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**Journalism Innovation and the Ethic of Participation:
A Case Study of the Knight Foundation and its News Challenge**

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**Journalism Innovation and the Ethic of Participation:
A Case Study of the Knight Foundation and its News Challenge**

by

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Dissertation

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Dedication

For my wife, Tiffany, whose patience, sacrifice,
and persistent encouragement have made this possible.

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**Journalism Innovation and the Ethic of Participation:
A Case Study of the Knight Foundation and its News Challenge**

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Seth Corwin Lewis, Ph.D.
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Supervisor: Stephen D. Reese

The digitization of media has undermined much of the social authority and economic viability on which U.S. journalism relied during the 20th century. This disruption has also opened a central tension for the profession: how to reconcile the need for occupational control against growing opportunities for citizen participation. How that tension is navigated will affect the ultimate shape of the profession and its place in society.

This dissertation examines how the leading nonprofit actor in journalism, The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, has sought to help journalism innovate out of its professional crisis. This case study engages a series of mixed methods—including interviews, textual analysis, and secondary data analysis—to generate a holistic portrayal of how the Knight Foundation has attempted to transform itself and the journalism field in recent years, particularly through its signature Knight News Challenge innovation contest.

From a sociology of professions perspective, I found that the Knight Foundation altered the rhetorical and actual boundaries of journalism jurisdiction. Knight moved away from “journalism” and toward “information” as a way of seeking the wisdom of the crowd to solve journalism’s problems. This opening up of journalism’s boundaries created crucial space in which innovators, from inside and outside journalism, could step in and bring change to the field. In particular, these changes have allowed the concept of citizen participation, which resides at the periphery of mainstream newswork, to become embraced as an ethical norm and a founding doctrine of journalism innovation. The result of these efforts has been the emergence of a new rendering of journalism—one that straddles the professional-participatory tension by attempting to “ferry the values” of professional ideals even while embracing new practices more suited to a digital environment.

Ultimately, this case study matters for what it suggests about professions in turbulent times. Influential institutions can bring change to their professional fields by acting as boundary-spanning agents—stepping outside the traditional confines of their field, altering the rhetorical and structural borders of professional jurisdiction to invite external contribution and correction, and altogether creating the space and providing the capital for innovation to flourish.

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INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1: Digital Disruption and Innovation in Journalism

It was June 10, 2008, and the man who oversees the world’s leading journalism foundation, with \$2 billion in assets, stepped to the lectern at a gathering of nonprofit, business and media leaders in Boston, Massachusetts. Alberto Ibargüen, president and chief executive officer of The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, proceeded to deliver perhaps the most consequential speech¹ in the foundation’s nearly six decades—one that would articulate a Media Innovation Initiative that has become the touchstone around which the Knight Foundation has sought to transform itself, the journalism field in which it resides, and even philanthropy at large.

Ibargüen began by outlining the foundation’s baseline concern: Historically, the reach of a local newspaper or radio station nicely coincided with the geographic boundaries of government and civic life, such that news media played an essential role in developing a Aristotelian “sphere of shared information” to serve a given community. However, the digitization of media has turned this arrangement upside down, both for good and ill—at once enhancing our abilities to forge virtual communities around the globe, while also undercutting the essential functions and capacity of local media to inform physical-space communities in which we still live, work, vote, and pay taxes. Amid this disruption, Ibargüen said, the Knight Foundation had made a pivotal shift: no longer fretting about the fate of the *news industry*, but instead being concerned for the future of *news and information*—and how media innovation and experimentation could shape the civic information of the future. In his speech, Ibargüen said:

¹ For the full text, see http://www.knightfdn.org/news/press_room/knight_press_releases/detail.dot?id=330912.

[T]here's little to be gained from lamenting how the media landscape has changed. A more productive approach is to embrace the change and make it yours, infusing it with your values. That's what we've chosen to do at Knight Foundation. We believe technology can strengthen community information, and through that information, communities themselves. ... Today, our work is focused on innovation and experimentation. The question we ask is *not* "How do we save newspapers?" The question is, "How do we save effective communication that communities need to manage their affairs in this democracy?" In other words, how do we save journalism in the digital age?

This turn away from the newspaper industry, to which the Knight Foundation long had a close relationship after it was born out of the Knight brothers' newspaper company in 1950, was no small step. It signaled that, in looking for answers to the problem of preserving "effective communication" for communities to function, the Knight Foundation was looking outside its familiar home in the journalism profession, where it has famously funded mid-career training programs and other initiatives that serve the news industry. Instead, as Iburgüen described, Knight was embracing a media innovation strategy of open experimentation, of engaging with philanthropists in other fields, and of trusting the "wisdom of the crowd" to guide its efforts. In doing this, the foundation was implying that it was less concerned with saving the traditional *means* of doing journalism (via a professional news industry) and more interested in preserving the *outcomes* of journalism—the civically important information that leads to "informed and engaged communities," to use the foundation's slogan.

A PROFESSION UNDER PRESSURE

How the Knight Foundation has sought to negotiate this challenge, of preserving the core outcomes of journalism even as the professional means of doing journalism struggle to survive, is the subject of this dissertation. The Knight Foundation matters because, as I will explain through this case study, it is uniquely positioned as a professional steward for journalism: an organization that holds great influence within the

profession as the leading funder of journalism education, training, and research and development; yet, at the same time, it is an organization that is not entirely beholden to the news industry, and therefore has the autonomy to move beyond the professional limitations of “journalism” and its ideology (see Deuze, 2005b). As I will argue here, this boundary-spanning position—through which the foundation is both embedded in the profession and yet can remain apart from it to suit its purposes—has allowed Knight to *step outside of journalism in order to bring change back in*. In this way, the Knight Foundation offers a point of entry through which to understand the larger phenomenon of *professional innovation*, or the (attempted) innovation of a professional field as catalyzed by an influential and well-positioned actor within that field.

These are complex times for professions. Never have there been more occupations attempting to professionalize themselves for purposes of status and occupational control (Noordegraaf, 2007), and yet professionalism in the developed world increasingly is under “assault” (Freidson, 2001, p. 179) from a confluence of social and market pressures: e.g., organizational demands for cost-cutting and profits, a growing distrust of elites generally, and a do-it-yourself culture that looks with increasing scorn on the specialized education and bureaucratic barriers to entry that professions cultivate. If professions, by definition, have *jurisdiction* (Abbott, 1988) through to which to govern a body of knowledge and the practice of that expertise, with an ideological interest in doing “good work” (Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi & Damon, 2001) for society that transcends a corporate imperative—then threats to the profession are primarily struggles over boundaries (Gieryn, 1983): about the rhetoric and material delimitations of insiders and outsiders, of what counts as ethical practice, and so on. These are questions, ultimately,

of *control*, and of professions' capacity for exercising that control to fulfill their normative functions.

In the early years of the 21st century, amid the disruption brought on by the digitization of information, few professions have been buffeted quite like U.S. journalism,² which has seen its economic stability and social authority eroded dramatically (for an overview of the crisis, see Downie & Schudson, 2009). Amid this change, however, the story of journalism professionalism, captured in an array of academic studies, has been one of relative *stasis*—of resistance or reluctance on the part of news institutions to change fundamental elements of their culture and praxis in the face of existential threats, and of an occupational ideology of journalism that remains “operationally closed” (Deuze, 2008b, pp. 20-21).³ To be sure, newspapers have become digitized, and the journalists working for them have moved beyond thinking like “print people” (Boczkowski, 2004, p. 187). Even Deuze (2008b) acknowledges “tears” on the surface of journalism as “enthusiastic multimedia reporters experience institutional or technological change as empowering and liberating” (p. 21). But, in general, changes in technologies and audiences have been “normalized” (Singer, 2005) to suit longstanding rituals and routines of newswork, and therefore to reinforce a professional sense of importance (Williams, Wardle & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2010). In all, the primary struggle for journalism today is one of negotiating the capacity of networked technologies for open,

² The argument over whether journalism should be classified as a profession or “semi-profession” (Witschge & Nygren, 2009) is taken up in Chapter 3. Suffice it to say here that it matters less *how much* journalism resembles a “classical” profession such as medicine or law than it does how journalism has sought to professionalize itself (Anderson, 2008b; Schudson & Anderson, 2008).

³ In his examination of news institutions, technologies, cultures, and organizations, Deuze (2008b) finds journalism to be an “operationally closed, self-organizing, and self-defensive social system, communicating social and technological affordances in terms of the various ways in which they might ‘fit’ existing (informal) hierarchies, and traditions of doing newswork” (p. 21).

transparent, and dialogical forms of engagement with audiences, against professional defensiveness and reassertion of control.

STUDY PURPOSE

This dissertation, however, is not another recounting of a profession under siege, nor of institutional journalism's general disregard for systemic innovation. Rather, this is the story of how change *does* occur within professions, or at least how catalytic agents of innovation seek to make that change occur by attempting to shift the way professions think about and act upon their normative roles in society. This is the story of how one nonprofit foundation with decades of close relations with the news industry, The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, has undertaken an ambitious effort to bring innovation to journalism. The foundation has done this in part by working to shift the emphasis from “journalism” to “information,” thus attempting to open up journalism—its definition, and the boundaries around its practice—to a wider set of fields, interests, and actors. The underlying tension in all of this is the struggle for journalism's soul: how to reconcile the need for professional control against the impulse for greater user participation. How that tension is navigated will affect the ultimate shape of the profession and its place in society.

Thus, the purpose of this dissertation is three-fold: (a) to explore how the Knight Foundation has negotiated the tension between professional control and open participation in journalism; (b) to understand if and how that negotiation has been manifest in its signature innovation initiative, the Knight News Challenge; and (c) to discuss the implications of Knight's innovation logic for the profession of journalism. This case study engages a series of qualitative and quantitative methods—including textual analysis of key policy texts, interviews with foundation leaders and the innovators

they have funded, and secondary-data analysis—to generate a holistic portrayal of how the Knight Foundation has sought to transform itself in recent years, and how that in turn has influenced its efforts to change the field of journalism broadly.

DIGITIZATION AND JOURNALISM

Contemporary digital technologies have shifted the news communication paradigm from one-to-many broadcasts to more diffuse and multi-directional many-to-many networked flows (Castells, 2007). For institutional journalism, this ongoing transformation undermines the crucial elements of authority (Robinson, 2007), expertise (Anderson, 2008a), and gatekeeping control over information (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009) that historically endowed the press with professional prestige in society and monopolistic power in local advertising markets. For much of the 20th century, both the business models and the news-making models of U.S. journalism were highly stable and successful enterprises because they took advantage of scarcity, exclusivity, and control. They dominated the means of media production, access to expert source material, and distribution to wide audiences. Digitization, however, has challenged each of those elements; in a world of ones and zeros, information is no longer scarce, hard to produce, nor difficult to repurpose and share. This development challenges journalists' dual claims to material control and cultural authority in mediating public discourse. Under these conditions of digitization and dissolution of professional moorings, how does journalism—as an idea system of culture and values, as well as a practice seeking economic viability—reconstitute and reorient itself?

This general problem forms the backdrop for this study. I take up a central tension for 21st century journalism, examining the unresolved interplay between professional control and open participation. I introduce two guiding concepts that help to codify the

polarities on each side of this tension: the *professional logic* and *participatory logic* of media work. A “logic” is an organizing framework that embodies taken-for-granted assumptions about a particular rationale or ideology—in this case, an encompassing sense for how one ought to work with and within the media under certain conditions and assumptions (c.f., Deuze, 2007). On the one hand, the logic of professionalism implies a degree of *control*, rhetorically and materially, over a body of knowledge; on the other, participatory forms of media creation and circulation are unregulated, distributed, and therefore *outside the bounds of institutional control* by nature. Thus, in the context of journalism, a professional logic is one that seeks to retain control over content, in the normative role as society’s gatekeeping steward. Alternatively, a participatory logic seeks to distribute that control over content to end-users, thus democratizing the process of media production and distribution through digital networks.

In the sociological study of journalism, this struggle for control has become an emerging area of focus, beginning with early studies of newspapers’ transition to the Web (e.g., Boczkowski, 2004). However, this professional–participatory polarity has become even more prominent in recent literature on blogging, citizen journalism, and other facets of the read-write, socially networked internet⁴ of today (among many others, see Bruns, 2008; Carlson, 2007; Deuze, 2009a; Deuze, Bruns & Neuberger, 2007; Domingo & Heinonen, 2008; Domingo et al., 2008; Hermida & Thurman, 2008; Kern & Nam, 2009; Lewis, Kaufhold & Lasorsa, 2010; Lowrey, 2006; Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009; O’Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008; Robinson, 2006; Robinson, 2010; Singer & Ashman, 2009b; Singer, 2007; Singer, 2010; Thurman & Lupton, 2008; Thurman, 2008). This

⁴ In line with current trends in internet studies (Markham & Baym, 2008, p. vii), I will lower-case the “i,” in part to reflect that the internet is just another generic medium like newspapers or television. However, all references to “Web” use the capitalized “W” to reflect its origins in the proper name World Wide Web.

strand of literature has highlighted the extent to which the profession's sense of self has been tested in the digital media environment. The rise of user-generated content, in particular, presents not only practical challenges to newswork but also philosophical questions about occupational values (Lewis et al., 2010; Singer, 2010). As Singer and Ashman (2009b) describe these questions: "If the content space is shared, is responsibility for the content itself also shared? Who decides what is credible, true, or even newsworthy in the first place? What happens to the prized journalistic norm of autonomy in this environment?" (p. 4)

But, for institutional journalism at large, digitization has brought more than challenges to its sense of authority and identity. An equally vexing challenge has come from the erosion of longstanding business models for news (Downie & Schudson, 2009). The troubles are particularly acute for U.S. metropolitan newspapers, which have seen spiraling losses in readership, revenue, and market value as their control over local advertising has unraveled, resulting in mass layoffs and diminished output (e.g., see Anderson, 2009; Compton & Benedetti, 2010; Franklin, 2008; Meyer, 2009; Singer, 2008a; Thurman & Myllylahti, 2009). This weakened position contributes to a downward spiral, as fewer resources contribute to poorer quality, which in turn leads to less penetration in the local market and less influence in shaping public discourse (Jones, 2009; Meyer, 2009).

Thus, in much of western society but particularly in the United States, the traditional modes of *funding the news* (via for-profit advertising) and *making the news* (via professional gatekeeping) are in crisis like never before. These circumstances have created much professional and scholarly controversy and concern over the future of

journalism—including pessimistic portrayals of its imminent “death,” as well as optimism for a “rebirth” and return to its less-commercialized roots.⁵

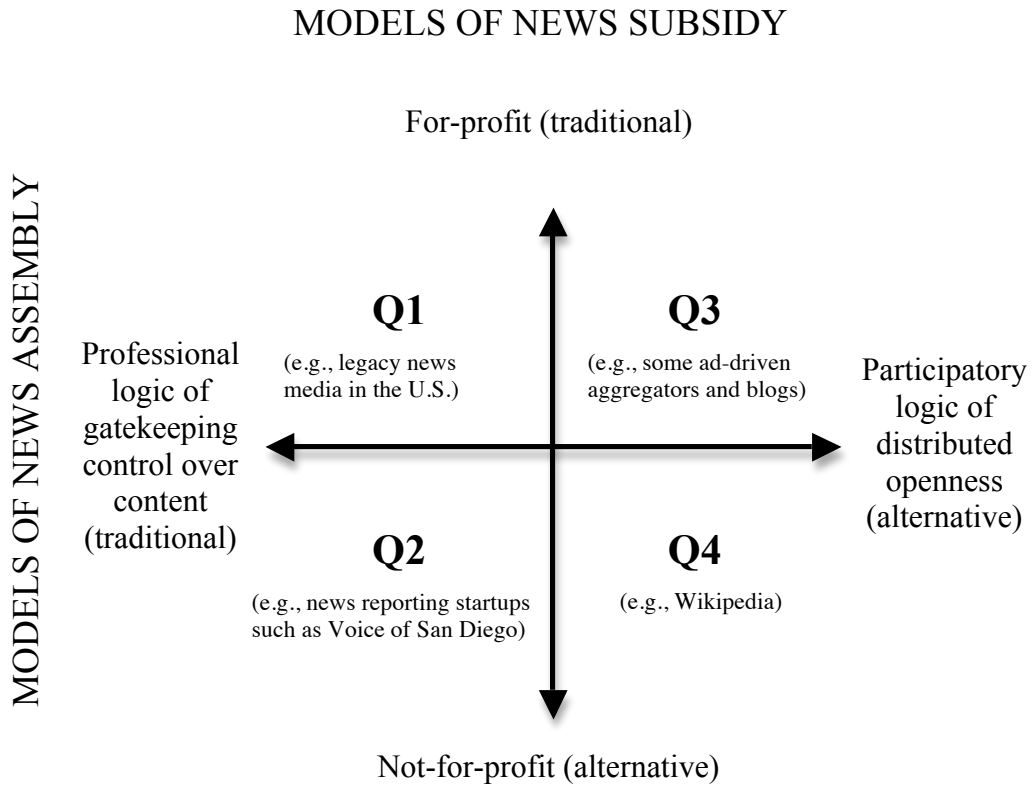
RESEARCH PROBLEM

However, amid this debate, there remains relatively little empirical work that examines attempts being made to build a different kind of future for journalism, such as ongoing experimentation with novel methods of nonprofit funding (e.g., Fremont-Smith, 2009) and more open-source assembling of news (e.g., Muthukumaraswamy, 2010).

The critical question is: How are journalistic actors attempting to innovate their way out of this professional crisis, and with what potential implications for future norms of organizing, underwriting, and reporting the news in western society? Placing this question in the context of professional and participatory logics for media work, I want to understand the frames of reference adopted by key innovators in the journalism field, to comprehend if and how they associate their innovation efforts with a particular emphasis on control or participation. For instance, how are they reconciling this tension of control over content? For them, which logic is more salient? How does the logic they adopt toward professional control relate to the media content they facilitate? How do they define their role as journalists?

⁵ For a number of scholarly voices articulating both perspectives, see *Journalism*'s special issue on “The Future of Journalism” (2009, vol. 10, issue 3).

Figure 1: The Intersection of News Assembly and News Subsidy in Journalism Work.



These dual concerns for sustainable models of *making* and *subsidizing* the news can be visualized as two intersecting dimensions, as presented in Figure 1. For much of the past century, U.S. journalism mostly has occurred in Q1: gathered, filtered, and disseminated through a closed process of professional control, and underwritten by for-profit advertising and subscription revenue. This occurred primarily because the costs of mass communication were so high, requiring a trained class of practitioners who could follow efficient routines in delivering a generalized product that could attract a wide audience. As such, professional gatekeepers operating in Q1 simultaneously provided and controlled access to a scarce and ephemeral resource—news information (Shirky, 2008, p. 57). Digitization, however, has dramatically lowered those barriers to entry, enabling media to be produced in a more open, distributed fashion among the networked masses—in effect flipping the equation from one of information scarcity to potential abundance, in a few short years. Meanwhile, the concurrent decline in the for-profit advertising model has caused a number of philanthropists and foundations—many concerned about the absence of high-quality journalism—to explore new methods of non-profit subsidy (Downie & Schudson, 2009). The result has been a proliferation and fragmentation of news models in each of the four quadrants pictured in Figure 1.

