and scholars.

As a member of the faculty of the Payson Institute, Steele has addressed the implications and effects of economic change on both the ethical values and behaviors. Steele acknowledges that the fight for financial survival has forced an erosion of ethical standards across the journalism profession as shown through thousands of personal ethical issues he has received from editors, reporters, producers, photographers, and a good handful of news corporation executives.

Steele was asked to help edit an online publication which was questioning the use of a hate crime story in a community blog that contained controversial information. The editor knew that the story would generate significant views and clicks but also considered the story to be “questionable” due to the fact that the blog only “repeatedly described what the alleged victim of the hate crime had done to prompt an attack.” Since the information provided was hazy and not concrete detail, it could harm the credibility of the publication for reproducing the story, according to Steele. The researcher explained that newspaper are under immense economic pressures but still, traditional standards need to be maintained.

In this case, Jonathan Polls had to make some quick decisions about how to properly exercise his power as editor during the process of creating this news story.

Decision #1: What are the roles and responsibilities of the editor?

THINK ABOUT IT:

Do the responsibilities of an editor extend beyond basic job descriptions? The following are sample job descriptions for various editor positions at the Daily Sundial:

News Editor: Responsible for developing and tracking story ideas, primary assignment editor, gives content a first read and edits stories with reporters. Works with other editors in coordinating content for print and online. Manages and posts content on web site. Assists with designing the print edition.

Line News Editor: Assists News Editor with editing content and assigning stories, including online and multimedia content. Coordinates day-to-day coverage of local events, handles breaking news and assignments for newsroom editor. Manages flow of online and social media content, working directly with those editors. Assists with designing the print edition.

Online Editor: Responsible for working with key editors and staff to generate and develop unique content, and update the Web site. Oversees monitors online comments.
PROPER ETHICAL TRAINING
FOR PROFESSIONALS AND AMATEURS

Blogging continues to usurp the mainstream media and receive a tremendous amount of traffic on their sites by doing so. Bloggers hold power and strength in their ability to filter and disseminate information to a widely dispersed audience outside the mainstream.

Although readers turn to these blogs for information, traditional journalists have sent out a warning to audiences. Some bloggers do not adhere to the same ethical practices and values that journalists do, such as verification of information, objectivity, and disclosure of political and personal biases. The credibility of bloggers and the content they produce is questioned as a result.

Decision #2: How important is proper ethical training for anyone ranging from a professional journalist to a casual blogger?

THINK ABOUT IT...

Technology has caused a new media journalist to emerge in the form of the blogger. Transparencey video cameras and the simplicity of uploading content have created citizen-journalists who are less costly than professionals and more likely to capture breaking news stories.

An example of irresponsible blogging occurred during the 2004 Election Day coverage. Several blogs posted incomplete exit poll numbers that suggested an easy victory for Democratic challenger John Kerry. Blogs, such as those posting incorrect exit poll numbers, are typically celebrated for the speed at which they produce information.
An example of irresponsible blogging occurred during the 2004 Election Day coverage. Several blogs posted incomplete exit poll numbers that suggested an easy victory for Democratic challenger John Kerry. Blogs, such as these posting incorrect exit poll numbers, are typically celebrated for the speed at which they produce information.

Above: Flores expresses his opinion regarding proper ethical training.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES
ECONOMIC-ORGANIZATIONAL-NARRATIVE-RELATIONSHIP

As seen in this case study, there are many different ethical challenges that journalists are now faced with every day. What has caused some of these ethical challenges to arise?

According to research by [citation], the economic, organizational, narrative and relationship structures of journalism all have tremendously evolved over the last decade. It is these four aspects of occupational change that have affected the ethical beliefs and behaviors of journalists altering the profession of journalism forever. Each of these changes has its own ethical implications causing the traditional ethical guidelines in the newsroom to be reconsidered.

It is these changes that have made it increasingly difficult for journalists to adhere to the norms and values that have consistently been staples of the profession.

THINK ABOUT IT...

ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

Changes in the economic structure caused by a loss in advertising revenue and the use of an old business model [designed for print media, not online/new media] have resulted in journalists having to fight for financial survival by making some ethically questionable decisions.

