

*Doing it for Real: Designing Experiential Journalism Curricula that
Prepare Students for the New and Uncertain World of Journalism Work*

Jeanti St Clair
University of Southern Cross, NSW
jeanti.stclair@scu.edu.au

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Abstract: The world of journalism in the digital age is changing faster than university curricula can keep up. News is now produced in forms and on platforms that were non-existent 10 years ago. Journalists may increasingly generate their own work opportunities in entrepreneurial news outlets and start-ups, rather than as employees in legacy newsprint and broadcast media. Substantial workforce contraction has also occurred since 2012 as revenue in print and other traditional media has found new homes in social media and search engines, and over 1000 journalists (or 15 percent of the journalism workforce) were made redundant. Journalism graduates therefore need to be flexible, innovative and enterprising to survive professionally in this evolving setting. Additionally, financial and funding pressures on universities are leading them to reduce course costs and deliver more courses online. Elongated unpaid internships provide real world experience but access to these will likely reduce as workforces continue to contract. This article considers student feedback from three authentic experiential journalism projects in light of these changing times in journalism. It explores how the performative and very practical nature of traditional and digital journalism skills may be developed through a learning-centred curriculum anchored in authentic and experiential activities and settings. The article briefly considers some of the challenges facing journalism educators in delivering such a curriculum in e-learning settings, and sets out a simple framework for supporting the development of digital media workforce readiness.

Keywords: journalism education, curriculum design, journalism 2.0

Introduction

The world of journalism in the digital age is changing faster than university curricula can keep up. Traditionally, news media production was an industrialised practice and journalists produced a news story in standardised format for print, radio or television. But, as journalism academic Eric Newton (2012) reminds us, the digital age operates on a different set of “technology, techniques and principles”, and has “disrupted traditional media economics”. But the “body of practices” simply known as journalism, is adapting to these new conditions (Picard, 2010). News is now produced in forms and on platforms that were non-existent 10 years ago (Este, Warren, Connor, Brown, Pollard & O’Connor, 2010). The part of the media industry that is struggling is the economic model upon which media is built. In many developed economies where digital media has made significant in-roads, thousands of editorial and production positions in news organisations have been shed as revenue streams have dropped away (Pew Research Center, 2014; Midgley, 2014; Bittner, 2014; Beecher, 2013; Christensen, 2013; Kidd, 2014). At the same time, digital technology integration in news media has broadened the range of skills needed by journalists and redefined concepts of professional identity and news production, as Mensing (2010), Picard (2010), Kanigel (2014), O’Donnell and McKnight (2012) and others argue.

Change is now a given in the digital era. Journalism graduates wishing to work in the media therefore need to be flexible, innovative and enterprising to survive professionally in this evolving setting. Yet journalism educators and industry have struggled to reach a consensus on what contemporary journalism curricula should deliver (Tanner, 2014). Additional financial and funding pressures on universities are leading to pressures to reduce course costs (Universities Australia, 2014). One response is to deliver more courses online. Elongated unpaid internships provide real world experience and are one of the clearest pathways to employment, Tanner (2014, p.105) notes, but access to these will likely reduce and become more competitive as workforces contract. Already, the contemporary internship model has been criticised for using the interns as unpaid labour, replacing paid positions (Hope & Figiel, 2012; Perlin, 2012; Stewart & Owens, 2013).

This article critically reflects on student feedback from three authentic experiential journalism projects, managed by this article’s author, in light of these changing times in journalism as part of a broader project of journalism curriculum renewal at the author’s university. It explores how the performative and very practical nature of traditional and digital journalism skills may be developed through a learning-centred curriculum anchored in authentic and experiential activities and settings. The article briefly considers some of the challenges facing journalism educators in delivering such a curriculum in e-learning settings, and sets out a simple curriculum framework for supporting the development of digital media workforce readiness.

What makes an ideal Journalism 2.0 graduate?

News creation in the digital era, in the maturing digital media markets discussed below, is seen as an open-ended process, a two-way conversation between journalist and reader that is facilitated through story comments and social media. Increasingly referred to as Journalism 2.0., such news creation can be defined as decentralised, media convergent and collaborative news making practices that draw on Web 2.0 technologies that allow "user-generated content and user-to-user interaction" and as a consequence is more "user-focused" (Abdul-Mageed, 2008, p.61). Journalism academic Jeff Jarvis labelled this "journalism as beta" involving "collaboration, transparency, letting readers into the process, and trying to say what we don't know when we publish – as caveats – rather than afterward – as corrections" (Jarvis, 2009). As Guardian Australia's then-editor-in-chief, Katharine Viner (2013) noted in giving the annual AN Smith Lecture at Melbourne University's Centre for Advancing Journalism that journalists take a curatorial role in bringing the most relevant information to audiences. In this era of news creation, she says, content will target niche audiences, providing opportunities for journalists to fill the gaps in news coverage and dig deeper into content and analysis. Journalists may increasingly generate their own work opportunities in entrepreneurial news outlets and start-ups, rather than in legacy newsprint and broadcast media.

