Will President Trump change his tune on access, transparency, FOI and press relations?
Or will it be a TOTAL ECLIPSE FROM THE START?
Every year the Society of Professional Journalists recognizes students, advisers and professional members who play a vital role in the Society’s fight to improve and protect journalism. Nominate an SPJ member today for one of the following honors:

**HOWARD S. DUBIN OUTSTANDING PRO MEMBER AWARD**
The award salutes individual professional members who have made significant contributions to the Society.

**JULIE GALVAN OUTSTANDING GRADUATE IN JOURNALISM AWARD**
The award honors a graduating journalism student who is outstanding in his or her class on the basis of character, service to the community, scholarship, proficiency in practical journalism and significant contributions to his or her SPJ chapter.

**DAVID L. ESHELMAN OUTSTANDING CAMPUS ADVISER AWARD**
The award honors an individual who has done an outstanding job serving as SPJ campus adviser and who has contributed to his or her chapter and the national organization over an extended period of time.

**REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE YEAR AWARD**
The award honors an outstanding SPJ regional director.

**NOMINATION DEADLINE:**
APRIL 17, 2017

For more details and nomination forms, visit spj.org/awards.asp or contact SPJ at 317.927.4788 or awards@spj.org.
FOI OMG
As FOIA turned 50 in 2016, we saw countless stories on the campaign trail and beyond utilizing public records. But that doesn’t mean access to records is an easily won right. We asked prominent people in the freedom of information and public records fields to share their thoughts on transparency in the age of Donald Trump (and beyond).

FAR AWAY, STILL THE SAME
Donald Trump has set a standard of terse interactions with the press — at least at home. How do journalists abroad view him and his relationship to journalists? In light of what he has said (and largely tweeted about) on the campaign trail and after his election, how will he be received by those who cover his international visits?

A LIFE WELL-LIVED
A journalist must be objective, we’re always told. And while ethicists and editors may have different ideas of exactly what that means, it’s true that by and large, we keep our views and ourselves out of the story. But sometimes there’s need for greater use of ourselves, and of the “I” word, in telling stories and connecting with audiences. Steve Buttry found that later in his career, a career (and life) that any objective observer would note was well lived.

DEPARTMENTS
3 FROM THE PRESIDENT
5 SPJ REPORT
10 10 WITH TARA GATEWOOD
12 QUILL THROUGH THE YEARS

TOOLBOX
9 NARRATIVE WRITING
Think musically to create and write with purpose.

23 WORDS & LANGUAGE
Watch out, says the Department of Redundancy Department.

25 FREELANCE
Three keys of goals setting: prioritize, prioritize, prioritize.

33 ETHICS
Offer support and assistance to harassed colleagues.

40 DIGITAL MEDIA
Use Twitter to spotlight, not just highlight.

ON THE COVER // Then-candidate Donald Trump, during an interview in the spin room following the Republican Presidential Debate, November 10, 2015. (JOSHUA LOTT/AFP/Getty Images)
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HOW TO REACH US
Phone: 317/927-9000, ext. 214
Fax: 317/920-4789
Internet: www.spj.org
Email: spj@spj.org
Mail
The Eugene S. Pulliam National Journalism Center
3909 N. Meridian St.
Indianapolis, IN 46208

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I am here because I believe that the most important thing for free men to do is to protect the freedom of others. I am here so that my son when he is grown will not have to fight or die in a land not his own, because one man or group of men try to take his liberty from him. I am here because I believe that free men should take up arms and stand together and fight and destroy the groups and forces that want to take the rights of people away.”

The person who wrote this had his United States citizenship revoked at one point. He also fought in the Cuban Revolution, becoming an ally of Fidel and Raul Castro and Che Guevara.

His name is William Alexander Morgan. He was born and raised in Ohio. After serving in the U.S. Army (he was court-martialed in 1948 and sentenced to five years in prison, but released early in 1950) he went to Cuba to fight with and lead a group of rebels during the revolution. He was known as the "great Yankee Comandante," one of only a few foreign nationals to hold the rank of comandante in the rebel forces.

After the revolution, Morgan found himself on the opposite side of Fidel Castro, imprisoned and shot by firing squad. Almost 50 years after his death, the U.S. restored his citizenship.

I recently traveled to Cuba, and before my visit I read a lot about the revolution. I found myself intrigued by the story of William Morgan, especially the quote above — specifically the first sentence: "... I believe that the most important thing for free men to do is to protect the freedom of others." (Read more about William Alexander Morgan from David Grann in The New Yorker: tinyurl.com/NewYorkerWilliamMorgan)

Since beginning my term as SPJ president in September, a vital trend has emerged and been a constant: the importance of protecting the rights guaranteed under the First Amendment.

This may sound like a no-brainer, but I was not expecting it to be as prevalent a concern as it is for journalists and non-journalists alike. That could mean I have been taking this freedom for granted, or I’ve not felt the threat of it being taken away in my daily reporting life. Whatever the reason, I am more aware than ever about how important and necessary it is to be proactive about protecting the freedoms SPJ has fought for since 1909.

For me, reading that quote provided a sense of purpose. It directly related to what I’m doing while SPJ president and what I do every day as a journalist. We have the freedom to say what we want, publish information and do so without government retaliation or interference. We are lucky and should not take this for granted. We also have to protect these freedoms and be proactive about doing so.

Right now in the U.S., you and others may feel that those rights are being threatened or could be threatened. While we don’t want to live in fear, I don’t think it hurts to be aware of what we have now, so we can make sure we only push and fight to make it better and not worse.

Internationally, other leaders and citizens look to the U.S. for guidance and use the freedoms we have as a standard of what should be. That means that if we allow our standards for what a free press is, how it operates and what free speech looks like to be lowered, others around the world may follow.

Let’s think about this as we work as journalists. Let’s also think about this as we live as citizens in this country.

We are lucky and should not take our freedoms for granted but instead remember to fight for them and push back when even the slightest portion is taken away. I can promise SPJ will be doing the same.

We are lucky and should not take our freedoms for granted but instead remember to fight for them and push back when even the slightest portion is taken away. I can promise SPJ will be doing the same.

Next time a public records request is only partially answered, push back for all of the records. I know it can be easy to move on, especially when you have what you need for your story, but we have to hold governments accountable every step of the way — even when it is time consuming, even when the benefit of doing so for your current story is no longer there.

Journalists in the U.S. work in a profession protected under the First Amendment. Keep that in mind and remember it daily. We have the ability to hold the powerful accountable and provide a voice for the public.

Together, we can protect our freedom and the public’s freedom. •
The Sigma Delta Chi Foundation announces the Eugene S. Pulliam First Amendment Award to honor a person or persons who have fought to protect and preserve one or more of the rights guaranteed by the First Amendment. Mr. Pulliam, who passed away in January 1999, was well-known for consistently using his own considerable influence and that of his newspaper to support activities that educated the public about First Amendment rights and values. The Sigma Delta Chi Foundation has established this annual award to honor those committed to the same goals as a tribute to the professional contributions that Eugene S. Pulliam made to journalism and to the freedoms outlined in the First Amendment.

ABOUT THE AWARD
At the Excellence in Journalism 2017 Conference, the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation will honor an individual, group of individuals or organization with a $10,000 cash award and an engraved statue. The honoree(s) also will receive transportation to the conference in New Orleans, La.

ELIGIBILITY
Nominations are open to any person, persons or organization in the U.S. or its territories who have worked to protect the basic rights provided by the First Amendment. Honorees do not have to be journalists. In fact, the Foundation encourages recognition of those outside the journalism profession for their First Amendment efforts and initiatives, such as, but not limited to, public officials, members of the legal profession, scholars, educators, librarians, students and ordinary citizens.

NOMINATIONS
Visit spj.org/a-pulliam.asp for nomination information.

QUESTIONS
Call: 317/920-4788  |  Email: awards@spj.org
The Eugene S. Pulliam First Amendment Award is a project of the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation. For more information on the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation go to spj.org/sdx.asp.

THE NOMINATION DEADLINE IS JUNE 22, 2017
A journalist with 10,000 stories

BY RACHEL SEMPLE
At 16, Boyd Huppert did his first broadcast writing. Four decades later, he’s still going.

As a teenager, he oversaw the controls of a local radio station during Green Bay Packers broadcasts. Between commercials he gathered death notices from local funeral homes to compose obituaries.

From the beginning, Huppert has never shied away from hard work. “The harder I work, the luckier I get” is one of his favorite quotes, and it shows in the care he puts into each piece. He said his work ethic comes from growing up on a Wisconsin dairy farm, set by his dad’s example.

Huppert’s career in television began after he graduated from University of Wisconsin - River Falls. After working at stations in Wisconsin and Nebraska, he found his home at KARE 11 in Minneapolis, where he works today, producing the narrative feature “Land of 10,000 Stories” segment.

His first task when starting a new installment is finding the focus. He doesn’t just look at the story as a list of facts; it’s about the characters and their emotions and stories. It’s multidimensional. The digging begins with the facts that people tell him, and continues until he uncovers the common thread of human interest that gives a story its deeper layers.

One of his favorite and most famous story series is about the close relationship between Emmett and Erling, a 3-year-old boy and a World War II veteran who lived next door. It was the kind of story that could have been easily overlooked, but Huppert gave it the time it deserved. He saw the story that others could have missed: the mutual respect, the tenderness. The real story that Huppert uncovered spoke to viewers, and they connected with the message. That just shows the power of journalism, Huppert says.

Stories like this take delicate listening and understanding skills, which he practices carefully.

Huppert is humble about his successes, as well as the long and ever-growing list of awards his work has won, including multiple national Sigma Delta Chi awards from SPJ. He speaks of hard work, high expectations and the wonderful opportunity he has to pick the types of stories that most journalists aspire to cover.

“If I work hard today, tomorrow will take care of itself,” he said. It’s a lesson he has tried to teach his kids.

SPJ was a resume-filler when Huppert first joined as a college student. But he’s stayed because of SPJ advocacy efforts. He said it’s important to have someone fighting for press freedoms, even when he isn’t able to take up the case with lawmakers in Washington, D.C., himself.