Newscasts across the United States are under enormous stress due to economic pressures. Stock prices have plummeted, advertising revenue has evaporated and readers have found that an easy way to save money is to no longer subscribe to the publications that they once did. All of these changes have resulted in less funding available for journalism to succeed.
Also, old business models are still used in a profession that has changed immensely with the recent addition of digital media. 

Over the last decade, news outlets gambled that an advertising model that had paid most of the bills for 150 years would still work in the age of the Internet. Publishers have been building readerhip by offering most or all of their content online for free.

These efforts have been successful in gaining a large number of readers but created an entire generation of news consumers who are used to having readily available free information at their fingertips. These news consumers have the expectation that all of it is and always will be free, making it extremely difficult to begin charging readers.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Traditionally, professional journalists were trusted solely on the basis that their moral and ethical values had been shaped based upon the news organization they work for. Journalism is considered within the public domain that employs journalistic: newspapers, magazines, broadcast news stations and the like. These organizations provide a basis for the credibility that journalists receive. News stories are seen as being trustworthy because of the organization, not the individual journalist.

Now that news is viewed mostly online, these older publications are not as popular. The credibility of journalists is being challenged in the digital world as readers are allowed to debate and discuss each and every aspect of an article.

These changes in the organizational structure of journalism have created a journalist who is always concerned with their own credibility. As a result, journalists must make ethical decisions that will assist in maintaining their reputations as being accurate, fact and accountable reporter of news.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

The transition from print to online media has caused for the narrative structure of journalism to change bringing new decision-making challenges to journalists.

In traditional journalism, the familiar process to the writing of a news story consists of an inverted pyramid structure, where the facts that are seen as the most important are placed at the top or beginning of a story. This is then followed by less important facts. Also, journalists are trained to make themselves as readily visible as possible to the reader. This is looked at as a core aspect of objectivity in which the journalist remains distant from his/her audience. Constraints such as page length for print, time limits for television, and deadlines along with the process of writing mentioned above, all affect the narrative that is produced by journalists.

The stories online do not always fall under this same formula because there are fewer space limitations. Also, hyperlinks allow readers to see where sources of information come from, meaning the journalist is no longer the sole controller of content. The interaction between journalist and audience alters the narrative when anyone who reads a story online has the ability to make his/her own comments and judgments. The journalist no longer carries the power of determining what is meaningful, as readers can construct their own ideas. The comments section adds controversial interactive elements of news websites. Not everyone comments or reads the comments section on a website.

RELATIONSHIP STRUCTURE

Finally, the relationship structure between journalist and audience has changed making it difficult to distinguish the professional from the amateur.

The role of journalism lies in the ability for a journalist to remain free from outside pressures that shape information. The Internet encourages the personal values and views of the journalist to be shared. This can lead to a transparent view of not only what information exists but how the story was discovered and verified. Journalists are also able to provide their own insights into how stories should be interpreted, playing a direct role in the synthesis of material.

The ethical dilemma arising from this transparency is how journalists and editors can remain impartial when they control content in various forms for both profit and ethical reasons.
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The actual audience is growing, even though they are mostly people who are not paying anything for their news. This enables information to reach a broader audience. Digital media allows for anyone with access to the Internet to be able to receive the news without being limited to money, time or space constraints. In addition, although the number of professional journalists has declined, citizen journalists are able to offer a new type of reporter with the aid of technology to easily capture images and video content elsewhere.

The most drastic change that the digital age has caused is the rise in opinion. The addition of blogs and other community-enabled websites allow for opinion to be readily available and shared without having gone through any editorial process (such as seen in traditional media). This has changed the power and influence that once belonged to journalists.

The case mentioned here discusses how to deal with very specific scenarios in the newsroom. Source confidentiality can be especially tricky - even if consent is initially obtained. Because the Internet and the digitization of journalism has become a reality, many more challenges face journalism everyday. It is in a journalist's best interest to look at all the facts, turn in whatever resources are available and make the best decision they possibly can as the economic, narrative, relationship and organizational structures of the profession continue to change.
EDUCATOR’S RESOURCE

LESSON PLAN AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Welcome to the educator’s portion of the CSUN Case Study. Connection. This section of the website has been designed to help you, the educator, access the full potential of this project. Below you will find additional resources, links, context and everything you need to teach the case studies. Feel free to click on a section below, or use the navigation menu to the right.