Journalism 2.0 technology has rewritten journalist role specifications and altered journalistic processes in innovative ways. Journalists must be able to produce news across all media including text, audio, photographic and video formats. They must be publishers as well as producers, and report and publish from the field using mobile technology. Journalists may have specialist skills in data visualisation. They will be social media savvy and will engage with audiences who expect to contribute content and be free to engage in debate on the day's topics. News content is published online first, either to a news website or blog, or even straight to Twitter and other social media outlets before appearing later in traditional media outlets. This is the digital age Newton writes of when he calls on journalism courses to embrace "continuous change" (2012), echoing Quinn's warning about the "glacial speed at which curricula change proceeds" and the need to "update journalism education to prepare for a future that is rapidly becoming the present" (2010, p.78). Graduates need to not only know what news is and be multi-skilled for the digital news age, but they must also be comfortable with changing technologies, innovative story forms and workflows, and comfortable with uncertainty, for careers in near-future newsrooms yet to be imagined.

Yet, university journalism education has struggled with the process of curricula reinvention. In part, Deuze (2006) suggests this is due to a shortage of structural, systematic and collaborative research between journalism academics on the question of 'what should journalism education do?'. Despite this, Deuze says journalism programs globally have many challenges in common, although perhaps not concurrently. This would be the case in countries where digital news platforms have yet to seriously impact legacy media models (discussed below), and where the pressures on journalism training to respond to the altered news production environment have yet to fully exert themselves. But where digital media has had that impact, change is underway (Picard, 2014). As Mensing notes (2010), educators initially responded to the digital era by expanding technology training and tweaking course sequences and emphases. But it can be argued that what is demanded is not a new skill set. The digital shift requires a new

mindset, one that emphasises entrepreneurialism, innovation and collaboration. Vázquez Schaich and Klein (2013) note that this has led to a new field of “entrepreneurial journalism” courses, particularly in the United States. According to educators behind this new field, these courses were established to develop an innovative and “entrepreneurial mindset” and digitally relevant skills among journalists, and to help them create their own employment opportunities or innovate within established media organisations during such uncertain and disrupted times (p.207). But Picard (2014), while in agreement about the need for increased emphasis on analytic thinking, innovation and problem-solving skills, is critical of many attempts at curriculum renewal as not trying hard enough to break away from training students in twentieth century production mode silos or from normative views of what journalism’s role in society is. Vázquez Schaich and Klein (2013) similarly found that despite the arrival in the US of specialist “entrepreneurial journalism” courses, the traditional mindset of ‘journalism as product’ is probably still dominant. This is “because journalism schools are in the earliest stages of the transformation of their programs, the introduction of the new skills and the redefinition of the professional profile of the digital age journalist” (Vázquez Schaich & Klein, 2013, p.207). Indeed, results from Tanner’s (2014) Australian survey on journalism curriculum renewal indicated attitudes that showed educators and industry seemed unable to develop a common definition of what journalism in the digital age entailed, echoing Deuze’s (2006) earlier warning. Few Australian journalism courses teach students to take an entrepreneurial or experimental approach to journalism, or teach business skills to support students in creating media start-ups (Tanner, 2014, p.84). This is unfortunate. Such a mindset could be beneficial for today’s graduates as employment security is expected to be tenuous and only those graduates who can cope with such disruption will make a living as a journalist.

Tenuous times for media workers

But is this tenuousness global? Digital technology and social changes in society are indeed affecting the economic viability of the media industry and forcing media organisations born from last century’s technologies to “restructure and reduce their organisation, making journalists and other employees redundant, and reducing the scale and scope of many news-gathering and dissemination activities” (Picard, 2010, p.365). Print newspaper circulation has been on the slide for more than a decade and has fallen in most first world economies (WAN 2014). Talk of the death of newspapers, in print form at least, has been rife for much of that time (see Dawson, 2010; Newspaper Death Watch, 2007; Beecher, 2013). But the picture is more complicated than framing a grand extinction of newspapers. Globally over the past five years, print newspaper circulation has only secured increases in regions (Asia, Latin America and Africa) where smartphones, digital media players or high-speed internet access is not yet widespread. However, this increase in newsprint consumption is marginal compared to the larger losses over the same timeframe in Europe, North America and Australia (WAN-IFRA, 2014). Broadcast media has been impacted with the arrival of digital media, but not as deeply..

In these developed economies, consumers have so far been prepared to consume both legacy media formats *and* digital models to varying degrees, and with varying levels of commitment to paying for digital content. But it is perhaps only now that we see digital

media consumption reaching a “tipping point”, as research from Deloitte (2014) found in Australia. Australian consumers are embracing digital media consumption at levels that indicate audiences will fully migrate to digital platforms, perhaps within the timeframe Dawson (2010) suggested in his newspaper extinction timelines. (For Australia, this is 2022; the United States, 2017 and the UK, 2019). However, the key issue for the media sector, and therefore its workers who expect a pay cheque, has been whether consumers will pay for digital content. Revenue from digital news media is building slowly in many markets (and new models for paid content are developing with this) but not enough to fill the gap left by disappeared legacy media advertising revenue, which has found new homes in social media, search engines and digital native media start-ups (Pew Research Center, 2014; Reuters Institute, 2014; WAN-IFRA, 2014).

