



## A 10-Step Survival Guide for Journalism Schools Stuck in the Fourth Estate

By: Joe Murray, Ph.D.

*Back in the spring of 1789, Louis XVI summoned a full meeting of “Les États-Généraux,” a general assembly of estates consisting of representatives from all but the poorest segment of the French citizenry. The three estates gathered at the Palace of Versailles. The First Estate was comprised of three hundred nobles, the Second; three hundred clergy and the Third; six hundred commoners.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the “estates of the realm” became known to the world. Years later, Thomas Carlyle wrote that Irish philosopher Edmund Burke cast his eyes upon the Reporter’s Gallery of the House of Commons and said, “...yonder sat a Fourth Estate, more important far than they all.”<sup>2</sup>*

### Here We Are

#### Something is Different

Skip forward now, from the 18th to the 21st—you do have random access to the centuries don’t you? Observe that nobles, clergy, and commoners still have a steadfast place in these modern times, but up in the press gallery, it’s getting a little crowded—what with all the extra folk moving into the estates of the realm these days. The contemporary press now must knock elbows with mojos, smart mobs, bloggers, social-networkers, and backpack journalists, to name but a few. Hang the Fourth Estate, these new denizens are co-opting the Fifth Estate and some are demanding there is even a Sixth. Like the traditional press, these “shapers of public opinion” also gather the news with a passion *and* the technology to instantly publish their text, video, sound, animations, and cogitations as vox populi to the hoi polloi all around the world.

In other words, these “participant journalists,” with their camera phones, laptops and wi-fi Web access, dare to communicate directly with those select members of the body politic who have disposable incomes and demographic appeal to “Big-Media’s” advertisers. A few years ago, this made the average media mogul more than a bit crazy-mad. “Don’t these people know that the loyal patronage of the hoi polloi belongs to the commercial news syndicates and networks!” By now, everyone knows that’s all changing, of necessity. Newspa-

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per readership and TV news viewing is declining; newsprint costs are rising; retail, auto and movie advertising is slumping.<sup>3</sup> Even the print industry's longtime bread and butter revenue stream has gone stale with the introduction of free searchable classifieds on web sites like Craigslist and similar online venues. National and local TV news viewership is falling as more people gravitate to the Internet for the news they can use anytime. The Pew Research Center reported that in the years between 1993 and 2000 the number of people watching nightly network news fell to 30% in 2000 from a high of 60% at the beginning of the seven-year period. The trend for local TV news viewers also slipped to 56% from a high of 77% in 1993.<sup>4</sup>

According to Yehonathan Tommer, "mainstream journalism as we have known it for the better part of the 20th century is headed for remarkable changes that are blurring distinctions between professionals and non-professionals." Tommer writes for OhMyNews,<sup>5</sup> a collaborative online newspaper with a readership of two million, and more than 26,000 registered "citizen journalists." This collaborative news site is credited with playing a key role in sweeping Korean President Roh Moo-hyun to power in 2003.

If you just stopped to go back and re-read the part about the two million subscribers, it's likely you're not a citizen journalist. Up north, the Canadian NowPublic<sup>6</sup> web site also combines camera-phone photographs and breaking news events supplied by citizen journalists. Michael Tippett, co-founder of the site, says "mainstream journalism and citizen journalism can and should collaborate and complement each other." Tippett points out that citizen journalism sites can spread a broad network, and with their new technologies "re-engineer the supply of news."<sup>7</sup>

In July, 2007 NowPublic's home page reported that it had 109,611 members in 3,693 cities around the world, bringing meaning to their motto, "crowd powered media." Using the new math, that would embed an average of 30 "reporters" in each locality. How many journalists are currently covering your municipality? At about the same time Roh was getting elected in Korea with the help of participant journalism, Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis were working on their seminal report, *We Media: How Audiences are Shaping the Future of News and Information*.<sup>8</sup>

According to this report, "Media futurists have predicted that by 2021, "citizens will produce 50 percent of the news peer-to-peer. However, mainstream news media have yet to meaningfully adopt or experiment with these new forms." Bowman and Willis are joined

**"If the mainstream press is bewildered..., can university journalism schools be far behind?"**

by countless others now who believe, “We are at the beginning of a Golden Age of journalism—but it is not journalism as we have known it.” The Carnegie Corporation commissioned a survey to gain insight into where 18-to-34-year-olds get their news and how the Net Generation thinks they’ll access news in the future. One area of the survey assessed young people’s perception of the relative strength of the various media, including its timeliness, utility and trustworthiness. “Newspaper” ranked particularly low in all categories.

The Internet’s image performed much better overall in the survey. But, when it comes to the matter of trust, the Internet was regarded only a percentage point higher than newspapers. Net Geners still gave higher marks to local and cable TV news as the more trustworthy sources.