Recently Minnesota banned still and video cameras from all state prisons. When he discussed it with his co-worker and SPJ chapter president Ben Garvin, there was already a plan in place for the local chapter’s response. To Huppert, SPJ’s greatest value lies in knowing someone is ready to stand up for the importance of a free press like Garvin was.

Huppert also teaches at different training programs, including SPJ’s traveling JournCamp events and the Excellence in Journalism conference. He reiterates the importance of finding the story’s focus before you begin writing. Those who attend his sessions come away with a new passion for narrative storytelling and an inspiration to tell stories that move viewers. He was even a self-professed “workshop junkie” at the start of his career, attending events by SPJ, National Press Photographers Association, Radio Television Digital News Association and others. That’s how he got closer to the level of work he saw from his journalism heroes.

Huppert is always thinking about his next story, thanks to the tips that pour in from viewers and fans. His love for journalism keeps him pursuing new stories, figuring out how best to showcase people’s narratives to the community.

“That the Emmett and Erling stories have been shared tens of millions of times gives me hope for those who take pride in the craft and believe there is still a bright future for storytelling and journalism,” he said. ✨
Calling chapter leaders for Scripps Leadership Institute

SPJ’s Ted Scripps Leadership Institute helps participants become better leaders by offering a mix of sessions focused on interpersonal and organizational leadership skills, as well as sound chapter management practices. Leaders can immerse themselves in everything SPJ, take an intuitive look at their own leadership style and make time for serious personal reflection, all while building new relationships with other SPJ leaders.

Previously based in Indianapolis, the Scripps program is now a traveling show meant to arrive in each of SPJ’s 12 regions over the course of three years (four regions per year).

Upcoming stops:
Kansas City, Mo.: April 28-30, 2017

Participants in the interactive program learn:
• About their individual leadership style, its strengths, and how to better interact with others.
• The importance of building a sense of community among chapter members and how that can be accomplished.
• The role of the leader in recruiting, developing and rewarding talent.
• The dynamics of group decision-making and how leaders can help groups make better choices.
• New insights on how to engage and motivate peers.
• How to effectively manage responsibilities while remaining focused on important goals.

Participants are responsible for their travel costs to and from each location, but lodging and meal costs are provided.

To apply, complete the online application (at spj.org/scrippslt.asp) before the deadline for each location. Applications will be reviewed and invitations will be extended to participants. A submitted application does not guarantee an invitation the program.

Free Google tools training available for chapters

Enjoying much success in less than a year, Google News Lab and the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation, the educational arm of SPJ, have extended their partnership to bring even more training to journalists.

Since late 2015, members of SPJ have trained more than 1,500 journalists in over 35 locations across the U.S. on Google’s tools for news gathering. Based on increased demand, the network has expanded with more training opportunities.

The training, which is free to journalists, SPJ chapters, news outlets and college campuses, provides an overview of several Google tools, such as Google Trends, Google Fusion Tables, Google Public Data Explorer and Google Trends. Complete details on the program, including a link for newsrooms and journalism organizations to request training, are available at SPJ.org/google.asp.

“This partnership has been a welcome addition to our current training portfolio, which is available at the Excellence in Journalism conference, SPJ JournCamps, our online eCampus resources, and more” said Robert Leger, president of the SDX Foundation. “We are pleased to continue our work with Google News Lab to provide more training and education for journalists across the country to improve their information gathering and reporting skills that translate to excellent journalism for their audiences.”

Nicholas Whitaker, training and development manager for Google News Lab, said, “We are glad to continue to work together to support journalists and improve their storytelling for readers, listeners and viewers while showing all the ways in which Google tools can improve journalism.”

The continuation of the partnership will ensure that more journalists across the country have access to training on how to effectively use digital tools to tell their stories.

“The group was engaged and the trainer did a great job presenting the material in an accessible and empowering way,” said Carlos Gonzalez, product manager, interactive, at KQED Public Media for Northern California.

Any SPJ chapter, newsroom, educator or other group looking for training on these and other free Google News Lab tools can find information at SPJ.org/google.asp.
SPJ seeks nominations for national awards

Annually, SPJ invites nominations for awards that recognize contributions to the profession, the public’s right to know, and the Society. Awards, some open to the public and some reserved for SPJ members and chapters, have various deadlines.

See a full list with more information and deadlines at spj.org/awards.asp. For more information on all SPJ awards, contact Awards Coordinator Jessica Bennett at 317-927-8000 or jbennett@spj.org.

PUBLIC AWARDS:

Distinguished Teaching in Journalism Award
Honors an outstanding journalism educator who has made a significant contribution to the profession and/or journalism education and to maintaining the highest standards of the profession.

Ethics in Journalism Award
Honors journalists or news organizations that perform in an outstanding ethical manner demonstrating the ideals of the SPJ Code of Ethics. It also honors especially notable efforts to educate the public on principles embodied in the code or hold journalists ethically accountable for their behavior. Nominations are open. Self-nomination is permitted.

Fellows of the Society
Presented to journalists for extraordinary contributions to the profession.

Historic Sites in Journalism
Honors individuals, news organizations and places of national historic journalism interest.

Sunshine Award
Recognizes those making important contributions in the area of open government.

Kunkel Awards
Recognize excellence in video game journalism. Anyone can nominate an entry at no cost, and all entries will be judged by professional journalists.

Bayonet Awards
Recognize the nation’s edgiest student journalists. Are you sharp enough?

SPJ MEMBER AWARDS

Howard S. Dubin Outstanding Pro Member Award
Salutes individual professional members who have made significant contributions to their SPJ chapter.

David L. Eshelman Outstanding Campus Adviser Award
For individuals who have done an outstanding job serving as SPJ campus adviser and who have contributed to their chapters and the national organization over an extended period of time.

Julie Gaivan Outstanding Graduate in Journalism Award
Honors a graduating student in journalism who is outstanding in his or her class on the basis of character, service to the community, scholarship, proficiency in practical journalism and significant contributions to their SPJ chapter.

Regional Director of the Year Award
Recognizes an outstanding SPJ regional director.

Robert D.G. Lewis First Amendment Award
Honors a student who has demonstrated outstanding service to the First Amendment through the field of journalism.

Wells Memorial Key
Wells Memorial Key is the highest honor SPJ bestows upon a member for outstanding service to the Society over a period of years.

CHAPTER AWARDS

Circle of Excellence Awards
Recognize chapters for outstanding efforts in five key areas.

Outstanding Professional and Campus Chapter Awards
Salute chapters for overall excellence in supporting the Society’s missions, members and the profession. Up to three large and three small professional chapters will be selected each year for recognition, with one in each category being chosen as the chapter of the year.
The Eugene C. Pulliam Fellowship was established to enable a mid-career editorial writer or columnist to have time away from daily responsibilities for study and research. The cash award allows Pulliam Editorial Fellows to:

**TAKE COURSES** • **PURSUE INDEPENDENT STUDY** • **TRAVEL**
**PURSUE OTHER ENDEAVORS THAT ENRICH THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF A PUBLIC INTEREST ISSUE**

**HISTORY**
The Eugene C. Pulliam Fellowship is a Sigma Delta Chi Foundation educational program of the Society of Professional Journalists. The Society first offered the fellowship in 1977. It is funded by a grant from Mrs. Eugene C. Pulliam honoring the memory of her husband, one of the original members of the Society, which was founded in 1909 as Sigma Delta Chi. Eugene C. Pulliam was the publisher of The Indianapolis Star, The Indianapolis News, The Arizona Republic and The Phoenix Gazette.

**WHAT THE FELLOWSHIP PROVIDES**
The Pulliam Fellowship awards $75,000 to an outstanding editorial writer or columnist to help broaden his or her journalistic horizons and knowledge of the world. The annual award can be used to cover the cost of study, research and/or travel in any field. The fellowship results in editorials and other writings, including books.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**
To be eligible for a Pulliam fellowship, a candidate must:

- Hold a position as a part-time or full-time editorial writer or columnist at a news publication in the United States.
- Have at least three year’s experience as an editorial writer or columnist.
- Demonstrate outstanding writing and analytical abilities.
- Secure assurances by the editor or publisher that the applicant will be allowed sufficient time to pursue the fellowship without jeopardizing employment. (fellows do not have to leave their jobs.)
- Demonstrate ability and intent to publish work within 18 months of selection. (If selected, work must be published within 18 months of receiving the fellowship.)

The selected applicant must provide a post-fellowship written report on how funds were used. Each fellowship recipient will become a mentor to the following year’s recipient.

**SELECTION AND PRESENTATION**
A panel of judges will review materials submitted by all the applicants and select the fellow. The fellowship presentation will take place during the 2017 Association of Opinion Writers Convention.

**QUESTIONS?**
For more information contact SPJ Headquarters at 317/920-4788 or by email: awards@spj.org.

Visit [spj.org/a-pulliamfellow.asp](http://spj.org/a-pulliamfellow.asp) for application information.

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:** **JUNE 22, 2017**
Think musically to create with purpose

DURING THE HOLIDAYS, I took vacation, pulled out one of my guitars from the closet and began playing again after a long hiatus. There is a writing lesson here, I promise. After strumming a few songs, I decided to get serious and go back to learning and then practicing my scales.

I’d learned the patterns years ago, but I’d never spent the time to understand how, when and why to use them. I decided now to focus on just the A scale: major, minor and the three related pentatonic, all in just one position on my fretboard. Instead of just running through the pattern, I focused on the notes I was playing, trying to memorize them. And then, instead of playing a pattern — running up and down the scale pattern — I attempted to make music by playing along with a backing track, which provided the chord progression.

During a break, I realized how applicable these scales were to our journey into narrative storytelling, the technique, craft and art.

Here are my thoughts, and a lesson plan for you to follow this year.

VARY THE ORDER

Why do you start a story a certain way? Does your structure never vary? Are you taking creative risks with how you tell a story?

When I started playing my scales to the backing track, I realized that I constantly started the solo on the lowest root note 100 percent of the time and then played the notes in order. There was nothing creative. It was no different than walking, simply putting one foot in front of the other. The structure, the safety of the structure hemmed me in.

Do you start your stories the same way time after time? Why do you start a story a certain way? Does your structure never vary? Are you taking creative risks with how you tell a story?