Note: Each lesson plan has been broken apart into smaller parts. These parts include links to the sections of the website that you need to accomplish that portion of the lesson. It is recommended that all educators download the PDF version of the case study website and the educator’s website to use as a roadmap for navigating through this lesson.

The Educator’s Site Includes:

- CSUN Case Study Connection objective
- Successfully Using this Website [navigation, system requirements, etc.]

Complete Lesson Plan:

I. Lesson Plan Objectives
II. Session 1
III. Session 2
IV. Session 3
V. Session 4
VI. Web Resources
VII. Test Resources

Note: Each lesson plan has been broken apart into smaller parts. These parts include links to the sections of the website that you need to accomplish that portion of the lesson. It is recommended that all educators download the PDF version of the case study website and the educator’s website to use as a roadmap for navigating through this lesson.

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V. Session 4
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VII. Test Resources

Discussion Forum

Download the Lesson Plan PDF

NEXT
EDUCATOR’S RESOURCE

CSUN CASE STUDY CONNECTION OBJECTIVE

Mission Statement:
This website serves as a resource for future and current journalists. The CSUN Case Study Connection’s mission is to provide an interactive tool that can be accessed by students, educators, and professionals. Cases are presented with multimedia content to help improve each reader’s experience with this site.

Each case study has been designed to promote thoughtful discussion in order to prepare journalists for the increasing amount of day-to-day ethical challenges that occur in the newsroom.

Readers are asked to put themselves in the shoes of the people mentioned in the case studies so that they can have a better understanding of how journalists, organizations and everyday people are affected by the decisions that are made.

In The Classroom:
It is the job of the educator to teach students what they need to know to be successful in the future. In general, students are used to absorbing information through multimedia-rich environments with the use of computer, smartphones and other forms of technology. This makes it increasingly difficult to keep students interested and engaged with the information being presented to them.

The CSUN Case Study Connection combines real, interactive, multimedia-rich environment to promote successful learning.

The following are the intended uses for this website:

1. Students can access this website from a home/school computer and basically engage the content on an independent level.
2. Educators can present the website content in a classroom setting in order to guide students through the process of learning through the use of case studies.
3. A combination of the above (most recommended use). Educators can present portions of the website in a classroom setting to serve as an introduction to the Case Study Connection. Students can then independently access the rest of the website to become familiar with all of the content. A follow-up discussion/assessment session can occur at the next class meeting to ensure successful learning.
4. Certain videos, audio interviews, and other content can also be used as supplementary material for other lesson plans.

What to Keep in Mind:
This website has been designed to promote THOUGHTFUL DISCUSSION. Audio and video interviews contain information that represents the opinions solely of the interviewees.

It is extremely important that students listen and watch the interviews with an open, yet critical mindset.

The intention of the interview content is not to tell students the right answer.

The interviewees are included to show students a real-life example of how one reporter dealt with these ethically challenging situations.

Many different variables (environment, internal/external pressures, personal values, experience, etc.) can completely change the answers to the questions asked in this case study.
**SUCCESSFULLY USING THIS WEBSITE**

**System Requirements:**
- An Internet connection (Cable, DSL, T1 or above recommended for use with video content)
- Optimized for use on Firefox but has also successfully tested for use with these web browsers: Safari and Internet Explorer (the website may have issues running on Google Chrome)
- Apple Quicktime is required for viewing video/audio content

**Successful Navigation:**
- 1. Navigation tools can be found at the bottom of every page
- 2. A navigation menu has also been included on the right side of the website
- 3. Every page on the "Student Website" has access to the navigation menu
- 4. The "Educator's Website" has a separate menu - also accessible on all pages
EDUCATOR’S RESOURCE

LESSON PLAN: OBJECTIVES

TEACHING OBJECTIVES: This case study will give students the ability to make difficult decisions in situations that challenge the ethics, values and experiences of a reporter. The interviews found in this case study have been used to provide students with an insight into how these journalists made their decisions. This case study deals with numerous topics including: source confidentiality, editorial management, digital media, ethics and student journalism.