### Source Best Described By Image

The Internet among the top performers on many images; Newspaper is not considered strong on any image

	Local TV News	National Net. News	Cable TV News	Internet	Newspaper
Trustworthy	21%	19%	21%	10%	9%
Up-to-date	19%	13%	24%	29%	4%
Offers “news I can use”	37%	11%	10%	20%	9%
Useful way to learn	15%	11%	14%	41%	8%
Entertaining	23%	12%	18%	20%	4%
Provides news only when I want it	12%	6%	9%	49%	9%

SOURCE: Carnegie Reporter, April 2004<sup>9</sup>

All this is enough to make traditional news organizations dizzy, wondering if the importance bestowed upon the Fourth Estate centuries ago by Burke is now indeed in some kind of dire jeopardy. If the mainstream press is bewildered with exactly how to catch up and compete with all of the screen scrapings, mashups and YouTube<sup>10</sup> videos being uploaded, can university journalism schools be far behind? Clearly the evidence is showing that some adaptation is in order for journalism education and practice to accommodate the cultural changes, shifts in audience preferences and emerging technology.

“We are at the beginning of a Golden Age of journalism—but it is not journalism as we have known it.”

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## *Sleeping Giants*

### **What's a Paragon to Do?**

Most journalism schools are in the process of sorting out the convergence of media simultaneously with the aforementioned seating problem and elbow-knocking going on in the new estates. Clyde Bentley is an associate professor on the Convergence Journalism faculty at the University of Missouri and he's not even sure "convergence" is the right word for what they're doing. "That term implies that two or more ways of producing news are merging to become one," he says. "But I'm a print person and know how hard it is to turn broadcast stories into print ones." Bentley thinks "online" might be a better word. In his mind, "convergence" should be relegated to the Master's level where future media managers can study how to integrate multimedia in the newsroom.<sup>11</sup>

Missouri is conservatively leading a pack of J-schools that are now beginning to experiment and alter the shape of their programs and curricula to teach students to be productive and competitive not only in the Fourth, but perhaps also the Fifth and Sixth Estates as well. While few schools presently know exactly what to do, almost all are certain they must do *something*. Professor Stephen Greene visited Missouri and three other well-known journalism schools in 2006 to assess the state of journalism education. He blogged interviews back to his institution, San Jose State University, as part of a two-week investigative tour, Quest 4 the Best.<sup>12</sup> Greene reported, "Missouri created a new Convergence Sequence, but, with only five faculty, it ranks as the smallest group in the school. It will receive some added support when the new \$31 million Donald Reynolds Journalism Institute is completed in 2008, but even then, there will only be eight faculty compared to the 13 faculty members currently in the Journalism Sequence." Associate Dean Brian Brooks says, "95% of all new jobs are still traditional ones." "Convergence will eventually come," he says, "but Missouri intends to carefully stage the transition."

Greene compared the tortoise-powered speed of convergence at Missouri to the nearby University of Kansas. UK's relative pace of change more resembled a hare with its tail on fire. "They shook it up overnight, but we didn't think we could do that and continue to support the media industries that depend on us for graduates," Missouri's Brooks says. When Greene visited Kansas and asked if the university moved too far too fast, UK professor Rick Musser

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responded with a backhanded swipe at his Midwest rivals, according to Greene. “Of course, we haven’t,” said Musser. “It never works to stay the same. Some people are just too set in their ways.” Former department chair Jimmy Gentry, who engineered the changes at UK, says it was time for reorganization. “We had had the same curriculum for 15 years. It was the old ‘elevator’ approach to learning. You enter a sequence at the first floor and ascend through the courses until you get out at the top. The problem is the door never opens in between. You never take common courses or outside courses with anyone else in the school.” Greene reported that Gentry’s reorganization at Kansas “worked so well that today other universities, like Ithaca College, among others, pay him \$1500 a day plus expenses to do the same for their schools.” The major problem Gentry encounters as a consultant to other schools? “Number one is the reluctance to change,” he says. “That’s why I always tell the faculty up front, ‘If you want to stay the same, hire someone else. I tell them we’re going to the window and jumping out together,’” Gentry says.