Consider the case of San Diego, California: In the local news market, legacy media such as the *Union-Tribune* newspaper remain rooted in Q1, though with vastly diminished resources; in Q2, Voice of San Diego, with its growing stable of news professionals and nonprofit funding from wealthy donors and foundations, focuses on “accountability journalism,” or local investigative reporting; and in Q3, the San Diego News Network (SDNN) has a for-profit website that features less original reporting and more aggregation of local information, including from non-professional bloggers

(Downie & Schudson, 2009, pp. 35-38). In San Diego as elsewhere, what remains less understood is Q4: the space in which news is put together in a more participatory fashion, and subsidized through not-for-profit or alternative means—as in the case of Wikinews and Wikipedia (Lih, 2009; McIntosh, 2008; Thorsen, 2008; Vis, 2009), or other forms of user-controlled media production. This fourth quadrant, precisely because it presents the starkest contrast to traditional modes of assembling and subsidizing news, represents a compelling context in which to see the character of a participatory logic and its apparent threat to the professional logic. For this reason, and because the activities in Q4 remain under-examined in empirical research, *this intersection of participation and nonprofit funding is the focus of this study.*

In sum, institutional journalism faces twin crises of assembly (how should news be put together?) and subsidy (who will pay for it?). As legacy news organizations have seemed paralyzed in resolving both problems (Anderson, 2009), non-profit foundations have stepped forward to stimulate and underwrite innovation on a wide scale (Downie & Schudson, 2009; Kurpius, Metzgar & Rowley, 2010; Shaver, 2010). Most prominent among these foundations is the Knight Foundation. It has given more than \$400 million to journalism-related initiatives during its long and often close relationship with the profession, but more than half of those funds have been invested in the past decade alone. Moreover, in the five years since Ibarguen, a former newspaper publisher, was named president and CEO, a large portion of those funds have shifted from traditional journalism projects (e.g., endowing chairs in journalism schools, or underwriting mid-career training programs for professionals) to more experimental—and risky—initiatives intended to stimulate innovation in journalism (Wilhelm, 2009). Knight has invested millions in supporting news startups in California, Minnesota, Missouri, and Texas (to

name just a few; for examples and details, see Kurpius et al., 2010), and underwritten a whole series of grants focused on citizen and collaborative forms of journalism—in short, projects out of the mainstream mold.

The signature effort of this process, of the foundation’s self-described “transformation,” is the Knight News Challenge, a five-year, \$25 million contest that seeks to fund “innovative ideas that develop platforms, tools and services to inform and transform community news, conversations and information distribution” using digital media (Knight News Challenge, 2010a).⁶ For the Knight Foundation and philanthropies at large, the Knight News Challenge represents a key shift from traditional grant-making in that the contest is open to all: individuals as well as organizations, for-profit firms as well as non-profit institutions, and (crucially) non-journalists as well as professionals. Because of the openness of the contest, as well as the wide media coverage and acclaim that its winners have generated, the Knight News Challenge has assumed an outsized role in setting the agenda for news innovation as “the most high-profile competition in the future-of-news space” (Benton, 2010).

To recap, at a time of great disruption for journalism’s sense of identity and modes of operating, the Knight Foundation has emerged as an increasingly pivotal player in the journalism field. It directs much of the experimentation at the edges of the field as a primary funding source for news startups, an incubator of innovation, and a promoter of distinctly non-traditional ways of doing journalism. At the same time, however, it retains great influence at the core of the profession with its reliable support of journalism schools, associations, and mid-career training programs (see Chapter 5 for details). This expanding footprint of investment and influence—at a time when journalism’s

⁶ See <http://newschallenge.org/>.

professional core has been contracting as legacy news institutions shrink—raises some questions of professional and scholarly concern: What is the Knight Foundation hoping to accomplish in all of this? How is it intending to transform the profession of journalism, and with what potential consequences for the future of the field and its innovation in the digital age? In recent times, the efforts and output of the Knight Foundation’s funding have been mentioned variously on journalism blogs (e.g., Poynter Online and Nieman Journalism Lab) and in the trade press (e.g., *Nieman Reports* and *Columbia Journalism Review*), but to date no published scholarly research has attempted a systematic investigation of the foundation’s attempt to innovate journalism. This void is particularly silent on the question of professional and participatory logics of newswork: How is the Knight Foundation negotiating issues of professional control and open participation, and with what kind of impact and import for the professional field?

The purpose of this case study, therefore, is three-fold: (a) to explore how the Knight Foundation has negotiated the tension between professional control and open participation in journalism; (b) to understand if and how that negotiation has been manifest in its signature innovation initiative, the Knight News Challenge; and (c) to discuss the implications of Knight’s innovation logic for the profession of journalism. In this dissertation, I conduct a case study of the Knight Foundation’s efforts to transform itself and the journalism field, based on a close reading of key policy texts and through interviews with foundation leaders. To this I add a more focused and particular study of the Knight News Challenge in its first three contest cycles (2007, 2008, 2009). Through a mixed-methods approach—a quantitative examination of data on more than 5,000 applicants, as well as a qualitative textual analysis of winning proposals and interviews with select winners—I seek to understand how the contest came to be, what kind of

innovations it has attracted and awarded, and how its winners see their work in relation to professional control and open participation. In the interviews and analysis, I put special emphasis on those winning innovators who intended to establish news organizations/platforms, to assess how they negotiated the professional-participatory tension in the work of *doing* journalism. Put together, this course of research can be seen as a three-step progression: from the macro-level view of the Knight Foundation, to a meso-level considerations of the News Challenge, to a micro-level analysis of select News Challenge winners who sought to engage in journalism. Through it all, my ultimate aim is to understand how these organizational and individual actors perceive and act upon journalism in relation to professional and participatory logics of newswork.

Knowing how news innovators perceptually reconcile these logics and incorporate them in their projects is important for what it might suggest about the future of journalism. The professional logic of control historically has afforded journalists the crucial access, authority, and audience reach through which to hold powerful interests accountable on society's behalf. Furthermore, the professional logic brings with it a code of ethics, quality-control standards, and a truth-seeking imperative—in short, a number of beneficial elements that society needs (Beam, 1990; Shirky, 2008, p. 58). Thus, to the extent that innovators are discarding the professional logic, that might portend a poorer journalism, one ill-equipped to fulfill its normative mission. However, such a pessimistic view assumes that journalism's society-serving functions can only (or best) be met in an environment of control over content. Perhaps news innovators are embracing a hybrid logic of professionalism and participation that facilitates truth-seeking within a framework that also accommodates greater citizen participation—itsself a democratic

ideal. These questions underscore the importance of understanding where the field is headed based on the perceptions and intentions of its innovators.

The Knight Foundation and its News Challenge winners by themselves do not constitute a statistically representative sample of the field's innovators, but the highly publicized nature of their efforts gives them an agenda-setting influence that warrants further study. In coming to see how these innovators perceive and act upon professional and participatory logics, I hope to contribute to the field's understanding of the profession's present innovations and likely future orientation toward longstanding democratic goals. In short, I intend to show how these innovators are attempting to shape the journalism ethics of the future. To make such claims, however, I need to establish the rationale for and significance of examining the Knight Foundation and its News Challenge contest, placing both entities in the context of philanthropy and social entrepreneurship, disruptive change in journalism and media, and the role of nonprofit foundations in the innovation of journalism.

BACKGROUND

Chapter 2: The Case and its Context

The purpose of this study is to explore how the Knight Foundation has negotiated the tension between professional control and open participation in journalism; to understand if and how that negotiation has been manifest in its signature innovation initiative, the Knight News Challenge; and to discuss the implications of Knight's innovation logic for the profession of journalism. Before proceeding with these analyses, we need a baseline understanding of the Knight Foundation and the News Challenge, and an appreciation for how they both fit in a transformed landscape of philanthropy and social innovation. This chapter sets forth a basic history of the foundation and its relationship with journalism; an overview of the foundation's media innovation strategy and the central place of the Knight News Challenge in that effort; and, finally, a look at how Knight's initiatives fit within a broader framework of change in nonprofits.

KNIGHT FOUNDATION

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation is widely considered the leading nonprofit supporter of journalism in the United States, in addition to its substantial influence in press-related issues around the globe. Its history cannot be understood apart from journalism, in that the foundation owes its very existence to a newspaper fortune. The eponymous Knight brothers established the foundation in 1950, using \$9,047 they transferred from a scholarship fund set up a decade earlier to honor their late father, Charles Landon Knight. During its early years, the foundation, then based in Akron, Ohio, kept a low profile, making small grants for education and journalism causes. Contributions primarily came from the *Akron Beacon Journal* and *The Miami Herald*,

and then from other Knight-owned newspapers as well, which initiated the foundation's tradition of giving grants to those cities where Knight published newspapers.

A turning point came in 1965 when the foundation received its first major infusion of assets: 185,000 shares of Knight Newspapers stock from the Knights' mother, Clara I. Knight. When those shares were later sold in 1972, the foundation's assets ballooned from \$3 million to more than \$24 million, kick-starting an expanded grant program to serve the "Knight communities" and also setting a course for investing in journalism. At that time, "journalism, especially the education of journalists, became a matter of more pronounced funding interest."⁷ In 1975—shortly after Knight Newspapers merged with Ridder Publications to become Knight-Ridder, the largest U.S. newspaper company at the time—Jack Knight, the majority shareholder, bequeathed the bulk of his estate to the foundation. He died in 1981, and by 1986 the foundation had received a full transfer of funds, which totaled more than \$428 million—a 20-fold increase in assets. Suddenly, the Knight Foundation was the 21st-largest U.S. foundation based on asset size. By the time the foundation received Jim Knight's \$200 million bequest in 1991, it was operating in 26 communities and deepening its commitment to journalism training. Thus, while the foundation was in its founding and always has been a private foundation, independent of the Knight family's business interests, there was no mistaking its professional-cultural roots, given its journalism-centric two-fold mission: "committed to preserving, protecting and invigorating a free press at home and abroad and to investing in the 26 U.S. communities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers until their deaths." Today the foundation, now based in Miami, has some \$2 billion in assets and has made grants totaling more than \$1 billion since its founding.

⁷ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/about_knight/history.dot, from which much of this historical information is taken.

Working at the intersection of politics, media and society, the Knight Foundation has been cited as a case study of creativity and innovation because it uses a mix of dynamic leadership, regular review, and flexibility in seeking to be a change agent, both for journalism and communities as well as philanthropy at large. In their broad-based study of “creative philanthropy,” Anheier and Leat (2006) include Knight among nine foundations they profile, because it “operates in a fast-changing field in which many threads and opportunities are present and frequently collide ... its grant-making program is informed by a passion for free press and democracy, and its activities are characterized by tenacity and risk-taking.” Moreover, “it is also a story of a foundation that is rooted in local communities while pursuing national and increasingly international agendas” (p. 163). In seeking to broaden its influence, particularly during the past decade, the foundation has given special attention to *transformation* as the watchword of its efforts.

We are a national foundation with local roots. We choose, as the Knight brothers chose, to seek opportunities that can transform both communities and journalism, and help them reach their highest potential. We advance journalism in the digital age and invest in the vitality of communities where the Knight brothers owned newspapers. We focus on projects that promote informed, engaged communities and lead to *transformational change*. We believe that information is a core community need. We want to ensure that all citizens get the information they need to thrive in a democracy and act in their own best interest. And we ask, as we evaluate opportunities and grants, “Is this truly *transformational*?”⁸

If the foundation appeared to take risks when Anheier and Leat (2006) studied it in 2003, it has sought an even greater experimental strategy in the years since, most notably under the leadership of Alberto Ibarguen. Not long after Ibarguen came to the foundation in 2005 by way of the newspaper business, he put the foundation through a major re-evaluation that, while not explicitly altering Knight’s mission, has affected

⁸ See http://www.knightfdn.org/about_knight/.

nearly every of its chief funding areas—perhaps nowhere more than in its flagship program: journalism. The result has been a pull-back in funding traditional journalism efforts (such as endowed chairs at journalism schools) and a full-throttle embrace of experimentation (for examples, see Downie & Schudson, 2009; Massing, 2009; Nelson, 2009; Osnos, 2010; Sokolove, 2009; Wilhelm, 2009). The changes have caught the attention of the news industry as well as the nonprofit community, as captured in this *Chronicle of Philanthropy* article from July 2009, shortly after the crisis over newspapers’ future reached a fever pitch:

With newspapers across America hemorrhaging revenue and readers, Alberto Ibarguen has been billed as a kind of savior. As president of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, one of the largest grant makers to support journalism, senators sought his advice in May for a panel about the future of journalism, while the title of a recent *Forbes* magazine profile of Mr. Ibarguen asked: “Can this man save the news business?” At the same time he is shaking up the news industry, the lawyer and former publisher of *The Miami Herald* is shaking up philanthropy, earning a reputation as an innovator who embraces fast-paced deadlines and a stop-the-presses willingness to make changes. ... Knight seeks to circumvent the top-down nature of foundation giving and instead solicit ideas from outsiders, be they charity leaders, business owners, or everyday citizens. In the parlance of the digital revolution, Mr. Ibarguen says he is seeking the “wisdom of the crowd.” (Wilhelm, 2009, p. 2)

To understand the scope of these changes, consider the foundation’s well-branded commitment to its journalism program. This program includes areas of specialty: newsroom diversity, press freedom advocacy, digital media, and training and education. In the profession, the foundation perhaps is best known for its mid-career training programs, including endowed fellowships at Stanford, Michigan, and Harvard, as well as vast training initiatives, such as international fellowships and online education, that have reached more than 100,000 journalists worldwide.⁹ Most recently, the foundation has

⁹ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/about_knight/fact_sheet.dot.

contributed millions to supporting nonprofit news startups, a digital-focused reinvention of National Public Radio, and professional partnerships for investigative reporting. All of this investment in journalism has made Knight the leading philanthropic funder of journalism, surpassing the efforts of other groups such as the Gannett-affiliated Freedom Forum, which has seen its endowment and ambitions shrink (see Baker, 2002; Heyboer, 2001).

Knight's expansive influence in the profession is especially significant given the recency of these efforts. During the foundation's first 30 years, when it was still quite small relative to major nonprofits, it invested less than \$2 million in journalism initiatives. Then, as the foundation's assets grew, the funding for journalism accelerated: from \$30 million in the 1980s to \$100 million in the 1990s to \$300 million in the 2000s, according to estimates made by Eric Newton, the foundation's vice president over its journalism program. "The reason is that, as it has become more and more clear that we are entering a new age, a new digital age of news and information, the opportunities for foundation work had become so much greater that it does justify the tripling and then another tripling" (personal communication, March 25, 2010).

Media Innovation Initiative

Nevertheless, even with this dramatic widening of Knight's commitment to the press, it has become clear that the foundation is rethinking its priorities amid the disruption for newspapers and journalism generally. Consider this comment made by Ibargüen during his speech in Boston, in which he rolled out the foundation's Media Innovation Initiative:

Over time, we've invested \$400 million to advance quality journalism and freedom of expression. *But the perhaps the most telling figure, the one that best*

describes our purpose and intent, is that in the last three years, we've committed more than \$100 million to media innovation initiatives.¹⁰

The Media Innovation Initiative¹¹ is the broad categorization for six projects:

- Knight News Challenge,¹² which “funds innovative ideas for using digital media to deliver news and information to geographically defined communities”;

- Knight Community Information Challenge,¹³ which “offers matching grants to foundations across America to support creative ways to keep communities informed and engaged”;

- Knight Commission on Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy,¹⁴ a high-level commission in partnership with The Aspen Institute to propose “public policy to better meet information needs”;

- Universal Access, which represents Knight’s effort to help “communities across the United States ensure digital access for every citizen;

- Carnegie-Knight Initiative,¹⁵ which “strives to transform journalism education in the United States; and

- World Wide Web Foundation,¹⁶ which “seeks to advance the Web to empower all people and benefit humanity.”¹⁷

This six-part initiative finds its purpose in what Knight Foundation calls the “information paradox”: Despite the growing abundance of information, people around the globe still struggle to find the information they need to make basic decisions about their

¹⁰ Here and elsewhere throughout this dissertation, italicized emphasis is mine, unless otherwise noted.

¹¹ See <http://www.knightfoundation.org/mii/>

¹² www.NewsChallenge.org

¹³ www.InformationNeeds.org

¹⁴ www.KnightComm.org

¹⁵ www.NewsInitiative.org

¹⁶ www.WebFoundation.org

¹⁷ See <http://www.knightfoundation.org/mii/>

lives in local community settings. “Knight Foundation wants to help *define* and *meet* the information needs of communities in a democracy. . . . Our strategy is experimental. Right now, nobody knows all the answers. But the more experiments we seed, the more approaches we explore, the more likely we are to find innovations that will serve communities and strengthen journalism in the digital age.”¹⁸

Thus, *innovation conducted in the name of “information”* has become the foundation’s major project, for the moment. The first and most important piece of the Media Innovation Initiative was and is the Knight News Challenge, which has funded nearly half of the more than 100 media innovation experiments that Knight has undertaken since 2007. Because the News Challenge is the foundation’s primary link between *innovation* and *journalism*, understanding its philosophy and outcomes is important for grasping the foundation’s overall emphasis for and influence upon the journalism field.

KNIGHT NEWS CHALLENGE

The Knight News Challenge is a five-year, \$25 million initiative to fund innovative projects that seek to inform local communities through open-source digital media. It does this using the “prize philanthropy” model that has become popular among nonprofit foundations in recent years (see McKinsey & Company, 2009). This model usually involves (1) offering a major award for solving a difficult problem, so as to generate greater media attention and word-of-mouth buzz; (2) opening up the application process to virtually anyone, to ensure the greatest possible diversity in applicants and ideas; and, in some cases, (3) opening up the judging process as well, to allow crowds of users and/or experts (external to the foundation) to play a larger role in determining

¹⁸ See <http://www.knightfoundation.org/mii/>

winners. In the case of the News Challenge, Knight gives up to \$5 million annually for “innovative ideas that develop platforms, tools and services to inform and transform community news, conversations and information distribution and visualization” (Knight News Challenge, 2010a).

These ideas may come from nonprofit and for-profit outfits alike, from individuals as well as organizations, and with the intention of serving information needs in any country in the world—far beyond the foundation’s traditional focus on the 26 “Knight communities” where the Knight brothers’ newspapers were traditionally located. The News Challenge was announced in 2006, with its first grantees named in the summer of 2007, and in the course of three years it has attracted roughly 8,000 applications— from which 51 projects (or 0.006%) have won. The awards have ranged from \$10,000 in 2009 to develop a newspaper content management system tool, to \$5 million in 2007 to set up the Center for Future Civic Media at MIT. The median grantee received \$244,000. (Details on the 51 winners—their affiliations, locations, and project descriptions—can be found in Appendix A.)

Contest Criteria

The Knight News Challenge (motto: “You Invent It; We Fund It.”) has three primary criteria: that projects (1) use digital, open-source technology, (2) distribute news in the public interest, and (3) test their concepts in a local geographic community (see Knight News Challenge, 2010b). These criteria reflect the Knight Foundation’s general understandings about media today: Digital technologies are great at creating virtual communities and connections, but comparatively poor at helping citizens understand and act on problems at the geographic level where politics still takes place; therefore, innovations need to address news and information needs in local communities, and

should be open-source so as to be easily scaled and replicated in other communities if they are successful. The Knight Foundation is less concerned with “invention” (creating something from scratch) than with “innovation” (recombining existing products/services for new purposes), because, as Ibargüen (2009) has made clear, “This is not a science prize, and we’re not focused on figuring out the next ‘widget.’ We’re interested in the ways a ‘widget’ can be used to bring communities together.”

In addition to these rules (i.e., digital, open-source, innovative, local community), there are more implicit criteria: e.g., that projects should encourage greater engagement with local democracy and be able to “scale up” through replication in other locales. Chapter 6 considers how these parameters and other factors (e.g., an applicant’s background, the proposed features of her application, and so forth) are associated with one’s likelihood of advancing in the News Challenge competition.