Source Confidentiality - dealing with sources can be a difficult process, especially for inexperienced journalists. Objective: Students will learn how to deal with source confidentiality. Students will be able to see how private citizens are treated differently than public figures. Most importantly, students will see that there is a careful balance that must be maintained as a journalist tries to seek the truth while maintaining the trust of any source.

Editorial Management - when journalists and editors have strict deadlines, time constraints can cause for quick decision making to occur. Editors in this modern era may not have enough time (or resources) to check a story for accuracy, make sure that everything is fair and balanced or even see every article that gets published. Objective: Students will learn what the interaction between journalist and editor is like in a real newsroom.

Digital Media - journalism, traditionally found only in print, has now moved into the online/digital world. Any person, place, event or happening mentioned in an article online is given a digital imprint. Social media, new technology and the power of the Internet have changed traditional journalism forever. Objective: Students will learn how to handle retractions, corrections, un-generated content, social media and the process of updating a story online in order to cancel/un-publish.

Ethics - journalists are faced with ethically challenging situations everyday. How a journalist decides to deal with these situations depends greatly on the background of the journalist, the resources available (as in this case study) and the codes/handbooks/policies supplied by an employer or organization. Objective: Students will learn about specific resources such as ethics codes, theories, sample handbooks and policies that exist.

Student Journalism - journalism schools provide future journalists with not only the skills needed to be successful professionals but also the values, norms and basic understandings that are needed to be thoughtful and honest journalists. Objective: Students will learn how two former student journalists used their experiences, both in the classroom and in the newsroom, to deal with all of the challenges mentioned in this case.

NEXT
EDUCATOR'S RESOURCE

LESSON PLAN: SESSION 1

Session 1: Introduction and Source Confidentiality

Anticipatory Set

1. Identify the Mission Statement and objectives of the CUNY Case Study Connection. Project the website on a large screen or have students follow along on personal computers.

2. Go over the case summary and identify the key topics (listed underneath the case summary).

3. Introduce students to the case by reading through the “Introduction” page. Watch the video at the top of the page, read through the “What/Where/Why/How” aloud, and listen to the audio interview located at the right side of the page with editor Jonathan Pahre.

Modelling

4. Take students through the navigation menu on the right side of every page. Explain how to successfully use this website while identifying system requirements students will need in order to view this site on their own computers.

5. Show students the “Biographies” in order for them to become familiar with the key players in this story. Read through the biographies for Adrielle Pierson and Jonathan Pahre (and play the audio interviews). Let students know that they can read the other biographies independently at a later time.

Guided Instruction

6. Read through the “Pathfinder” page with students. Use the map at the bottom of the page to help them identify the specific location of this story. Also read through the “Dolly Sundial” page so that students who may not be familiar with the publication may now do so.

7. Have students break up into small groups (3 - 4 students per group). If possible, have “The Story” page printed or otherwise accessible to each group. Also, the full article should be accessible to the students at this point. Groups should read through this page and the full article to become familiar with the story.

Guided Practice

8. Discuss the “Decision Making Tools”. Go through this page on the website and encourage students to discuss each tool. Use the links under the “Society of Professional Journalists: Code of Ethics” and “Employer Handbook” sections to expand on this topic. Students will need to refer back to this section when doing independent work.

9. Watch the video at the bottom of the “Decision Making Tools”
page. Here, students will learn the ethical beliefs of Adolfo Flores. This provides a good chance to introduce the "Discussion Forum" to students. If needed, show students how to create a user name/password and how to successfully login to the forum. Access the Discussion Forum and guide students through the example discussion under the first topic, "Decision Making Tools".

- a. DECISION MAKING TOOLS - watch the video at the bottom.
- b. DISCUSSION FORUM - view sample discussion topic here [you will need to provide students with a direct link which can also be found at the top of every page of this website].