### **Transformation Personified**

If transformation is inevitable, then how best should a school of journalism go about accomplishing it? For starters, one needs only to look at the employment advertisements on institutional web sites to find clear indicators of changes that are planned for faculty and likewise, the types of courses that will be taught. A recent ad placed by the Medill School at Northwestern University says that the school is “reinventing its journalism curriculum to add emphasis throughout the program on multimedia journalism, audience understanding and engagement and online publishing.” According to the accompanying job description, Medill is looking “for several innovative media professionals or academics who can help us develop new courses and teach undergraduate and master’s students. We are particularly interested in people who can teach journalism videography, including the creative use of video story forms and production techniques, to create video news and feature packages for digital distribution via Web, cell phones and handheld devices. Instructor and students primarily use small handheld digital video cameras and do some field producing and editing on wireless laptops.”<sup>13</sup>

In another job ad, the Department of Mass Communications at Southern Illinois University “seeks candidates for an anticipated tenure-track Assistant Professor position in web design and multimedia.” The new hires will teach courses such as, “Design & Writing for World

**“You enter a sequence at the first floor and ascend through the courses until you get out at the top. The problem is the door never opens in between.”**

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Wide Web, Multimedia Use in Mass Media, Online Reporting, Media Convergence and Advanced Multimedia.” Particular software skills are also identified in the ad: “Knowledge of Adobe Creative Suite, Studio 8, and other multimedia authoring tools is highly desirable.”<sup>14</sup>

While on the subject of software, many schools attribute at least some positive change to the decision to go with one computer platform. All four schools from Greene’s survey—Ithaca College, South Carolina, Missouri and Kansas—use Macintosh. “They all did it for roughly the same reason,” says Greene. “The iLife applications bundled free with the computers made possible all the multimedia projects added to the curriculum.” Associate Dean Brian Brooks of the University of Missouri says, “We were an IBM school. They had given us \$15 million, but after reviewing what each had to offer, it was apparent Macs were best for us. Those applications make it possible for our students to complete all the basic multimedia projects we assign,” Brooks said. For advanced tasks, the school uses Avid for broadcast, Dreamweaver for the web and InDesign for print layout.

As journalism schools begin to reinvent themselves, there are of course, many factors to evaluate in addition to the composition of the faculty and context of the courses. It is also important to consider the relative size of the faculty and student population; the inherent philosophy and strengths of the institution; perception and need; interest and predisposition toward change; and more—none the least of which is how to fund the technology required by the convergence of all media. To finance the necessary technology at the University of Kansas, the school instituted a \$12 per credit hour lab fee. According to the school’s assistant dean, David Guth, that lab fee brought in \$180,000 in 2005. If the fee seems expensive, consider the fact that, at the time, it was the lowest one on campus. Engineering, for example, was charging \$75 per credit hour to KU students when Stephen Greene interviewed Guth in 2006. Greene speculated that \$36 per course could “end the financial woes” for his employer, San Jose State University. By way of comparison, Greene reported Missouri’s Journalism School’s yearly equipment and expenses budget in 2006 was \$150,000—\$50,000 short of the \$200,000 they needed.<sup>15</sup>

In spite of the myriad ways that programs might end up relative to an institution’s individual personality and mission, when it comes to integrating technology, approaches for re-invention may be simplified to a small set of general alternatives. Mass communication educators generally adopt one of two distinct approaches to new technologies,

**“Mass communication educators generally adopt one of two distinct approaches to new technologies: incorporation or experimentation.”**

says Robert Huesca: “incorporation or experimentation.” Some educators try to incorporate new technologies into existing journalistic norms and practices, but Huesca advocates against “mere incorporation.” Instead, he argues that the academy must be willing to reinvent journalism education and experiment with “practices that are congruent with the imputed properties of cyberspace.” Because of this, Huesca encourages educators to be “flexible, creative, and open-minded experimenters who are not wedded to given conventions of journalism.”<sup>16</sup>

In the true spirit of the unconventional, and all that is imputed, I submit that there are indeed three prototypical approaches to transforming any journalism curriculum at any institution. They are presented here in no particular order, as I am sure you will quickly determine the most appropriate approach for your institution.

### *The Three Approaches*

#### **Approach A: Blow it up**

Declare all current courses in the journalism curriculum, “weapons of mass instruction” and blow them up. While the fires burn, create an entirely new theoretical utopian curriculum that converges all theory and practice with the technology of journalism for the new millennium. “Surge” the faculty with newly created “technicals.” Hire consultants from Blackboard to rout out the tenured insurgents and partially rebuild the program with “just-in-time” online courses using *ready-fire-aim* hardware and software. Fund the entire operation with support from virtually any Dot.Com that will pay for naming rights to the new country—er, school. While the course sequences and concentrations are being reconstituted, announce the deployment of an exit strategy for the consultants and leave the students to teach themselves.

#### **Approach B: Give Piece (of Convergence) a Chance**

The anxieties over convergence and new technologies that have up until this point made us rethink *what* and *how* we teach will imminently demand that we face the questions of *why* and *for whom* we teach.<sup>17</sup> Focus on the enduring issues of journalism and service to the public rather than to media industries. Make journalism and mass communication education and professional practice diverse, inclusive, and global. Instead of worrying whether journalism pro-

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#### **Disclaimer**

These approaches are offered to provoke discussion and thought. Use of actual explosives to modify the journalism curriculum is dangerous and should not be attempted in real, or even academic, life. Any resemblance of the approaches to events, persons or situations past or present is entirely coincidental.