The workforce contraction in the legacy print media that has followed the fall in revenue over the past decade has been substantial. Newsrooms and journalists have been key targets of cost-cutting exercises across the media industries where digital news platforms have disrupted legacy print and broadcast models. In particular, the United States (Pew Research Center, 2014), United Kingdom (Midgley, 2014) Europe (Bittner, 2014), and Australia (Beecher, 2013; Christensen, 2013; Kidd, 2014) have seen workforces shrink. In Australia during 2012, over 1000 journalists (or 15 percent of the journalism workforce) were made redundant (Zion, 2013; O'Donnell & McKnight, 2012). More lost their jobs in 2013 and 2014. The cost-cutting has not only affected print and commercial broadcast newsrooms. Journalists working for public broadcasters, including the BBC, CBC and the ABC, have fallen under the axe as well (CBC News, 2014; Kidd, 2014, Midgley, 2014)

This workforce contraction appears to reflect a shift away legacy media field hiring into digital media roles, as well as a flattening out of newsroom hierarchy (Fuller, 2014). The Pew Center (2014) in the United States surveyed digital media outlets and found that while many were hiring legacy journalists, they were hired predominantly for their investigative skills. Otherwise, there was a key preference for younger employees, with and without journalism degrees, who are “adaptable”, “multi-platform” and who had an “intuitive sense of the media world” and voices that were “nurtured online” (Pew Center, 2014, pp.24-25). This indicates a purposeful shift in the types of skills valued in digital news media. In Australia, data from the Australian Government Job Outlook suggested that while job openings for journalists are expected to be below average over the period to November 2017, this slowing had come off the back of strong employment growth in the previous five years (Australian Government, 2012). In late 2014, the ABC in announcing that 100 out of 400 job cuts would go from its news division, said that it would also be hiring 70 new staff with a “focus on digital skills, meaning an overall reduction of 30 jobs” (Kidd, 2014). So, perhaps there is room for a little optimism. This suggests that the shift from running two separate newsrooms (print or broadcast and digital) is being completed and the new ‘digital first’ newsroom models are reaching maturity.

But despite this open talk of the death of newspapers, journalism is not dead. Nor is the journalism degree: in 2013, Australian universities offered more than 70 journalism, media and communications courses (Tanner, 2014, p.59). Statistics suggest there were more journalism students in 2012 (4077) than there were newspaper journalists, with the journalist’s union, the MEAA, estimating just 3500 to 4000 (Buchanan, 2013).

While not all journalism students want to work as journalists, those who do appear cautiously optimistic about their job prospects and are keen to enter what would be considered traditional journalism roles – as reporters and producers. Students also believe new opportunities will have emerged by the time they graduate (Finlayson & Fox, 2013).

Bringing the real world of journalism work to students

So, how can we best prepare journalism graduates for an uncertain but possibly rewarding media career?

Firstly, we could structure courses and our teaching and learning environment to better replicate the realities of newsroom work in this digital age. Educators might avoid teaching in production silos of print, audio and video and instead embrace digital-first, cross-media production that engages with audiences and publishes user-generated content as part of news production; journalism that is process- and not product-oriented, and which links out to the best content online. Educators need to teach students underlying process skills of problem-solving, critical analysis, self-learning and collaboration, to help them innovate around the professional practices and standards (Oliver & Herrington, 2001).

Secondly, educators need to help students get up to speed on production outputs. Discussions at the 2013 Journalism Education Association Australia conference suggested a substantial proportion of Australian journalism educators have professional journalism experience. Such perspectives, as well as recent newsroom experience, are valued by the media industry (Tanner, 2014, p.97). Journalism educators clearly have some understanding, on a personal level, of the stress and anxiety that can come with the pressures of newsroom production, and the gap between journalism classroom outcomes and what is expected of graduates in the newsroom. Where the classroom might expect the student to produce three assessment items across a semester, the newsroom will expect the graduate to quickly get up to speed and produce three or more news items a day, as well as stay abreast of social media and audience interactions. Educators therefore have a responsibility to help students learn “how to cope in a fast-changing environment” (Quinn, 2010, p.75). This includes a requirement that students be self-supporting and adaptable when encountering new technology (software and equipment) in news practice (Tanner, 2014, p.21, p.88). An Australian study into work-integrated internship placements for journalism students found that media employers generally had high expectations of the level of skills that students should present during placement. These included “practical expertise alongside students’ development of ‘self’ – personal confidence, initiative, problem-solving, office communication and general cooperativeness and teamwork” (Forde & Meadows, 2012, p.23).

Finally, educators must design learning around experiential activities in *authentic* settings to ensure students have experience in the unpredictable task of reporting. There would be little surprise that journalism educators in this field already emphasise experiential learning as a grounded means of developing practice and mindset and see its value as professionalising tool. However, unless the experience is anchored authentically in terms of location or outcome, such learning activities are bemoaned by

industry as a “poor substitute for the reality of working in the daily newsroom and producing content to ‘real’ deadlines” (Tanner, 2014, p.99). Interestingly, these complaints were made despite a general lack of specific awareness among industry respondents of the types of ‘real’ content delivered by ‘real’ deadlines being produced in Australian journalism courses (ibid, p. 97).