- 10. Use the "Source Confidentiality" introduction page to identify the questions that students will have to answer in this section. Read through the questions and have a brief discussion on each. Explain to students that their thoughts and opinions on these questions may change as they work through this case study. Play the audio interview with Fabra [right side] followed by the video interview with Flores (bottom of page).

- a. SOURCE CONFIDENTIALITY

- 11. Navigate to the first "Source Confidentiality" question page. This question asks students, "Is it a journalist’s responsibility to expose a source's identity if an article that has already been published?" Take students through the process of reading (1) the introduction (2) thinking about the question (3) reading through the "Think About It" section (and watching any video or audio clips) and (4) any other additional content such as links, images, etc.

- a. SOURCE CONFIDENTIALITY - Identifying Sources

- 12. Show students where they will be answering their first discussion question, individually, on the Discussion Forum. This is where students should use the information they have received from the "Decision Making Tools" page along with the content from "Source Confidentiality - Identifying Sources" page to engage in a group discussion on the Discussion Forum. Students should include specific examples found on this case study website in their responses.

- a. DISCUSSION FORUM

Independent Practice

- 12. First, students should read through the following "Suggested Readings".
- a. SP Code of Ethics - CLICK HERE TO OPEN LINK
- b. Daily Social Handbook - DOWNLOAD HERE

- 13. Next, students should now navigate through the four "Source Confidentiality" pages reading the content, following links, watching the video and listening to the audio interviews.

- a. SOURCE CONFIDENTIALITY - students will access all four pages.

- 14. Finally, students should participate in each of the four "Discussion topics" one per page on the Discussion Forum. Students should use any information obtained from the Suggested Readings, content from the case study or personal beliefs during the discussions. Instruct students to keep track of all notes and bring them in for the discussion that will take place during the next class session.

- a. DISCUSSION FORUM - students will participate in discussion.

- 15. Instruct students to keep track of all notes and bring them in for the discussion that will take place during the next class session.

- a. SOURCE CONFIDENTIALITY - students will access all four pages.
- b. DISCUSSION FORUM - students will participate in discussion.
LESSON PLAN: SESSION 2

- Session 2: Digital Journalism

Anticipatory Set

1. Prior to the next class session, review the Discussion Forum for certain points of interest. This can be certain disagreements that occurred between students, topics that caused thoughtful debates or basically anything that has created a "teachable moment". Make notes regarding each point of interest so that you can review these with the students during the next session.

2. At the start of Session 2, ask students to form groups (3 - 4 students per group). Students should now take 10 minutes to discuss something that struck them as surprising during their independent work. One student should take notes during the discussion so that a report can later be given to the whole class.

Anything ranging from something they heard in one of the interviews that seemed interesting to something another student posted on the discussion forum that the agreed/disagreed with should be noted. Walk around and spend time at each group to ensure that thoughtful discussion has taken place.

Guided Instruction

3. Have one student from each group report on the findings during these group discussions. Encourage students from other groups to ask questions and share their own thoughts.

4. Once all groups have reported, compare the group findings with your personal notes. Discuss anything that the students may have not mentioned.

5. Access the "Digital Journalism" page. Explain to students that they will now be looking at different aspects of Digital Journalism or New Media that affected the decision making process during this case. Become familiar with the content found on this page. Now access http://wayback.museum/ and show students what the "Wayback Machine" is. Wayback Machine is basically an archive of the Internet that keeps a cache of over 150 billion web pages all the way back to 1996. This can be used as an example to show students how content published online can never be completely removed - even if the article/web page link (or name) are removed.

a. DIGITAL JOURNALISM
b. WAYBACK MACHINE

Guided Practice

6. Guide students through the four (4) discussion topics for this session. Read the questions aloud, one by one, and ask students to discuss their initial responses to the questions.

a. DIGITAL JOURNALISM

7. Show students the video at the bottom of the Digital Journalism page. In this video, Adolfo Flores explains the editorial process at the Daily Sundial both for online and print articles. Ask students to take a few moments to write down their initial responses to each of the four (4) questions found on this page.

a. DIGITAL JOURNALISM

8. Have students return to their small groups of 3 - 4. Have each student respond to one of the questions aloud in the small groups. Walk around and interact with the students during this time.