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grams are producing the kinds of staffers news industry leaders say they want, ask whether the journalists we train are prepared to serve the public weal.<sup>18</sup> Once you have fully grasped the weal, by all means develop the technological fluency and media literacy of students—but look beyond the basic skills they need to perform entry-level jobs and strive to educate the future leaders of this profession. Develop faculty and strategic changes to courses to effect transformation that can grow proportionately from its own momentum within the program. Integrate new technology into relevant current courses and create new courses where they are needed to address the state of the art, audience expectations and need. Integrate professional journalistic practice and new technology across the curriculum where the most significant results may be obtained. Walk slowly and deliberately. Resist the urge to hold hands and sing, “All we are saying, is give Convergence a chance....”

### **Approach C: Resistance is Futile**

Build large box. Fill with sand. In it, stick collective head. Continue to teach the way we always have, because we like it best. Wait for empathic and telepathic communication to evolve into a Seventh Estate. In the meantime, ask students how to upload your curriculum vita to Monster.com.

### *What Faculty Know*

The pace of change notwithstanding, journalism faculty instinctively know what separates the professional journalist from the average blogger with cell phone, Skype account, digital camera and a broadband connection to the Internet. It is, in a word—education. This much is clear and unequivocal. But how Boomer faculty apply this education to the inquiring minds of the Net Generation is a matter of great consternation and speculation.

It is apparent that we cannot spend 100% of our time on a medium that only 20% of the populace is predicted to be using three years from now. We know that experience, training, objectivity, truth, balance, perspective, insight and practice all contribute to close the gap between the non-professional and professional journalist. A hard working, motivated student will get all of this and more from a good school. As a student, it helps immeasurably to hang out with people who are smarter and more experienced, and to consort with academics and

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professionals who are willing to share their wisdom—albeit for the price of tuition. We know how to develop the skills and habits of beginning writers, reporters, and researchers. But like everyone else, we are also trying to do this while teaching the same students how to master all of the technology skills necessary to create comprehensive multimedia packages for the Web, and the growing list of other new media form factors and distribution points that seem to be emerging daily.

### *What's the Story?*

With all of the current attention on new technology and media convergence, and with the associated fear of losing our minds in addition to our audience, students and revenue, everyone, it seems, is concerned about the future. “The trouble with our times,” says Paul Valéry, “Is that the future isn’t what it used to be.” While this observation is at once contemporary and relevant when one considers the many changes taking place in the mainstream media today, it should interest you to note that Valéry was born in 1871—a full 120 years before the Internet arrived on the scene to make our life’s story so *very* interesting.

Journalism is all about *the story*. Storytelling has been a part of human culture as long as there has been a culture, and visual storytelling is as old as history itself. Some of the earliest examples are found in the cave paintings of Lascaux, France dating from 15,000 BC. By 3,100 BC Egyptians were telling sacred stories using hieroglyphics. Medieval monks illuminated manuscripts. Great writers and painters captured the ages in ink and oils. Early photographers and cinematographers introduced a frame of reference for our collective reality. One and all, they contributed to the gradual shrinking of our perceptual world while expanding our consciousness at the same time. We now inexorably will add to it a record of multimedia for the generations that follow. One might ask, “Why bother?” The answer is simple: Because the world is a different place. The planet still weighs in at a little over six thousand billion billion tons (no, it’s not a typo) and spins around once per day. But in spite of what science tells us, it’s now possible to fit our entire world into Apple’s new i-Phone, or they wouldn’t have made one for us—right? Here is an example from real life: I walk out to the box to get the morning newspaper and I remark to no one in particular, “I wonder what the weather’s going to be like today?” My six-year old overhears me and by the time I arrive back at the kitchen table with the front page and the day-old forecast, the kid has already checked the new interactive map on weather.com because

**“The trouble with our times is that the future isn’t what it used to be.”**

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he “likes the rain and cloud animation.” He continues, “And you can now overlay rain and clouds at the same time in a semi-transparent motion layer.” “Way cool,” I say over my bowl of Post Toastie Anachronisms. You’ll see this same kid in your intro course someday, are you ready?

