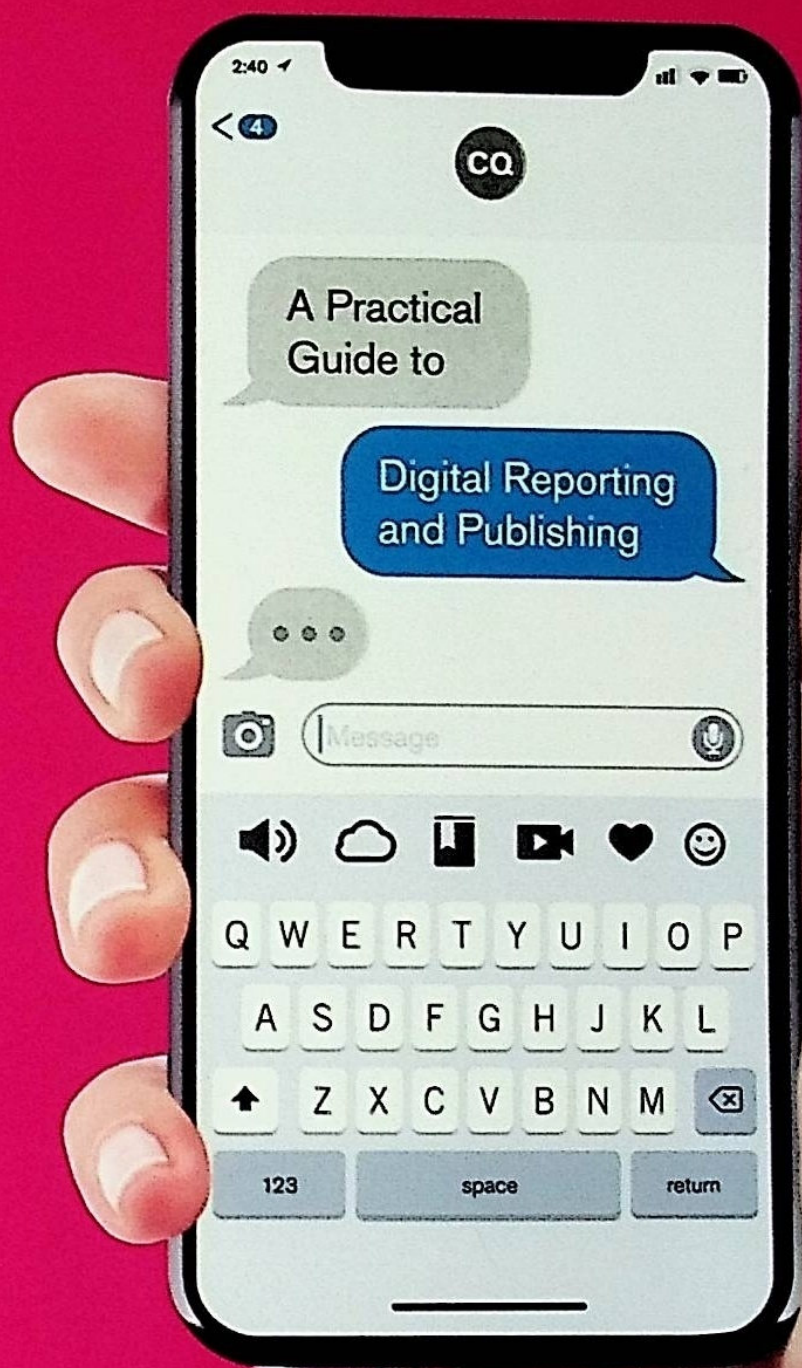


fourth edition

journalism**NEXT**



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With a Foreword by John Clark,
*Executive Director of PILOT at the
National Association of Broadcasters*



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A Practical Guide to
Digital Reporting and Publishing

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Foreword by John Clark



Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
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FOREWORD

In 1997, I was introduced to HTML by my desktop publishing class instructor. I was studying journalism and mass communication and enrolled in "Desktop Publishing" to dabble in page layouts. My interest in journalism carried over from high school but was primarily focused on display, design and the little consumer interaction that was available at the time—usually a letter to the editor or a classmate making some comment on what they had seen.