The performative and very practical nature of journalism work suggests that journalism skills development is most effective when approached through a learning-centred approach to curriculum (Kartveit, 2009; Segrave & Holt, 2003) This engages the learner actively in the learning process and supports “deep knowledge construction rather than surface learning” (O’Brien, Millis & Cohen, 2009, p.11-12). It enables experiential learning, which as Kolb (1984) formulates, allows learners to engage in *reflective observation* about their experiences. Learners then assimilate the impact of those experiences into *abstract concepts*, which they then *actively test*, experiment with or innovate around. Such an “integrative strategy ...emphasiz[es] the dynamic interactions between experience, theory and enhanced practice” and best reflects the “shifting, indeterminate and complex” world of professional practice (Segrave & Holt, 2003, pp.11 & 10). Students participate actively and make choices in the learning experience, collaborate and support other students, and reflect on and articulate what they learn with others. Additionally, learner-centred design that can “foster a project or problem-based approach and the ability to work in multi-function teams” is more crucial in times of disrupted economics, globalisation and workplace structure, where high value workers are those who are multi-skilled and flexible in an interdisciplinary environment (Beetham, 2013, p.541).

Anchoring experiential learning in authentic settings or around authentic activities further supports relevant and deep learning, helps journalism students develop skills and mindsets they can draw upon during internships and their first professional roles. Research shows that students feel more confident about their journalism practice after engaging in authentic experiential activities (Baines, 2012; Tanner et al, 2012). But what do ‘authentic’ activities or settings look like? While acknowledging the term ‘authentic’ in the educational context is open to interpretation, Herrington, Oliver and Reeves (2003) outline ten defining characteristics, based on a broad literature review. Applied to journalism education, authentic learning activities can be seen as those that closely match real world professional practice, and provide opportunities for collaboration and critical reflection. While the assessment is integrated seamlessly into the authentic activity, the resulting news publication can be valued in its own right, rather than only as activity or assessment. Authentic activities reflect the interdisciplinary, ill-defined, multi-modal and multiple-choice world of journalism work and require students to make a substantial investment of time and critical resources.

Rebuilding journalism education in face of the e-learning challenge

Considering the benefits to students of authentic experiential activities, educators could do more to embed them in journalism courses. However, authentic and experiential learning activities are time and resource-intensive and do not always fit neatly into allocated teaching schedules, timeframes and workloads. But then, news production does not fit easily into a two-hour workshop. Authentic, experiential journalism

activities are also constrained on two fronts: they frequently require off-site 'residential' participation by students which can disrupt student schedules, and delivery is challenged by shifts from face-to-face or blended classes to courses delivered entirely online. While the numbers of students studying by online appears stable (Norton, Sonnemann & McGannon, 2013, p.16), there is pressure at my university to 'externalise' all courses, including highly practical and technology-based subject areas. This allows the university flexibility in scheduling a course as a purely online offering. This transition from face-to-face teaching or blended learning may be the greatest challenge facing the pedagogical design of experiential learning.

One possible approach to enriching computer-based experiential learning in journalism education is the e-simulation. Deakin University introduced an e-simulation in 2003 to provide an experiential CD-ROM/computer-based learning activity in a blended course delivery for its journalism students. HOTcopy's newsroom, e-simulation newsroom workplace, and news stories were grounded in journalism curriculum priorities and provided interaction with digital scenarios and characters within the framework of a news deadline. Students completed written reporting tasks, participated in simulated reflective debriefings in the 'pub' and between other students and staff. The simulations were linked to follow-up internships and face-to-face scenario work and reflections in class (Segrave & Holt, 2003, p 13). While the simulated activities had no real world outcomes for students, they did provide students with a "low-risk environment" where students could practice "'being' a journalist to develop the contextual knowledge that guides professionals to know when and how to act effectively" (ibid, p.16). HOTcopy was a rare e-simulation in journalism education, and was retired in 2011. Aayeshah (2012) has found "very few" examples of digital games being used for journalism skill development, particularly since 2010. The "best" example uncovered by Aayeshah, the Global Conflict Series, allows students to "think in situations where they cannot visit in person, due to expenses as well as associated dangers" (p.9).

But games and e-simulations have limited value to journalism education pedagogically. They might be valuable in developing very basic reporting and newswriting skills; however e-simulations cannot, for example, teach the core journalistic craft of interviewing (p. 13). Herrington (2006) warns that e-simulations, when measured against authentic task criteria, fail to provide "genuine productivity" (p. 3168). Furthermore, simulations require a substantial investment of inter-disciplinary resources and time to develop, which various Australian and New Zealand academics in Aayeshah's (2012) survey noted. Maintaining the currency of reporting practices and tools used in an e-simulation would be challenging and, in the fast-changing and uncertain world of Journalism 2.0, betting on the future direction of journalism practice is risky when journalists are unsure of it is heading. Like the 'teaching hospital' model of journalism schools, simulations risk reinforcing the 'journalism as product' model rather than encouraging students to innovate around existing practices, and collaborate with community and audience by working authentically in real world settings (Mensing & Ryfe, 2013; Robinson, 2013). Capturing the organic uncertainty that comes with the 'journalism as process' model of news production would be challenging to create. How, for example, would the conversations between audience and journalist be incorporated in an e-simulation?