Will multimedia become our hieroglyphs? Only time will tell. At present, it seems multimedia can make almost any story more interesting and compelling. If you could, wouldn’t you want to see and hear actual video and audio recordings of the young Pharaoh Tutankhamen<sup>19</sup> as you investigate if he was murdered, as most believe from a blow to the back of his head or, as new evidence suggests, he died of an infection from a broken leg? Multimedia stories are particularly effective because, thanks in part to the World Wide Web, they are reaching the most people. The technology of course, has the remarkable capacity to create the appearance of sophistication, credibility, objectivity, authority and authenticity in a particular story—when in fact it may all be a spectacular lie. It is important to be reminded that multimedia technology alone does not make a good story great, nor a journalist. How then do we prepare students to be intelligent consumers of information, and likewise, professional journalists with a high level of multimedia literacy, occupational competence and a competitive stake in the new technological estates? How are other schools coping with this new Golden Age? These are not rhetorical questions. Journalism schools want the answers now, and our students want to work, earn a comfortable living and buy i-Phones.

### **First, A Few Words From Our Sponsors—I Mean, Students**

A student asked me once, “How does it feel to be a professor? After a dramatic pause that beguiled the academic traditions of the professoriate, I responded thoughtfully, “What do you mean?” The student clarified, “You know, like every year *you* get older, but your students stay the same age.” “An interesting observation,” I said, while stroking my chin with forefinger and thumb. This provided a moment for me to rapidly flip through my brain’s psychology files to conjure up a more perfect response that would help guide this exciting opportunity for discussion. “How do you think it feels?” I asked, as I anticipated the arrival of the warm glow that comes from adulation and having one’s self-worth affirmed. “It must really suck,” the student said, and she walked off before I could engage her in a meaningful conversation about how meaningful my job is to me.

**“Multimedia technology alone does not make a good story great, nor a journalist.”**

A couple of decades may frequently stand between the professor and the student and their respective generations, but research shows that the differentiating factor may not be so much one person's generation versus another; the difference may be in experience. Generational issues are relevant to higher education because the faculty or administrator perspective may be considerably different from that of our students.<sup>20</sup>

So, I was interacting with my student when she asked how it felt to be a professor, wasn't I? Why did the conversation fail? Because I fundamentally misunderstood the question as an invitation for a conversation about teaching, and didn't recognize I was being "Googled" for a quick answer and preconceived response. The student pulled a cell phone out of her purse as she walked off, so I am fairly certain she also wanted to respond to an incoming text message or voice mail. Maybe this is why old professors seem so frequently to be talking to themselves.

The short attention spans of Net Geners point to interaction as an important component of instruction. According to Mark Prensky, they "crave interactivity—an immediate response to their each and every action. Traditional schooling provides very little of this compared to the rest of their world." Where immediacy is concerned, Prensky says, "Digital natives are used to receiving information really fast. They like to parallel process and multitask.... they thrive on immediate gratification." The expectation of immediacy holds true for access to friends, services, and responses to questions. According to one student, "The ever-increasing speed of the Internet is one thing I really like because I like my info now, not later."<sup>22</sup>

### *Teaching on the Edge*

Researchers Diana and James Oblinger point out in *Educating the Net Generation*<sup>25</sup> that, "It is an almost instinctive assumption to believe that Net Gen students will want to use IT heavily in their education; they certainly do in their personal lives." According to the report, "if you ask Net Gen learners what technology they use, you will often get a blank stare." Greg Roberts, a contributor to the research, says the Net Geners "don't think in terms of technology." Rather, "they think in terms of the activity technology enables. In general, the Net Gen views the Internet as an access tool—a medium for distribution of resources rather than a resource with limitations."<sup>26</sup>

#### **HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH DIGITAL NATIVES**

**Some educational researchers believe communicating with, and teaching a digital native effectively, requires large doses of interaction and immediacy.**

**George Kuh says the social nature of these new generation students, "as well as their desire for experiential learning, implies that interaction is an important technique for colleges and universities to employ.**

**The importance of interaction is not new; learning science has consistently demonstrated that students learn more when they interact—with material, with each other, and with faculty."<sup>21</sup>**

The research further reveals that when asked about technology, students' definitions centered primarily on the newest technologies. For example, "a cell phone with a new feature was considered technology; a cell phone with standard features was not." "What we might consider 'new technology,' such as blogs or wikis, are not thought of as technology by students," according to Oblinger. Surveying members of the Net Generation reveals that the activity enabled by a particular technology is more important than the technology itself. For example, instant messaging, Oblinger reports, wasn't considered a technology; IMing is treated as a verb—it is an action, not a technology. Students often use the word "talk" when they describe text messaging or instant messaging. If the technology isn't "new, novel, or customizable," it is not technology to the Net Geners.