I had to learn HTML by trial and error. I spent countless hours typing in Notepad and testing in Netscape Navigator before moving my index.html to a test server via WS-FTP to "make it live" on the web. Creating animated gifs were not worth the hassle—yet. And the `<blink>` tag, for a short time, was appreciated. Anyone with a computer could create a web page, but it was difficult finding and using the nascent tools available beyond the basics.

My instructor chuckled when asked if there was a textbook available.

Then I took my first job at Capitol Broadcasting Company working with web technologies and journalism. I literally held two different jobs. I spent half of my time as an online news producer for WRAL-TV. The other half was spent as a web programmer for WRAL's sister company, Capitolnet Marketing Group. The serendipity of working these two positions gave me a perspective that I had missed in college. If we effectively couple digital technology with the principles of journalism, we will provide an extraordinary service. Technology is a driver and means for connections. Technology is not the end result; it is a means for what we do. For anyone involved in journalism, that is, and always has been, an important distinction. With or without technical guides, we have a responsibility to use digital tools appropriately to serve and connect with people.

That sunk in during the 2000 election. I was in line to vote, and several people in front of me were discussing restaurants and options for dinner that evening. One suggested, "Check WRAL; they post restaurant ratings." I was stunned. I had been working on a small piece of software related to those ratings that morning. I interrupted and asked what else they get from WRAL's website. "I'm sure they'll put the vote counts online all night," someone said. Indeed, we did. The power of technology paired with content was immediate. By embracing the digital environment, we had a direct impact

on our viewers. But we were writing our own how-to manual. There was not a reference guide to follow.

I fondly remember—and now laugh about—the scant documentation for a mobile streaming server we were attempting to stand up in the mid-2000s. Our team could not stabilize the system to deliver video to mobile devices. At the time, these high-end mobile devices were flip phones and not the computing powerhouses we now carry. The documentation provided was simple, direct and worthless. The best guidance it provided was, “It’s good when it works, but it doesn’t always work.”

Shortly after I took a position as executive director of Reese News Lab at UNC’s School of Media and Journalism in 2011, I was given a copy of Mark Briggs’ first edition of “Journalism Next.” He had compiled and explained practical techniques for digital publishing. Where had this been? My desktop publishing instructor could finally stop chuckling.

In August that year, I watched Hurricane Irene set a course for the North Carolina coast. Lab students decided to live blog the storm from central North Carolina, while sourcing information with news organizations in the eastern part of the state. The students had not done this before and were hesitant. In the end, one of them remarked that he did not realize how useful the technique could be.

I am not a journalist. I am a technologist with a goal of supporting journalists and the vital service they provide in our society. I am driven by the purpose of journalism as defined by the American Press Institute: “To provide citizens with the information they need to make the best possible decisions about their lives, their communities, their societies, and their governments.”¹

Our digital world is an ever changing environment in which people can watch, read, listen, interact and respond to journalists’ work. It is not passive engagement where journalists simply work “at people.” Rather, journalists work with and for people.

The impact is immeasurable when we put technology to work for us.

Technology is not to be feared or be held in contempt. Simply classifying the digital media tools available as “technology” only discounts their ability to help us serve the purpose of journalism. Journalists who embrace technology can help people see the world more clearly, understand complex situations and provide avenues for actions. Technology is a part of a journalist’s life, and there is a practical guide for its use.

You simply have to put the tools to work, and you do not have to rely on trial and error. Mark has made complex processes understandable and provides practical advice, tips and methods for taking advantage of everything the digital world can provide. He pulls from his vast experience to make this guide applicable and practical.

I challenge you to put "Journalism Next" to use. Our society is counting on you. If you believe in the purpose of journalism, then it is your responsibility to keep advancing journalism. It is your responsibility to provide that service in every way possible. It is your responsibility to use the tools available. This book can help.

John Clark

Executive Director of PILOT, National Association of Broadcasters

NOTE

1. What is the purpose of journalism," American Press Institute, 2018. <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/journalism-essentials/what-is-journalism/purpose-journalism/>

Journalism Is About People, Not Technology

"T

he future is already here. It's just not very evenly distributed yet."