How the Judging Works

Knight News Challenge applications are screened by sets of judges chosen by the foundation. In addition to Knight staff who are involved at every step of the way, the pool of judges typically may include a mix of journalists, technologists, entrepreneurs, academics, and former News Challenge winners, according to contest director Gary Kebbel. He said:

In terms of their background, we are looking for a mix of young people and people established in their careers, people who are in the journalism field, people who are in the technology field, social networking, mobile—we try to have a mix of lots of different types of specialties represented. We look for people who, as a result of our travels or our meetings or our conferences, that we think basically “get it.” (personal communication, February 24, 2010)

While complete lists of judges from the 2006-09 contest cycles are not publicly available, in 2010 the foundation identified the set of 25 judges involved in choosing the

latest winners; it did this in a blog post titled, “Knight Foundation is honored to host new media innovators.”¹⁹ Among these invited judges determining the 2010 winners were the managing editor for *The Washington Post*’s online operations; quite a few participants labeled as “entrepreneurs” and “media consultants”; an expert in “social enterprise and philanthropy”; another working on “participation in emerging democracies”; and media-focused venture capitalists, among others.

However, it is important to note that this was the *final-round* set of judges. The process of choosing Knight News Challenge winners is somewhat complex in that it involves different sets of judges both *within* and *across* years. In a given contest year, one set of judges—made up of Knight staff and outside experts—screens the initial group of roughly 2,500 applications and whittles that down to approximately 250 finalists. These elite 10% then submit more detailed proposals, which are evaluated by the same group and reduced to roughly 50 candidates, or the top 2% overall. At that point, a new set of judges—including Knight staff but mostly composed of outside experts—reviews these top 50 and chooses the class of winners. The number of winners varies in size each year: in 2007 it was a bumper crop of 26, in 2008 there were 16 winners, and in 2009 only 9. Secondly, these groups of judges differ from year-to-year, making it that much more difficult to draw precise conclusions from multi-year data. Finally, as Keibel acknowledged to me, the marketing and judging of the Knight News Challenge has varied year-to-year according to the particular focus of the foundation: In the first contest cycle, Knight sought to reach the journalism community; in 2008, it was the international crowd; and in 2009 (and the most recent 2010 cycle) the emphasis was on attracting more

¹⁹ See <http://www.knightblog.org/knight-foundation-is-honored-to-host-new-media-innovators>.

applicants from techies and Web developers (personal interview, February 24, 2010).²⁰

These complexities and limitations must be kept in context as I proceed (in Chapter 6) to analyze the best (and only) quantitative data available on this the most significant innovation contest in journalism.

Catalyzing Change at the Foundation and Beyond

Ultimately, the News Challenge must be understood in the context of what it has done for the foundation and how it connects with social innovation broadly. A recent investigation of the contest found that “although the News Challenge—\$25 million over five years—represents only a fraction of Knight’s work, it has become a signature program, an unmistakable sign of its earnestness about finding new, digital ways to replace the news that citizens used to get from local newspapers, television and radio” (Connell, 2010, p. 2). The News Challenge has inspired similar grant contests, including the \$24 million Community Information Challenge (see Chapter 5 for additional details) and the \$20 million Knight Arts Challenge in South Florida, both of them incorporating lessons from the News Challenge’s early experience. As Kebbel told Connell (2010), “A contest like this *changes the entire way a foundation thinks about its work*. Our journalism grant making has moved from known organizations and associations to unknown individuals” (p. 2).²¹ In the same report, Newton said, “The fact of the matter is if you’ve seen 2,400 proposals trying to be truly innovative, then some of the scores and

²⁰For an example of this outreach, see this cross-posted entry (Zamora, 2009) between the Knight News Challenge blog and a blog representing Drupal, an open-source content management system used by many Web developers: “The Knight News Challenge recently extended its online submission deadline to December 15th to attract a broader applicant pool, particularly targeting software developers and entrepreneurs. ... The competition is currently accepting applications[,] and previous winners have included several members of the Drupal community.”

²¹ For more on this shift from “institutions to individuals,” see the latter portion of Chapter 7 of this dissertation.

dozens and hundreds of regular proposals you get just don't look that interesting anymore" (p. 2).

The Knight News Challenge is one of the largest, but not the only, media contest of its kind. While the technology sector has long used challenges to encourage innovation, the philanthropic world was just beginning to awake to the idea when the News Challenge was founded in 2006. Now, four years later, "everyone is infatuated with contests," Mayur Patel, Knight's director of strategic assessment and assistant to the president, told Connell (2010, p. 2). To get a sense for how large and varied the field of media innovation contests had become by 2009, the Knight Foundation commissioned a review by Arabella Advisors. The consultants identified 29 information communication and technology (ICT) competitions globally, including prominent efforts such as Sunlight Lab Apps for America, We Media Pitch It, NetSquared N2Y4 Challenge, Stockholm Challenge, and Imagine Cup. These ICT competitions vary in their execution—e.g., some rely entirely on crowds of users to select finalists and winners, unlike the News Challenge's expert judges—but in general they focus on using the capacity of digital media to address global problems such as development, health, and government transparency, or they seek to develop new communication technology for commercial purposes. About half of these ICT contests had launched since the Knight News Challenge was founded. The News Challenge, however, remains the most dominant player; it offers the largest total amount of funding annually and receives one of the highest rates of submissions (Arabella Philanthropic Investment Advisors, 2010). So it is that in the growing universe of prize philanthropy (McKinsey & Company, 2009) the Knight Foundation and its News Challenge both reflect and help shape this evolving phenomenon in nonprofit funding.

THE ROLE OF NONPROFIT FOUNDATIONS

More broadly still, the Knight Foundation's efforts must be considered in the context of nonprofit foundations and their role in pursuing change in American life and in societies around the world. Nonprofit foundations, often understood only by their tax-exempt status, should be distinguished from the wider category of "nonprofit organizations" that includes trade unions and public charities. Structurally and operationally, nonprofit *foundations* are defined by several key characteristics: e.g., they are established with a specific purpose and retain a level of organizational consistency over time; they are private, or institutionally separate from government; they have internal governance procedures and enjoy a meaningful sense of autonomy from government or corporate interests; and they do not return profits to their trustees or directors, with any surpluses re-invested in the basic mission of the foundation (Anheier & Leat, 2006). Well-endowed private foundations such as the Gates, Ford, and Knight foundations are the largest and most influential players in a space that includes tens of thousands of foundations in the United States alone; whatever their differences in ambitions, these and other nonprofit foundations generally are united in their intent to work on public problems, particularly in addressing social problems that have proven intractable to government and market-based solutions.

Despite this idealistic premise, philanthropy is fraught with controversy in American public life. Wealthy donors and major foundations tend to pursue individualistic aims (e.g., see Dowie, 2002, p. 248), yet they operate in the public sphere (Frumkin, 2006). Foundations must have sufficient autonomy to "fulfill their mission of challenging, reforming, and renewing society"—and yet, because of the tax breaks they enjoy, foundations must also be held accountable by society (Fleishman, 2009, p. xiv). These paradoxes only confound the problem that U.S. foundations, while dynamos of

social change in the 20th century, have always operated in a peculiar state, behind a “veil of privacy” and a “shroud of secrecy,” their decision-making largely opaque to the wider world—even as a quickening pace of wealth transfer is making a select number of private philanthropies increasingly influential (Dowie, 2002; Fleishman, 2009). Moreover, this comes precisely at a time when publics have begun expecting greater transparency from leading institutions, thereby contributing to a growing drumbeat of criticism against foundations and calls for greater oversight of their management (Anheier & Leat, 2006, p. 7). Dowie (2002) captured this mounting concern when he asked, “If foundations are indeed ‘America’s passing gear,’ we need to ask what, or whom, they are passing, and where are they taking the country?” (p. xxi)

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

Amid this tension, between the expanding influence of foundations and the elevated scrutiny that such influence has attracted, a number of major foundations have begun changing their approach to grant-making, opening up the process to public view and, in some cases, even allowing outsiders to shape the funding distribution. A key component of this change is the emerging role of technology in philanthropy. While nonprofit foundations have long been idiosyncratic, immune to market forces, and otherwise buffered against social changes, the digitization of media has ushered in at least one major change: the rise of large and influential philanthropic intuitions (e.g., Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Skoll Foundation, and Omidyar Network) whose assets come from fortunes made in the technology sector (Bernholz, Skloot & Varela, 2009). Perhaps more important is another digital change underway, as philanthropies increasingly use technology “to unleash the power of aggregated individual donors and activists”—taking advantage of the affordances of digital and social media to recalibrate the way they

communicate their goals, ask for and receive public input, and measure the effectiveness of their work (Bernholz et al., 2009, p. 6).

One result has been the emergence of deepening, networked connections among foundations that have a shared interest in (1) tightly integrating digital technologies into their missions and operations, and (2) assuming that a market logic, or a venture capital mind-set, is the best way to make strategic investments in social change, in a process often referred to as “social entrepreneurship” (for more on this concept, see Alvord, Brown & Letts, 2004; Hippel, 2005; Neck, Brush & Allen, 2009; Short, Moss & Lumpkin, 2009). It’s a fusion of technology and the culture of business innovation that has become so closely associated with technology. It can be seen in the likes of Skoll Foundation and Omidyar Network, both of which grew out of eBay wealth and which focus on investing in social entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs, the foundations argue, combine the principles of business entrepreneurship with the pursuit of social value to drive a unique brand of innovation that taps “inspiration and creativity, courage and fortitude, to seize opportunities that challenge and forever change established, but fundamentally inequitable systems” (Skoll Foundation, n.d.).

This merging of market logic, technology, and social welfare can be seen in the relationship between Knight Foundation and Ashoka Foundation, which invests in citizens around the world who have “pattern-changing ideas, entrepreneurial quality and ethical fiber” (Ashoka Foundation, 2008). Knight and Ashoka partnered on a three-year, \$3 million plan to promote social entrepreneurs who “start new journalism organizations, create new kinds of news outlets, develop new models for investigative reporting, and campaign for public understanding of freedom of expression—launching projects designed to be expanded and copied” (Ashoka Foundation, 2008).

On the whole, there is a certain quality of technological determinism in this social innovation movement—a belief, it appears, that open-source technologies and open access to digital tools are *uniquely powerful* in working to help democracy become more dynamic, transparent, and representative. At the same time, there is a concurrent and growing faith in the power of harnessing external ideas to help accomplish innovation. This “open innovation” paradigm (Chesbrough, 2006), popularized in software development, is premised on the notion that in a world of digital technologies that facilitate the easy exchange of ideas across time and space, there is no reason that a single company—or, in this case, a foundation—should rely on its own internal research and development for inspiration. It should tap into the best that the distributed crowd has to offer (for more on “crowdsourcing,” see Chapter 3). This “open innovation” approach, which has become a fixture in the technology and organizations literature (e.g., see Chesbrough, Vanhaverbeke & West, 2006; Dodgson, Gann & Salter, 2006; Herzog, 2008; Hippel & Krogh, 2006; Lakhani & Panetta, 2007) and in the practices of several major corporate firms, makes a trust in technology all the more salient because of what it enables. Taken together, this tight coupling of technology, entrepreneurship, and laissez-faire capitalism—all increasingly common and taken for granted in the nonprofit scene—is important for how it is reflected, if sometimes only subtly, in the rhetoric and action of the Knight Foundation’s approach to innovation in journalism.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Chapter 3: Professions, Jurisdictional Boundaries, and Participation

“In any profession, particularly one that has existed long enough that no one can remember a time when it didn’t exist, members have a tendency to equate provisional solutions to particular problems with deep truths about the world.”

—Clay Shirky (2008), *Here Comes Everybody*, p. 59

The purpose of this study is to explore how the Knight Foundation has negotiated the tension between professional control and open participation in journalism; to understand if and how that negotiation has been manifest in its signature innovation initiative, the Knight News Challenge; and to discuss the implications of Knight’s innovation logic for the profession of journalism. In the introductory chapter, I briefly described the context in which this professional-participatory tension has developed. It used to be that news professionals (and mass media generally) solved the “problems” Shirky mentions—the difficulties of producing, reproducing, and distributing information on a broad scale. “The commercial viability of most media businesses involves providing those solutions, so preservation of the original problems became an economic imperative” (Shirky, 2008, p. 59). In a digitized media environment, the collapse in communication costs has threatened the gatekeeping control that historically was crucial to journalism’s professional prestige in society and commercial sustainability in the marketplace. In this chapter, I delve more deeply into the theoretical and conceptual nature of this professional-participatory tension. Through a “sociology of professions” framework, I will explain how professions—including journalism—articulate themselves and their purpose, seek to forge boundaries of jurisdictional authority, and guard against

external change they perceive will threaten their professional autonomy. In elaborating on journalism as a profession, a field, and an ideology, I will show how its professional logic of control comes in conflict with digital and participatory cultures. Bringing these together, I will describe how the profession of journalism has negotiated audience participation in the digital age, and discuss these outcomes in light of innovative forms for news and the research questions for this study.

SOCIOLOGY OF PROFESSIONS²²

In this subfield of sociology that examines occupations and their professionalization, scholars initially identified professions by the extent to which they were self-governing and embodied certain professional traits such as formal education, licensing, codes of ethics, relationships of trust between professional and client, a public-service imperative over commercial interest, social status, and so forth. However, this structural-functionalist “trait approach” generally was discarded several decades ago as sociologists moved “from the false question: ‘Is this occupation a profession?’ to the more fundamental one: ‘What are the circumstances in which people in an occupation attempt to turn it into a profession, and themselves into professional people?’” (Hughes, 1971, p. 340).

This turn to a Weberian study of professionalization—of examining *how* occupations attempt to claim status and authority—was famously pioneered, in part, by the work of Magali Sarfatti Larson (1977). Through her articulation of the “professional project,” she argued that “ideal-typical constructions do not tell us what a profession is, but only what it pretends to be,” and that it’s more appropriate to ask “what professions

²² Much of this section draws on the insights of Schudson and Anderson (2008), who deftly articulate the sociology of professions as it relates to understanding journalism.

do in everyday life to negotiate and maintain their special position” (p. xii). As Schudson and Anderson (2008) point out, Sarfatti Larson’s (1977) focus on professionalization, as an ongoing *project*, has guided much of the most important work in the sociology of the professions during recent decades; professionalization, in her view, is the extent to which social actors “attempt to translate one order of scarce resources—special knowledge and skills—into another—social and economic rewards” (p. xvii). Because “to maintain scarcity implies a tendency to monopoly,” occupations professionalize to the degree that they can build and sustain exclusive control over expertise in the market or status in a social system (p. xvii).

Expanding on Sarfatti Larson’s approach in this sociological shift from “professional traits” to “professional struggle,” Andrew Abbott (1988) downplayed the structural categorization of *occupational group* to instead focus on professional *work*. Abbott argues that, in the terrain of inter-professional competition, the struggle is one of *jurisdiction*—of claiming exclusive right to engaging in a particular task for society. When a profession can link its knowledge claims to its daily work practices, it can, in effect, ask society “to recognize its cognitive structure through exclusive rights” (p. 59)—and thus confer upon it the social authority that recognition deserves (see Schudson & Anderson, 2008, p. 95).²³ In short, claiming jurisdiction is about displaying what a profession *knows* (its system of “abstract knowledge”) and connecting that to what the profession *does* (its labor practices).

Linking this with the information professions, Abbott argues that journalism remains “a very permeable occupation,” in that there is great mobility with and

²³ As Schudson and Anderson (2008) point out, “Even journalists, who lack many of the structural advantages granted to other professional groups, have achieved some level of jurisdictional recognition via shield laws, for example, and privileged access to political leaders” (p. 95).

transferability to public relations, and that even while there are journalism schools, associations, and degrees, “there is no exclusion of those who lack them” (p. 225). Nevertheless, whether journalism qualifies as a profession is not so important to Abbott as the extent to which it has gained “extraordinary power” through its jurisdictional claim to the collection and distribution of “factual” information about current events. Journalists have attained this power in part by invoking the occupational norm of objectivity, which itself is structured out of routines and narratives, and which historically has afforded journalists a monopolistic claim on expertise in communicating “truth” about the world (Schudson & Anderson, 2008, p. 96). This brief review of the sociology of professions, by no means exhaustive, leads us to consider how the professional project and jurisdictional struggle play out in the context of journalism and its contemporary changes, because jurisdiction is so threatened in a digital environment.

Journalism and Boundary Work

In journalism research, the body of academic work generally regarded as “media sociology” represents more than a half-century of studies investigating how journalists perceive and practice their work under a variety of influences (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) and in a range of organizational, cultural, national, and technological settings (Berkowitz, 1997; Schudson, 1997). This scholarship on “newswork” reaches back to early studies of gatekeeping (Snider, 1967; White, 1950) and newsroom socialization (Breed, 1955), and today represents a dominant and ever-growing branch of research (Reese, 2008); this is especially true as scholars, including those beyond the communication field (e.g., Wiik, 2009), seek to track, explain, and predict the changing nature of news production and professional identity (Deuze & Marjoribanks, 2009).

As Anderson (2008a) has argued, the media sociology literature can be divided into two distinct yet complementary streams of thought: theories about how journalists construct the nature of *reality* in society, and theories about how journalists construct the nature of *themselves* as a profession. If the first strand of literature was dominated by critiques of journalistic objectivity, routines, and framing found in studies by Tuchman (1978), Gans (1979), Fishman (1980), and Gitlin (1980), the second strand was less concerned with the press' representation of the "world outside" (Lippmann, 1922/1991) and more interested in understanding how the press could lay claim to being the legitimate conduit through which society's worldview *ought* to be shaped. Featuring the influential sociological work of Michael Schudson (1978) and the cultural studies approach of Barbie Zelizer (1992), "this second tradition moved quickly on to questions of how journalism—as an occupational category, as an institution, as a cultural category with particular tropes and practices—was both codified and publicly legitimated" (Anderson, 2009, p. 304). This dissertation, like much of contemporary research in this area (Berkowitz, 2010; Berkowitz, 1997), takes this second perspective.

This process of codification and legitimation can be viewed as a form of what Gieryn (1983) famously called "boundary work"—the process of demarcating fields of knowledge relative to others, marking who and what are "in" vs. "out." Boundary work is a rhetorical exercise taken up in all professions, but one in which journalism, given its malleable character, is particularly engaged. In journalism studies, a number of scholars, following the lead of Zelizer (1992), have invoked boundary work as a way of describing how journalists use narrative techniques to construct their expertise and social authority. While the struggle over journalistic jurisdiction is not *entirely* rhetorical in nature, nevertheless it is true that much of the consternation brewing in journalism today pertains

to how the field is “constructing itself.” After all, what *is* journalism and what *qualifies* one to claim a place in journalism at a time when the means to publish and carry out traditional functions of journalism are so widely distributed among the populace at large? At a time when an amateur video can win the prestigious George Polk Award that typically belongs to the best of professional reporting (Stelter, 2010), the boundaries of journalistic work and professional jurisdiction become increasingly blurred amid the news industry’s “identity complex” (Robinson, 2010, p. 141). Therefore, in the media sociology of the 21st century, locating *how*, *where*, and *why* jurisdictional claims are made is essential for capturing how changes are occurring and with what kind of impact in the journalism field.

Knight Foundation in the Journalism Field

Invoking the “field” metaphor in this context can point us to the theorizing of Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1983) and its popular application as a framework for understanding journalism in relation to other social institutions (Benson & Neveu, 2005; Benson, 2006). In Bourdieu’s view, modern society is composed of relatively autonomous social spaces (or fields)—such as art, politics, education, law, and journalism—in which institutional rules and struggles over capital and power are enacted. The important point in this line of theorizing is to see the relational associations: the competition for capital and prestige *between* and *within* fields, as well as the connections and arrangements of authority forged *among* and *across* fields. Because Abbott (1988) argues that “jurisdiction has not only a culture, but also a social structure” (p. 59), Bourdieu’s conceptual frame can be helpful in recognizing that the boundary work of journalism is not exclusively rhetorical, as in the cultural studies approach of Zelizer (1992; 2004b), but is shaped by and within “external” structures such as government

policy and organizational limitations. At the same time, however, the field concept has its limitations for present-day newswork: It “may theorize well about highly structured and fairly unchanging social-cultural constellations (fields) but is less supple at explaining the spaces between fields, the competition between fields, and the edges of fields” (Anderson & Schudson, 2008, p. 98).