Since Net Geners spend so much of their time online, it seems reasonable to expect that they would have a strong preference for Web-based courses. The reverse is actually true, as illustrated by a study from the University of Central Florida. Older students (Matures and Baby Boomers) are much more likely to be satisfied with fully Web-based courses than are traditional-age students. The reason relates to the Net Gen desire to be connected with people and to be social as well as their expectations of higher education. Traditional-age students often say they came to college to work with faculty and other students, not to interact with them online. Older learners tend to be less interested in the social aspects of learning; convenience and flexibility are much more important.<sup>27</sup>

	Matures	Baby Boomers	Generation X	Net Generation
Birth Dates	1900–1946	1946–1964	1965–1982	1982–1991
Description	Greatest generation	Me generation	Latchkey generation	Millennials
Attributes	Command and control Self-sacrifice	Optimistic Workaholic	Independent Skeptical	Hopeful Determined
Likes	Respect for authority Family Community involvement	Responsibility Work ethic Can-do attitude	Freedom Multitasking Work-life balance	Public activism Latest technology Parents
Dislikes	Waste Technology	Laziness Turning 50	Red tape Hype	Anything slow Negativity

SOURCE: Rita Murray, in *Educating the Net Generation*.<sup>28</sup>

## TALK, TEXT, TEST

The "talk, text, test" approach to teaching is not highly effective with most learners.

Students do best when they actively construct their own knowledge. In addition, there is a positive correlation between interaction and knowledge and a positive correlation between interaction and student retention.<sup>23</sup>

The level of interactivity in a traditional lecture is typically quite low. Estimates are that students ask 0.1 questions per hour in a traditional class; faculty ask 0.3 per hour.

Networked technology of course, makes it possible to provide learners with anytime, anywhere content and interactions if desired. Research shows that some computer-based instruction increases the number of questions posed from less than 1 per hour to 180–600 per hour.<sup>24</sup>

In response to a student technology survey the majority of students preferred a moderate amount of IT in their classes. Students appreciate the convenience provided by online syllabi, class readings, and online submission of assignments.<sup>29</sup> They also want face-to-face interaction, however: Year after year, face-to-face interactions are ranked by all students in either first or second place. This replicates the results of many distance education studies that show students often feel that something important to their learning is missing when all interactions are mediated, whether synchronous or asynchronous.<sup>30</sup>

Oblinger says, “The implication is that colleges and universities should not assume that more technology is necessarily better. Technology that enables certain types of activities is likely to be appreciated. For example, wireless networking enables learner mobility and makes it possible to be constantly connected. The majority of wireless network use, however, may be outside the academic realm. Using technology to increase customization, convenience, and collaboration is well received; however, its integration into most courses or curricula is not as deep as into students’ personal lives.” For the Net Generation, “the Internet is like oxygen; they can’t imagine being able to live without it.”<sup>31</sup>

### **We’ve Met the Enemy—It is Us**

The prevailing research shows that technology in and of itself is not what makes learning engaging for the Net Gen or, for that matter, any generation. It is the learning *activity* that matters most. Many faculty also teach a relatively large number of students who are not part of the Net Generation. In short, there are significant individual differences among learners in any classroom, so no one-size-fits-all approach will ever be effective. With the appropriate use of technology, learning can be made more active, social, and learner centered—but common sense dictates that the uses of technology should be driven by pedagogy, not the technology itself. For journalism students in particular, a high level of technology mastery is crucial to their continued success in the future’s “media information utilities”.

Technology has changed the Net Generation. The mainstream media and journalism education must also change. It should be clear by now that transforming the Fourth Estate is going to take a good amount of effort, determination and dare I say, inspiration?

Benjamin Franklin believed that, “When you’re finished changing, you’re finished.” Though these ten steps are offered to foster discussion on how to survive the many changes that await us in the

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new Fourth Estate, our concerns for survival will readily be eclipsed by our growth. For many of us, the transformation is indeed, only just beginning, but if we are willfull and intent on meaningful change, transformation will always be far from finished.

## *Ten Steps for Survival*

### **1. Faculty, Know Thy Students**

Digital natives are bored by most of today's education, well-meaning as it may be. The many skills that new technology has actually enhanced—like parallel processing, graphics awareness, and random access—have profound implications for learning, yet are almost totally ignored by educators. You know what is important for students to learn, you now must find new ways to teach that will engage your students to continue learning more. All learners are not the same. Teaching them all universally well is frequently difficult and occasionally, not possible. Experiment with an approach that will create activities both in, and outside of class with other students, faculty professionals and members of the community. Use your judgment. Be resourceful. This is why you make the big bucks.

### **2. Faculty, Know Thyself**

As “old faculty,” you have something that does not ship with any software application and cannot be downloaded at any price or connection speed. Experience. Wisdom. Perspective. Your years of teaching, research, professional depth, and service are more valuable than your college's technology investment. You are the “value-add” to the enduring propositions of new-media journalism. Without it, our students may as well be computers themselves—unthinking, lacking in sound judgment and the genuine knowledge or intelligence required to move a heart or a mind.

As “new faculty,” you are digital. You know how to blog and use a digital video camera. You write and edit multimedia on your laptop while parked in a wi-fi hotspot at your daughter's daycare. In the very moment you are able to achieve the remarkable and reach each new goal, you need only look at your feet to know with certainty that your reach has been extended by standing on the shoulders of the old faculty who came before you.

