NONPROFIT INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM: A SNAPSHOT OF CONTENT AND REACH

Research supported by The Jonathan Logan Family Foundation.

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**Content Analysis**

- 2,309 individual “stories” in 2016 from 9 outlets
  - 3 National outlets (ProPublica, Center for Investigative Reporting, and Center for Public Integrity)
  - 3 State/Local outlets (NJ Spotlight, inewsource.org and Arizona Center for Investigative Reporting)
  - 3 Academic sites (American University, UC Berkeley and University of Wisconsin)

**Impact Analysis & Conversations**

- Selected a random sample of stories
- Searched Lexus-Nexus for evidence of “other” outlets “picking up” original stories
- Informally asked participants to tell us what they did to measure “impact”
- Collected and curated those “conversations”

**RESEARCH OVERVIEW: WHAT WE STUDIED**
Story Topics: Primary Story focus (e.g. Presidential elections, Government, Criminal Justice, Health Care, etc.)

Type of Story: Straight news, “Explainers” Investigative reports, Data Journalism, Op-ed, etc.

Delivery Methods: written, podcasts, blogs, video, etc.

Partners: If and who were mentioned as partners in the story
Primary Story Topics (% of All Stories)

- Government/Non-election (17.5%)
- Presidential Election (10.7%)
- Health/Healthcare (10.7%)
- Business/Economy (7.5%)
- Legal Issues (7.1%)
- Story/Brand Promo (7.5%)
- National Security (2.2%)
- Housing (2.4%)
- Natural Disasters (1.5%)
- International News (1.9%)
TYPES OF STORIES BY TYPE OF OUTLET
- **Partnerships:** Overall 15.9% of the stories mentioned a partnership but 30.9% of all picked up stories were partnership stories.

- **Data Visualizations:** Just 3.9% of the stories were data-centric/data visualization stories but they comprised 15.9% of all of the “picked up” stories.

- **Presidential Election Stories:** These stories made up 8.2% of the stories but 19.8% of the “picked up” stories.

**IMPACT ANALYSIS: WHAT GOT PICKED UP?**
Who is driving the impact Measurement train?
- Participants recognize that funders want measures of impact but are not really sure they want to chase after it?

Impact Measurement takes lots of Time and Effort.
- And participants are not sure they are doing it right

You think anyone ever asked Jimmy Breslin to his impact measurement score?
- A cultural and perhaps generational shift in terms of views on impact

Would you like to see my Pulitzer? Or my East Central Upstate Healthcare Reporters award?
- Do awards measure impact or quality of journalism? Are they the same?
Anecdotal evidence of legislative change.
  Can we systematize this?

Anecdotal evidence individual and consumer engagement.
  Can we systematize this?

It is nice to be “liked” and “sharing” is always good.
  But does this really measure engagement?
Learning by Doing: How about a more comprehensive survey of nonprofit investigative news outlets and impact measurement?

Create new and systematic methods for measuring consumer engagement: How about figure out how to do this better?

Explore direct measures of legislative impact: Can we “backward map” to measure the link between legislation and news stories?

Machine Learning, Natural Language Processing and Sentiment Analysis: Will automated reach measurement tools work in our world?
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