This discussion of boundary work and fields serves to highlight the challenge facing me in this study: to adequately account for the rhetorical constructions being made about journalism’s jurisdiction, and the need to ground these discursive efforts in the movements within and beyond the journalism field. It is at the edges of the journalism field, and in the border zones around the field, that much of the most interesting “action” in journalism is taking place—and yet the transformation of institutions located at the heart of the field deserves equal attention. In the generic sense of spatial representation, I see the journalism field as having a set of core institutions (e.g., legacy news media and professional associations), a wide array of peripheral members (e.g., less prestigious journalists/organizations, startup websites, and semi-institutionalized bloggers), and relative outsiders (e.g., citizen journalists and non-institutional bloggers) who may or may not be attempting to break into the field. More particularly for this study, we can think of how the Knight Foundation might fit in the journalism field: certainly as a powerful and embedded institution with deep capital, figuratively and financially, and similarly thick associations of power with individuals and organizations in the industry.

However, as this study will investigate, the Knight Foundation simultaneously is a complex case because its cultural rhetoric *and* structural activities—the two components to a jurisdictional claim—suggest that it is moving within and beyond the journalism field. It is supporting innovations and ideas that lie at the margins of the field, therefore

(and presumably) shifting the foundation's relationship vis-à-vis fellow members at the core; meanwhile, it is also forging new ties with like-minded organizations working in fields beyond journalism, and in that bridging process creating external opportunities for claiming resources, capital, and power. If these are how things appear *prima facie*, how then should these activities and their associated rhetoric be judged? How should I interpret the boundary work of the Knight Foundation, in light of ongoing and larger changes to journalism, its professional locus, and media and society as a whole? The ultimate question, although admittedly speculative, is this: To what extent does the foundation's boundary-spanning constructions and behaviors give shape and meaning to the field, in actually *changing* the field and its professional direction? Such questions, to be empirically examined, first need to be grounded in a greater understanding of the journalism's professionalization, its ideology of control, and its tricky negotiation with participatory culture.

Professionalism in Journalism

A classical or "pure" professionalism is "about applying general, scientific knowledge to specific cases in rigorous and therefore routinized or institutionalized ways" (Noordegraaf, 2007, p. 765). More generally, Freidson (2001) argues:

Professionalism may be said to exist when an organized occupation gains the power to determine who is qualified to perform a defined set of tasks, to prevent all others from performing that work, and to control the criteria by which to evaluate performance. (p. 12)

By either definition, journalism does not easily map onto the framework used by many scholars who study professions. (Indeed, Noordegraaf [2007, p. 762] goes so far as to lump journalists among cartoonists, body piercers, and pet sitters as examples of occupational groups that have sought to portray and organize themselves as professionals,

amid a “professionalization of everyone” kind of environment.) Journalism, as it is practiced in the United States, lacks the trappings of a classical profession: It has no monopoly on the training and certification of its workforce, nor has the means to prevent others from engaging in its work, and, while it has self-policing mechanisms of ethical codes, its power to enforce compliance is minimal. Because journalism is considered something of a hybrid “semi-profession” (Witschge & Nygren, 2009), researchers have attempted to “measure” the level of its professionalization by surveying journalists’ attitudes and values. The most famous of these efforts, the decennial surveys of American journalists led by David Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, led the researchers to conclude that “the modern journalist is *of* a profession but not *in* one. ... The institutional forms of professionalism likely will always elude the journalist” (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996, p. 145).

However, the sociology of professions perspective encourages us to look beyond “trait” simplifications, to give up wondering where journalism falls on a professional spectrum between carpenters and cardiologists, and instead “inquire why and how the occupations of reporting and news editing achieved the professional status they did and how journalism may be attempting ... to raise that status” (Schudson & Anderson, 2008, p. 91). Cultural histories by the likes of Schudson (1978) and Mindich (1998), for instance, have explained how journalists adopted objectivity as a way of laying claim to social authority, being able to present their work as value-free and therefore credible, balanced, and “true.” Throughout much of the 20th century, journalism established institutional routines (e.g., the “inverted pyramid” style of reporting) and organization-spanning norms (e.g., codes of ethics) that worked to accomplish the two purposes of professionalization (Noordegraaf, 2007): professional control (Freidson, 2001) and

occupational closure (Abbott, 1988). Successful in their “professional project,” journalists could lay claim to greater social authority during much of the mass media era (Anderson, 2008b).²⁴

This should not imply that professionalization is a stunt to fool the masses into subservience to a faux profession. On the contrary, there are many good consequences to professionalism as an organizing force. It socializes members to a collective identity and culture, lends autonomy and authority against outside critics, and emphasizes public service over financial profit—all of which have served to benefit journalism (Beam, 1990). Of these features, autonomy has been considered the most essential component in shielding journalism from the outside influences of government, sources, advertisers, and audience (McDevitt, Gassaway & Perez, 2002). Indeed, journalism needs some level of control over its work and freedom from attack in order to fulfill its social purpose in speaking truth to power. Such protection, however, never fully materialized for U.S. journalists, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s with the rise of corporate mergers, cost-cutting, and managerial oversight—making journalists more subordinate to their organizational chieftains in comparison to their counterparts in law and medicine (Reese, 1999, p. 74).

In the years since, the threats to autonomy and authority have only grown. With the rise of digital media and “gotcha” comedy critiques, the legitimacy of journalists is being challenged on seemingly all sides by the likes of bloggers (Carlson, 2007; Singer,

²⁴ Given the importance of specialized and “abstract” knowledge to the definition of a profession, journalism-as-a-profession has always been in an awkward position, as Schudson and Anderson (2008, p. 96) explain: “Journalism seems to simultaneously make a grandiose knowledge claim (that it possesses the ability to isolate, transmit, and interpret the most publicly relevant aspects of social reality) and an incredibly modest one (that really, most journalists are not experts at all but are simply question-asking generalists). Abbott’s framework, with its focus on knowledge and jurisdiction, helps us see immediately what makes journalism a sociologically anomalous profession.”

2007), user-generated content (Hermida & Thurman, 2008; Robinson, 2010; Singer & Ashman, 2009b; Williams et al., 2010), and Jon Stewart (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2009). All of this serves to stir ongoing controversy about how to classify and engage in “good” journalism (Kunelius, 2006). Nonetheless, journalists have remained steadfast for decades in invoking professionalism as the basis from which to articulate, justify, and defend their claim to holding an essential position in a proper-functioning democracy (Deuze, 2005b). In this sense, professionalism has an important part in the self-conception of journalists (Kunelius & Ruusunoksa, 2008); it has guided them in discursively constructing their identity, expertise, authority, and power (Zelizer, 1992, p. 196), and thus in setting forth boundaries around their professional jurisdiction.

Society, on balance, has been the better because of journalistic professionalism, which generally has resulted in higher-quality news, gathered in an ethical fashion and with independence from corrupting influences. However, because professions are, by nature, closed to the outside world, they have been widely criticized as insular, ineffective, self-serving, and greedy (Noordegraaf, 2007). In the case of journalism, professionalism has been criticized as a means of social control (Soloski, 1989), hegemony (Reese, 1990), and discipline by management (Evetts, 2003). Moreover, the professionalization process has made the press so inwardly focused on peer judgment and elite access—as professions are wont to do (Shirky, 2008, p. 58)²⁵—that it has lost much

²⁵Shirky (2008) describes the effect of this insularity, especially as it affects a profession’s ability to recognize external trends: “Much of the time the internal consistency of professional judgment is a good thing—not only do we want high standards of education and competence, we want those standards created and enforced by other members of the same profession, a structure that is almost the definition of professionalism. Sometimes, though, the professional outlook can become a disadvantage, preventing the very people who have the most at stake—the professionals themselves—from understanding major changes to the structure of their profession. In particular, when a profession has been created as a result of some scarcity, as with librarians or television programmers, the professionals are often the last ones to see it when the scarcity goes away. It is easier to understand that you face competition than obsolescence” (pp. 58-59).

of its understanding for everyday people and their concerns; the essence of the public journalism movement was to correct this professional deficiency (Rosen, 1999). Finally, professionalism has led journalists to believe that they have exclusive claims on creating, filtering, and distributing something so sacred as the “first draft of history” (Edy, 1999). This has contributed to a mind-set of content control that, I argue, remains an enduring impediment to journalists’ capacity to change their perceptions and practices in the digital age. Indeed, this control logic is so deeply embedded, it is part of journalism ideology.

Occupational Ideology and Control

In his important and widely cited essay, Mark Deuze (2005b) argues that the whole arc of 20th century professionalization in journalism can be seen as “the consolidation of a consensual occupational ideology among journalists in different parts of the world” (p. 444). He defines this *occupational ideology* as a representation of the values, strategies and formal codes that most characterize journalism and the way its members “validate and give meaning to their work” (p. 446). Regardless of media type, format and genre, all journalists, Deuze argues, “carry the ideology of journalism” (p. 445), which in part explains how journalists are able to coordinate their approaches around the globe (Reese, 2001), and why they more readily identify with the profession than with their organization (Russo, 1998; Ryfe, 2009). Deuze categorizes the concepts, values, and elements of this ideology as a set of five discursively constructed ideal-typical traits:²⁶ public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics.²⁷

²⁶ In full, Deuze (2005, p. 447) expounds these as:

“• Public service: journalists provide a public service (as watchdogs or ‘news-hounds’, active collectors and disseminators of information);

• Objectivity: journalists are impartial, neutral, objective, fair and (thus) credible;

• Autonomy: journalists must be autonomous, free and independent in their work;

• Immediacy: journalists have a sense of immediacy, actuality and speed (inherent in the concept of ‘news’);

The implicit thread running through each of these ideal-typical traits is that professional journalists derive much of their sense of purpose and prestige through their *control of information* in their normative roles. In other words, they take for granted the idea that society *needs them* as journalists—and journalists alone—to fulfill the functions of watchdog publishing, truth-telling, independence, timeliness, and ethical adherence in the context of news and public affairs information. Deuze (2005b) calls this “one of the most fundamental ‘truths’ in journalism, namely: the professional journalist is the one who determines what publics see, hear and read about the world” (p. 451). This notion of journalistic control serves to tie together the essential elements of professionalism, forming the basis of a *professional logic*—the collectively shared and taken-for-granted assumptions underlying the belief that journalists, acting in their normative roles, ought to wield gatekeeping control over news content on behalf of society. This professional logic, invoked briefly during the previous chapter, serves as a general conceptual frame through which to organize the discourse on journalism’s norms, routines, and values.

Connecting this to the discussion of boundary work above, it’s important to note that an occupational ideology, as it changes over time, excludes or marginalizes certain ideas or values just as surely as it codifies and makes salient others (Deuze, 2007, p. 163)—in effect, working to reinforce boundaries of who counts as a journalist (Weinhold, 2010). Likewise, as debates regularly circulate through the profession—e.g., on seeking audiences, adapting to “new media,” and so forth—journalists return to ideological values that “can be deployed to sustain operational closure, *keeping outside forces at*

• Ethics: journalists have a sense of ethics, validity and legitimacy.”

²⁷ For comparison purposes, the Society of Professional Journalists (1996) identifies four principles in its code of ethics: seek truth and report it, minimize harm, act independently, and be accountable. Similarly, the American Society of Newspaper Editors’ (1996) “statement of principles” encompasses responsibility, freedom of the press, independence, truth and accuracy, impartiality, and fair play.

bay” (Deuze, 2005b, p. 447). In this sense, the professional logic of control is closely associated with the boundary work of journalism—the former acting as the anchor point around which to formulate the latter. This study is concerned with this interplay: how a sense of journalistic control is articulated, and how that articulation is connected with the forging of jurisdictional claims.

This interrelated set of professional logic and boundaries has been challenged like none other in recent years. The digitization of media breaks down material and cultural barriers to mass publishing, and therefore poses a commercial as well as conceptual threat to journalists’ sense of control and jurisdiction. What happens to the profession’s perceptions and practices in this context?

DIGITIZATION AND PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

This struggle for control over content, sometimes depicted as a “war” between corporate and grassroots interests (Jenkins, 2006), might imply that audience activity has arrived with digital developments in user-generated content (UGC)—that all of this user engagement is somehow *new* (c.f., Peters, 2009). That, of course, is not the case. Van Dijck (2009) calls it a “historical fallacy” to assume that end-user participation is unique to the read-write web, noting that so-called “passive” viewership in the mass media heyday still afforded opportunities for active interpretation of cultural signs—and even the actual manipulation of content in many fan communities (see Jenkins, 1992).

Nevertheless, what sets apart the present media moment is the *ease* with which individuals may participate in the creation and distribution of media, on a scale and with a reach unimaginable in earlier times, mainly because of the internet. This has become especially true with the emergence of Web 2.0 applications such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Because of their dynamic interfaces and low barriers to participation, Web

2.0 sites are novel in handing over much (if not all) control over content to the users themselves. In this way, “users actively apply the affordances of new technologies in the service of *their own creative and instrumental objectives*, and ... the desire to do so seems to be literally distributed among those online” (Harrison & Barthel, 2009, p. 161).

These changes in media and life (Deuze, 2011) can be viewed through the lens of what Henry Jenkins (2004; 2006) calls “convergence culture,” which recognizes that longstanding distinctions between media creation and media consumption are becoming increasingly fluid because of digitization. Convergence culture acknowledges the top-down, corporate-driven acceleration of media content across multiple channels. On the other hand, it also recognizes bottom-up, grassroots influences whereby “users are learning how to master these different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their *control* and to interact (and co-create) with other users” (Jenkins & Deuze, 2008, p. 6).

Perhaps the most significant element of this convergence process is that it’s not merely a technological phenomenon, but also a cultural one as well. This cultural element is often referred to as *participatory culture* (Jenkins, 1992; Jenkins, 2006) or *digital culture* (Deuze, 2006; Deuze, 2009b; Karaganis, 2007), and it emphasizes the extent to which end-users feel enabled and encouraged to participate in the creation and circulation of media. Jenkins (2006) argues that the “power of participation comes not from destroying commercial culture but from writing over it, modding it, amending it, expanding it, adding greater diversity of perspective, and then recirculating it, feeding it back into the mainstream media” (p. 157) (for an example, see Dena, 2008). Elsewhere, this concept of blending production and consumption of information is referred to as “produsage” (Bruns, 2008), and is evident in hybrid user-contributor communities such

as Wikipedia and Second Life. However, this convergence—of digital technology and culture, of production and consumption processes, and of corporate and grassroots interests—is not without its discontents (Van Dijck & Nieborg, 2009), who argue that internet hype serves to hide the political economy implications of a co-creation model encouraging free-labor exploitation (e.g., see Allen, 2008b; Scholz, 2008; Terranova, 2000). Moreover, critics charge that user-generated content represents little more than amateurish *reactions* to professionally produced content, as opposed to media creations that are original and culturally valuable (c.f., Keen, 2007). Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that users *enjoy* participating in co-creation, or at least see it as something other than labor exploitation (Banks & Deuze, 2009; Banks & Humphreys, 2008), and user participation has contributed to the overall breadth and diversity of media representation—including the enhanced reach afforded by citizen journalism (Allan & Thorsen, 2009).

At its core, media participation is about collectivism and equal contribution (or potential there for) on the part of all users. The theoretical roots of participatory culture can be traced to Pierre Lévy's (1997) notion of “collective intelligence,” which posits that knowledge is richest and most accurate when it reflects the pooled inputs of a distributed population, as opposed to the expertise of a single agent. This concept has been popularized as the “wisdom of crowds” (Surowiecki, 2004), and has been employed by organizations to harvest collective intellect through outsourcing corporate activities to the public through an open call—a process otherwise known as “crowdsourcing” (Brabham, 2008; Howe, 2008; Muthukumaraswamy, 2010). Because “no one knows everything, everyone knows something, [and] all knowledge resides in humanity” (Lévy, 1997, pp. 13-14), digital technologies have been instrumental in lowering the cost of coordinating

human wisdom and action across time and space (Brabham, 2008, p. 80). This, then, becomes the ultimate forging of technology and society in participatory culture: Digitization *enables* greater user participation on a seemingly infinite order, and the socio-cultural context of this technology has *encouraged* greater participation to achieve normative aims of collective wisdom and well-being.

Participation and its Ideology

Many scholars and commentators (e.g., see Chaffee & Metzger, 2001; Negroponte, 1995; Rheingold, 1993) have claimed that the changes wrought by the internet architecture of participation are no less than “epochal” (Shirky, 2008, p. 18), contending that when the means of communication dramatically change, societies inevitably change. As Shirky (2008) has famously argued, the big switch is the sudden ease with which formerly atomized individuals may connect and collaborate.

We are living in the middle of a remarkable increase in our ability to share, to cooperate with one another, and to take collective action, all outside the framework of traditional institutions and organizations. ... Now that there is competition to traditional institutional forms for getting things done, those institutions will continue to exist, but their purchase on modern life will weaken as novel alternatives for group action arise. (pp. 17, 21).

Participation, in this socio-technological view, is a function of *individual* agency engaged to address *collective* concerns, using the mix of motivations and affordances of digital cultures and technologies to solve group problems. Inherent in this is a de-institutional emphasis that puts power and control in the hands of end-users, *with the normative aim of achieving collective intelligence*. I would suggest there is a logic to this: If the ideology of professionalism is one of *expert control*, then the ideology of de-professionalized participation may be one of *distributed control*, of facilitating and fostering engagement through an open system of communication. I put special emphasis

here on *engagement*, as a normative concept of this ideology, suggesting that good societies are engaged societies—they are robust and active, dialogical and diverse, in freely sharing ideas and information. We might think of this as a “networked” variation on Habermas’ idealized public sphere (1991), featuring the same animated deliberation, but with a network arrangement that is more horizontal (peer-to-peer), and more representative of marginalized voices vis-à-vis “coffee house” interests.

Bringing this together, participatory culture can be understood as privileging “play, negotiation, transmedia navigation, and collective intelligences” (Lynch, 2007, p. 61). It is manifest in everyday users wielding the digital tools at their disposal to “archive, annotate, appropriate and recirculate content” (Jenkins, 2004, p. 33), often through the social tools readily available online. Participation, as an ideology, encompasses the idea system of distributing control over content to end-users for the normative purpose of achieving a more engaged, representative, and collectively wise society. The next step is to connect and contrast the ideological strains of professional control and open participation, particularly in the context of contemporary newswork.

Open vs. Closed Systems

Perhaps the best example of the participatory logic (or ideology) in action is the free software movement (Kelty, 2008) that developed out of the “hacker culture” in the early years of computing. The movement is a fusion of social, cultural, occupational and technological influences, and is most associated with open-source software. It has a guiding logic rooted in what Yochai Benkler (2006) calls “commons-based peer production,” or the idea

that the networked environment makes possible a new modality of organizing production: radically decentralized, collaborative, and nonproprietary; based on sharing resources and outputs among widely distributed, loosely connected

individuals who cooperate with each other without relying on either market signals or managerial commands. (p. 60)

Such peer-to-peer (P2P) production has a communal ethos (Turner, 2005), relies on non-monetary forms of reward,²⁸ and is galvanized by the idea of working in the open, being transparent, and serving public interests rather than proprietary-focused profits—as in the case of computer programmers imagining themselves as warriors against the evil forces of Microsoft (Weber, 2004). This common-cause kind of ethos is important for understanding how collaborative projects like Wikipedia can grow and succeed (Lih, 2009; Shirky, 2008). Even though members of any network have uneven claims to social, financial, and reputational authority and capital, nevertheless the *rhetoric* of communality allows participants to construct an ethical framework in which “they can be imagined as peers devoted to a collective mission” (Turner, 2009, p. 77).