**“In short, there are significant individual differences among learners in any classroom, so no one-size-fits-all approach will ever be effective.”**

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All faculty, new and old alike, need to learn something new on a regular basis to grow the awareness of how changes are affecting their specialties, their teaching practice and the field of journalism in particular. Fail to do this, and you will start feeling out of step with your colleagues and students with the passing of each new semester. And, as is the nature of these things, you will come to know this long after everyone else knows, and without any assistance from them.

### 3. Compromise Writing Skills At Our Peril

Hold on, I am getting a text message from the future. It says, “U wl B srry!” With all of the sexy, sophisticated software calling to us from our monitors, it might be tempting to begin thinking that it is more important to focus on helping make our students technologically literate while leaving the literacy of our common language to be fed and watered by the English department. Writing and grammar skills are more important than technology skills. There, I said it. Anyone who doesn’t agree is itching for a fight. This is one of the things that distinguishes the professional journalist from Koko the gorilla or a 3rd grade mojo with Mozilla.

### 4. Teach Students To Think And Use Technology

Remember Paul Valéry? When he wasn’t waxing philosophical about the future, he was waxing philosophical about other things—like developing the minds of our students. To wit: “Let us confess: The real object of education is the diploma. I never hesitate to declare that the diploma is the deadly enemy of culture. As diplomas have become more important in our lives (and their importance has done nothing but grow as a result of economic conditions), the less has education had any real effect...The aim of education being no longer the development of the mind but the acquisition of the diploma, the required minimum becomes the goal of study.”<sup>31</sup>

One minimally can develop a utility with most technology in a relatively short amount of time. Knowledge, perspective, insight, intelligence. This stuff takes much longer. New York University professor Jay Rosen acknowledges that two curricular aims hang in the balance of the modern journalism school. Of the two aims, “One builds the basic skills of reporting and editing. The other enlarges the understanding that future journalists will place behind those skills”<sup>32</sup>

**“You write and edit multimedia on your laptop while parked in a wi-fi hotspot at your daughter’s daycare.”**

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## 5. Introduce Convergence Early

Whatever you call it, media convergence, online journalism, or Beelzebub, get started now with introducing it at a common access point for all first-year students in the school. Exposure to, and awareness of multimedia techniques is more important than mastery in a student's first year. Don't sacrifice areas of concentration, but do provide a means for your students to "get off the elevator" to walk around on a floor that they typically would never see in the traditional vertical curriculum. For some of your students, this will be a history lesson because they are already consumers of converged information and multimedia. Consuming and creating, however, are two different things. Even if your students are creating multimedia content, they may not have the experience to do it well.

Prepare and develop faculty to integrate new technology into current courses across the curriculum. Identify common software, hardware and best-practices for courses and revise and reinvent a course only as necessary. Observe the examples of other universities and evaluate accordingly. Many *Beginning News Writing* courses now involve students using digital video cameras and the Internet. More often than not, the students in these courses are required to write the usual print stories, but now, working in groups of three, they also produce a basic interview on camera, a convergence story employing multimedia and an online story which they upload to the Web. Seriously consider getting students started on creating online portfolios and archives for their work. Encourage faculty and colleagues to put teaching resources, such as news stories and commercials, online. All students, at some point in the program should be uploading content to the Web and likewise, have the activity included in the requirements for completing a particular course.

Don't be overly concerned with total convergence of courses and blending everything together. Do look for ways to strengthen the relationship among the program sequences and for new opportunities to support collaboration among faculty.

## 6. Design And Usability Matter

I teach my students that one of literature's greatest challenges has always been to make the significant visible. With hundreds of cable television channels, and millions of online news sites, magazines, and blogs, it is also important now to make the visible significant if one expects to gain the attention and understanding of a regular audience. Good visual design, like writing, never goes out of

**"One minimally can develop a utility with most technology in a relatively short amount of time. Knowledge, perspective, insight, intelligence. This stuff takes much longer."**

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style. There is a high level of “truthiness” to the phrase, “When anything goes, everything goes.” When anything goes in design, chaos is the end result. Knowledge of inherent conventions and a visual grammar are required to communicate effectively online, and in any of the media now converging in our information landscape.

Visual literacy for the journalist is on par in importance with the mastery of language and technology. Media standards on much of the Web are currently already a lot lower than anyone suspected. Evidence is found in the proliferation of images and audio from camera phones in almost every news story from the war in Iraq to the shootings at Virginia Tech. The featured media clips are a far cry from broadcast quality video and sound—but it won’t always be this way. We should always set the bar high for a standard of presentation quality, design and usability as mark of professionalism in our field. In this regard, the technology should have to catch up to us.