An example from my work: Last year I wrote a story about a widow who wanted to return a medical bag to another widow. The second woman had given it to the medical school to give to a medical student after the death of her husband. School officials gave the bag to the first woman’s husband. It sounds confusing, but if you write me I’ll send you the story and I promise it will be clear.

There was no reason to write the story. It could be a brief, or a simple feature story, the kind you’ve read hundreds of times. But instead of running up and down the scales, I sat at my desk and thought about the story. What did it mean? What did I want readers to feel? What techniques were at my disposal?

I decided on voice.

My narrator’s voice could outline the theme for the reader in seven short paragraphs. The rest of the story — and it was long — would expand on that theme, drawing readers in, holding their interest and telling them an unusual and emotionally powerful story. That opening served the same purpose musically as does the piano that sets up the second half of the song “Layla” that plays off that simple musical theme.

Here is my opening:

For nearly 50 years, the leather doctor’s bag served as a reminder of the horrors of war and the fragility of life.

Over the decades, the family took the bag to two countries, four states and five cities. In every place they called home, the bag was prominently displayed next to a framed newspaper story.

That yellowing page featured a black-and-white photograph of a U.S. Army general pinning a medal on a little boy’s shirt.

To glance at the bag and the photograph was to pause and reflect on what matters.


PRACTICE

I practice my scales daily, still concentrating only on “A” in one position. When I can create solos in that position — and only then — I will move to the next position on the fretboard, again focusing on just “A.” In the past, I’d practice in one position for five minutes, and then move to another position and then another. But all I ever did was just play the pattern.

For your next five stories, focus on just the openings. Experiment with voice, dialogue, quote, scene and character. By working just within the confines of the story opening, you will be forced to move beyond the familiar

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30
Nothing in Tara Gatewood’s career went according to plan. If it had, she says, she would be a photographer somewhere doing “amazing shoots.” Her interest in journalism — and course of study — started with photography at Montgomery College in Maryland, having moved from her home in the Isleta Pueblo tribal community in New Mexico. The cutlines of her photos “started getting really long,” and savvy editors noticed she had a knack for writing, not just photography. After stints with the Boston Globe, Aberdeen American News and St. Paul Pioneer Press, she returned to her roots in New Mexico, where she went back to school to formally study journalism at the University of New Mexico.

A chance meeting of the executive producer of “Native America Calling,” a national daily call-in radio show covering Native issues and based in Albuquerque, got her in the door as an associate producer in 2005. Though she hadn’t thought of a career in broadcasting, she fit in well and became the show’s back-up host in 2008 and full-time host in 2012.

Gatewood describes the show, with its focus on Native issues, as “covering everything under the sun — including the sun.”

How do you think the format or topics of “Native America Calling” would change, if at all, if the show were aimed at a general audience? In other words, aimed at educating and informing the general public about Native issues?

I don’t think it would change much. We’re already there. We already understand that our audience isn’t just Native Americans. If we were to go even more national, I don’t think we’d change much. I think it’d be even more a priority to continue with that mission of creating understanding.

I know you have a music production interest, too. What’s your go-to music?

It’s basically mostly Native music in any form. Albuquerque is excitedly a kind of hub for Native music. There are really huge conferences that end up here. Seeing the interest in Native music here, interest in it has grown, which is something to celebrate. It’s Native music that I’m consuming,
which means I’m consuming jazz, punk rock, R&B, polka and everything else.

And if you weren’t a full-time professional journalist, what would you be doing?
Oh boy. I would probably be working in my community or on the music scene. But I’d still be doing these same rhythms, learning about the environment and the culture to create more understanding.

It’s no secret that Native and other minority voices are still greatly underrepresented in U.S. newsrooms, particularly in general-interest national news outlets. It makes sense that outlets with a sizeable Native American audience would need and want Native journalists on staff. But what would outlets like, say, NPR and The Washington Post gain from having more Native journalists on staff?

They would have a better line to understanding the populations they serve. If you look at a percentage of Native Americans, the majority actually live in urban settings. You probably have a significant Native population living around your area. It really opens the ability to connect to your community. It only helps to create more understanding. And if you have a diverse view of issues, you can get closer to a story than you could have otherwise.

Your show often references the idea of an “electronic talking circle,” which I think is neat in that it really is emphasizing the idea that everyone gets a voice and has a say. Do you think more general news media outlets would benefit from that kind of thinking?

What this talking circle does is give instant feedback on the kind of coverage that you’re doing. We’re starting from the point of a news item, and then hearing our human voices articulate what they think about that story. It really lets you know immediately if your coverage has covered the issue. That only makes journalism stronger when you understand the importance of the story you did. It’s a refreshing system that helps you become a better journalist by hearing that kind of feedback.

Your show of course covered the Standing Rock Dakota Access Pipeline protests, and I wonder what, if anything, you think the larger national news media missed or could have done better?
More coverage on treaties and the weight they hold and how they’re being exercised or ignored. The coverage about the diversity of voices could have been better. Hundreds of tribal nations are represented in [the protest camp in] North Dakota. And there could have been more coverage of water issues in general, about what Native communities face. There was some good coverage of people who talked to Native Americans from their area who had traveled to North Dakota, so that’s something I could definitely applaud.

Most journalists probably don’t live near or cover Indian Country on a regular basis, and may only do so when Indian Country issues bubble up to the national scale (e.g. Standing Rock, sports team mascot controversies). What would you recommend journalists do or research to better inform themselves on Native issues well in advance of things that bob in and out of the news cycle?

Personally, I’d recommend they listen to your show, but that’s just me. Fortunately, a majority of the issues that face Native nations are playing out publicly. There are always hearings taking place on Native issues in our nation’s capital. There are organizations having conferences that are streaming (video) of these conferences, such as the White House Tribal Nations Conference. There’s the National Congress of American Indians that publishes things. Indianz.com covers a lot of this, too. And you can go directly to the source. A large number of Native tribal-owned radio stations stream their programs online. And then just critically asking yourself where are the Native Americans in your community, and you might surprise yourself, because we’re everywhere.

I always ask about sports team loyalties — though you’re in New Mexico, which doesn’t have as many professional sports teams as other regions. Any teams you’re a die-hard fan of?

My connection to sports is to play them. There is nothing more fulfilling than wiping sweat off your brow after a good competition. I’m a retired volleyball woman, I’d say. I do find the importance in healthy living through sport. Anytime that element comes into my life, it’s inspiring.

Since it’s important for anyone in New Mexico: red, green or Christmas? (As in what kind of chile with your food — Christmas being red and green.)
It depends on what you’re eating and who you’re eating with.

If you look at a percentage of Native Americans, the majority actually live in urban settings. You probably have a significant Native population living around your area. It really opens the ability to connect to your community. It only helps to create more understanding. And if you have a diverse view of issues, you can get closer to a story than you could have otherwise.”
GIVING THE GIFT OF A FREE PRESS: NONPROFIT NEWSHOUNDS

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NON-PROFIT NEWSHOUNDS
This 2008 article by Suzanne Perry discussed the emerging trend of non-profit news sources funded by donors and members instead of subscribers and investors.

“High-quality journalism is not primarily a consumer good,” said Joel Kramer, the founder of the new site MinnPost.com. “It’s a community asset, the base on which democracy and community are built.”

Instead of focusing on journalism as a product to be sold, MinnPost.com focused on journalism as a community asset. Non-profit publications like MinnPost.com are an effort to provide the news that serves the public interest and their specific area.

Non-profit efforts like ProPublica also got started during this era, though they are far from the first non-profit journalism ventures. Other operations include National Public Radio, The Christian Science Monitor, Harper’s Magazine and groups that produce investigative reporting like the Center for Investigative Reporting or Center for Public Integrity.

At a time when advertising revenues were falling and staff cutbacks followed, philanthropic journalism efforts started attempting to fill the void left by these cutbacks across the country. MinnPost.com looked to fill the spaces left by layoffs at the Minneapolis Star Tribune and St. Paul Pioneer Press after new owners took charge.

These non-profit sources of information worked to combat the fears that job cuts, budget decreases and more coverage of celebrities and less coverage of serious news would lead to a deficit of the kinds of information citizens need. In order to have a functioning democracy, uninformed citizens are of deep concern, especially to non-profit journalism and news organizations.

Funding for sites and organizations like MinnPost.com and ProPublica comes from different foundations and grants more than from advertising revenue. The Knight Foundation provided money to MinnPost.com, as well as other journalism projects including the Gotham Gazette in New York and Chi-Town Daily News in Chicago. Their next goal was to provide a major grant program that would help community foundations seeking to support local journalism.

Alberto Ibarguen, the Knight Foundation president at the time, provided suggestions on how community foundations could help journalism. Among them: paying the salary of an investigative journalist at a local newspaper or supporting media-literacy education allowing people to understand how to support high-quality journalism.

Ibarguen said it best: “Information is as essential to a community and democracy as (emergency housing after a storm or education), maybe in some way precedes it, because if you don’t have shared information, it’s difficult to figure out how to deal with the rest of the problems.” Non-profit news organizations are working to ensure the American people have the basic information needed to work on other problems in society.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
• A letter from SPJ President Clint Brewer about the changing journalism industry and how the internet democratized publishing.
• How Craigslist and the internet have changed classified ads in traditional print newspapers, as well as alternative papers.
• The pros, cons and ethical concerns of finding sources for stories on the internet and social media.
• Covering suicides in the same way as other violent deaths: without stigma and with respect for the person’s life.
• A roundup of the best journalism of 2007, including reporting on the war in Iraq, mental hospital abuse and sports reporting.
TRANSPARENCY AND FOI IN THE AGE OF TRUMP
President Donald Trump craves the spotlight. For that reason alone, he will not shut out the media over the next four years. He is too dependent on their attention. But he will continue to single out favorites for special treatment and bash those who cover him critically. And because they will not be able to rely upon him for consistency in policies and messages, he will drive his White House staffers, military advisors, diplomats, cabinet members, party officials and the White House press corps mad.

It will be easy for journalists to be distracted by governance via Twitter. While it’s impossible to dismiss tweets from the president, American democracy cannot afford a climate where journalists settle on passing along every tweet as gospel and ignore basic nuts-and-bolts accountability reporting. The president may be reckless in the way he handles social media, but journalists cannot do the same. Now more than ever, journalists must speak truth to power — and do so in emphatic, thoroughly researched, thoughtful coverage. America’s democracy depends on them.