This study is concerned with how participation is framed in discourse and deployed in practice, and how it relates to the professional logic of control in the boundary work of journalism. If the former represents an open system of distributed participation, the latter is a closed system of professional jurisdiction. In the case of journalism, this is not a normative statement about which kind of system is right, for they each may be appropriate under different circumstances; rather, the open vs. closed dichotomy serves to cast in sharp relief the inherent challenges one poses to the other. From the perspective of journalism’s ideology, the digitization of media and the forms of participation together may well present a locus of *chaos* compared to the professional desire for *control*.

²⁸Witt (2006) describes how computer programmers are motivated to develop open-source software for benefits of having fun, building their reputation, enjoying a sense of community, etc.—things other than money—and nicely connects these motivations to those of sources who freely give their time and attention to news reporters.

PROFESSIONAL AND PARTICIPATORY LOGICS IN JOURNALISM

Just as fan culture did not begin with the internet, participation in the news process has long since been part of journalism. However, such feedback was always limited in scope (e.g., confined to the letters-to-the-editors page) and subject to editorial purview in the publication process (hence the power of gatekeeping control). What is different about digital forms of participation is the potential volume and scope that it entails: With the restraints of time and space removed from the “news hole,” there are seemingly infinite possibilities for user contribution to the news. As news organizations have wrestled with this emerging reality during the past 15 years (e.g., see O'Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008; Singer, 2003), they have confronted vexing questions about the degree and kind of participation to allow in their news spaces online—from the most basic level of comments on a news story, on up to wiki-style exercises in collective writing and editing (for a few examples, see Harrison, 2010; Hermida & Thurman, 2008; Lewis et al., 2010; Singer, 2010; Thurman, 2008; Williams et al., 2010). The underlying question is rarely stated but certainly implied: *How much control over content should we give up, and why?* After all, as a newspaper editor told Robinson (2007), “Someone has gotta be in control here” (p. 311).

The question of control arises out of a longstanding tension for journalists: on the one hand, a deeply embedded desire to retain professional autonomy because news-decision judgment conveys status and authority; yet, on the other hand, a recognition that the public service role of the press entails encouraging civic participation and active deliberation (Williams et al., 2010). Much of the public journalism movement (Glasser, 1999; Haas, 2007; Rosenberry & St. John III, 2010) was engaged around rehabilitating this second ideal, captured in James Carey's (1987) contention that the public “will begin to awaken when they are addressed as conversational partners and are encouraged to join

the talk rather than sit passively as spectators before a discussion conducted by journalists and experts” (p. 14). With the introduction of citizen journalism (Allan & Thorsen, 2009)—in other places referred to as open-source (Deuze, 2001), participatory (Bowman & Willis, 2003), grassroots (Gillmor, 2004), and networked (Beckett & Mansell, 2008; Jarvis, 2006) journalism—Carey’s vision for a co-creative, conversational public suddenly became possible, at least for the digitally connected; with this too, however, came the specter of parajournalists threatening the jurisdictional claims of professionals by fulfilling some of the functions of publishing, filtering, and sharing information.

In the face of this perceptual and practical threat, journalists have (unsurprisingly) fallen back on professional defenses: holding fast to enduring values, taking conservative steps to change, and then—even when opening the gates to participation—co-opting participatory practices to suit traditional routines and ideals (see Williams et al., 2010). Indeed, if there is one consistent theme running through virtually all of the empirical studies of the professional-participatory tension (Domingo et al., 2008; Harrison, 2010; Hermida & Thurman, 2008; O’Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008; Paulussen & Ugille, 2008; Robinson, 2010; Singer & Ashman, 2009a; Singer, 2010; Thurman, 2008), it is that journalists respond by reasserting *control*—e.g., “normalizing” alternative media formats (Singer, 2005), or allowing comments but deliberately shunting them to the periphery (Domingo et al., 2008). This control response is meant to minimize the extent to which participation may threaten journalists’ jurisdictional claim to the news process. I put emphasis on news *process*, for it represents the important journalistic claim: the authority to control the “making” of news (Tuchman, 1978), from beginning to end. This is an important distinction to make. The most current research has begun to reveal a “slow philosophical shifting” among journalists about the role of news organizations online

(Robinson, 2010, p. 140), finding evidence that professionals around the globe are developing a more positive view of user participation (Schmitz Weiss & Higgins Joyce, 2009). Yet, in actual practice, most participatory features are kept at the margins (Karlsson, 2010a), afford only post-publication kinds of feedback, and altogether fall outside of the news process, thereby creating little jurisdictional friction (e.g., see Domingo et al., 2008; Hermida & Thurman, 2008; O'Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008; Thurman, 2008).

OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDY

From this review I may conclude that the fundamental tension underlying the professional-participatory intersection is one of mismatched ethics and expectations: Journalism's identity and ideology remain rooted in a one-way publishing mind-set at a time when media are becoming a multi-way network. As the sociology of professions would suggest, occupations do not easily abandon jurisdictional claims once they are concretized in their self-perceptions, and so journalists have been reluctant to relinquish the control that is so central to their sense of purpose as normative gatekeepers, as Jane Singer has found consistently in more than a decade of examining this tension.

Without them, as journalists see things, democracy comes apart. Information is central to democracy, and the journalist is central to information. Its provision is the journalist's *raison d'être*. Ethics are necessary to protect the quality of that information and thus the value of the information delivery role. Without the ethical gatekeeper, in this view, information may circulate—but it may be disinformation or misinformation that, according to the journalist, is worse than no information at all. (Singer, 2008b, p. 63)

Gatekeeping is inevitably contested in the networked media environment; familiar notions of autonomy (control), authenticity (credibility), and accountability (responsibility) are challenged by the de-institutional and de-professional influences of

the network (Hayes, Singer & Ceppos, 2007; Singer & Ashman, 2009b; Singer, 2007). The challenge for scholars is to understand how this collision of traditional ethics and network modalities is (or is not) changing the underlying ideology and ethics of journalism. To date, there remains great need for more research to assess that question as journalism straddles a liminal moment between tradition and change (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2009).

More broadly, beyond the professional-participatory concerns, the journalism profession is under tremendous strain as its legacy organizations wane. There is a sense that the profession may be “breaking up from within” (Witschge & Nygren, 2009, p. 50) as its practices rapidly change and media work generally becomes more precarious, contractual, and contingent (Deuze & Marjoribanks, 2009; Deuze, 2007; Phillips, Singer, Vlad & Becker, 2009). However, these de-professionalization trends are primarily driven by and manifest in *organizational* demands (Ornebring, 2009), whereas *occupational* professionalism remains strong as “journalists go back to core journalistic values, precisely because of the external pressures” at the organizational level (Witschge & Nygren, 2009, p. 51). This suggests that journalism’s professionalism, so long studied via the classic newsroom ethnography (Cottle, 2007), may no longer be merely (or even mostly) on display in traditional news organizations. This potential decoupling of occupation and organizational home indicates to me that a study of professionalism can (and indeed should) be conducted in novel spaces where newswork is taking root—such as in the nonprofit innovations studied in this dissertation.

In sum, the professional-participatory tension in journalism is a key site for boundary work and repair. And, as the profession becomes less associated with stable organizational labor, there is much to be learned in studying what happens to

journalism's ideology amid this disruption. The perfect storm of threats to journalism, both rhetorical and economic in nature, certainly augur a renegotiation of what journalism *is* and *ought to be* in a digital and networked space. To locate such systemic change, however, requires looking beyond the news organization alone, beyond the single-site "online newsroom" ethnographies that are en vogue in media sociology (Paterson & Domingo, 2008). These empirical studies, while laudable, have done relatively little to advance a wider, more field-spanning perspective on how journalism is changing at the edges, through upstart innovations, and in ways far more diverse than have been captured in the academic literature. Indeed, with some exceptions (namely, Anderson, 2009), the state of journalism research is stuck in a quandary: major reports on the field at large seem to have caught the essence of a profession in transition (especially Downie & Schudson, 2009), but they lack the academic rigor to theorize about what they see; while on the other hand, academic research remains blinded by its bias for rather narrow, single-site analyses that may misread the larger contours of change.²⁹ What is needed, then, are studies that engage combinations of multiple methods and "sites" (c.f., Anderson, 2009; Cottle, 2007; Howard, 2002; Marcus, 1995) that work synergistically to develop a more comprehensive view of change in journalism (for one example, see Anderson, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to review the theoretical context in which the professional-participatory tension is embedded. The sociology of professions offers a

²⁹ Moreover, another weakness deserves some mention. While most studies on the rise of citizen journalism and blogging and their relationship with professional journalism are implicitly about the jurisdictional claims described by Abbott (1988), virtually none of the journalism studies literature—with some exceptions (Anderson, 2009; Lowrey & Mackay, 2008; Lowrey, 2006)—has explicitly taken up the sociology of professions literature as a guide for assessing this tension.

guide for understanding how occupations turn themselves into professions, forging boundaries of jurisdiction to demarcate their exclusive claims to expertise and action. The media sociology literature has found that, in the process of professionalizing itself, journalism has developed an ideology of seeking to control how audiences come to learn about the world—not for cynical reasons, I would add, but rather because attempting to monopolize a given societal function is the very nature of professions. Thereafter, I showed how digitization has ushered in an era of participatory culture that presents a locus of distributed control—of open, transparent, and non-institutional systems—that comes into conflict with the professional desire for autonomy. For journalism, this has prompted a defensive posture of reflexive control, even in a networked media environment that is undermining journalists’ ethical emphasis on gatekeeping power and authority. Thus, the professional struggle for control, as an unresolved interplay, deserves greater attention for what it means about the changing soul of journalism itself. And, at the same time, because journalism is decoupling from its traditional organizational home, there is a growing need for academic research to assess how the ideology of journalism is renegotiated in untraditional and innovative settings.

Case Study and Research Questions

This dissertation explores the professional-participatory tension as it plays out in multiple (and alternative) sites in the field: first, in the macro formulations of a major institutional foundation; secondly, in the agenda-setting of innovation that is occurring through the Knight News Challenge; and thirdly in the perceptions and practices of individual innovators. At each step, I hope to assess how these organizational and individual actors situate themselves in the journalism field, relative to other professionals and other (non-journalism) fields and actors; how they articulate the boundary claims of

journalism and its normative ethics that flow from its jurisdiction; and how these processes of “thinking” are connected with the “doing” of innovation and journalism. Through it all, the “professional project” (Sarfatti Larson, 1977) and its emphasis on struggle over jurisdiction (Abbott, 1988) and boundaries (Gieryn, 1983), leads me to put particular emphasis on the way the constellation of actors under study here—the Knight Foundation and its leading officials; the Knight News Challenge and its aspirants; and the news innovators who intended to do journalism—negotiates the tension between professional control and open participation. Given the Knight Foundation’s importance for setting the parameters of and funding support for news innovation in the United States and beyond, precisely *how* the foundation articulates and acts upon journalism, I will argue, has implications for shaping the very nature of ethics in the journalism of the future.

This leads me to ask the following research questions:

RQ1a. In recent years, how has the Knight Foundation defined journalism?

RQ1b. To what degree has this definition of journalism been associated with changes in the foundation’s philanthropic activities?

RQ2a. Based on a quantitative analysis of proposals, what are the distinguishing features of applicants, finalists, and winners of the Knight News Challenge, and how are they predictive of one’s proposal advancing in the contest?

RQ2b. In particular, to what extent do participatory media features predict³⁰ advancing in the contest?

RQ3. Based on a qualitative analysis of winning proposals, how do winners of the Knight News Challenge negotiate issues of professional control and open participation?

³⁰ My use of the term “predict” here does not in any way suggest a causal association. Rather, this usage merely reflects the standard language of the regression model appropriate for testing this relationship based on the data available (see Chapter 6 for details).

RQ4. In their perceptions and practices, how do news innovators negotiate issues of professional control and open participation?

METHODS OVERVIEW

Chapter 4: The Mixed-Methods Case Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how the Knight Foundation has negotiated the tension between professional control and open participation in journalism; to understand if and how that negotiation has been manifest in its signature innovation initiative, the Knight News Challenge; and to discuss the implications of the foundation's innovation logic for the profession of journalism. Understanding how the Knight Foundation defines journalism and seeks to stimulate its innovation is important not only because of the foundation's prominence in the field, but also for what it may suggest about the future of news professionalism. How Knight navigates the professional-participatory tension has implications for the ultimate shape of professional values and norms, and the very role of journalism in society.

Assessing the perceptions and practices of the Knight Foundation and its grantees, however, requires an appropriate set of methods. Hard evidence of the foundation's articulation and influence cannot easily be identified and measured through typical variable-analytic methods of social science, but nor should such methods should be discounted when they can be applied to explain some facet of the problem. Thus, for my purposes of gaining both a holistic rendering of the Knight Foundation as well as an empirically based, ground-level description of its News Challenge participants, I chose a methodology that allowed me the flexibility to engage multiple methods—primarily qualitative but also quantitative—and adapt them as I went along. The result was a mixed-methods case study.

This dissertation poses four sets of research questions, and in this chapter I will describe how I worked to address each: (1) Based on a close reading of key foundation texts and interviews, how has the Knight Foundation defined journalism? To what degree has this definition of journalism been associated with changes to its philanthropic activities in the journalism field and beyond? (2) Based on a quantitative analysis of grant proposals, what are the distinguishing features of applicants, finalists, and winners of the Knight News Challenge, and how are they predictive of one's proposal advancing in the contest? In particular, to what extent do participatory media features predict advancing in the contest? (3) Based on a qualitative analysis of winning proposals, how do winners of the Knight News Challenge negotiate issues of professional control and open participation? (4) Based on interviews with winning news innovators, how do they negotiate issues of professional control and open participation?

This chapter proceeds to describe this study's research methodology and includes discussions with regard to the following: (a) rationale for mixed-methods research, (b) justification for the case-study method, (c) overview of the research design, (d) methods for data collection and analysis, and (e) ethical considerations.

RATIONALE FOR MIXING METHODS

As quantitative and qualitative approaches have matured and become legitimated in social inquiry, scholars have become increasingly interested in combining the methods, as the logical next step in the development of research methodology. Creswell (2009) credits this popularity to the inherent strengths of mixing methods: *viz.*, it allows qualitative approaches to fill in the gaps of quantitative work, and vice versa; it moves outside the individual limitations of both approaches to capture a greater picture of

complex social phenomena; and it offers synergistic insights that make the research whole greater than the sum of single methods (p. 203).

While the mixing of methods has been around for some time in practical fields such as nursing, education, and evaluation, the past two decades have seen a “groundswell” of interest in learning and applying mixed methods to study social phenomena more broadly (Greene, 2008, p. 7). In the process, mixed methods have become a topic of much controversy as they have entered more theoretical fields with strong disciplinary traditions. This interplay between theory and practice, or thinking/knowing and acting/doing, has meant that mixed methods, while increasingly popular in many fields, resides in something of an in-between state of research—neither wholly qualitative nor quantitative, neither wholly constructivist nor positivist, but truly its own mode of inquiry (Greene, 2007; Greene, 2008). As something of a “third paradigm” (Denscombe, 2008; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007) in social research, mixed methods has developed through a substantial body of literature by scholars such as John Creswell, Abbas Tashakkori, Charles Teddlie, Burke Johnson, Anthony Onwuegbuzie, Jennifer Greene, and David Morgan (see Denscombe, 2008). From early frameworks (Greene, Caracelli & Graham, 1989) to seminal texts on paradigms, strategies, and research designs (e.g., Creswell, 2009; Greene, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), and now a recently launched journal (*Journal of Mixed Methods Research*), the mixed-methods movement in recent years has reached a stage where it is “increasingly articulated, attached to research practice, and recognized as the third major research approach or research paradigm” (Johnson et al., 2007, p. 112).

While this is not an exhaustive exploration of mixed methods as a research paradigm, I hope to make clear that the *raison d'être* of mixed methods is that something better can be achieved by combining quantitative and qualitative approaches within a single study—namely, that greater validity and reliability can be achieved as a result. As Bernard (2005) defines them, “Validity refers to the accuracy and trustworthiness of instruments, data, and findings in research” (pp. 46-7). Meanwhile, “reliability refers to whether or not you get the same answer by using an instrument to measure something more than once.” Elsewhere, Kirk and Miller (1986) write, “Loosely speaking, ‘reliability’ is the extent to which a measurement procedure yields the same answer however and whenever it is carried out; ‘validity’ is the extent to which it gives the correct answer” (p. 19). Both facets of research are important: Researchers care most about identifying “truth,” but substantiating claims depends on using refined measures that can be replicated by others.

Scholars have long taken as given that quantitative approaches are better at ensuring *reliability* (hence the myriad checks on reliability, such as Cronbach’s alpha and other systematic measures of data consistency), while qualitative methods are better suited for achieving *validity*. Some qualitative-oriented scholars would prefer other terminology to describe that difference. For instance, they would focus on the pursuit of “legitimation” (Newman & Benz, 1998), seeing *reliability* as synonymous with “dependability” and *validity* with “credibility” (Golafshani, 2003). However, in the aggregate researchers are talking about the same thing: the need to employ methods that are stable and consistent across research settings (reliable), and which also tell us something meaningful about the object under study (valid).

RATIONALE FOR THE CASE STUDY METHOD

This pursuit of “trustworthiness” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was my primary purpose in choosing a case study approach. The case study has something of an uneasy position in the social sciences, in part because a case study is defined more by its object of inquiry (the case) than by any particular set of research method (Haas, 2004). As one of the leading case-study scholars, Robert Stake (2003), has noted: “Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied” (p. 134) Thus, the nature of case studies can vary tremendously from study to study, depending on the chosen object of study (i.e., a person, place, or organization) and the scope of that inquiry (i.e., the boundedness of the investigation). Case studies can be multi-method and mixed-method in their approach: They typically engage a set of multiple qualitative research tools (e.g., archival research, depth interviews, participant observation), but they also may include quantitative analyses as well. The exact calibration of this triangulation varies from study to study as researchers assess the underlying epistemological question: *What can be learned from this particular case?* (Stake, 2003, p. 135)

Case studies, therefore, can be understood as the work of investigating a bounded series of events, individuals, or institutions to gain deep understanding, both of the case itself and its relationship in a broader context (Haas, 2004). Yin (2008) has described the case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, *especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident*” (p. 18, emphasis added). For this study, the boundaries between the Knight Foundation’s media innovation efforts and the larger context(s) of digitization, journalism de-professionalization, social innovation, and so forth can be difficult to detect; thus, a variable-analytic method would have been ill-suited to this case because it would have missed the nuance and inherent “fuzziness” of this phenomenon. Moreover,

whereas the survey researcher gathers relatively small amounts of data on many cases, the case-study researcher culls a voluminous corpus of data on one or only a few cases. And whereas the ethnographer is interested in gaining a holistic understanding of a given culture or phenomenon, the case-study researcher seeks to grasp the interplay between a given case and its outside context (Haas, 2004, p. 60).

Thus, case studies are about *depth* and *context*. For this dissertation, I have sought to make a deep-dive exploration of the Knight Foundation's rhetoric and activities in relation to news innovation, all the while studying this material with an eye toward the context of changes in media, journalism and the professions broadly. Because of this laser-like focus on a particular phenomenon, case studies are often criticized for their apparent lack of generalizability; yet, as Flyvbjerg (2006) has argued, case studies are important for developing exemplars from which disciplinary paradigms are formed. This may be particular true for the field of communication and journalism at a time when some of its traditional theories perhaps seem ill-suited to predict and explain in the digital media environment (Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Chaffee & Metzger, 2001). Regardless, however, "the purpose of a case report is not to represent the world, but to represent the case" (Stake, 2003, p. 136)—here, to represent the Knight Foundation, without pretending to speak for the entire sphere of journalism. Nonetheless, as I will show in this study, Knight is an example of professional innovation—of the influence that one embedded organization can wield in attempting to change the professional milieu in which it operates.