## 7. Plant Generalists Now To Grow Specialists Later

Our students will work in a new environment where media organizations are transforming into information utilities. They need to be familiar with how the legs on the caterpillar work together to move digital stories from concept to completion, and also how stories morph and change as they cross over to appear in print, on television, the Internet, cell phones, databases, RSS feeds and podcasts.

## 8. ETWIAD

Every survival guide ought to have at least one catchy acronym. Here is ours: “Embrace The Web In All You Do” OK, I left out the “Y”—but the acronym sounds better this way and the word is still in there, since there really is no way to achieve true ETWIAD without you. The web is a container for good writing, not a replacement. A bucket of crap is still a bucket of crap on the Web, it is just delivered faster—and is searchable. If it will help, think of the Web as email with pictures. Or, perhaps a typewriter that also broadcasts movies and sound. No matter what course you are developing, transforming or currently teaching, find a way to integrate the Web with all you are doing. Your students will thank you.

Have your students start blogging and designing web pages and layouts as soon as practicable. Many *Introduction to Media* and *Basic Reporting* classes are adding Web and camera work to the more common assignments. Some colleges are considering creating new tracks like *Strategic Communications* (Formerly Public Relations and Adver-

**“Visual literacy for the journalist is on par in importance with the mastery of language and technology.”**

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tising) and *News and Online Information* (Old Print/Broadcast, New Online). Some schools additionally are wondering if they should abandon the production of the daily campus newspaper in favor of moving all news, features and advertising to one comprehensive on-line presence. Are you ready? Only if you *etwiad*.

## 9. Multitasking Is A Waste Of Time

Contrary to popular belief, doing two or three things simultaneously is not always good. Perhaps you were thinking I should call this step MIAWOT? Multitasking is not an especially good idea when you are trying to understand a new technology well enough to teach it fast enough to Net Gen students. Relax. Before you can integrate everything, you must first understand how to use one thing reasonably well. The technology can be overwhelming if you try to learn it all at once.

Here is a secret: learning just one software application well actually gives you a leg up on the next one. This is true because many of the processes and procedures across the software suites are derivative, and are becoming more integrated with each new release. Here's another secret: Do what professional developers do when they need to gear up quickly. They log on to [TotalTraining.com](http://TotalTraining.com)<sup>33</sup> and buy a DVD or online subscription to see exactly how everything works by watching a movie! Didn't get a concept? Rewind the clip and play again. No more reading software manuals! (As if anyone ever did?) Also, many of the software companies like Macromedia, Adobe and Apple, now provide free comprehensive online tutorials that you (and your students) can use to master the latest technology. You can even integrate the tutorials with your own online syllabus and course materials.

Apple's Pro Certification courses are another good way to standardize technology training for students and faculty. The various levels of certification are giving students a competitive edge and a distinguishing professional credential to accompany their degree on their first job interview. Be sure to use your own experience to help students understand how to troubleshoot problems and develop a high level of patience and persistence in resolving technology issues. Teach students to be resourceful, and when all else fails, where to go to find support. Remember the scientific method? Testing and changing too many variables simultaneously is a recipe for frustration and failure. Leverage your university's Information Services department, New Media Center, Educational Technology Service and Faculty Professional Development Center to help develop your own skills and help prepare materials for your courses.

**“The web is a container for good writing, not a replacement. A bucket of crap is still a bucket of crap on the Web, it is just delivered faster—and is searchable.”**

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## 10. Rinse and Repeat.

This step really should be called, “Experiment, Record Results, Analyze And Repeat.” The selected title, though, is much easier to remember, don’t you agree? If you really want to be picky, one should also state the problem and research hypotheses before rinsing, repeating and ultimately drawing a conclusion—but I think you get the idea. In short, extend a scientific curiosity and rigor to improving not only the curriculum of the journalism school, but also your teaching in the new estates.

Try to positively change the culture, attitudes and behaviors of the people in your school with equally as much deliberation as is applied to changing course names and content within the programs. As educators, this should preeminently be an important part of what we do each day. Otherwise, it may become difficult to distinguish journalism faculty from the backpack journalist and even the hoi polloi. The time will come when, they, too, will need a place to go for answers and advanced training to improve upon their work and service to the public. Improving our practice and professionalism this way will help everyone to know how to get help, and where go to find it.

**“Try to positively change the culture, attitudes and behaviors of the people in your school with equally as much deliberation as is applied to changing course names and content within the programs.”**

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Kent State University School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Franklin Hall, Kent, OH 44242-0001, 330-672-2572, [www.jmc.kent.edu](http://www.jmc.kent.edu)

Joe Murray, Ph.D., Assistant Professor  
email: [gmurray@kent.edu](mailto:gmurray@kent.edu)

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