The White House Correspondents’ Association’s role will become more important than ever. This is an opportunity for the WHCA to get more attention for holding the administration accountable than for its all-star party. I believe they are up to it.

But we cannot ignore a threshold problem facing American journalism. We have lost at least one generation of experienced government reporters to newsroom layoffs and buyouts. The White House will be covered, but I fear that coverage of Congress, the courts, state legislatures and local governments will continue to shrink.

The young journalists who colleges like mine graduate every year are enormously talented, have breathtaking digital skills and have great potential to produce thoughtful, authoritative journalism. But most are not yet equipped to handle day-to-day coverage of the federal executive, legislative and judicial branches of government.

The challenges are not limited to Washington coverage. Federal agencies are poised to make sweeping changes in federal health care, education, energy, eco-
onomic, national security and environmental policy. Decisions made in Washington will be pushed down to the states, and local newsrooms are even less prepared to cover these issues. Accountability reporting is more important than at any time in my lifetime. Education and training for reporters who cover these issues and agencies are critical.

As journalists cover federal agencies and the local entities dependent on them, media lawyers will be laser focused on the Justice Department because no government agency has a greater impact on the day-to-day operations of the media.

Trump’s nominee for attorney general, Sen. Jeff Sessions (who at this writing is yet to be confirmed), is well-liked by his Senate colleagues for his congeniality and hard work. But I have sat through Senate Judiciary Committee hearings where Sessions aggressively tried to block passage of a federal shield law for journalists and user-friendly amendments to the federal Freedom of Information Act. I find it hard to imagine a prospective attorney general with a more dismissive attitude toward the media and basic government transparency. With his track record, the aggressive attitude of the Obama Justice Department toward journalists and whistleblowers will look like child’s play.

Here are a few things to watch for.

**WHISTLEBLOWERS (A.K.A. LEAKERS)**

Journalists frequently rely on insiders to provide them with information. The Obama administration expanded on the George W. Bush administration’s already robust attack on whistleblowers.

Attorney General Eric Holder, who was attorney general for most of Obama’s term in office, had to contend with leaks from Chelsea (then known as Bradley) Manning as well as Edward Snowden. Other prosecutions involved CIA employee Jeffrey Sterling, which kept journalist James Rosen under threat of jail for refusing to identify his sources for the better part of a decade; the State Department’s Stephen Kim, which resulted in the Holder Justice Department labeling Fox News’ James Rosen a “criminal co-conspirator” in an effort to execute a search warrant on his newsgathering materials; and National Security Agency executive Thomas Drake, who had the bulk of the whistleblower prosecution case against him dropped by the government on the eve of trial, causing the judge in the case to describe the Justice Department’s actions as “unconscionable.”

The Obama administration did not like leakers. However, when the media pushed back hard on several aggressive inves-

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SPJ’s New America Award honors public service journalism that exposes an issue of importance to immigrant or ethnic communities currently living in the United States. Although not required, collaboration with ethnic media is taken into account.

To be eligible, work must have been published or broadcast during the 2016 calendar year. SPJ welcomes nominations from media outlets, journalists, community and issue advocacy groups, individuals and others concerned with ethnic and immigrant issues.

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tigative tactics used by the Holder Justice Department, the attorney general agreed to adopt guidelines that made it less likely journalists would be sucked into a criminal case merely for doing their jobs. But the guidelines are merely guidelines. Attorney General Sessions could reverse them easily and quickly.

SUBPOENAS
The Holder Justice Department did not use subpoenas to get information from reporters as much as they might have. Technology made it possible for investigators to rely on digital tracks to identify sources used by reporters. Nevertheless, several unsuccessful attempts were made during the Obama years to adopt a federal shield law. Jeff Sessions opposed them all, often citing arguments consistent with his former role as a state attorney general and federal prosecutor accustomed to free reign in gathering evidence.

At one Judiciary Committee hearing in 2013, Sessions offered 27 amendments that would have gutted the bill. We still don’t have a federal shield law. But Holder’s Justice Department was on record supporting a shield law. It’s hard to imagine Sessions supporting one.

TRANSPARENCY
For more than 40 years, incoming attorney generals have issued memoranda advising federal agencies as to how the federal Freedom of Information Act should be interpreted. For example, during the Clinton and Obama administrations, agencies were told to presume records were open and to make discretionary disclosures unless there was a “foreseeable harm” in doing so. During the George W. Bush administration, Attorney General John Ashcroft advised agencies to withhold discretionary information if they could find a privacy or national security justification to do so. While the language of each directive was something only a bureaucrat could understand or appreciate, the directives set a tone as to how transparent an administration would be.

Congress adopted and Obama signed amendments to FOIA in 2016 that locked in the Clinton/Obama standards for interpretation of FOIA. Sessions stalled the bill and was unsuccessful in efforts to weaken it. While those directives are now law, Sessions will undoubtedly issue a memorandum on how to interpret the new law.

There is plenty of wiggle room available to make it difficult for requesters to get information. For example, he could take a hard line on fees or aggressively fight FOIA lawsuits. Watch for a swing back to the Ashcroft attitude.

A POTENTIALLY BRIGHT NOTE
Ironically, the shield law bill that had the best chance of passage during the Obama years was co-sponsored in the House of Representatives by then-Rep. Mike Pence. During his years in Congress, Vice President Pence also formed a “Press Freedom Caucus” with Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif.

As Indiana’s governor, Pence signed a bill that increased transparency in the state’s economic development agency and vetoed a bill that would have allowed state agencies to charge a fee for searching for public records. On the other hand, he fought efforts to release emails under the state’s public records law and attempted to start a state-run news agency. Whether Vice President Pence will have any influence over these matters remains to be seen.

Lucy Dalglish is dean of the University of Maryland’s Philip Merrill School of Journalism. She previously served 12 years as executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and was a media lawyer in private practice. From 1980 to 1993 she was a reporter for the St. Paul Pioneer Press. Email: dalglish@umd.edu.

LET’S TEACH OLD PUBLIC RECORDS LAWS NEW TRICKS
BY MICHAEL MORISY

There’s good reason for existential angst about transparency in the new presidential administration.

Breaking with precedent, President Donald Trump declined to release his tax returns as a candidate. He ditched his press pool. And while Freedom of Information Act requests from other people provided him endless speech and tweet fodder during his fight for the presidency, he has shown no eagerness to return the favor and strengthen the law. Instead, he’s hinted that too much transparency hinders America’s ability to make “good deals.”

But while there’s cause for concern, the truth is that FOIA and state public records laws have been taking a serious beating during the past 16 years.

Since 9/11, national security exemptions have spiraled out of control, expanding to cover not just necessary secrets but everything from parking tickets to how police monitor protests. A wave of outsourcing has meant trade secrets exemptions can now hide vast portions of governmental operations.

And gutting FOIA is sadly a bipartisan issue: Some of Hillary Clinton’s most visible supporters floated the idea of exempting emails entirely from FOIA, while over the past few years we’ve seen Republican-controlled legislatures try to gut state public records laws in Wisconsin and Florida.
But despite these setbacks, FOIA continues to be a uniquely powerful force for good, helping inform voters and hold government accountable, no matter who is in charge.

In 2016, right-to-know laws helped expose dangerous drug labs, rewrote the narratives around fatal police encounters and exposed countless examples of waste, fraud and abuse by the private and public sectors alike.

Public records can also be a powerful tool for rebuilding trust in the news media when it’s critically low: It shows readers how our work is done, makes it harder for public officials to spin damaging stories, and ultimately reaffirms that in a democracy, the government is in service to the people.

2017 will be a critical fight nationwide and at every level to keep FOIA a powerful tool for accountability. Here’s how journalists, no matter their beat, can help.

SHOW HOW THE SAUSAGE IS MADE
FOIA gives reporters an opportunity to show readers all the work, analysis and documentation required to do our job. By uploading primary documents through DocumentCloud or showing your requests with MuckRock, you build trust and demonstrate exactly how valuable your work is. You also make it harder for your work to be dismissed by public officials, an increasingly common tactic by those tapped for the country’s highest posts.

When an agency doesn’t respond to requests for information or provides a ridiculous denial, write about it. When you take an agency to court, write about it. When you win, write about it again.

SPREAD THE FOIA LOVE
In many newsrooms, there is go-to public records guru, the one person who knows freedom of information laws inside and out. Their knowledge is treated like some kind of dark transparency magic. But FOIA is better with friends.

Over the past seven years at MuckRock, we’ve found that agencies that receive public records requests from a variety of sources — reporters, public interest groups, regular citizens — are the ones that develop a healthy culture of transparency, while those that receive few requests are often the ones that put up the biggest road blocks.

You can help create a culture of transparency by hosting public records training and participating in events like the annual Sunshine Week every March. (See sunshineweek.org for more.) Get involved with your state’s National Freedom of Information Coalition chapter (NFOIC.org). Encourage every-
moving information from websites and government files, par-
down to state and local government agencies. A culture of secrecy within government, which could trickle
crimes and secretive political appointees, as well as creating
against journalists.

FIGHT WITH EVERY WEAPON YOU HAVE
Over the past few years, important FOIA lawsuits have gotten a lot of attention. But suing is not — and can’t be — the only tool
we have, particularly for cash-strapped newsrooms and inde-
pendent journalists. At the federal level, a well-crafted appeal
can often knock loose previously inaccessible documents.

It’s important to build alliances for the long term. In 2017, let’s build bridges and find common ground with our readers, with non-profits and advocacy groups, and even with other news organizations to remind agencies that government
information is the people’s information.

FOIA is strongest when it’s a right accessible to everyone.

Michael Morisy is co-founder of MuckRock, a news and information outlet focusing on access to public records. He was previously a Boston Globe editor and 2014-15 Knight Fellow at Stanford University. Email: m@morisy.com. On Twitter: @Morisy.

TRUMP TO MAKE FOI GREAT AGAIN
BY DAVID CUILLIER

A Donald Trump presidency is the best thing that could have ever hap-
pened for freedom of information.