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

In this dissertation, I used mostly qualitative but also quantitative methods in working to understand (a) how the Knight Foundation has sought to transform itself and

the journalism field; and (b) how these efforts have given shape to the leading innovation effort in journalism, the Knight News Challenge, and (c) the winning innovations that have emerged from the competition. Therefore, the overarching “sample” was limited to the Knight Foundation (*vis-à-vis* other nonprofit foundations); with an even further limited interest in the foundation’s media, innovation, and journalism activities—most notably, the Knight News Challenge (*vis-à-vis* the foundation’s other philanthropic efforts); and, more particularly, a subsidiary focus on a chosen set of winners of the News Challenge who intended to start news organizations/platforms (*vis-à-vis* other winners). This course of research can be understood as a three-step series of within-case analyses, ranging in specificity and depth: from the macro-level view of the Knight Foundation itself (see Chapter 5), to a meso-level consideration of the Knight News Challenge (see Chapter 6), to a micro-level analysis of select News Challenge winners who sought to produce journalism (see Chapter 7). These case study components were conducted concurrently during the Winter and Spring of 2010, and therefore each contributed to informing the other in a symbiotic whole. Through it all, my aim in the overall case study was to understand the process through these organizational and individual actors articulate and act in relation to the tension between professional control and open participation in digital media work. The way that tension is navigated will affect the ultimate shape of the profession and its place in society.

METHODS FOR DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Because each of these within-case studies was distinct from the others, particularly in how the data were collected and analyzed, I have reserved a more thorough recounting of these details for the specific chapters to which they apply (see the “Methods” sections near the beginning of Chapters 5, 6 and 7). For example, the

complete methods for the meso-level examination of the Knight News Challenge are recounted in Chapter 6, just before the related findings are presented. This is done because of the complexity of the methods in that chapter, which includes both quantitative and qualitative analyses and therefore requires a tandem presentation of methods and results, as a pairing. Briefly, however, I will describe the major forms of qualitative methods used in this dissertation: depth interviews and textual analysis.³¹

Depth Interviews

As a qualitative method, *depth interviews* are a common tool for exploring how people make sense of their world, illuminating the rhetorical construction of their experience and perspective (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 173). In journalism research, this has been particularly true in recent years as scholars have sought to understand how journalists *think about* and *talk through* issues of their work—e.g., their professional identity (e.g., Deuze, 2005a), occupational authority (e.g., Robinson, 2007), and relationship with the active audience (e.g., Hermida & Thurman, 2008). While seemingly simple, the work of doing focused interviews is hard, and takes time and training to master (Merton, Fiske & Kendall, 1990). I brought to this dissertation work the experience of having used qualitative interviews in a number of previous studies (e.g., Lewis & Reese, 2009; Lewis, 2008; Lewis et al., 2010). In general, depth interviews are conducted face-to-face, but there is a growing precedent for conducting valid interviews via telephone (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004), e-mail (James, 2007; Meho, 2006), and instant messaging (Kazmer & Xie, 2008). In this research, because my participants were geographically dispersed, the phone (via Skype connection) was the preferred means of

³¹ The quantitative methods of statistical data analysis need little justification when explained in light of the data involved. Please see Chapter 6.

communication. (For complete details of the methods and protocol used for the major portion of my interviews, see Chapter 7 and Appendix B.)

Textual analysis

Another common qualitative method, *textual analysis* represents the “close reading” of texts to identify patterns, themes, cultural assumptions, and/or ideological meanings that are not manifest in the content alone (Frsich, 2009). Indeed, where content analysis is concerned with identifying and “counting” the frequencies of preselected textual cues, readily apparent in the data, textual analysis differs in that it attempts to explore underlying meanings that lie below the surface. This type of analysis involves a certain intimacy with the texts—otherwise described as an “immersion in the materials” (Pauly, 1991). This implies not only a deep familiarity with the texts under study, but also an iterative, inductive process of exploration: a continual back-and-forth of finding and refining conclusions based on patterns that emerge from the data. Thus, in my close study of Knight Foundation and Knight News Challenge texts (which included everything from interview transcripts to blog posts to policy speeches), I looked both for manifest and latent themes, subtle phrases, and key words that would call up larger meanings in relation to issues of professional control, open participation, and the ideology of journalism (Deuze, 2005b).

HUMAN SUBJECTS AND SAFETY

I received approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Texas-Austin before proceeding with any interpersonal elements of this research (for evidence of IRB materials, see Appendix C). All recipients were notified of the nature of this research and their opportunity to opt-out at any point. I conducted the interviews “on the record,” with identifying information as part of the research report; however,

participants had the option to withhold their identity, either wholly or in part, at any time during the research process.

RESULTS OF THE CASE STUDY

Chapter 5: The Transformation of the Knight Foundation

“Thus we seek to bestir the people into an awareness of their own condition, provide inspiration for their thoughts and rouse them to pursue their true interests.”

—John S. Knight, “Philosophy of the Knight Newspapers”³²

The purpose of this study is to explore how the Knight Foundation has negotiated the tension between professional control and open participation in journalism; to understand if and how that negotiation has been manifest in its signature innovation initiative, the Knight News Challenge; and to discuss the implications of Knight’s innovation logic for the profession of journalism. In this chapter, I take up the first part of that purpose—an examination of the Knight Foundation’s articulation of and funding approach toward journalism in recent years, to assess how the foundation has handled the rhetorical and practical implications of professional and participatory modes of newswork.³³

The importance of this chapter’s analysis is rooted in the prominence of the Knight Foundation in the journalism field. Knight is widely regarded as the most influential journalism-oriented nonprofit organization, and that distinction has become particularly apparent in recent times as it has become *the* leading funder of nonprofit news startups and other major journalism initiatives (for evidence: among others, see Downie & Schudson, 2009; Massing, 2009; Nelson, 2009; Osnos, 2010; Sokolove, 2009; Wilhelm, 2009). It matters, therefore, to understand how the Knight Foundation *talks*

³² See <http://knight.stanford.edu/jsk/principles.html>.

³³ Chapters 6 and 7 give more attention to the applicants to and winners of the Knight News Challenge, and their negotiation of professional and participatory considerations.

about journalism, attempts to *translate that articulation* in the way it underwrites news innovation, and altogether seeks to *shape journalism's professional orientation* for the future. It matters for what it could suggest about the Knight Foundation's role in the boundary work of journalism, based on its cultural rhetoric *and* structural activities—the two components to jurisdictional claims, as described by Abbott (1988).

Thus, this chapter addresses a pair of interrelated research questions:

RQ1a. In recent years, how has the Knight Foundation defined journalism?

RQ1b. To what degree has this definition of journalism been associated with changes in the foundation's philanthropic activities?

METHODS

To understand how the Knight Foundation has defined journalism and acted in relation to it, I needed a grounding in the foundation's rhetoric and activities as a whole. Over the course of six months (December 2009 to May 2010), I gathered and concurrently analyzed a body of material that was produced by or about the Knight Foundation's journalism, media innovation, and related initiatives. The resulting collection included more than a hundred "texts," in the broadest sense of the word, representing foundation reports, archival notes, news releases, speeches, news articles, interviews, blog posts, videos, podcasts, and more. Many of these were collected from the Knight Foundation's website,³⁴ but, in total, the materials came from a wide variety of sources that were publicly available across the internet. The materials were found through relevant keyword searches and my own immersion in the Knight Foundation's Web-based offerings. Among the most important of these texts were speeches, policy statements, and other pronouncements addressing why the foundation was pursuing an

³⁴ See <http://www.knightfoundation.org/>.

innovation-focused media strategy—such as in the Boston speech discussed in Chapter 1, or in Alberto Ibarгүйen’s testimony at a U.S. Senate committee hearing on journalism’s disruption.³⁵

Additionally, these texts were supplemented with a series of formal and informal interviews conducted with current and former Knight Foundation staff. The most important of these were interviews with foundation leaders most closely directing the journalism initiatives: Alberto Ibarгүйen, foundation president and chief executive officer; Eric Newton, vice president for the journalism program; and Gary Kebbel, journalism program director and head of the Knight News Challenge. These latter three interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the resulting texts analyzed among the others here. Overall, because Ibarгүйen speaks so frequently as the “face” of the Knight Foundation, his statements were overly represented among these materials and thus appear quite frequently in the analysis section to follow.

I textually analyzed this broad sweep of evidence, looking for key words, patterns and themes that would call up a sense for how the Knight Foundation has articulated its approach to journalism, innovation, and information generally, and translated those ideals into actual practice and policy change. From this close reading, I found four interlocking (though not necessarily sequential) themes that will be explained in this chapter.

OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

First, in the years since Alberto Ibarгүйen assumed leadership in 2005, the Knight Foundation has broadened its conception of journalism, moving beyond a professionally focused definition to include (and even embrace) de-institutional and participatory forms of expression and expertise. In doing so, Knight has not “abandoned” its commitment to

³⁵ See http://www.knightfdn.org/news/press_room/knight_press_releases/detail.dot?id=346885.

the professional core and its ideals, but rather has re-articulated the foundation's norms in a way that make user engagement both a natural and necessary component of 21st century journalism.

Second, in broadening this definition, the foundation has downplayed the ideologically laden "journalism" in favor of the more neutral "information," a term that more easily invites participation and open interpretation, and ultimately is associated with greater trust in distributed publics.

Third, these cultural and rhetorical efforts, significant for their de-institutional logic, have allowed the Knight Foundation to "decenter" itself and pursue structural changes in its philanthropy—opening the door to challenge contests, its media innovation initiative, and other projects that reflect a reformulation of journalism boundaries.

Fourth, and through all of this, the Knight Foundation has emerged as a boundary-spanning agent, deepening and expanding the scope of its influence both within journalism and in other fields. Through the shared interest in "information," the foundation has connected with other fields and foundation actors, all in pursuit of Knight's own revised aim for journalism: one that focuses more on the *outcomes* of news ("informed and engaged communities") than on any particular (professional) *means* of accomplishing them. I will explain these patterns in two sections: "From Professionalism to Participation," and "From Journalism to Information."

FROM PROFESSIONALISM TO PARTICIPATION

As I described in Chapter 2, the Knight Foundation historically has been a *journalism* foundation. Even while private and financially independent from the Knight newspaper chain, it nevertheless was funded by the family's newspaper fortune, long enjoyed a close relationship with the newspaper chains that bore the Knight name, and

primarily was in the business of supporting the mainstream press—offering mid-career fellowships to its professionals, funding more than two dozen endowed chairs at journalism schools, and pouring money into press freedom advocacy.³⁶ All of these efforts, of course, were highly valued within the field and gave the Knight name a prominent place in the professional culture, branded as a steward of journalism excellence (e.g., Cleghorn, 1996; Cunningham, 1999; Kunkel, 2006). In turn, Knight upheld a definitional standard that resonated that of the press: of journalism as society’s watchdog steward, holding a high and important calling to make powerful interests accountable.

A History of ‘Journalism Excellence’

To review the Knight Foundation’s annual reports³⁷ around the turn of the millennium—beginning in 1999, the earliest point at which a report is available—is to find a thoroughly consistent reference to journalism and its centrality to the foundation: “Knight Foundation’s basic mission remains unchanged. We are committed to *promoting excellence in journalism* worldwide and to investing in communities where Jack and Jim Knight owned newspapers” (2000 report).³⁸ References to “journalism excellence” appear throughout Knight-produced materials during this era (1999-2004)—and, to a somewhat lesser extent, still do today. The foundation’s 2003 report defined it this way:

Journalism excellence—the accurate, fair, contextual pursuit of the truth—acts in the public interest. Good journalists verify and clarify. They monitor power as

³⁶ It should be noted that the foundation does not fund *only* journalism initiatives. From its earliest days, the Knight Foundation has distributed its funding among several priority categories, including Communities, Culture, and Education. In terms of overall grant outlays, only about a quarter of Knight’s funding had gone to Journalism during the foundation’s first 50 years, according to the 1999 annual report. Nevertheless, there is little question that Knight, as a brand, remains most powerful in the journalism field, where, the same report noted, it is “synonymous with excellence” (p. 21).

³⁷ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/about_knight/annual/.

³⁸ Unless otherwise noted, all emphases within quotes are mine—as is true in other chapters of this study.

fair, independent auditors. Their news is interesting, relevant, presented in context. They consciously seek truth on behalf of their whole community.³⁹

The 2000 annual report provides some additional insight. It notes that, in the process of a thorough reassessment of the Knight Foundation's aims and grant-making, foundation advisors "were in agreement that we should focus on our two signature programs. We will continue to promote journalism of excellence by *supporting the education of current and future journalists* and by *defending a free press worldwide*." In this sense, journalistic excellence was pursued through a scaffolding strategy: building the right structural apparatus of training and autonomy to help the profession wield its full might in defense of truth and justice, at home and abroad.

Around this time, in the early 2000s, the Knight strategy for journalism education was reaching its zenith. The foundation was busy placing more than two dozen industry veterans in full-professor positions at the nation's leading college journalism programs, aiming to improve the quality of skills-based education—the industry's primary concern at the time, and a source of much tension with the academy (Reese & Cohen, 2000; Reese, 1999). In taking this approach, the foundation implicitly was aligning itself with the industry, accepting the industry's professionalizing efforts, and reinforcing a basic assumption of the time: that journalism and professional newswriters were one and the same—the former impossible without the latter. According to Newton, who has been with the foundation since 2001,

Knight determined 20 years ago [around 1990] that if we could bring the journalism education and the profession closer together, that would help advance *journalism excellence* in America. ... So, Knight said, "Well, we want to start endowing chairs at the great schools of journalism and communication and systematically do that. And the chairs are not for Ph.D.s who have no experience in the profession. *The chairs are for professionals who have demonstrated*

³⁹ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/about_knight/annual/images/2003_KF_Annual_Report.pdf, p. 16

*intellectual capacity equal to or greater than the smartest Ph.D.s, and who are capable of taking tenured positions at the highest ranks of journalism education.”*⁴⁰

The endowed-chair strategy reflected Knight Foundation’s abiding faith in the expertise and wisdom of industry professionals. This link between professionalism and journalism excellence was reinforced in the 1999 annual report. In its recap of the foundation’s initiatives during the past half-century, the report notes somewhat obliquely that a Knight Fellow at Stanford that year had made a presentation suggesting that “the notion of journalist-as-professional is a relatively new phenomenon.” It quotes the presenter, Russell Baker: “Fifty years ago, there was much less disposition to *take ourselves or the business as solemnly as we do today.*” The foundation’s rejoinder, however, immediately follows: “But as Larry Jinks points out in the accompanying reflection on Knight Foundation’s support of midcareer journalism, *supporting professionalism, consistently and over time, is a proven way to ensure journalism of excellence.*” (p. 36)

Thus, in the Knight Foundation worldview leading up to the early 2000s, journalism excellence is a function of professionalism. The premise of this stance is easily understood: As discussed in Chapter 3, professionalization leads to consistency of standards, greater adherence to accepted codes of ethics, internal peer review, and so forth—all of which should promote higher-quality journalism. Moreover, this emphasis on professionalism was generally consistent with the times, during which the notion of citizen-based journalism was of only marginal consideration. Nevertheless, while a professionalism-oriented journalism definition might have been quite reasonable under the circumstances, my point in emphasizing it here is to make a contrast: to hold it up

⁴⁰ Unless otherwise noted, quotations come from personal interviews conducted in early 2010.

against the foundation's more complex and de-professionalized articulation of journalism, news, and information that has emerged in the years since.

The Influence of Alberto Ibargüen

Alberto Ibargüen, president and publisher of *The Miami Herald* and a longtime newspaper executive elsewhere, took over leadership of the Knight Foundation in July 2005. The transition came during a turbulent time for the industry; despite a strong U.S. economy, cracks were starting to show in the business model that sustained newspapers, and cost-cutting measures and consolidations began to become more severe. In 2006, the Knight-Ridder newspaper chain, then the second-largest newspaper company in the United States, was sold to McClatchy Co. With the sale, the Knight name left the newspaper scene. "For the first time in more than a century, there may not be a Knight newspaper in America," the foundation's 2005 annual report records. "That is sad news." Concerns about the future of newspapers—and news generally—weighed heavily on Ibargüen during his early tenure at Knight. After some soul-searching and consultant-seeking, Ibargüen said he realized that neither he nor Knight nor any of the so-called experts had the answers.

[T]he more I thought about this, the more I thought, "Listen. The main thing you've got to remember in foundations is you're not God and you're not even the mayor, and you do not have anywhere near the resources to solve all the problems that you're interested in. So don't even try." ... What I wanted to do was first of all acknowledge that *we didn't know where we were going*. And that meant we had to pause our very, very active practice of teaching best practices. We had just done 20-odd chairs of journalism, in as many universities. We had become the most important funder of mid-career journalism education. Shame on the industry that didn't fund it. We did. And so I said, "We've really got to pause. *We can't teach best practices for a world we don't know.*"⁴¹

⁴¹ Ibargüen, personal interview.

Ibargüen’s move away from endowing journalism chairs marked the beginning of a key shift at Knight Foundation, one that has since transformed the nature of the foundation and its funding efforts. This shift engaged at least three major components, each reinforcing the others; I will describe them below, and then provide examples from the case material.

- First, Knight accepted that the “problem” for journalism in an era of digital disruption was the need to find new or refurbished models through which journalism’s core functions and societal benefits could be achieved, to “meet the information needs of communities,” in the foundation’s common refrain—but the solution, however, was *not* saving newspapers as such.

- Second, Knight turned away from its longstanding reliance on *professional expertise*—both the news industry’s *and* its own—to acknowledge that the solutions may well come from the *aggregate expertise* of a participatory crowd of contributors. Typified by Knight’s abandonment of the endowed-chairs strategy, this reflected a shift from faith in (individual) professionals to faith in (collective) “crowds of wisdom.”⁴² It also represented a growing trust in the capacity of participation from actors beyond the profession’s core: from bloggers and activists engaged at the margins of journalism, from the “people formerly known as the audience,”⁴³ and from fields beyond journalism— from computer programmers, venture capitalists, community foundations, and a host of others who would bring solutions outside the scope of anything Knight might imagine.

⁴² See Wilhelm (2009): “With the news challenge, Knight seeks to circumvent the top-down nature of foundation giving and instead solicit ideas from outsiders, be they charity leaders, business owners, or everyday citizens. In the parlance of the digital revolution, Mr. Ibargüen says he is seeking the ‘wisdom of the crowd.’”

⁴³ See how Newton used this iconic phrase, popularized by Rosen (2006), in his essay for Nieman Lab: <http://www.niemanlab.org/2010/01/eric-newton-shame-on-us-if-we-dont-take-the-steps-needed-to-feed-knowledge-to-our-democracy/>

This was portrayed as participation both in the grant-funding process (as in the case of challenge contests), as well as in the actual work of informing their communities (as in the case of citizen/participatory journalism). Thus, trust in *participation*, and the *collective wisdom* wrought by such, become baseline assumptions of Knight's operations.

- Third, these connected assumptions—that neither Knight nor the news industry had the solutions to the “informed communities” problem, but that answers could come through participation from distributed crowds that were newly connected online—led Knight to conclude that it should *give up control* over some facets of its philanthropy, as it did with the challenge contests. Furthermore, the foundation chose to give up control over maintaining journalism's professional boundaries of exclusion, of defining journalism excellence by the professionalization of the actor, by rhetorically opening the gates to greater participation from audiences.