Journalism 2.0 technologies may have circumvented the need for e-simulations, beyond the very foundational level of journalism skills development such as basic newswriting

tasks. The barriers to entry for news production and publication have fallen dramatically. Free websites, editing software and cloud hosting services (for example YouTube, Vimeo, Soundcloud) as well as social media, smartphone cameras and recorders have made it easy for anyone to publish media-rich, audience-engaged online content. Aayeshah's survey found some academics noted a preference for having students write "real stories", and collaborate on proven platforms like Facebook (Aayeshah, 2012, p.12). Social media can be utilised particularly well in journalism education because it can fulfil not only a role as a discourse facilitation tool, but builds competency in a suite of tools used increasingly by journalists. Cochrane, Sissons and Mulrennan (2012) found the use of Twitter as a discourse platform can "bridge the classroom environment with students' informal learning experiences in the real world, ... enriching their learning experiences, and enabling student-generated content and student-generated learning contexts" (p.170). There remains limited scope for e-simulations in specialist reporting where reporters engage in personally risky activities, such as investigative reporting on corruption, or reporting on traumatic events. But the academy must invest the resources and headspace to collaborate on such projects.

However, for general reporting tasks, and to facilitate innovation, authentic experiential activities may be more beneficial for students and will provide publication outcomes, which can form part of a student's digital reputation and portfolio. In 2014, Southern Cross University launched its news site, MediaDrive (mediadrive.net.au), as the learning and publication space for its online journalism students and to provide real publication opportunities for students and academics in the School of Arts and Social Sciences. It joins other Australian university hosted news sites specifically developed to publish journalism students' work including *Reportage Online* (University of Technology, Sydney) and *Upstart* (LaTrobe University). Such websites and collaborations with professional journalism websites such as the Brumby and Bailleau Dumps, undertaken by Swinburne University with Crikey website (Dodd & Green, 2011), represent opportunities for powerful authentic and experiential learning experiences.

Students' feedback shows authenticity especially valued

In 2013, I supervised ten undergraduate journalism students as they reported from the Bluesfest, a music festival held at Byron Bay. Students received backstage passes and were excited to be reporting as part of the Rhythms Magazine media team at the festival. The student festival reports were published on the Rhythms Magazine blog (<https://rhythms.com.au/reviews/southern-cross-university-byron-bluesfest-reports>). Students produced text-based news articles and performance reviews, and posted photographic galleries and audio podcasts of the live 'question and answer' (Q&A) sessions with festival performers. As well as excited, they were nervous because for many this was their first opportunity to be a reporter, a journalist, in a real world setting. Over the five-day festival, students built a public portfolio of journalism work and they did it all on very tight deadlines.

The Bluesfest Reporting Team is one of three experiential learning activities, associated with the journalism major in the Bachelor of Media that I have delivered over the past five years. Each experiential activity involves either an authentic setting or a real world

publication outcome. With all three projects, students work with me as their editor and mentor, and must rework their stories after editorial feedback is given until the work is ready for publication.

The second project invites students to report from the three-day Byron Bay Writers' Festival. Reports and audio recordings are published on the official festival blog <http://www.byronbaywritersfestival.com.au/v2/index.php>. Students publish work alongside the festival's official blogger. The third experiential project is the Pulse Project, where a small focussed team of five to seven student journalists is mentored across a semester through an intense writing-for-publication activity. Each week, students must produce music journalism articles and reviews for the region's main newspaper, The Northern Star. Students participate for one or two semesters. The project is an excellent portfolio-builder and many students in the Pulse Team have gone on to work in the media industry as journalists.

From my observations as supervisor and editor, I could see students were benefitting, from their involvement in these projects, with increased confidence and greater task mastery. However to gain a more subjective perspective from the students on what they most valued in these projects, I implemented an extended online survey for participants to complete and present some initial analysis from that study in this article. Such systematic and critical reflections assist educators to avoid the risk of introspection and self-justification. Developing a reflective teaching practice is beneficial for educators (Schön, 1983), especially when undertaking curriculum design and renewal projects as I have been pursuing at Southern Cross University. Brookfield's four lenses concept (1995) extends on Schön and advises educators to view their teaching through multiple perspectives: (1) the autobiographical, (2) the students' eyes, (3) colleagues' experiences, and (4) theoretical literature. This survey was undertaken with this intent.

Method and sample

Between July 2012 and October 2013, I surveyed students about their experiences with these authentic experiential projects, and the intention is to continue this study as the numbers that participate each year are limited by the capacity of the reporting activities. Approximately, 10 students can be accommodated with each of the blogging projects and between 5-7 students are involved in writing for Pulse. As some students participate in more than one project, students were limited to providing feedback on one project, usually the first they were involved with. The sample for this analysis includes 14 students across the three projects. While the sample is small, the qualitative and reflective nature of the data is indicative for the projects, and is not intended for statistical generalisation.

Following the experiential learning project, the journalism students were invited to debrief via an extended online exit survey. Students were asked to respond to 38 questions, which included ratings questions and open-ended questions that were designed to draw out individual reflections into their experiences. Participation was optional. The survey received ethics clearance through Southern Cross University.

Data analysis for this article is limited to the following questions:

Q1. List the three greatest challenges, placing one in each box and then think about how you felt about these challenges at the start of the project.