We know from history that threats to democracy result in bolstered free-
dom of information. Excessive gov-
ernment secrecy following World War II led journalists to push for the Free-
dom of Information Act. Watergate inspired a host of states to pass open record laws. The PATRIOT Act and in-
creased post-Iraq War secrecy led to emergence of more state open government coalitions and federal FOIA advocacy groups.

For every action, reaction.

Since the election we’ve heard a variety of fears of what a Trump administration could do to the press and government transparency, including:

• Issuing subpoenas against journalists to identify confidential sources.

• Charging journalists under the Espionage Act for publish-
ing classified information.

• Loosening libel laws (not likely since that’s outside the power of the president), or at least filing frivolous libel suits against journalists.

• Managing the message through public information of-
cers and secretive political appointees, as well as creating a culture of secrecy within government, which could trickle down to state and local government agencies.

• Nominating federal judges hostile toward the press.

• Instructing agencies to thwart FOIA, or at minimum re-
oving information from websites and government files, par-
icularly climate data.

I hope all of this happens, and I hope the president rubs

Donald Trump and his team predict Trump will work hard to punish leakers and hide damaging information.

This is an opportunity for journalists to push back at all lev-
els of government, whether covering the White House or town hall. It’s time to apply journalistic jiu-jitsu, where the disadvan-
taged can defeat a stronger assailant by using leverage and taking the fight to the ground.

Here are 10 ways how:

1. Get pumped (and trained). Training is the best way to get reinvigorated and motivated to dig deeper. Pledge to attend the SPJ conference Sept. 7 to 9 in Anaheim (excellence injournalism.org), or an Investigative Reporters and Editors conference or Poynter online learning seminar. Seek out other training for your news organization, such as SPJ’s Google News Lab training (spj.org/google.asp).

2. Expose secrecy. Tell your community when govern-
ment is hiding information that people want to know. It’s not inside baseball or a conflict of interest to report public record denials. Focus on how it affects average people, and quote them. The government isn’t saying “no” to you; it’s saying “no” to the thousands or millions of people you represent.

3. Show, don’t tell. When you get public records and data from agencies, post them online for your community to see. Show people how they can access the information themselves. Empower.

4. Stay cool. The last thing we want is for journalists to appear to be whiny little losers. Jumping up and down scream-
ing plays into the hands of those who want to frame the media as self-interested watchdogs who are all bark and no bite. Educate the public with dignity, and treat government employees with respect.

5. **Focus on what they do, not say.** David Cay Johnston, a Pulitzer-winning journalist, founded DCReport.org recently to cover what the government does, not what government says it does. This is critical. “Journalists have to be resolute about covering what matters,” he told me. “If you’re just a reactive reporter, then you’re their best friend.”

6. **From the ground up.** Develop sources in an agency from the ground up — meaning government employees working in the trenches, not the political leaders who just want to use you. So you tick off the mayor or PIO? Good! Now you will have one less press release cluttering your inbox about the police department’s new DARE vehicle.

7. **Watchdogpile.** Form a consortium of journalists and news organizations in your community or state to carry out team projects and public record audits. Get involved with your state open government coalition. Fight for better public record laws, particularly for attorney fee provisions for when you prevail in court. Stronger, together, you can make journalism and FOI great again.

8. **Appeal.** If you are denied a public record, always appeal. It’s free, and about a third of the time it will kick records loose. Don’t accept lame denials, made-up exemptions or outrageous copy fees.

9. **Sue.** Now, more than ever, media organizations need to step up to sue for public records. Publicly praise those who do and publicly shame those who skulk away. Take advantage of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press media hotline (800-336-4243), SPJ Legal Defense Fund and National Freedom of Information Coalition’s Knight FOI Litigation Fund.

10. **Be strong.** Remember that what you do is a calling. The First Amendment is durable. The press, as a proxy for the public, is powerful, and by the end of the next four years we can actually improve FOI.

David Cuillier is director and associate professor at the University of Arizona School of Journalism, a member of the SPJ Freedom of Information Committee, former SPJ national president and co-author with Charles N. Davis of “The Art of Access: Strategies for Acquiring Public Records.” Email: cuillier@email.arizona.edu.

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SPJ supports true, ethical, dogged reporting that gives a voice to the voiceless.

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spj.org/firstamendmentforever.asp
Farah Stockman received a 2016 Pulitzer Prize for "Boston After Busing," a series of columns examining race and education for the Boston Globe. The project was supported by a $75,000 Eugene C. Pulliam Fellowship for Editorial Writing from the Sigma Delta Chi Foundation, the educational arm of the Society of Professional Journalists.

IGNITE A CONVERSATION. IMPACT COMMUNITIES. INSPIRE CHANGE.
The Sigma Delta Chi Foundation supports great journalism that does all these things and more. Congratulations to Farah Stockman for receiving a 2016 Pulitzer Prize for her work funded by the SDX Foundation. Find out more about how SDX supports journalists: spj.org/sdx.asp

Photo: Essdras Suarez

spj.org/sdx.asp
A SHARP-EYED READER named Tom sends examples from the media of what he calls the "sophomoric redundancy" of the phrasing "potentially dangerous." He points to potentially dangerous natural gas levels, potentially dangerous levels of a fungicide in orange juice, even a potentially dangerous bit of choreography.

Tom correctly argues that "potentially dangerous" seems to conflate the concepts of "possibly dangerous" and "potentially harmful." Said another way, potential is the very essence of dangerous, which means having the capacity for harm not yet inflicted. It’s both odd and gratuitous to pair words with the same essential meaning.

Careful writers and editors are especially wary of the redundant. Not all redundancies are as slippery as "potentially dangerous," however. Some are ham-fisted repetitions, and all we have to do to fix them is the obvious: delete the repetition. Strip true from "true fact," for example, free from "free gift," sum from "sum total..."

Like this:

New recruit, dead body, current incumbent, 12 noon, closed fist, past-history.

Why do careful writers and editors strike those words? Because they know that all recruits are new. They know a discovered body is dead, or we don’t call it a body. They know incumbent means currently in office; noon always occurs at 12; all fists are closed, or they’re not fists; and all history is past, or it’s not history.

Thoughtful writers and editors likewise reach for their editing pen when they read such structures as “thought to myself.” Or blinked our eyes, shrugged our shoulders, nodded our heads, set a new record, 7 a.m. in the morning, past experience, or from whence.

discovered body is dead, or we don’t call it a body. They know incumbent means currently in office; noon always occurs at 12; all fists are closed, or they’re not fists; and all history is past, or it’s not history.

Thoughtful writers and editors likewise reach for their editing pen when they read such structures as “thought to myself.” Or blinked our eyes, shrugged our shoulders, nodded our heads, set a new record, 7 a.m. in the morning, past experience, or from whence.

They know that the only way we think is to ourselves. They know the only blinkable body part is the eye, the only part we shrug is the shoulder, and the only part we nod is the head. Therefore: We thought, or blinked, or shrugged, or nodded. They know that all record-setting sets new records, that 7 a.m. in the morning means "7 in the morning," that all experience, like history, is past, and that "whence" means "from which place," making "from whence" redundant.

Careful writers and editors are also on the lookout for such redundancies as ATM machine, PIN or VIN number, or HIV virus. That’s because ATM stands for automated teller machine, so “ATM machine” is saying “ATM machine machine.” In the same way, PIN or VIN stands for personal or vehicle identification number, so “PIN or VIN number” is saying “PIN or VIN number number.” HIV stands for human immunodeficiency virus — therefore, “HIV virus” is saying “human immunodeficiency virus virus.”

The expression "using civilians (or men, women, villagers, prisoners, etc.) as human shields” is a common but odd redundancy — because civilians, men, women, children, villagers, prisoners, etc., are in all events human and would therefore always be human shields. A more thoughtful construct might be something like: “They said government soldiers used Aleppo citizens as shields during the battle.”

Another linguistic oddity from 2016 qualifies for both euphemism and redundancy. Olympic swimmer Ryan Lochte repeatedly dismissed as an “overexaggeration” his false claim that he’d been held up at gunpoint in Rio. If “exaggerate” means to overstate, embellish, inflate or stretch the truth, what would “overexaggerate” mean, exactly?

In fact, Lochte was not merely “overexaggerating.” He was lying. He was never held up at gunpoint — which he himself finally admitted and which the press should have unflinchingly brought to both his and the readers’ attention. Instead, many reporters adopted Lochte’s phrasing, thereby seeming to help him whitewash his lie.

Coinages such as “overexaggeration” show that the prefix “over” bears watching because it can create not only vagueness and inflation, but also redundancy. The expression “overcrowded,” for example: How crowded does a room have to be before it becomes “overcrowded”? When the people in the room are crushed or suffocated?

The take-home message from the “Department of Redundancy Department” is that redundancy never strengthens or enriches expression because unwitting repetition is imprecise and empty by nature. Of course there’s such a thing as intentional or stylistic repetition, but that’s entirely different from inadvertent repetition. Stylistic purpose aside, saying it as well as it can be said means never having to say it twice.
GET SET FOR life

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP*
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To honor members who have a deep commitment to perpetuating a free press and to save them money in the long run, SPJ is offering lifetime memberships for $1,000. With current dues set at $75 per year, it won’t take long before this deal starts paying for itself. Passionate members who take advantage of this deal can continue networking with other members and getting discounts to SPJ programs and services.

For more information on how you can get set for life, contact Membership at (317) 927-8000, ext. 203, or membership@spj.org or visit spj.org/whyjoin.asp.
Goal-setting: Keep your eye on the prize

When I was a kid, I remember waking up on New Year’s Day and excitedly pulling out my unicorn-and-rainbows box filled with paper and a pencil. I’d write down my New Year’s resolutions and tuck them away in the box, along with my not-so-great drawings of horses, my love at the time.

Within three days, I’d have bitten my nails, argued with my brother or done whatever else I’d vowed not to do for the whole year. The horses remained. The resolutions did not.

I never sat down to write yearly goals for my life as a freelancer, at least not until last January when a local women’s journalism group in Los Angeles hosted a goal-setting workshop led by Debra Eckerling, a freelancer who created Write On! Online more than a decade ago. It’s a community for writers to help them set goals and be more productive.