Independent Practice
99
Flavas and Joe Ploomb passed during this case. Become familiar with the
content found on this page.

5. Now access http://example.com/ and show students what the
"Poinsett Institute" is. The Poinsett Institute is a school dedicated to
teaching and inspiring journalists and media leaders excellence and
integrity in the practice of journalism. Print out copies of one of the
cardboard found on this site ahead of time. A great article can be found
at http://www.poinsett.org/videos/video/134835
This article discusses the topic of aggregate sites. Use this article as a sort of micro case study.

Guided Practice

6. Students should get into their small groups and read through the
article that you have chosen. Have student analyze and discuss this
article on their own. This will help students
get a better idea of what the Poinsett Institute is and how it can be
used as a resource by both students and professional journalists.

a. POINSETT INSTITUTE
b. SAMPLE ARTICLE

7. Guide students through the three (3) discussion topics for this
section. Read the questions aloud, one by one, and ask students to
discuss their initial responses to the questions.

a. ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES

Independent Practice

8. First, students should read through the following “Suggested
Reading” articles.

a. Steele, J. (2008). Ethical values and quality control in the digital
era. DOWNLOAD HERE
DOWNLOAD HERE

9. Next, students should now navigate through the three (3)
Additional Challenges pages, reading the content, following links,
watching the videos and listening to the audio interviews.

a. ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES

10. Finally, students should participate in each of the three (3)
discussion topics (one per page) on the Discussion Forum. Students
should use any information obtained from the Suggested Readings,
content sourced from this case study or personal beliefs during the discussions.
Instruct students to keep track of all notes and bring them to the
forum for discussion that will take place during the next class session

a. DISCUSSION FORUM - students will participate in discussion.

11. Monitor comments made by students. Comb through the
Discussion Forum, promoting thoughtful engagement where needed.
Again, make notes of certain points of interest that can be discussed
during the next session of class.

a. DISCUSSION FORUM


Knight Case Study Initiative – The Journalism School of Columbia University. Retrieved January 3, 2011, from
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The main goal of this project was to develop an interactive case study website that can be accessed by student and professional journalists in order to better prepare them for the ethical challenges that exist in newsrooms. Ethics is a complicated subject that is full of many different theories, opinions and values. The journalism profession has undergone some very drastic changes, especially in the past few years with the rise of digital journalism. It is these changes that have influenced media ethics. Without proper ethical training, it is difficult for both students and professionals to make educated decisions when faced with ethical challenges.

The interview subjects, Adolfo Flores and Jonathan Pobre, both provided helpful insight into the difficult ethical challenges that must be made by journalists. Adolfo Flores explained how beneficial his ethics courses were to him. It was the words of his professor that helped to guide him through this ethically challenging situation. The ethical training provided by his classes at California State University, Northridge combined with the experience he gained at the Daily Sundial have created an ethical base that he now uses as a professional. Jonathan Pobre had similar comments to make while stating that his experiences in school have helped him to stay out of trouble in the professional world.

The different tools mentioned in this case study project, ranging from the theories to the actual ethical codes, will help journalists to make the right decisions. Even though these theories have been clearly outlined in this project, journalists must always consider
each situation in its own right. One of the most important things learned from this project is that when a journalist is faced with an ethically challenging situation, there is not always a right or wrong answer. Journalists must use the available resources along with common sense, personal values and organizational values in order to make the best possible decision.

Components

Case study websites have many different components. By completing this project, it was discovered that the most important components to a case study website are the interviews done with the people directly involved. The initial audio and video interviews with Adolfo Flores and Jonathan Pobre uncovered many different ethical challenges that were not originally considered. The content gained from these interviews served as a starting point for the rest of the case study website to be developed around.

It was also during these initial interviews that these two journalists explained how important ethics had been to their professional careers. Flores felt the information he obtained while in school has created new instincts that help him to make correct ethical decisions. He does not use any sort of ethical checklist or code of ethics. Instead, he turns to his peers and relies on this ethical training he received in school to get him through ethically challenging situations.