Q2. Compare how you felt about each challenge after the project and rate your success at tackling each challenge, where 1 is feeling no success and 9 is very successful.

Q3. How valuable overall did you find the learning project in the following? [1 - 9 where 1 is no value and 9 is extremely valuable.]:

- 1. Developing confidence*
- 2. Learning new skills*
- 3. Refining existing skills*
- 4. Developing the capacity to work to short deadlines*
- 5. Building a portfolio*
- 6. Preparing me to enter the workforce as a journalist*

Q4. Think back to how you felt after the reporting project finished. Consider and describe whether your skills and experience, and your level of skill, as a journalist has changed.

Q5. What challenges did you face and how you did you overcome them?

Q6. What were the personal benefits from setting the project in a community or industry environment?

Responses from Q1, Q4, Q5 and Q6 were classified into themes and examples of typical responses are included in Table 3. Other informative, but uncommon responses are noted in the discussion. Answers to the ratings questions (Q2 and Q3) are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

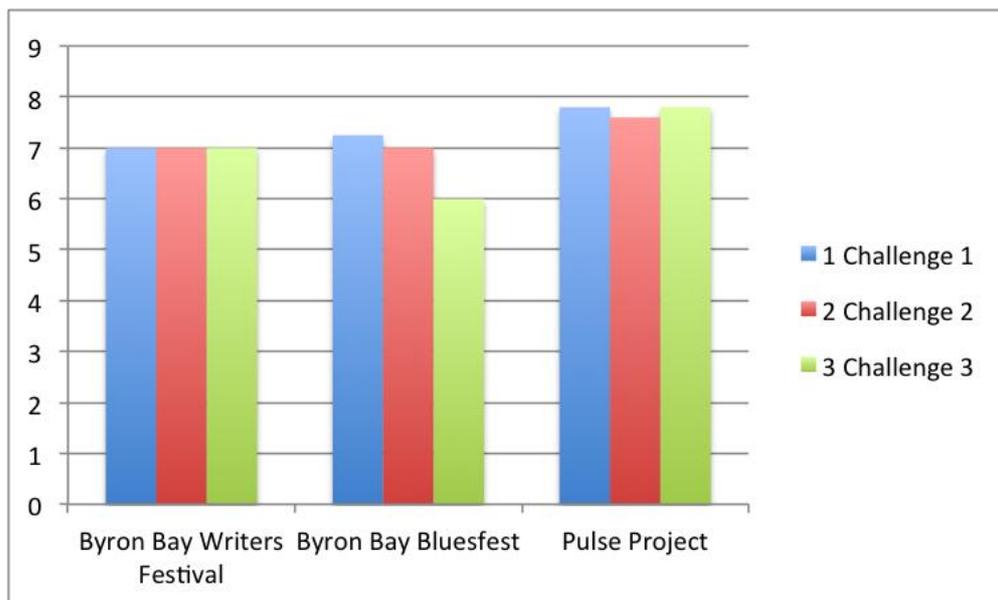
Results and discussion

Each student was asked to freely nominate what he or she felt were the three main personal challenges he or she faced going in to the reporting project. The students' answers were then reviewed and classified into 4 broad categories. These reflect activities common in the production of news media content:

- Facing novel situations or tasks
- Meeting deadlines
- Self-confidence (skills/capacity)
- Self-management (time/tasks)

The students then rated how successfully they personally felt at tackling each challenge, where 1 was no success and 9 was very successful. The two short-run festival projects ranked 7/9 overall. The Pulse Project - which runs for a 12-week semester - rated more highly 7.75/9.

Table 1: Students rate levels of success tackling challenges

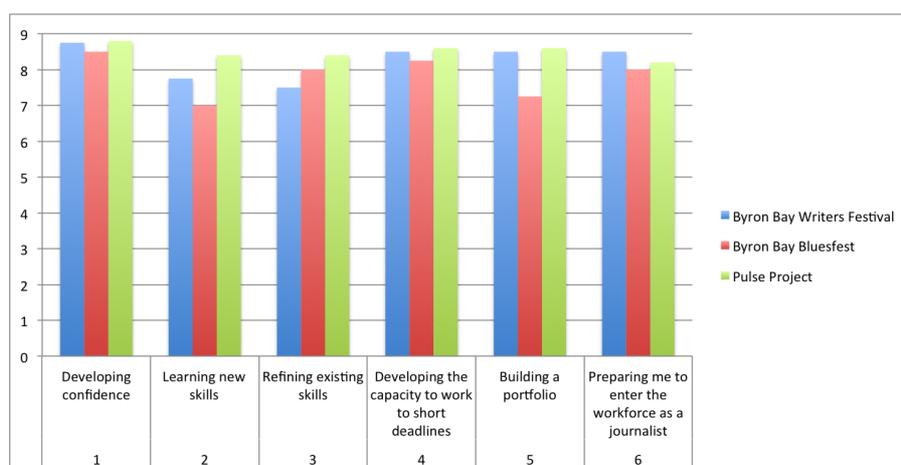


Survey data: Southern Cross University experiential journalism projects 2012-2013

Q2: Compare how you felt about each challenge after the project and rate your success at tackling each challenge, where 1 is feeling no success and 9 is very successful.