When William Gibson made that observation in 1993, there was no Facebook, no Google, no iPhones or Oculus Rifts. It is among the most prescient observations I have heard, and it still rings true today.

People often ask about the future of journalism. As Gibson noted, it is already here.

To survive and thrive in the digital age, I argued in my first book, "Journalism 2.0," journalists must adopt a new way of thinking and approaching their craft. Learning the skills and technology is actually the easy part. Recognizing you are part of a new information ecosystem, aka "the future," is the steeper hill to climb.

That perspective, at least the latter part, now almost seems quaint. When "Journalism 2.0" was published (in 2007), most journalists in the United States were ambivalent (at best) toward the new digital information ecosystem. Then social media happened, driven largely by Facebook and Twitter, and it became difficult to find anyone in journalism who did not believe the landscape had been significantly altered.

I wrote that book for working journalists: those who had spent years or decades doing one form of journalism and were now being asked to evolve. Thanks to funding from the Knight Foundation, the book was made available as a free downloadable e-book, and more than 200,000 people have taken advantage. The book has been translated into five languages, too. Most surprising to me, many colleges and universities adopted the book. (I assumed someone would have already written the book on that.)

A revised, updated and expanded version of the book, titled "Journalism Next," was published in 2009 by CQ Press. It was aimed at those getting started in journalism or digital publishing, whether students or midcareer professionals looking for a new direction.

Regardless, the message is the same for both students and practitioners: "The future is now."

Though it is not the only industry to be upended in recent years, the pace of disruption for mainstream media—daily newspapers, TV and radio stations and magazines—is certainly in full force. As a result, the evolution of the business model is (finally) receiving the focus it deserves, meaning we have already begun to glimpse what the next incarnation of sustainable journalism looks like. (My other book, "Entrepreneurial Journalism," covers this area.) The disruption of the traditional business model has led many in journalism, especially those who have worked at newspapers, to question the future for journalism. Do not be one of them.

"The future of journalism can and will be better than its past," says Richard Gingras, who is now head of news products at Google. "[But] we need to rethink every facet of what we do. There's a large amount of transformation to get from here to there."

WELCOME TO THE AGE OF TRANSFORMATION

The news business, and all business really, will be forever changing. The dizzying pace of technological innovation will ensure it. There is no magical switch to flip that will move us all from one model to another.

"The culture of innovation is not a luxury," says Google's Gingras. "It can't be intermittent. It must of part of an organization's DNA."

When "Journalism 2.0" was first published, the first iPhone had just been released. There is no mention in the book of Twitter. The iPad? Android? Instagram? All (and many more) were still in development and mostly just ideas.

We are living in the age of digital Darwinism. This affects any business using digital technology to publish content, whether it is journalism, music, movies or funny cat videos.

Unfortunately, many of the people running news companies today still remember the best of times during the 1980s and 1990s. Given that experience, it can be difficult not to hope that the current state of flux is only temporary. Those decades were a golden period for publishers, where

organizations grew large and consolidated, pushing profit margins up and supporting publicly traded companies.

WHAT JOB CAN I GET IN JOURNALISM?

My last three jobs in journalism did not exist when I was in college.

If you are a student reading this, think about what that means for your future. How do you prepare yourself today for a job that does not currently exist? If you are an educator reading this, how do you prepare your students for jobs that do not currently exist? (And jobs that did not exist while you were working in the profession?)

I can tell you what worked for me:

- **Use a wide-angle lens when viewing the world:** Journalism, especially newspaper and broadcast television journalism, is an extremely insular industry. To prepare yourself for what is coming next, you must be aware of the wide range of innovation, from technology to entertainment and new consumer products. Read business magazines and websites. Follow smart people on social media who have nothing to do with news. Attend events that are not related to journalism.
- **Feed your journalistic curiosity, starve your journalistic skepticism:** Curiosity is inherent in journalists. Most of the people who end up in journalism are there because they want to answer questions, for themselves and their audience. Apply that curiosity to new products, software tools, gadgets and apps. Become an early adopter.
- **Collaborate:** Whenever possible, collaborate with people outside your regular team. Mixing with people from other disciplines or interests will teach you new ways of thinking and approaching problems.