The first thing we did in the workshop was write a mission statement for ourselves. What did we want to accomplish for the year? The statement takes you from being floundering freelancer to focused solo businessperson.

“What is the overarching thing that you want to be doing?” Eckerling said. “It’s sort of like what was your theme for the year?”

Your mission statement is the guiding light that will help you plan your year and grow your freelancing in the direction you want it to go. It’s what you want your freelance life to be.

Let’s say you characterize yourself in your mission statement as a successful, savvy reporter with an interest in global stories. But you’ve done little international reporting. During the year, you’re offered a gig to write press releases for a local company. Sure, you could grab the gig for the money. And you should, if you really need it. But ideally, you should step back and see if the gig aligns with your mission statement. No? Then you’re better off skipping it and focusing your time on something that aligns with your mission.

After you craft a mission statement — which can change year to year, as your life evolves — it’s time to write down some goals to help you move toward the freelance life you want.

“The best way to set goals is to take out a piece of paper and write down everything you want to accomplish this year,” Eckerling said. “I’m talking from new business cards to writing the great American novel to getting published in a major magazine — every single thing that you have in your head as something that you want to accomplish.”

Eckerling said the key is getting those goals out of your head and onto a piece of paper.

“So you write your mission at the top and then you do your laundry list of everything,” Eckerling said. “And then you break it down.”

Going back to our example, maybe you define “successful” as making more money. Then one goal might be to make 25 percent more compared to last year. You want to beef up your international reporting, so let’s make it a goal to build your international portfolio.

Once you have a few goals set, guided by your mission statement, you need to break each goal into smaller tasks that will get you there. If your goal is to make 25 percent more, then your tasks might be: Send 20 pitches a month. Pitch to a new outlet each week. Stop taking stories that pay under a certain amount. The tasks for each goal are very specific.

With the international reporting example, maybe your tasks would be: Apply for six international fellowships this year, such as the Burns Fellowship to Germany or an East-West Center Fellowship to China. Find one international story in your own backyard each month. Pitch these local “international” stories each month to international outlets, such as PRI’s The World or an international newspaper. This moves you toward your goal.

It’s simple but effective. First, mission statement. Second, goals, prioritized from big to small. Third, tasks.

Congratulations! You’ve laid the groundwork for your freelance year.

But it doesn’t stop there. Eckerling said to stay motivated by looking at your goals. Post them somewhere you can see them each day. Post them publicly. Find a buddy or a group to help you stay accountable to your goals. And more importantly, check in on how you’re doing. Have you strayed from your goals and mission statement? Recalibrate and set yourself on the right path.

Eckerling suggests not focusing on failure. We all fail. We need failure to push us to succeed. She said to take some time regularly to write down your successes.

“Write down the things that pop into your head that you’re most proud of accomplishing in the last six months, three months, year,” she said. “And look at them and be like, ‘Look what I did!’”

Eckerling said it will not only keep you mentally positive and motivated but can also help inspire your freelance buddies around you. She said it gives you a little boost to be able to look at those successes when you’ve had a crappy week or a period when everything seems to be going wrong.

And don’t let yourself off the hook, either. As freelancer media folks, we’re often natural procrastinators.

But in the end, remember your mission. Remember who you want to be as a media professional and as a person. Remember your goals.

“Keep your eye on the prize,” Eckerling said. “Even if you work toward them a little of the time, you’ll get somewhere.”

Susan Valot is a public radio reporter and an adjunct professor in the Los Angeles area. She has been freelancing full time for five years. She regularly contributes to KQED’s “The California Report,” NPR’s “Only a Game” and other outlets. She’s also a member of the SPI Freelance Community’s executive committee. On Twitter: @susanvalot
There is a great scene in “All the President’s Men,” the film about The Washington Post’s reporting that eventually led to Richard Nixon’s resignation as president of the United States. Executive editor Ben Bradlee is talking with reporters Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward about a strange interaction they just had with a source.

“All non-denial denials,” Bradlee says. “They don’t say the story is inaccurate.”

“Did you understand one thing he was saying?” Woodward asks.

“What I can’t figure out is what is a real denial?” Bernstein quips.

“Well if they start calling us goddamn liars, we better start circling the wagons.” Bradlee answers.

I have a picture of Bradlee, Woodward and Bernstein at my desk that I took at an SPJ conference in 2008. I look at that photo every single day and remind myself that some of the most important reporting of the 20th century was done by a couple of stubborn reporters who worked with an uncommonly remarkable editorial staff and owner. It also helps remind me to strive never to take stories at face value.

Those three wise men, as I’ve come to call them, were not the first — or last — reporters to get a non-denial denial from a source. It’s common practice.

A recent, stark example of a non-denial denial is the press conference held by Donald Trump on Jan. 11. If it is a harbinger of what’s to come, the press is in for a very long four years. It was his first press conference as president-elect, complete with cued music and awkward bursts of applause (six times) and cheering, bizarrely out of place in such a setting.

Most remarkable was the time spent making non-denial denials about a story that had been reported by CNN and BuzzFeed and then picked up by, well, everyone. Trump, Vice President-elect Mike Pence, a lawyer for Trump and Trump’s press secretary Sean Spicer spent the first 30 minutes of the press conference taking jabs at the press in a backdoor approach to discredit the reporting, not the information reported. The story dealt with a 35-page document claiming...
that Russia has compromising personal and financial information on Trump. CNN’s report revealed that both Trump and President Obama had received intelligence briefings on the matter. BuzzFeed went deeper, further and more controversial in publishing the entire dossier.

“You are fake news,” Trump said. The exchange was followed by a bitter string of tweets from Spicer’s account, demanding an apology from Acosta.

The press conference covered a variety of other topics, in relatively vague terms, including the border wall (not the “fence”)! between Mexico and the U.S., the Affordable Care Act, Veterans Affairs, Russia, and the domestic and foreign intelligence communities.

THE DEADLINE TO END ALL DEADLINES

Reporters from around the world seem just as dumbfounded by what to make of the new leader of the free world as many American journalists are.

Nobody wants to speculate about what might happen after the inauguration, or for the four years following it. Ever optimistic that the incoming Trump administration will somehow play by the rules, journalists around the world are working overtime to normalize what has time and again proven to be anything but a normal situation.

Nobody wants to speculate about what might happen after the inauguration, or for the four years following it. Ever optimistic that the incoming Trump administration will somehow play by the rules, journalists around the world are working overtime to normalize what has time and again proven to be anything but a normal situation.
how he or members of his administration will ever be able to steer the ship toward some semblance of normalcy.

That would include, as things relate to the media, basic protocols and traditions that have long been followed by every modern president. Regular press briefings, speeches and press conferences. A presidential reporter pool assigned to follow POTUS. Announcements and interactions made through traditional channels, such as spokesman statements and announcements, press releases and so on.

Trump makes announcements and commentary via Twitter, a practice so unprecedented that there is no protocol to govern his use of social media after he takes office.

Etta Prince-Gibson is an Israeli freelance journalist who writes about news and politics for domestic and foreign press in both Hebrew and English. She said she’s finding it difficult to come to terms with the new global reality vis-a-vis Trump.

“This has to be some sort of a cosmic joke; this can’t be real,” Prince-Gibson said. “I don’t think we (in the Israeli press) feel much different than the American press, yet we have a job to do.”

She’s worked as a journalist for more than 20 years and said she has been consulting resources from Poynter.org to study up on tactics for reporting news about Trump. One of those pieces of advice is to “report on what’s not normal.”

But Prince-Gibson said she’s finding it hard to get grounded in any solid approach or tactic.

“How do you do this right?” she said. “I’m reading some of the revelations this morning (on Russian intelligence claims) and I’m thinking ‘Really? How am I supposed to present this?’”

In her opinion, a visit to Israel by Trump would present a “professional and moral quandary” for the Israeli press, given its close economic and cultural ties to America.

For the most part, the lively media scene in Israel is defined by a more individualistic bent, according to which journalist is reporting for which media outlet. That means some outlets will likely embrace what Prince-Gibson describes as the “bromance” between Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Others will likely focus on his opinion about possibly relocating the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, his stance on Israeli settlements in the West Bank and his choice of ambassador as potential threats to a peace process that is already dangling by a very raggedly thin thread.

Then there are the insults, such as Trump’s mocking gestures of a disabled reporter (which Trump has vigorously denied).

“What do you do when somebody comes out with a comment that is absolutely not acceptable in terms of the liberal modern Western values in the broadest sense?” Prince-Gibson said. “As emotional as it is, and as horrible as it is, our job doesn’t change. Our job is to report, to inform readers, to challenge readers through multiple opinions. What’s different is the tone, some of the crudeness and the anti-intellectual bent that’s everywhere in the Western world.”

FROM RUSSIA WITH ...?

Some journalists are taking a more tongue-in-cheek approach to looking ahead at the next four years. Alexey Kovalev is a Russian journalist and media analyst who writes about propaganda, fake news and Russian state media on noodleremover.news. The site is in Russian, but on Jan. 12 he posted an essay on his newly created Medium account that reads like satire. Chillingly realistic satire.

Titled “A message to my doomed colleagues in the American media,” the essay explains that the American press is in for a rough ride.

Kovalev describes Trump as “an authoritarian leader with a massive ego and a deep disdain for your trade and everything you hold dear,” then explains that Russian journalists have long experienced the same under Vladimir Putin.

Within two days, the piece had 100,000 views on Medium, according to Kovalev, and was republished by The Huffington Post, where it received hundreds of comments.

“That was actually a bit of a joke, suggested by one of my American col-
leagues,” Kovalev said. “I didn’t expect it to get so many comments.”

He added that he thought the similarities he pointed out between Trump and Putin — including making press conferences into choreographed media events, showing a blatant disregard for facts, enduring abusive behavior from POTUS himself, and rough jockeying amongst journalists just to get a question in — would have already been obvious to Americans.

“Living in Russia, I somehow myopically assumed that people outside of Russia are following Putin’s press conferences as closely as we do,” he said, adding that Putin holds one major press conference every year. “Everything is focused on Putin and what he says during that four-hour press conference.”

Kovalev predicts that Trump will be a huge hit with the Russian media.