Along with the interviews, another very important component of a case study website is the additional multimedia content. The actual street where the attempted kidnapping took place was visited and photographs were shot. In order for readers of the case study website to become engaged with this project, it became important for them to
see exactly what the street looked like. In addition, photographs were taken all around the California State University, Northridge campus to highlight key settings used in this case study (such as the building where the Daily Sundial is published, the pool where the women’s water polo team plays and other areas around campus). This content will be especially important for readers of this case study website who are unfamiliar with the Northridge area.

Even though the article written by Adolfo Flores does a fine job describing the interesting attempted kidnapping story, the case study website expands upon the whole situation with specific attention to detail. These details are very important in order for the reader to become more familiar with the story and put themselves in the shoes of the journalists. Biographies of each of the key characters in this story are given to help readers better understand who exactly these people are. Information on the Daily Sundial is provided so that anyone who is unfamiliar with the publication will be better informed about the policies, demographic and history of the student newspaper. Overall, the written content on the case study website allows readers to think about this situation on a whole different level then when only reading the original article.

Challenges

The development of this case study website presented many different challenges. In terms of actual website development, formatting became a major issue. With the enormous amount of information that needed to be included, organization became very important. As content was added, the formatting of the pages became a problem as the allotted sizes available for written content became overwhelmed. Content from one
paragraph started to bleed over other paragraphs and into the photographs on the pages. Individual text boxes for each paragraph had to be created to alleviate this problem.

Another problem was adding links to the web pages. A major benefit of a case study website, in comparison to a physical case study text, is the ability to use hyperlinks for ease of navigation and to take readers to different places around the Internet that relate to the site. Since this website has an abundance of internal and external links, managing each became difficult and tedious. When a new page was added, each link had to be tested and re-tested to ensure that they were sending readers to the proper web page. If the title or heading of a page was changed, all inbound links also had to be changed (otherwise the links would direct readers to a now non-existent web page). In future case study website development, a website map should be created prior to any actual page creation so that links can be solidified ahead of time.

Another major issue was the process of updating the website. Website updates were made on a development site (dev site) that is basically an inactive web page that is not accessible to the public without the proper login information. Once content is updated on the dev site, it has to be ported over to the live site so that a reader can see the changes. Even when tweaking something as minor as font size of a word, the whole website has to be ported over from the dev site to the live site. This could take upwards of twenty minutes for each minor update. This also raised an issue when formatting on the dev site did not match the formatting of the live site. Each minor change had to be made individually, ported over, tested and then repeated numerous times. In the future, a different website building program should be researched as to fix this issue.
The final challenge was testing the website with different browsers. On Safari and Firefox, the website always performed as it should. With Internet Explorer, depending on the version being used, the videos on the website would not always run smoothly and any background details (such as shadowing, images, frames etc.) would not be in the correct position on the page. In order to correct these issues, each page had to be simplified so that background details became a non-issue. The finalized version of the website is actually much simpler in terms of graphics than earlier versions. With Google Chrome, some videos would either stop unexpectedly or not play at all. Video content had to be re-hosted in order for it to load properly with all browsers.

_Promotion_

The main purpose of this case study website is for it to be used as a tool by current and future journalists. In order for this to happen, the website must be promoted. The first way to do this is to integrate search engine optimization (SEO) into the coding of the website. This way, whenever keywords like “Case Study”, “Ethics”, “Journalism Ethics” and “Digital Journalism” are searched through Google, this website will show up. This should generate a large increase in website views.

Another way to promote this website is through the Knight Case Study Initiative. In the conversation with Kirsten Lundberg, she stated that she would like to see the case study website after completion in order to decide if it could possibly be used on their website. This would be a very significant way for the case study website to gain attention. A “Teaching Note” (basically the lesson plan for the case studies found on the Knight Case Study Initiative) was also requested at a later time. In a response to my
request, another member of the Knight Case Study Initiative showed interest in using this case study website and asked for notification when the project was finalized.