We find these intersecting assumptions in a wide range of Knight Foundation texts since 2006, but especially in statements made by Ibargüen:

About three years ago, when I came in, and with the trustees, we took a look at the situation in journalism—and even in the communities side—and decided we needed to change the standard and try to do social investing more than charity. ... On the journalism side, we had just endowed 21 chairs at the best journalism schools in the country, and my really strong feeling was that here we are trying to teach best practices to the best people in the best schools for jobs that aren't likely to exist. Or, if that's an exaggeration, what isn't an exaggeration is that you can't teach a best practice about a world you don't know—and *we really don't know what is going to evolve*. ... The *participatory nature* [of media] is only the beginning of it. It's the knowledge that the *information doesn't belong to me* that is difficult—and that it belongs to you. ... [W]hat I am responsible for is to come up with answers for how to meet the information needs of communities. *Not to save newspapers or television news or radio news—but about how to meet information needs*. And so I thought the first thing we needed to do was to admit *we don't know what we're doing*; we needed to admit that we don't know where

we're going. And that's where we came up with the idea for the Knight News Challenge.⁴⁴

It is incredibly liberating to admit you don't know the answer. Then you don't have to go out and pretend and say, I am the foundation, I have an idea, and I have the money. Instead you can afford to say, I have some money, here's the problem we're worried about, do you guys have any ideas?⁴⁵

Professionals, by nature, seek to be autonomous from outside influence, and so an acknowledgment of one's lack of *expertise* or lack of *control* is a serious departure from the professional paradigm. Nevertheless, Ibargiuen's logic—of openness, of distributed control, of crowd wisdom and collective engagement—is more in tune with the digital media environment and its participatory culture (as described in Chapter 3). And, in this sense, his logic may reflect the Knight Foundation's adaptation to the situation—its own way of “figuring out the flow” (Ibargiuen's words) and leveraging the momentum to accomplish its purposes. Part of this going-with-the-flow approach involves learning to roll with the “chaos” of mass participation brought on by digitization—this “wonderful strangeness”⁴⁶ that can emerge—which Ibargiuen likens to the confusion and consternation that immediately followed the invention of movable type.

Before Gutenberg, monks were in control of information and there was order. Long after Gutenberg, we had assimilated the impact: literacy was general and books and pamphlets helped make the Renaissance and Enlightenment. But, in those crazy, in-between years, *it must have seemed like chaos*. Those are the years we're living now, just post the World Wide Web and Internet and all things digital. And at a time of change and uncertainty, it is even more critical to focus on the core. So, the question we should ask, the question we ask at Knight Foundation, is not, how can we save newspapers, but rather, *how can we save journalism and communication*. . . . Nobody has all the answers. But I believe that the changes in how we communicate, and in how we define community, have

⁴⁴ See <http://www.mediabistro.com/articles/cache/a10584.asp>.

⁴⁵ See Wilhelm (2009).

⁴⁶ See <http://www.tacticalphilanthropy.com/2008/03/tactical-philanthropy-podcast-alberto-ibarguen>.

opened opportunities for journalism ... to *connect to people and engage them* in ways that will define our future.⁴⁷

Breaking Down Jurisdictional Exclusivity: Participation and ‘Their True Interests’

In this sense, “saving journalism” becomes closely associated with making it more relevant to, reflective of, and engaged with the citizens it is intended to serve—all normative aims that grew out of the public journalism movement of the 1990s and were incorporated into the citizen/participatory journalism logic of the 2000s (Haas, 2007; Nip, 2006; Rosenberry & St. John III, 2010). Public journalism and citizen journalism share an interest in renegotiating the jurisdictional boundaries of professional journalism to allow for greater public input on what to cover and how to cover it—in effect, lowering the barrier between journalist and audience in a manner that threatens professional autonomy (McDevitt et al., 2002; Singer & Ashman, 2009b). This is significant because the Knight Foundation, among other nonprofit foundations, had a role in nurturing, in word and money, nascent forms of public journalism, as did Knight-Ridder newspapers (Rosenberry & St. John III, 2010). Hodding Carter III, who served as Knight Foundation president from 1998 until he retired in 2005 (and was replaced by Ibarгүйen), gave several speeches in support of public (or civic) journalism. In 1998, he said:

Civic journalism says that journalists need to rediscover the total community, listen to the total community, cover the total community and advocate for the total community. It says that the people who live in a neighborhood *know as much, and probably more*, about what is wrong with it and what might be done to fix it than city officials and certified experts.⁴⁸

This early concern for the limits of professional expertise and the need for greater public engagement, evident in the late 1990s, would set the stage for the Knight Foundation’s embrace of media participation as the growing ubiquity of digital media

⁴⁷ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/news/speech_detail.dot?id=348406.

⁴⁸ See http://204.8.120.192/kiosk//editor/98_dec/carter1.htm.

made that possible in more recent years. During Ibargüen’s tenure, from 2006 onward, this became particularly apparent. Just as Knight legitimized extra-professional contributions and the wisdom of the crowd by acknowledging its own (and the industry’s) lack of expertise in disruptive times, the foundation likewise made acceptable forms of external engagement with journalism—e.g., participatory journalism—by suggesting that such could co-exist with and even complement the work of professionals. As Newton described it in a 2006 speech:

The new era has turned journalism upside down and inside out. Every element—who a journalist is, what a story is, which medium works best, *even how to describe the people formerly known as the audience*—every element is changing. *A journalist can be anyone*. A story can be data, events, issues, ideas—or all of them. A medium can be words, sound, pictures—or all of them. *An audience can become a journalist*.⁴⁹

More broadly and more frequently, Knight Foundation officials speak of media participation beyond the context of journalism, eagerly endorsing the widening capacity for users to take part in the creation and distribution of information, on their terms. When he appeared before Congress in 2009 to testify at a Senate committee hearing on the Future of Journalism, Ibargüen said, “I enthusiastically welcome the *democratization of media* and am thrilled by its possibilities.”⁵⁰

We are living in a moment of extraordinary creativity. We will be a nation of *media users, not consumers*. We’re going from the information model of one-to-many, of “I write/You read” to many-to-many, made possible by technology.⁵¹

More than a mere acknowledgment of changing patterns in communication, this conception of the active audience—articulated time and time again by Ibargüen, particularly—represents a foundational statement about Knight’s assumptions and

⁴⁹ See http://www.knightfdn.org/news/press_room/knight_press_releases/detail.dot?id=330504.

⁵⁰ See http://www.knightfdn.org/news/press_room/knight_press_releases/detail.dot?id=346885.

⁵¹ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/news/speech_detail.dot?id=347669.

orientation. Toward the end of a 2009 speech in which he laid out the rationale for the foundation's emerging emphasis on media innovation, Ibargüen said, "What all of these [innovations] have in common is an assumption that *the era of 'I write, you read' is over.*" While such may ring hollow as easy rhetoric—fashionable, even, at a time when social media is chic—I would argue that this invocation of "I write, you read" is significant for how it relates to the ideology of journalism (Deuze, 2005b) and its overarching emphasis on professional control of gatekeeping. In a widely cited piece, Deuze (2003) suggests that user participation online "undermine[s] the 'we write, you read' dogma of modern journalism" because it threatens the "core values and ideals" of autonomous control over the way audiences come to understand the world (p. 220). Thus, to contend that the "era of 'I write, you read' is over" is to contend that the ideology of journalism is over—or, at the very least, unalterably contested and perhaps transformed as control over content increasingly passes into the hands of end-users.

Ibargüen acknowledges the discomfiting perplexities this situation creates for professionals. At a Knight-sponsored Media Learning Seminar for community nonprofit foundations—a group well accustomed to the idea of sharing control with partnering institutions—he said:

If you're used to being the expert, it's really hard to let go. When you talk to any editor of a newspaper or news director of a television station or a radio [station], they take great pride in having come to the craft by a lot of hard work. They have developed a lot of stories, they know what good journalism is. That just really butts up against the notion that I think most of the people in this room, by nature of the work that we do, would say, "Well, geez, you've got to find partners. You've got to collaborate. This just makes absolute sense." And then [they] say, "The wisdom of the crowd? What does that mean? That you're going to all of sudden be edited by bloggers?" ... This is really an uncomfortable time of experimentation.⁵²

⁵² See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vyi-s1LNatY&feature=player_embedded.

At another moment during the same meeting, Ibargüen explained why he considers David Cohn’s Spot.Us project, a 2008 Knight News Challenge grantee (see Chapters 6 and 7 and Appendix A), to be “in some ways the most important grant we made in all of this” push for media innovation. Because Spot.Us uses the micro-contributions of a distributed crowd to fund investigative journalism in local communities—in effect, allowing the public to decide which news stories get reported—“that is fundamentally different than the ‘I write, you read’ model. That invites the crowd. You don’t get the money, you don’t do the story. . . . What I find really important about this is it *effectively includes the reader in a fundamentally different way than any other model.*”⁵³

Thus, a norm of participation—that users *should* be enabled to engage, take control, and contribute to the news discourse—has developed in the foundation’s culture of and assumptions for media innovation. While this norm can be linked historically to the foundation’s early interest in supporting civic/public journalism, what I found more striking was the extent to which these references to citizen participation were historicized through the words of Jack Knight. In 1969, he set forth the “Philosophy of the Knight Newspapers,”⁵⁴ concluding with this remark:

We seek to bestir the people into an awareness of their own condition, provide inspiration for their thoughts and rouse them to pursue their true interests.

No phrase has appeared more frequently in Knight Foundation reports nor been invoked more regularly in Knight Foundation speeches. It serves as the foundation’s credo. Often it is referred to briefly as justification for supporting policies and initiatives that foster “their [own] true interests.” While in many cases this reference occurs rather

⁵³ See <http://vimeo.com/9831443>.

⁵⁴ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/about_knight/pdf/1969_04_JSK_principles_of_Knight.pdf.

generically, its usage has become particularly apparent recently in the way Knight Foundation (and Ibarguen especially) talks about its purposes for media experimentation and innovation.

*The citizen is a user of information more than a passive consumer. Mine is not a lament for the past, which excluded many, especially women and minorities, from the main pages of newspapers and the evening news. I welcome the democratization of media and its possibilities. The question is not how to save the traditional news industry, but how to meet the information needs of communities in a democracy so that people might, as Jack Knight used to put it, “determine their own true interests.”*⁵⁵

Our operating principles are simple: (1) We believe that the role of information is to *enable citizens to determine their own true interests*. (2) We believe we’re living through a time of such enormous change that the most responsible thing we as a foundation can do is to experiment and learn, experiment more and learn more. (3) We believe that the best communities are informed and *engaged communities* and so we seek to support programs and projects that lead to that end.⁵⁶

In a speech to the League of American Orchestras National Conference in June 2009, Ibarguen spoke of the similarities between newspapers and orchestras (e.g., a sense of calling among their members, an emphasis on professional polishing and judgment before their products are presented to the public, etc.). He used the opportunity to connect Jack Knight’s vision for a good newspaper with the Knight Foundation’s present adaptations—such as its openness to participation, inclusion of crowd wisdom, and general acceptance of wider boundaries for journalism.

There is a fierce debate within the newsroom about the authority and authenticity of the new ... citizen journalists, information aggregators and bloggers, upstarts that challenge the established order of the full, accurate, contextual search for truth that mainstream journalists cling to with justified pride in their accomplishments. *What can the inclusion of community or audience bring to the craft, they ask?* The music analogy for this is reported by Alex Ross in *The Rest is*

⁵⁵ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/news/speech_detail.dot?id=347669.

⁵⁶ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/news/press_room/knight_press_releases/detail.dot?id=344266.

Noise. He writes that, “The debate over the merits of engagement and withdrawal has gone on for centuries.” But, in his view, “Composition only gains power from failing to decide the eternal dispute. *In a decentered culture, it has a chance to play a kind of godfather role, able to assimilate anything new because it has assimilated everything in the past.*” What better describes our society’s communication culture than “decentered?” And what better way to think about this than as nothing but opportunity to perform a critical service? Our foundation’s founder, Jack Knight, understood this for his time and viewed the role of great newspapers as bringing together all sorts of information in a way that made sense so as to inform and inspire their readers and *help the people*⁵⁷ to *determine their own, “true interests.”*⁵⁸

The journalism profession, Ibarguen is suggesting, should be playing this “godfather role.” Comfortable in what it has accomplished in the past, the profession, he is saying, should be confident in assimilating new forms of participation without finding this process a threat to its professional identity because the longstanding role of journalism has been to “bring together all sorts of information.” The unspoken sense is that even while such assimilation has yet to happen across the news industry (e.g., journalists still clash with bloggers), the Knight Foundation is positioning *itself* to assume a godfather kind of role within the profession. By “decentering,” or shaking up, its own understanding of journalism—i.e., allowing jurisdictional claims to open up and include a greater swath of participants and possibilities—the foundation is attempting to accomplish what the newspaper of late has failed to do: inspire people, give them critical information, and help them discover their own true interests. The emblem of this ambition is the Knight News Challenge.

⁵⁷ This progressive ideal can be compared to the motto of the E.W. Scripps newspaper company: “Give light and the people will find their own way” (see <http://www.scripps.com/heritage/our-motto>).

⁵⁸ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/news/speech_detail.dot?id=348406.

Knight News Challenge: Bringing It All Together

In assessing its place in journalism, the Knight Foundation took a self-reflective step away from several of its traditional roles: of worrying about the “health of newspapers” (see Sokolove, 2009); of funding established institutions, mainly of the traditional journalism variety, through a relatively closed process; and of “pretending” to have the answers from the get-go, in the typical top-down fashion of foundation funding (see Wilhelm, 2009). What emerged was the Knight Brothers 21st Century News Challenge, as it was originally called: a challenge contest that would *not* be solely concerned with saving newspapers, but instead would be an *open call* for applications from *individuals* as well as institutions (inside *and outside* of journalism), and would acknowledge, publicly, that the Knight Foundation needed help in identifying solutions to the growing problems for journalism. In May 2006—just less than a year after Ibargiñen’s arrival—the foundation first outlined some of its ideas for the News Challenge, and encouraged suggestions for how to distribute the \$25 million over 5 years. Perhaps fittingly, it used a user-generated website (Newsvine) to publish this initial proposal:

The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation plans to seek people and organizations that will do in the 21st century what the Knight brothers’ newspapers did in the 20th century. Those newspapers helped define communities. They described the happenings and defined obstacles and opportunities. They created a sense of place by creating a shared experience. They did it with integrity and insight. They reached a mass audience, creating a critical mass of thinking and feeling. Their news was the glue that held communities together. In a democracy that is organized by geography, the fate of every American village, town, suburb and metropolis depends on citizens being able to get the news they need to run their lives and their governments. The Knight Brothers 21st Century Challenge hopes to recognize transformative ideas, pilot projects, leadership initiatives and investment opportunities that will help improve

the flow of journalism, information and news in the public interest in America's communities.⁵⁹

Under the “what we’re looking for” section of the original proposal, the foundation said that, among other things, it was seeking “new ways for people to *communicate interactively* to understand one another” and “new ways for people to use information, news and journalism to *imagine their collective possibilities* as communities.” Indeed, in the first year of the contest, the proposal documents included a reminder to applicants about tailoring their projects with the words of Jack Knight in mind: “Thus we seek to bestir the people into an awareness of their own condition, provide inspiration for their thoughts and rouse them to pursue their true interests.” All of these serve to underscore an implicit emphasis on participation that was built into the contest from the start.

For the Knight Foundation, the News Challenge represented the first real leap into the innovation realm. It was the foundation’s initial foray into prize philanthropy, and so represented a loss of (some) control over refining the topic for proposals. It meant erasing old boundaries about who could be a grant recipient, moving beyond the usual suspects (i.e., other nonprofits or universities) to include virtually anyone with a good idea (Wilhelm, 2009). It meant “suspend[ing] our internal bureaucratic rules” and “pretend[ing] as long as we possibly could that there weren’t any rules at all.”⁶⁰ It meant trying to market the competition to the world in multiple languages. It was a request-for-proposals “on steroids.”⁶¹ Ibarguen described the uncertainty that this strategy entailed:

[The News Challenge] assumes that the *wisdom is out there*, not in our office, and seeks to find it. It also requires a certain level of comfort with *chaos*, since you

⁵⁹ See <http://21st-century-news-challenge.newsvine.com/news/2006/05/12/195130-the-21st-century-news-challenge-what-would-you-do>.

⁶⁰ Newton, quoted in Wilhelm (2009).

⁶¹ Kebbel, quoted in Wilhelm (2009).

don't know when or if those great ideas are going to come in or in what form. Moreover, the contest is worldwide, so you truly don't know where something might originate.⁶²

At another time, he said:

I give great credit to my [board of] trustees, who went from 0 to 60 in the space of a couple of trustee meetings, and after only, I guess, about four or five meetings with me, ended up agreeing to do the first of these [innovation projects], which was the News Challenge. And when one of them said, 'Well, but what exactly will we be funding in this challenge?' [laughs] And I said, as honestly as I could, '*I don't know!*'⁶³

While its \$25 million budget is dwarfed by the roughly \$100 million that the foundation spent on journalism initiatives (as a whole) in the 2000s, the News Challenge nevertheless appears to have become, both for the foundation and journalism observers, its most visible project—one that embodies a fusion of the foundation's journalism roots and its innovation aspirations. Now four years into the contest, Knight has walked an uneasy line in negotiating journalism's *explicit* place in the News Challenge. The word "journalism," clearly a part of the original framing of the competition, was dropped in favor of "news and information" for purposes of appealing to a broader set of potential grantees.⁶⁴ And the nature of some of the grantees has caught some in the profession—and Knight's own board of trustees—a bit off guard. For example, in the contest's first year, MTV received a \$700,000 grant to equip young adults in all 50 states to cover the 2008 U.S. presidential election with cellphone-video news reports intended to reach teens and 20-somethings. In describing the project for a podcast on "tactical philanthropy,"

⁶² See http://www.knightfoundation.org/news/speech_detail.dot?id=349212.

⁶³ Ibargüen, personal interview.

⁶⁴ As Keibel said, "We purposely talk about 'news and information' so that we make the field as broad as possible for what the News Challenge does. And we purposely say that our goal is not to save newspapers. But we are very focused on journalism and its ethics, and values, and principles. ... But the News Challenge itself, you don't have to have, let's say, journalism in the traditional sense to have a winning application."

Ibargüen acknowledged, “Now some people will listen to this and *they’ll just vomit on the table*. They just won’t be able to stand the idea that you can actually deliver serious news and substantive news and information in such a frivolous way. Well, that’s too bad...”⁶⁵ Of the 51 News Challenge winners through 2009 (see Appendix A), a number of them involve games, databases, wikis, and an array of other projects that, as Keibel noted, might not qualify for some people as “traditional journalism.”

Nevertheless, the News Challenge represents the foundation’s signature effort to upgrade journalism for the digital age—to meld the best of old-school ethics and ideals with the finest of new-age tools and tactics, all with a baseline assumption that media *should* be participatory. Introducing the contest in 2006, Ibargüen said, “Our bigger hope—in fact, our plan—is that the values that defined the Knight brothers—values of integrity, fairness, community and verification journalism—will survive into our brave new world.”⁶⁶

In all, the Knight Foundation has not abandoned its longstanding commitment to “journalism excellence,” which still today it tends to define as the “fair, accurate, contextual search for truth.”⁶⁷ As evidence of this commitment, Newton and others point to the continuing flow of grants to mid-career and online training programs for working professionals, journalism education initiatives for curriculum development, and the \$15 million⁶⁸ recently staked to investigative reporting by startup news organizations.⁶⁹ What has changed, however, is the foundation’s articulation of journalism: what it constitutes,

⁶⁵ See <http://www.tacticalphilanthropy.com/2008/03/tactical-philanthropy-podcast-alberto-ibarguen>.