“The first state visit of Donald Trump to Russia will be covered by every state media in Russia; they will heap praise on him,” he said, adding that Trump’s aides have been traveling to Russia “for a couple of months now” and have been treated like “royalty.”

Editorial independence in a country that is dominated by state-controlled and -funded media is going to be a challenge, Kovalev said — particularly given the recent explosion of interest in Russia.

“I can see on Facebook that quite a few of my colleagues are really disillusioned,” he said. “In my decades as a reporter, I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Kovalev predicts that Putin might prevail on Trump during his first visit to Moscow to coach Trump on controlling reporters.

“Putin is a huge fan of discipline; you will never see him lash out at reporters at a news conference,” he said. “If you watch Putin’s press conferences, you will see how he deflates questions. One thing you’ll never see is Putin lashing out; he completely destroys you without insulting you. He’ll shred you to pieces just by smirking at you.”

STIFF UPPER LIP?

If Trump pays a visit to the U.K., though, he could meet with a much different breed of journalist than he’s accustomed to. British journalist Sophie Cohen reports for Jane’s Intelligence Review and thinks that although the populist movement is well understood in the U.K., Trump may not get a very warm reception.

“Britain is such a traditional place, and it has such set, formulaic structures, and Trump is this kind of an anti-establishment figure,” Cohen said. “They will have a field day.”

Though Cohen notes that British sentiment is generally that Trump could reinvigorate the U.K.’s “special relationship” with the U.S., there might be some awkward moments if there are face-to-face interviews.

“Because of our cultural differences, the tone might be different,” she said. “He might be met with a certain amount of irony, or if he’s rude to British journalists, the reaction might be kind of cutting. I think it will be amusing.”

She added that Brits, and the international press in general, may have unique opportunities to do what the American press can’t, or won’t.

“We have a tabloid culture; the British press aren’t shy at awkward questions,” she said. “There is that element of freedom that the international press has. They don’t need to worry about possible consequences.”

Ultimately, how demanding the British press is of Trump in getting to the hard questions could simply come down to perception.

“He’s not quite taken seriously; he’s seen as a sort of a comic figure,” she said. “Closer to home in Canada, some reporters are wary of what’s in store.”

Tom Korski is managing editor of the political electronic daily Blacklock’s Reporter and has been a working journalist for nearly four decades. He said by email that most Canadians rely on American media for their news, so much of the coverage of Trump so far has been of the “chat room variety.”

That could change, though. He describes public sentiment toward the incoming president in somewhat nihilistic terms, saying that there is a “wariness, fascination, a vaguely smug sense of superiority, a nagging fear he will hammer Canadian negotiators in any trade negotiations.”

The real issue in Canada in regard to Trump, according to Korski, is trade.

“Legislators are chiving their fingernails over Trump on trade,” he said. “Millions of Canadians have opposed free trade in the past — 57 percent of voters opposed it in a 1988 general election — but it’s now so accepted as necessary that any revisions are treated like a death in the family. They are truly terrified. I’m serious. Petrified.”

Korski said America’s two-party system, with all its “tribalism” and limitations, is a big part of the problem. But he warned that journalists need to find a way to drown out the noise and just keep at it.

“If I was a managing editor in the states, I would take careful note that a game show host just won an election by campaigning against media as corrupt partisan hacks, and a lot of reporters were so busy feeling sorry for themselves they missed the biggest political story of their generation,” he said.

“The only refuge for reporters is reporting. Drop the sniveling. Get back on the beat.”

Genevieve Belmaker is an editor for Mongabay and a freelancer based in Jerusalem. On Twitter: @Gen_Belmaker

NARRATIVE WRITING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

story pattern: Anecdote, quote, nutgraf. What you learn by concentrating on just a small part of the overall story, will serve you well — in coming stories — as you move to the middle and then the end.

LISTEN

I listen to songs as a musician. What notes were used in that solo? In what order were the notes played? Why did I like it? How can I apply that to my playing?

As a writer, you must read. And I mean everything. Read once as a reader coming to the work for the first time, but then go back and focus on a particular passage, or the opening or ending. Why did it work? What choices did the writer make? Why? How can you apply those choices to your work?

Finally, I want to resume something I did years ago: Working with one of you on a story, and then writing about the process in a future column. If you are interested, email me: tbhbook@aol.com.
Many thanks to the Scripps Howard Foundation for its continued generosity in support of the Ted Scripps Leadership Institute. Since 1996, the program has trained and empowered more than 1,000 industry leaders around the country. Here’s to 1,000 more!
THE INTERNET inarguably shook up the journalism industry more than any other technology throughout its history. People spend a lot of time discussing the internet’s impact on storytelling and the business of journalism, but they typically ignore or simply don’t realize the harassment it unleashed on journalists.

The issue sneaked into the daily lives of journalists as the community known as Gamergate grew into an army of anonymous internet users willing to attack any person or reporter who got in their way. People also saw the in-person and online harassment journalists endured during the 2016 election.

Twitter more recently banned Martin Shkreli, the much-maligned former pharmaceutical executive, from its platforms after repeatedly targeting an editor at Teen Vogue.

Professional journalism organizations like SPJ and the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press are incredibly good at responding to the legal and ethical challenges faced by journalists. No organization — as far as I know — is currently addressing the issue of harassment.

Harassment is an ethical issue, however. Harassment should be seen as an attack on a free press and a call to action for other journalists. Journalists have a duty to watch each other’s backs in the field and in the newsroom.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe took a step toward addressing the problem last year by publishing a report on the latest research on online harassment of female journalists and possible solutions.

The report calls on member states of the OSCE to acknowledge the issue, but it also calls on media organizations and social media platforms to find ways to address harassment against female journalists.

Among the report’s recommendations is a call for all journalists at media organizations to “have access to a comprehensive system of support including psychosocial and legal assistance.” Additionally, the report says those companies should create a culture of gender equality and non-tolerance of any harassment. They should also work with other organizations “to create support systems … for female journalists and media actors,” the report concludes.

The OSCE report should be required reading for all newsroom leaders as they balance the need to connect online with their readers, viewers and listeners while also protecting their journalists. The report can be viewed at tinyurl.com/OSCEHarassment.

The OSCE also suggests that the journalism industry create “industry wide guidelines on identifying and monitoring online abuse.”

Creating industry-wide guidelines and inter-organization support systems take time, but there are steps you can take in the meantime:

- Journalists who see their colleagues and peers being harassed online should reach out to the affected person to offer support.
- News organizations should develop protocols and resources to support journalists experiencing online harassment. If news organizations don’t have protocols in place, journalists should take up the tasks of identifying resources and creating support groups for their affected colleagues.
- Journalists and news organizations should identify point people within social media companies trained to deal with online harassment.
- Journalists and news organizations should immediately contact law enforcement about any credible threats to the health and safety of journalists.
- News organizations should also offer legal assistance to address harassment.

Some organizations and people within the journalism community are taking initial steps to combat online harassment. The organization known as TrollBusters is in beta mode, but it works to send positive messages and images to people affected by online harassment in an attempt to dilute the negative experience.

SPJ and other journalism organizations should also contribute to efforts to offer support and assistance to all harassed journalists through toolkits and newsroom workshops.

In the interim, simple steps and supportive colleagues can fill the gap.
OR the first half of my journalism career, I toiled mostly in obscurity and often in anonymity.

I took seriously the admonitions of my first journalism professor and many subsequent editors: Avoid using the first person. No one cares about your opinions or your feelings. No one cares how hard you had to work to get the story.

My tools and circumstances changed considerably through the first couple of decades of my career. Typewriters gave way to computers. I was present for the deaths of two newspapers and led another newsroom’s conversion from afternoon to morning publication. But this much seldom changed: If I felt or thought anything about the stories I wrote and edited, you couldn’t tell because my face hid behind the mask of an “objective” journalist. And readers never saw the face of a reporter or editor anyway, and not even the names of editors.

That approach to journalism served me well. I succeeded in various editing and reporting jobs for six different Midwestern newspapers over the first two decades of my career. I think I was a pretty good journalist, but few people, even fellow journalists, knew who I was, unless we had worked together. But a couple of decades ago, I started lowering the mask. I learned, and eventually practiced, a newer journalistic principle: transparency.

I learned a key lesson about transparency from my wife, who wrote as a freelance columnist for the Minot Daily News, where I was the editor for a year in the early 1990s. I also wrote a weekly column but seldom used the first person, hiding mostly behind the mask.

I generally used my column to explain why our staff wrote about certain topics or why we covered a story in a particular way. I wrote about issues in the community and even weighty world affairs.
Seldom did I write about that guy whose photo ran with the column. Mimi was not so restrained. Her column often featured people and events in the community, but if something funny or touching happened in her personal or family life, she’d write about that, too (often with my sons and me as amusing characters). I carefully suggested that she’d probably be better off to write sparingly about her own life, and have readers wishing they knew her better, than to write frequently about personal matters and have readers rolling their eyes, thinking, “There she goes again.”

As she often has during 42-plus years of marriage, Mimi ignored my advice. She wasn’t a reporter or editor, and she didn’t need to hide behind journalistic conventions that developed for reporters and editors. Her name and photo ran with the column, and if she felt like writing a personal story, she did.

The company that owned the newspaper wanted to sell the paper and decided to unload some big salaries, including mine. The publisher fired me abruptly, and dropped Mimi’s column, too, saying it would be awkward to publish her column after firing me. Guess which move outraged the community?

The editor who wrote about lofty matters received a few nice letters of encouragement and support. But firing the columnist who had made a personal connection with readers stirred an outpouring of angry reaction. Her work was so popular that four editors in neighboring towns in North Dakota and Saskatchewan eagerly picked up the column. And the unemployed editor noticed.

My next job was reporting for the Omaha World-Herald, working for editors who shared my views about keeping the reporter out of the story. I settled back initially into a career of pretty traditional journalism, wearing my mask and cranking out good stories.

But then the internet came along. And I started learning the value of transparency. I don’t think I’m a notably better journalist than I was when I hid behind the objectivity mask. But I get more credit for my work.

Journalists started using the internet about the time I decided to put my reporting and editing experience to work training journalists. My initial motivation for

Steve Buttry interviewing Mikhail Gorbachev in 2002.