The students were also asked to rate the value of a range of specified skill development and professionalization outcomes that arose from participating in the reporting projects on the same scale from 1 to 9. The outcomes rated most valuable included developing self-confidence and the capacity to work to short deadlines, building portfolio, and preparing self to enter workforce. Learning or refining skills rated slightly lower. These results were affirmed in qualitative responses, and a selection of typical comments is included in Table 3.

Table 2: Student rate value of skills development and professionalization benefits



Survey data: Southern Cross University experiential journalism projects 2012-2013

Q3: How valuable overall did you find the community-engaged learning project in the following? [1 - 9 where 1 is no value and 9 is extremely valuable.]

In responses to qualitative questions on personal benefits and highlights, students universally reported their participation in the experiential learning projects as positive: “immensely positive” “valuable”, “authentic” and “motivated and engaged” were terms used. An overarching theme from this survey data was the high value students placed on the opportunity to test-run their skills in a supported environment, as a precursor to independently applying their skills in a workplace. This came through clearly in the comments from students, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Representative examples of student feedback on personal benefits and highlights from participation in experiential learning projects, Southern Cross University, 2012-2013

I learnt some new and important lessons in journalism and [was] reassured that the things I've been taught in class have sunk in.
I am published, under my own name, for anyone to read... I feel more focused, work ready and have started to build a little network within this field.
I now feel confident if I was asked to do this type of work again.
I think all experience in the field always makes you a stronger journalist. In particular after this weekend, I feel I'm a stronger online writer, and I have a more hands-on, in-depth understanding of exactly how quick the turnaround for content can be in an 'on-site' reporting situation.
I feel like my skill level as a journalist has improved and that I now know what it's like to work as a journalist.
[B]ecause of these newly acquired skills I feel more confident in my abilities as a journalist.
My skill in photographing musical performances has increased dramatically.
The project felt like an internship, and my skills reflected my development. My skills in writing and communication have developed and grown, and these will benefit me immensely in a future career.
After finishing Pulse for the year I feel that my skills as a journalist are on a completely different level to what they were when I began. The experience allowed me to steadily improve at my own pace and grow into a more experienced journalist, rather than being forced to rapidly improve.

Other key learning outcomes from participation by students included a sense of ‘work-readiness’, a developed contextual understanding of journalism practice in the field, and portfolio development. Students appreciated the opportunity to network with professional journalists, being part of and observing a real working environment, working in a team, thinking on your feet, having access to an editor and mentor and the challenge of meeting tight deadlines for content delivery, which were described by one student as “sometimes a bit daunting”. The student added:

Having a team around you who were supportive and having access to an editor right then and there was very helpful, and I don't think anyone ever failed to turn out a quality piece of writing. (Student H)

In particular, one student made special note of the impact that the authenticity and collaborative nature of the reporting project on that student's own commitment:

Obviously there is a big difference between the structured lessons of a quiet classroom compared to the controlled chaos of the Bluesfest. Personally, the benefit of a real world environment as opposed to assessment pieces is the gravity of the situation. As I have demonstrated in many assessments, I struggle to complete tasks on time, which can cast doubt on one's ability and career goals. Given a team and a real responsibility to perform, my work ethic changes immensely. It forced me to take note of my surroundings, to learn from experience, and take action. When I succeeded in tasks, I felt empowered, and when I failed at something, I would try harder. A classroom cannot provide this situation or environment, and so where I have had doubts about my credibility as a student, I now know I can succeed in my chosen industry. (Student C)

The Southern Cross University journalism students' feedback is on par with student feedback from authentic experiential projects at other universities in Australia and overseas. These studies found that the placement of journalism students in learning environments that replicate the pressures of reporting in real-world settings contributes positively to students' work-readiness and confidence. For example, Tanner, Green and Burns (2012), in leading a team of university student journalists reporting for community television Channel 31 from the IXth national Special Olympics in 2010 in Adelaide, Australia, found student feedback repeatedly emphasised increased confidence in journalism skills as a result of putting skills learnt in the classroom into practice in the 'real-world'. Baines (2012) operated a hyper-local website out of Newcastle University in the United Kingdom as a "laboratory of inquiry" (Mensing, 2010) where students were able to develop traditional journalism skills, as well as innovate and be entrepreneurial in how publications were conceptualised. Baines notes that student feedback was positive and emphasised particularly the experience of being involved in a collaborative community, enhanced employability and entrepreneurialism. Earlier in 2007, Steel, Carmichael, Holmes, Kinse, and Sanders, ran a cross-disciplinary project with journalism and politics students during the 2005 UK election, at the University of Sheffield. Over the three-day reporting period of the project, 58 students produced "two newspapers, a website, 11 radio news bulletins, a three-hour "as live" radio programme and two television news magazine programmes" (Steel et al, 2007, p.325). Students noted that they felt anxious at the start of the program but developed confidence as it progressed, growing more accustomed to working under pressure. In the Southern Cross University study, all students felt the projects had assisted their professional development as a journalist or writer, and they felt more prepared to enter the workforce as a result. Students said they were more engaged, and some noted in comments that they gained greater benefits from such activities than by only learning in the classroom, or that it helped make sense of the classroom teachings. While beneficial to students, such learning projects are not without their challenges. Often these experiential activities are conducted extra-curricularly (run outside of specific units of

study) and, due to the intensity of event-based reporting, require staff to supervise students outside of general workload allocations. Tanner et al (2012) and Steel et al (2007) note in particular that more preparatory time with students within study programmes would have helped iron out production challenges encountered during the events. Despite these demands and difficulties, journalism educators appear generally supportive of experiential learning activities and look for ways and means to further incorporate them into renewed curricula (Mensing, 2010).