It is uncertain where your next career opportunity will come from. It may come from a traditional news company in a newly created role. Or it could come from a start-up news blog or a new enterprise you launch yourself.

Here is why it is a good time to go into journalism:

► 1. Journalism has a bright future

Experimental news operations have popped up all over the web since "Journalism 2.0" was first published. Some have become sustainable

businesses in a very short time. Others are still searching for viability while finding new ways to cover issues and communities.

In short, the demand for journalism from its audience has not diminished. But the models look very different these days.

A more narrow focus is required. Think of it as "bottom-up" journalism instead of "top-down." Technology and political and hyperlocal news sites have been the first to find success by starting small and concentrating on very specific topics. This, of course, is counter to the course of the more general audience publications that dominated when printing and distribution monopolies ruled the day.

Unleashed from corporate-run organizations sweating out the quarterly profit margin, the journalists powering these new sites have infused them with a level of energy, commitment and passion that can be found only in start-up companies. It is easy to see how these sites will pave the way for the true digital transformation of mainstream news companies, by finding successful new methods to inform and connect communities online.

Or in some cases, they will replace mainstream news companies.

▶ 2. That future is in your hands

Journalism needs you. It needs someone who can bring a fresh approach without the baggage that burdened earlier generations.

As the institutions that perform journalism struggled economically through the past decade, it became increasingly apparent that the people in charge did not have what it takes to oversee a digital transformation that would secure a viable future. Harsh words, I know. But their inability to put the audience first and use new technology to do better journalism—instead of copying the existing model and pasting it online—created a world where every newspaper and local TV news website is immediately identifiable. Most are disjointed repositories of what a news organization has always produced, with some new twists thrown in for good measure, instead of rich, vibrant information sources their communities want and need.

That is where you come in. Whether you end up working for a newspaper, magazine, TV station or internet start-up, you will have the opportunity—make that responsibility—to do things differently. My first job in journalism (part-time sports clerk) was mostly answering phones and doing grunt work where no one asked me about my ideas. Your first job is likely to be much different.

In fact, I would venture a guess that you will not get a first job *without* your ideas, in addition to your skills and experience.

► 3. Journalism will be better than it was before

Transformation and evolution are messy, emotional processes. When they produce advancement for society and business, they are seen as healthy and worthwhile, but not necessarily to those on the front lines.

After all, change is inevitable, but progress is optional.

The transformation to digital started more than 15 years ago for news companies and the web. If you are just getting started in journalism, you benefit by having missed the early mess.

The game is not over—it is just getting started. And since tomorrow's journalists inherently "get" the internet because they grew up with it, they have the opportunity to shape the future of journalism online as no generation has before.

If you did not grow up with the internet, do not despair. I did not either. My first newspaper reporting job had me sending stories back to the office on a Radio Shack computer device dubbed the "Trash-80" using cups over the receiver at a pay phone. (It only worked about half the time, so there was a lot of dictation.) Now, digital information and communication are like the air I breathe: I do not even notice they are there.

Interactive, transparent, collaborative journalism works. Digital technologies, some that have yet to be invented, will aid you. But they cannot replace a thoughtful, skilled professional with an entrepreneurial spirit. You will be ready to try, fail and try again. Thankfully, you will find a more experimental culture at news organizations today (and tomorrow) to test those new ideas.

You do not need to confine yourself to the road traveled before you—the opportunity to chart your own course is not only available: it is mandatory.

SUMMARY

While journalism is not the only industry caught in the middle of a massive upheaval, I would argue it is an industry that stands a great chance of making it to the other side and dramatically improving along the way.

"I think in the long run," author Steven Berlin Johnson said, "we're going to look back at many facets of old media and realize that we were living in a desert disguised as a rain forest."

Here is the new deal: You probably will not get to travel a well-marked, established career path as those who came before you did. But you will have a say in how the fourth estate evolves and how citizens are informed and engaged in the decades to come. And you will have the chance to be part of something bigger and better than it has ever been before.

Sounds like a pretty good deal to me. So, let's get started.