Frequently, as my training materials attracted attention, people would ask me how I could afford to “give away” my journalism tips online. My answer was that I couldn’t afford not to give them away.
publishing newsroom training materials online was promotional. I had started seeking business as a writing coach, leading workshops for newsrooms, press associations and journalism organizations. Because few people knew of my reporting and editing experience, I published my workshop handouts online, first on a personal website and later on the Des Moines Register’s website, after I became religion reporter and writing coach there in 1998.

My big break was the 2000 launch of the No Train, No Gain website, a collaboration of newsroom trainers around the world. I was the founding content coordinator and leading contributor. Every time I developed a new workshop, I posted the handout and/or exercise at No Train, No Gain. In 2004, I started my first blog, Training Tracks, addressing training issues for No Train, No Gain.

I didn’t reflect a lot of personality in my handouts, but the blog occasionally shared stories from my own career. And the fact that I was publishing all this training material online puzzled other journalists, too.

Frequently, as my training materials attracted attention, people would ask me how I could afford to “give away” my journalism tips online. My answer was that I couldn’t afford not to give them away. Sure, some people used my handouts without paying me anything, but others read them, found them useful and decided to hire me to present workshops on those topics for their newsrooms or organizations.

I developed a nice five-figure second income as a newsroom trainer, and most, if not all, of my work came from colleagues in producing No Train, No Gain and/or from strangers who read my handouts online. I could not imagine making similar money selling a book or newsletter offering the same tips.

Those handouts I was “giving away” brought me enough prominence in journalism training that I was able to get a full-time job (and a considerable pay raise) at the American Press Institute. That got me involved with the Newspaper Next project and working with some leading thinkers in innovation. I broadened the scope of my blogging, writing more frequently about issues of digital innovation than about newsroom training.
Soon the digital world was moving toward social media, and I recognized the need to be truly social in these new platforms. On Twitter and Facebook, I didn’t write just about innovation and training, but about flight delays, my favorite sports teams and new grandchildren, the stuff of social conversation. Because my career path was not completely an upward arc, my sense of transparency applied both to sharing the stories of my success (the editor and reporter I was for most of my career would have called that “boasting”) and to being open about setbacks and the lessons I learned from them.

And I shared intensely personal stories.

In 2009, my teenage nephew, Patrick Devlin, underwent treatment for leukemia, and I learned more about transparency and social media as his father, John, shared the family’s story in frequent posts on CaringBridge. The journal allowed John to update family and friends around the world who were praying for Patrick and watching his progress. CaringBridge’s ability to share big news naturally to me, even about something as uncomfortable as cancer. Besides, my treatment involved scheduled hospitalizations of five days at a time and some unscheduled hospital stays for brain surgery, meningitis and a severe infection, concluding with a 26-day hospital stay for a stem-cell transplant. Some level of disclosure was unavoidable. So I just continued my transparent ways.

I blogged about my diagnosis. I light-heartedly lamented the anticipated loss of my hair in a post that showed my varied styles of beard and hair through the years. I kept friends informed of my treatment in a CaringBridge journal.

The people who argued and agreed with me about innovation issues, or who shared my writing and ethics tips, responded with hundreds upon hundreds of emails, visits, text messages, phone calls and social-media messages of support. They celebrated with me when I left the hospital on Dec. 26, 2015, with healthy new bone marrow and cancer-free lymph nodes.

But my pancreas didn’t look right in a routine follow-up scan in April. I got more scans and tests and finally went in July to the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, where another scan and biopsy showed that I have pancreatic cancer. Again, despite some reservations, I blogged about the diagnosis.

This time chemotherapy was unsuccessful. The cancer has spread to my liver, and we’ve stopped treatment. And, of course, I blogged about that again, and again received an outpouring of support and encouragement.

I think I was a damn good journalist back in those objective days when “Stephen Buttry” was a byline, but not a person we showed the readers. … But beyond a nice paycheck and an occasional attaboy from an editor, I didn’t get much credit for my work.

And my social media accounts.

I blogged about lessons for media in CaringBridge’s ability to share big news in small circles. Blog readers and my social media connections responded with support and sympathy as I shared a few updates about Patrick and eventually published his eulogy on my blog.

Another nephew, Brandon Buttry, died in early November 2012 while serving in the Army in Afghanistan. I helped my brother, Don, by speaking for the family to the news media and blogged about the experience of meeting the plane bringing his body back to the United States and later about the funeral. Again, my transparency brought a warm response from the journalists following the blog and my social media accounts.

Brandon had been scheduled to come home Thanksgiving weekend. He had told his parents he wanted a cheeseburger for his first meal back on American soil. When his sister and I spread the word on social media, dozens of people, probably more than 100, many of whom didn’t know Brandon, joined in the “cheeseburger salute,” posting photos on social media of them eating burgers in Brandon’s honor.

When Digital First Media cut my job and others in 2014, I didn’t sugarcoat or go into hiding. I tweeted that I was a “free agent” and asked my Twitter connections to suggest where I might look next; my first job offer came that day.

Later that year, after moving to Louisiana State University, I faced a more severe personal challenge than flight delays or loss of a job. I was diagnosed with Stage IV mantle-cell lymphoma. A part of you wants to deal with cancer privately, and I know people who have chosen to disclose little more than a diagnosis, or who have even successfully worked through cancer treatment without disclosing their illnesses to co-workers and most friends.

By then, though, transparency came naturally to me, even about something as uncomfortable as cancer. Besides, my treatment involved scheduled hospitalizations of five days at a time and some unscheduled hospital stays for brain surgery, meningitis and a severe infection, concluding with a 26-day hospital stay for a stem-cell transplant. Some level of disclosure was unavoidable. So I just continued my transparent ways.

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I think I was a damn good journalist back in those objective days when “Stephen Buttry” was a byline, but not a person we showed the readers. And I won my share of state journalism awards and a couple of less-prominent national awards. But beyond a nice paycheck and an occasional attaboy from an editor, I didn’t get much credit for my work.

In February, I’m scheduled to receive the Chairman’s Citation from the National Press Foundation, my third award in less than two years from a major journalism organization (three more than I received working in obscurity in that first half of my career). I don’t think I finally reached some award-winning level of journalistic excellence. But my transparency has helped me contribute more to journalism and to get more credit for those contributions.

I’ve improved my journalism and my life by setting aside that objectivity mask and embracing transparency along with my traditional journalism skills and principles.

You might consider trying it, too.

Steve Buttry is director of student media at Louisiana State University. He has contributed to Quill in the past on topics of ethics and led sessions at the Excellence in Journalism conference on ethics, leadership and career development. Email: stephenbuttry@gmail.com. Twitter: @stevebuttry
BY BECOMING A MEMBER, YOU CAN:

• Build your network by engaging with like-minded members
• Utilize and debate new ideas about your journalism
• Inform and engage members by collaborating on programs and content
• Learn new tips and skills for your career
• Develop a better industry

IT’S YOUR SPJ. MAKE A DIFFERENCE BY JOINING THE COMMUNITIES TODAY.

Questions? Email Alex Veeneman, Community Coordinator at alex.veeneman01@gmail.com.
Use social media as a watchdog spotlight

ONE OF MY PROUDEST MOMENTS in recent memory happened when I tracked down a little-known government meeting and sent live updates to my Twitter followers on what turned out to be a $1 million cash subsidy to a major company.

While the government agency did not alert journalists about the 8 a.m. meeting until late afternoon the day before, the tweets made the contents of the meeting common knowledge throughout an otherwise boring Friday news dump.

While I ended up posting a breaking news story with the scoop, the coverage on social media contributed to public knowledge and therefore backlash against government officials. Other news outlets ran front-page stories about it, and a man even ran for governor on the issue.

All of this was made possible because of social media. If used right, social media platforms can shine light on issues that corporations and government officials don’t want shared. Here are some ideas.

REMEMBER THE POWER OF LIVE TWEETING

Although certainly not new, it’s still worth reiterating the usefulness of it. Live tweeting is the act of tweeting out events as they’re happening. We often see these types of tweets when your old friend you haven’t seen since college starts tweeting about eating a sandwich, then about how part of that sandwich dropped onto his shirt, and that he finished the sandwich.

In journalism, we can use Twitter to give a play-by-play of events when we are sitting in meetings or hearings. We can quote officials when they make inappropriate comments, and we can expose secret meetings when they are doing things that, for one reason or another, people in power don’t want anyone to hear. As an added bonus, you can use the quotes you write down on Twitter as backup notes.

REPURPOSE THE FRIDAY NEWS DUMP

While public relations professionals often bury stories by issuing press releases on Friday afternoons, social media experts say that users are more engaged on Facebook on Thursday and Friday afternoons. Analytics studies of social media engagement suggest that Monday through Wednesday actually have the lowest engagement rates on Facebook, while Facebook engagement increases by up to 10 percent on Fridays.

This means journalists should go ahead and report the breaking stories that public relations professionals may try to bury on Fridays and use Facebook to get the headline out. Your audience may not be seeking out your website or newspaper on Saturdays, but they will still share your Facebook links, and that means the “news dump” just might go viral.

SPREAD YOUR STORY AUTOMATICALLY

Once you have started live-tweeting events and posting potential news dumps at all the right times, you can use automated technology to move that information further and faster. If you don’t have a web developer to help you, try a simple iPhone app called If This Then That, or IFTTT.

The app allows you to automatically post from Instagram to Facebook or Twitter, from Facebook to Twitter, or even from Twitter to Reddit. The possibilities are virtually endless. And because each social media platform tends to reach a different demographic, the automation quickly expands the population of people who know about your reporting.

Social media can often be used (ad nauseam) as a marketing tool, but watchdog journalists can also strategically use social media to get once-secret information out to the public quickly. At its best, this can lead to greater public understanding of complex issues and shine light on issues that would otherwise be left in the dark.

ERIN MANSFIELD

Erin Mansfield covers healthcare, business and state government for VTDigger.org in Montpelier, Vermont. She previously covered Selectboards and a major utility project for local newspapers in Vermont. Interact on Twitter: @erin_vt

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NOMINATION DEADLINE: MARCH 20, 2017

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- **SUNSHINE AWARD**
  recognizes those making important contributions in the area of open government.

- **ETHICS IN JOURNALISM AWARD**
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