By contacting journalism departments around the country through email, this website can also gain attention. Professors will be encouraged to use this website in their courses and provide feedback about how successful it has been as a teaching tool. This will help the discussion forum on the case study website to grow. Students will be able to learn from other students who previously used this case study website. This growth will only improve the quality of the content found on the site.

**Future plans**

The end goal of this case study website is to have it taught in a classroom setting by myself. Using the detailed lesson plan that has been developed, the case study will be taught in an undergraduate journalism class. When this has all been completed, a questionnaire will be used that students can unanimously fill out in order to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the case study website.

**Journalism Ethics**

The development of this case study website has uncovered just some of the ethical challenges that journalists are faced with. Student journalists have deadlines just like professional journalists do and this can cause for quick decisions to have to be made. The changes in the structure of professional journalism that have caused for many different challenges to exist are now present in student journalism. These journalists, students and professionals, must rely on instinct, ethical training and whatever other resources they have in order to make the correct decisions.
This case study shows an example of a journalist who made an ethical decision that made sense (getting approval before using a source’s name). Even when a journalist does everything they can to make the right ethical decisions, many different issues can still arise. Journalists are given a voice, which comes with the power to share information with many people. Anyone given this sort of power has to be careful about the decisions that they make.

It is situations like those mentioned in this case study that journalists are faced with everyday. This case study website will hopefully make current and future journalists realize how important ethics are in order to maintain the credibility of the profession. Along with the resources mentioned in this project, journalists should turn to peers and the ethics codes provided by organizations in order to make the best possible decisions. As student journalists progress into the professional world, a strong ethical sense is an absolute necessity. The challenges of digital journalism will only continue to grow over time and journalists will need to adapt in order to be successful, credible and ethically sound professionals.
REFERENCES


Knight Case Study Initiative – The Journalism School of Columbia University


Zeran v. America Online, Inc. (1997), F.3d 327. 4th Cir. 129
APPENDIX: Matrix used to classify sections included in a case study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topical Area</th>
<th>Facebook Conundrum</th>
<th>A Life on the Line</th>
<th>Settle or Fight?</th>
<th>The Last Abortion Clinic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abstract</strong></td>
<td>Crisis management, international</td>
<td>Abstract (summary, what class will gain, who is involved)</td>
<td>Abstract (summary, objectives of this study, what you will appreciate)</td>
<td>Abstract (who it applies to, summary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>Key players, what happened, main dilemmas (get students hooked)</td>
<td>Characters, setting, brief synopsis, how it applies to future journalists (i.e., freedom of the press)</td>
<td>Frontline history, brief synopsis of the case study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biographies</strong></td>
<td>Editors, committee members</td>
<td>Key players</td>
<td>Frontline producers, the key players (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Links</strong></td>
<td>Outside links to articles, footnotes</td>
<td>Footnotes, few links to biographies</td>
<td>Outside sources,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Embedded Content</strong></td>
<td>Interview clips (Audio from editors describing themselves, stories, importance)</td>
<td>Audio clips (mostly interviews done by case creator)</td>
<td>Audio (interviews with how to chose producers, journalistic objectivity), 1 page with 4 videos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pictures</strong></td>
<td>Setting, characters</td>
<td>Settings, tiny images of key players and institutions</td>
<td>Tiny images of logos (media players), Images of logos, abortion clinic, characters, setting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion</strong></td>
<td>Let students chose what to do</td>
<td>Asks us “whom to believe?” – doesn’t give a final conclusion</td>
<td>Lets students choose</td>
<td>Lets students chose by asking “To use or not to use”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collected Content</strong></td>
<td>Interviews from editors, articles from paper, articles from outside sources criticizing the work</td>
<td>Lots of video content, articles from outside sources, CSM articles</td>
<td>Articles from outside sources, 4 newspapers looked at</td>
<td>Articles form outside sources, interviews with Frontline editors and writers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Notes</strong></td>
<td>Available in multimedia digital format (easy to navigate) and as download (.pdf) – only 5 navigation links on left</td>
<td>20 navigation links on left (more content), video was good but some audio didn’t work (took away from affect)</td>
<td>Least interesting of the cases (not much embedded content)</td>
<td>Only one page with videos on it was TOO MUCH in one spot</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>