Building graduates today for tomorrow

The case for journalism educational renewal is clear in the literature, but what approach could journalism educators take to achieve this goal? This ought not simply be a matter of content revision or the integration of new graduate attributes. Journalism educators need to step away from thinking of curriculum as a product, and remake it in the spirit of Journalism 2.0, as curriculum-as-process (Doll, 1993). This organic approach demands educators enter into a partnership with students in designing learning activities and assessment in order to encourage the development of the innovation and resilience that journalism graduates will need to thrive in Journalism 2.0 and beyond. By engaging educators and students as curriculum co-designers, it is possible to create an environment of on-going reflection and dialogue around discipline content, learning activities and assessment design. Such a post-modern reconceptualization of curriculum design, one that is dynamic with the capacity to transform students through reflective engagement, “cultivates new ideas and novel ways of dealing with them” (Hunkins & Hammill, 2005, p.43). This encourages students to become more proactive, curious and imaginative by providing them with a degree of control and choice in their assessment and learning activities.

A journalism curriculum-as-process would ask students to negotiate with educators around which media technologies to use, what forms and platforms to publish in, and which audiences to target. This process can also introduce authenticity to students' critical decision-making, by bringing in aspects of newsroom negotiations, where journalists must consult with editors over reporting tasks and story angles. More group assessment projects would encourage collaboration, and build capacity to work in multi-skilled teams, a requirement which is more common in cross-media reporting and data journalism projects. Setting authentic experiential learning and assessment activities in the community supports the development of networking and client management skills. Students would be encouraged to uncover problems and find solutions. Such a socially constructed design invokes Doll's four criteria for curriculum-as-process (richness, relations, recursion and rigor) (Hunkins and Hammill, 2005, p42-43), while engaging journalism students in news production that is being shaped by the unpredictability of the real world of journalism production.

Curriculum, of course, must continue to teach foundational practices in newswriting, reporting and media production, but it could also focus on the development of innovation, flexibility, critical evaluation, continued self-learning in students throughout the journalism course sequence. Students, write Mensing and Ryfe (2012), should be able to meet new technologies and practices without flinching, because they have learnt to critically assess what is good and bad practice, and can choose to use or change those

practices.

While supporting the development of these skills in students, a curriculum-as-process approach also encourages flexibility in the design of curriculum frameworks. The aim is to build resilience, not only in students, but also into journalism degrees, as insurance against the uncertain direction of future journalism practice. Such uncertainty could be mitigated by the creation of themed 'shell units', for example 'Practice Issues in Journalism 2.0' and 'Innovation in Journalism 2.0'. This improves the currency of curriculum content by providing educators with the opportunity to respond efficiently to evolving issues and practices. Students can be engaged, for example, in the collation of learning materials and uncovering emergent practices and issues through case study research.

Opportunities also exist to align units across cross-media lines, satisfying the relational criteria of curriculum-as-process (Doll, 1993). Kanigel (2014) has experimented with the structure and alignment of a Journalism 2.0 course at the foundation level. She and a colleague have paired an introductory multimedia unit with the basic reporting skills unit, and set experiential learning activities in authentic settings, that of students' local neighbourhoods. This ensures students are engaging in cross-media production and collaboration early in their course, and learning actively and authentically, while building community networks. An alternative approach is to design, at the capstone level, practice-based units that are technologically generic to allow students the opportunity to innovate around narrative and decide on publication forms.

While a curriculum-as-process approach to journalism education sees the course design as a joint venture between educators and students, the level of collaboration would vary during the degree. Considering Dron's (2007) concept of transactional control, it is important students are "sufficiently knowledgeable" of discipline content and the process skills that support such critical and collaborative decision-making before learner autonomy is significantly engaged (Dron, 2007, p.61). Therefore at the foundation level, educators would provide more learning support and structure for students than in advanced course levels, where journalism educators would increasingly negotiate with students around the topic, method, location and level of collaboration involved in learning and assessment activities. Educators can increase student engagement through matching experiential activities to student special interest, such as arts, sports or environmental journalism.

By these employing these curriculum-as-process strategies, educators can encourage in students the innovative, entrepreneurial and critical thinking practice that has emerged as crucial in the Journalism 2.0 era. Throughout the journalism course, opportunities to produce and publish journalism in the real world would become integral to learning activities and assessments. By course completion, students would have concrete, authentic experience in cross-media production of journalism, an extensive published portfolio, and developing professional networks in the community and in the media industry. Journalism graduates could hit the ground running and with significant confidence.

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Jeanti St Clair is an award-winning journalism lecturer at Southern Cross University in Lismore, Australia with interests in work-integrated journalism learning projects and applied journalism ethics in the foreign correspondent field. She has over 20 years' experience in radio, print and online journalist and has worked with in the Australian media the ABC, News Limited and Fairfax.