⁶⁶ See http://www.j-lab.org/awards/2006_knight_batten_symposium_keynote_speech/.

⁶⁷ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/news/press_room/knight_press_releases/detail.dot?id=326097.

⁶⁸ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/news/press_room/knight_press_releases/detail.dot?id=348319.

⁶⁹ As Newton said, “We don’t leave the question of journalism excellence behind because we are coming into a digital age. It just becomes a more complex world. The endowments that we created still exist. ... Just because we gave them a grant 20 years ago doesn’t mean we’ve forgotten about them.”

how it is accomplished, and who gets to take part. Metaphorically speaking, the Knight Foundation has taken the tent of journalism, which used to accommodate a small professional class, and uprooted its stakes, stretching it beyond its original footprint to include a much wider set of actors (c.f., Cooper, 2008). This resituated tent for journalism is more noisy, more chaotic, and yet the foundation revels in the dialogical participation that is beginning to take place. Rhetorically, this is the “journalism” Knight seems intent on building: one that is more inclusive, one that doesn’t presume to have all the answers, and one that is more forward-looking than backward-leaning—in short, one that embodies the characteristics of the Knight News Challenge itself. As I will show in the next section, however, this expansive progression has undergone yet another important change in Knight’s rhetoric and culture—a shift from “journalism” to “information.”

FROM JOURNALISM TO INFORMATION

It was September 18, 2007, and Alberto Ibarguen was preparing to deliver a plenary speech at the Council on Foundations’ community foundation conference in San Francisco. It was the largest such annual gathering of its kind, bringing together representatives from hundreds of local, place-based nonprofits. Reading through his prepared remarks, Ibarguen found that he was “fairly bored” with his own material, and so when he stepped to the lecturn that afternoon, he decided to ad-lib a portion of the talk to cover what he really cared about: “information needs.”

I just sort of got off on this tangent saying, “How does it happen that this incredible fantastic network of community foundations that you are, that are formed, every single one of you, to meet the core needs of your communities, there’s not a one of you that understands information as a core need? And yet I can’t imagine there’s anybody in this room ... who doesn’t believe that information is at the core of a well-functioning democracy. And so why in the world does that happen? Well, maybe you’re afraid of media. And maybe you think of media just as something that allows you to place a story about a grantee

of yours. We've got to rethink that. You've got to understand what's happening in media."⁷⁰

So, Ibargüen made an impromptu decision: He invited everyone to visit Miami the following February for the first Media Learning Seminar, to discuss the changes of digital media, their impact on local news and information, and the role that community foundations could play in stimulating media creation. Several hundred of them came, and each year since the seminars have been focused on giving regional- and community-based foundations “new insights into the changing media landscape and emerging technologies while offering concrete examples of how foundations are helping to fill their community’s information voids.”⁷¹

The story of the Media Learning Seminars is the story of the Knight Foundation’s latest iteration—one that has seen the foundation increasingly move beyond its home in journalism to connect with fields and foundations beyond. The short version is that *Knight has made a strategic shift in rhetoric, from talking about “journalism” to emphasizing “information,” in an appeal to a broader set of professional fields, philanthropists, and foundations.*⁷² The longer version is a bit more complex, and involves the recent introductions of the Media Innovation Initiative, the Knight Community Information Challenge, and the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy. Each of these initiatives and evolutions, in their own way, has contributed to the shaping of Knight’s norms for journalism and its democratic functions.

⁷⁰ Ibargüen, personal interview.

⁷¹ See <http://www.informationneeds.org/media-learning-seminar>.

⁷² This contrasts with the Freedom Forum, which didn’t mind “communication” in the academy as long as “journalism” was still given a distinct place (Charles Overby, personal communication, c. 1999).

To begin with, and as explained previously, Knight has an overriding concern about the fate of quality information in democracy.

Media is all around us, yet communities are challenged to deliver news and information to defined geographic areas. . . . the Knight Foundation is interested in both the craft of journalism *and* the essential information needs of our communities. And we are keenly aware that as the craft is transformed by technological and market forces, *the need for reliable information in a democracy does not diminish.*⁷³

It was for this reason—to help fill the information void left by newspapers’ decline—that Knight introduced the News Challenge contest in 2006. “We were essentially trying to figure out how do you do what newspapers do for communities in a democracy, except instead of on paper do it digitally,” Ibargüen said. However, as the News Challenge contest developed, Knight staff began to wonder if they were unduly focused on the “means” of informed communities—on the troubled journalism craft—and instead should give more emphasis to understanding and promoting the “outcomes” of informed communities, with less regard to *how* those outcomes were achieved. As Ibargüen put it:

If you’re being agnostic about the form [i.e., digital delivery], shouldn’t you really *focus on the end result*? That is, stop trying to figure out how to fix current media and instead ask the question, “What does a community in a democracy need? What kind of information does it need in order to function well within a democracy? Where are we now, and what public policy can you support that will get us from where we are now to where we ought to be?”⁷⁴

The Knight Commission and its Emphasis on ‘Information’

This line of thinking, Ibargüen said, led to the formation of the Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy. In April 2008,

⁷³ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/news/speech_detail.dot?id=349212.

⁷⁴ Ibargüen, personal interview.

this high-level commission—including luminaries such as Google’s Marissa Mayer and former U.S. Solicitor General Theodore B. Olson (the co-chairs), as well as members such as John Carroll (former *Los Angeles Times* editor), Michael Powell (former FCC chairman), and danah boyd (noted digital media researcher)—was organized in conjunction with the Aspen Institute, which is led by former TIME managing editor and CNN chief Walter Isaacson. The commission’s charge: “Rather than on *media*, the Knight Commission would focus on *communities* in the places where people lived and work,” with the task of (1) articulating the information needs of a community in a democracy; (2) describing the state of affairs in the United States; and (3) proposing public policy directions as a result.⁷⁵ In October 2009, the Knight Commission produced a report (“Informing Communities: Sustaining Democracy in the Digital Age”) that it likened unto the work of great commissions past: Hutchins, Kerner, and Carnegie.⁷⁶ The Knight Commission’s major findings⁷⁷ included three “fundamental objectives”:

- **Maximizing the availability of relevant and credible *information to communities.*** The availability of relevant and credible information implies creation, distribution, and preservation. Information flow improves when people have not only direct access to information, but the benefit also of credible intermediaries to help discover, gather, compare, contextualize, and share information.
- **Strengthening the *capacity of individuals to engage with information.*** This includes the ability to communicate one’s information, creations and views to others. Attending to *capacity* means that people have access to the tools they need and opportunities to develop their skills to use those tools effectively as both producers and consumers of information.

⁷⁵ See http://www.knightcomm.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/Informing_Communities_Sustaining_Democracy_in_the_Digital_Age.pdf, p. 1.

⁷⁶ C.f., <http://www.niemanlab.org/2010/01/eric-newton-shame-on-us-if-we-dont-take-the-steps-needed-to-feed-knowledge-to-our-democracy/>.

⁷⁷ See <http://www.knightcomm.org/executive-summary/>.

- **Promoting individual *engagement* with information and the public life of the community.** Promoting engagement means generating opportunities and motivation for involvement. Citizens should have the capacity, both individually and in groups, to help shoulder responsibility for community self-governance. (bold and italics original)

This passage deserves some attention for what it signals about journalism’s role in Knight’s formulation of information, communities, and innovation. On the first point, “credible intermediaries” could be a clear reference to professional journalists—but that it’s *not*, explicitly, suggests that Knight (both the Commission and the Foundation) has a broader articulation of the *means* by which to gather, filter and share credible information, and that those means may not always include journalists in the traditional sense. While journalism does receive fairly substantial treatment in the full report, one observer was “struck by how little [the report] had to say about how professional journalists and mainstream news organizations fit into the future of civic media.”⁷⁸

Speaking the Language of ‘Information’

Contemporaneous to the Knight Commission, the foundation developed the Knight Community Information Challenge. A five-year, \$24 million contest, it is an almost mirror-image of the News Challenge except that the Information Challenge is a matching-grant program meant to help place-based foundations “find creative ways to use new media and technology to engage and inform citizens” — with no emphasis on journalism in any particular sense.⁷⁹ The Information Challenge is premised on the two-pronged belief that information is vital for democracy to function in communities, and that community-based foundations are best equipped to meet core local needs.

⁷⁸ See

http://www.knightdigitalmediacenter.org/leadership_blog/comments/20100208_if_news_orgs_journalists_would_provide_local_civic_news_who_elses/.

⁷⁹ See <http://www.informationneeds.org/community-information-challenge/faq-for-place-based-foundations>.

Altogether, between the Knight Commission and the Information Challenge and the Media Innovation Initiative broadly (see <http://www.knightfoundation.org/mii/>), the Knight Foundation has pivoted toward “information,” and away from “journalism,” as the focus of its innovation interest. This can be seen as more than merely a rhetorical shift, but indeed an actual structural change in refocusing the jurisdictional boundary markers (Abbott, 1988). As Ibargüen said:

The whole understanding of our quest being to inform communities in a democracy in an effective way, I think has *freed us* to consider a real range of project options that we almost certainly would never have done before.⁸⁰

The Knight Foundation, in effect, has been “freed” from the ideological constraints of operating within a field (journalism) that is struggling with a professional identity complex, facing perceptual and material threats, and therefore has gone into defense mode, becoming more insular (Witschge & Nygren, 2009) precisely at the time it needs to more fully engage outside interests. “Information,” by contrast, has no particular ideology, and therefore can be malleably shaped to suit a variety of circumstances—much as the term “platform” has been variously used to justify diverse forms and functions of digital media (Gillespie, 2010). By invoking “information” and “information needs,” the Knight Foundation has been able to communicate to and connect with a range of fields, foundations, and corporations in a way “that we almost certainly would never have done before.”⁸¹ Because “information” is an empty vessel, open to interpretation, it has enabled Knight to speak the language of other fields, even as it advances the interests of its own. Ibargüen said:

One of the lessons for me is that when I *used to talk about this as journalism*, I’d get the great glazing of the eyes, as people would say, “Get over yourself, you’re

⁸⁰ Ibargüen, personal interview.

⁸¹ Ibargüen, personal interview.

just not that important, you know!” And now I know to say, “OK, this matters, this is at the center of almost anything. *You tell me your subject, and I’ll tell you how information matters.*”⁸²

CONCLUSION

The Knight Foundation prides itself on a history of entrepreneurship and risk-taking courage, which it traces to the Knight brothers’ transformation of a small newspaper company in Akron, Ohio, into the nation’s largest newspaper chain. “The secret of the Knight papers is ideas, not dough,” Knight Newspapers editor Stuffy Walters once said. “We have no inhibitions. We’ll try anything.”⁸³ In that same spirit, the foundation has made *transformation* the watchword of its recent efforts, because “transformation is about systemic ideas that are scalable, have broad support from a network of peers and partners, and are driven by social innovators and entrepreneurs.”⁸⁴

Transformation can begin to describe what the foundation has sought to do both *with itself* and *to the field*. Based on my reading of a broad corpus of materials covering its developments since the late 1990s, I found that the foundation has sought to innovate itself and the journalism field, contemporaneously, by renegotiating the rhetorical and actual boundaries of journalism work. Culturally, the foundation downplayed the emphasis on journalism professionalism from its past to embrace a more de-institutional approach that was more oriented to outside influence—e.g., the wisdom of the crowd, participatory forms of journalism, and a broader set of assumptions about what constitutes journalism and how it might occur in communities. These rhetorical adaptations paralleled changes in the Knight funding process, most notably in the development of the Knight News Challenge, which challenged the traditional, top-down

⁸² Ibarra, personal interview.

⁸³ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/about_knight/transformation.dot.

⁸⁴ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/about_knight/transformation.dot.

grant-funding methods as well as traditional understandings of journalism. In more recent times, however, the Knight Foundation has undergone a further evolution in moving from “journalism” to “information.” By downplaying its rootedness in professional journalism and highlighting its boundary-spanning interest in promoting “information” for communities, Knight has been able to expand its capital and influence as an agent of change among fields and funders beyond the journalism field.

Perhaps the most important finding here is that, under the guidance of Alberto Ibarгүйen, the Knight Foundation has reframed the “problem” of journalism in the digital age, away from the notion of saving newspapers (and, by extension, the profession itself) and toward the challenge of finding new ways to accomplish journalism’s core function of meeting the information needs of a community. As a result, the foundation has backed away from its longstanding embrace of professional expertise—i.e., the news industry’s as well as its own—to acknowledge that the best solutions may come from the distributed crowd, operating outside the traditional boundaries of journalism. All of this, in turn, has led the foundation to give up control over some of its own funding processes, and at the same time give up control over maintaining the boundary work of journalism. This, in effect, serves to open up journalism, rhetorically and materially, in a way that makes a foreign object like “participation” not only palatable but even valuable to journalism in this innovated articulation.

Chapter 6: The Knight News Challenge

The purpose of this study is to explore how the Knight Foundation has negotiated the tension between professional control and open participation in journalism; to understand if and how that negotiation has been manifest in its signature innovation initiative, the Knight News Challenge; and to discuss the implications of Knight's innovation logic for the profession of journalism. In Chapter 5, I examined the first part of that puzzle: how the Knight Foundation made a strategic shift from "journalism" to "information," changing not just its rhetoric but also its actual funding priorities in relation to the journalism profession. While not abandoning its commitment to professional training and industry-oriented objectives, nevertheless the Knight Foundation has pivoted toward a wider audience in recent years, broadening its definition of *journalism* and its methods for seeking the normative aim of informed communities. Along the way, Knight has positioned itself as a boundary-spanning agent in the journalism field, drawing greater capital and influence at the intersection of technology, philanthropy, and social innovation. As discussed, a major part of this reinvention of the Knight Foundation was the establishment of the Knight News Challenge, which quickly has become "the most high-profile competition in the future-of-news space" (Benton, 2010).

The News Challenge, therefore, deserves greater attention so we can understand how the Knight Foundation's organizing logics for journalism have been manifest "downstream" in the foundation's funding activities that directly and explicitly seek to integrate questions of "news" and "innovation." This is particularly true for a contest that has become the face of Knight's efforts to innovate journalism. Because of the contest's importance to the foundation and its centrality in the overall innovation strategy, the

Knight News Challenge should reveal something about the underlying aims of the foundation. The News Challenge can be seen as the clearest and most public manifestation of what the foundation is attempting to accomplish with news, information, and innovation. Therefore, it's essential to understand the nature of contest applicants, finalists, and winners—in particular, the *content* of their proposal applications, because in that content we find embedded the aspirations and assumptions, tactics and theories of would-be innovators. This content, in turn, should reflect the general manner in which the Knight Foundation framed and promoted the competition. More importantly, the content of proposals that advanced in the competition—i.e., reached the finalist stage—*should be indicative of what Knight was looking for and hoping to fund in the first place.*

Thus, this chapter focuses on the content of Knight News Challenge application proposals generally and finalist/winner proposals especially. The goal is to place these findings about content in the context of what has been learned so far about the Knight Foundation's ambitions. The findings from the previous chapter's study of the foundation can be summarized as two concurrent and interconnected shifts: *from professional to participatory* and *from journalism to information*. In this chapter, I hope to examine how these changes in the Knight Foundation's rhetorical and structural approach to journalism were reflected in the content of News Challenge applications, because of what that would reveal about the foundation's influence in shaping the assumptions for how journalism innovation should navigate professional control and open participation.

This chapter addresses these issues using mixed methods. First, I conducted a secondary analysis of quantitative data that were derived from a media consulting firm's content analysis of News Challenge proposals. The purpose of this quantitative portion was to achieve greater *reliability*, or greater consistency and dependability of methods. I

hoped to leverage the power of metric data to provide a more reliable picture of the contest's applicants, descriptively, as well as to enable statistical tests that would assess how particular criteria were predictive⁸⁵ of one's application becoming a finalist or winner—something that would have been impossible with qualitative analyses alone. Secondly, and as a supplement to the quantitative analysis, I conducted a textual analysis of winning proposals to see how the patterns that emerged from the former analysis were evident in the latter. For instance, while it would be helpful to know if applications focused on participatory forms of news had a greater likelihood of advancing in the contest, that alone would tell us rather little about the nature of those participatory features. In my close reading of proposals submitted by eventual winners, I looked for general themes and cues that would allow me to understand how winners articulated their aims for journalism—in particular, their approach to issues of professional control vs. open participation. The purpose of the qualitative portion, therefore, was to pursue greater *validity*, or credibility and accuracy. By combining both methods, I hoped to set forth a more consistent (reliable) and meaningful (valid) representation of the Knight News Challenge as a whole and its winners in particular, in pursuit of the following research questions:

RQ2a. Based on a quantitative analysis of proposals, what are the distinguishing features of applicants, finalists, and winners of the Knight News Challenge, and how are they predictive of one's proposal advancing in the contest?

RQ2b. In particular, to what extent do participatory media features predict advancing in the contest?

RQ3. Based on a qualitative analysis of winning proposals, how do winners of the Knight News Challenge negotiate issues of professional control and open participation?

⁸⁵ As noted previously in Chapter 3, my use of the terms “predict” and “predictive” does not suggest any kind of causal association. Rather, this usage merely reflects the standard language of regression models.

METHODS OF THE QUANTITATIVE SECONDARY ANALYSIS

Data

This first set of quantitative analyses draws on data gathered by Latitude Inc., a Massachusetts-based consulting firm that does statistical data analysis for a number of media-related clients including AOL, Scripps, Sports Illustrated, Yahoo! News, and Time Inc., among others.⁸⁶ In 2009, the Knight Foundation contracted with Latitude to conduct a content analysis of the proposal applications it had received for the first three years of the Knight News Challenge—the 2007, 2008, and 2009 contest cycles. The coding was completed in September 2009. In all, Latitude coders analyzed 5,172 application documents: 243 for Year 1; 2,699 for Year 2; and 2,230 for Year 3. This represented a census of applications from Years 2 and 3 (2008 and 2009), but only included some finalists ($n = 221$) and not even all of the winners ($n = 22$) from Year 1 (2007). Including this Year 1 data ($n = 243$) in my data set would have skewed the results of my analysis, because it would not have allowed for an apples-to-apples comparison—for example, of Year 1 finalists/winners vs. Year 1 losers. Therefore, for purposes of validity, my analyses focused exclusively on data from the second and third years of the contest (2008 and 2009); despite this loss of Year 1 data, the resulting sample ($N = 4,929$) still constituted more than 95% of the original data.

During the content analysis conducted by Latitude, approximately 10% of the entries (or 500 applications) were randomly selected and re-coded by a second coder. Reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa, a standard measure for inter-coder reliability. This statistic is generally considered more conservative than other methods, such as percent of agreement, because it does not give credit for chance agreement. An

⁸⁶ See <http://www.latd.com/>.

average of the Cohen's kappa value for all variables yielded a .56 reliability, which is moderate intercoder reliability and therefore acceptable, particularly in an exploratory context such as this where the variables can be difficult to pin down.

The Knight Foundation gave me access to the final data set in March 2010, and my analyses were conducted shortly thereafter. To reiterate: The original data set was coded by Latitude researchers, and my analyses rely on their coding setup and output.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is the proposal application to the Knight News Challenge. Applicants to the contest are asked to complete an online form that poses basic questions about their project, its purpose, and its proposed execution. There is limited space for reply, keeping each proposal to less than 1,000 words.⁸⁷ Applicants are asked to name their proposed project and detail specifics such as their requested amount of funding from the News Challenge, the total project cost including all funding sources, and the anticipated amount of time to complete the project. Thereafter, applicants respond to a set of open-ended questions, such as these drawn from the 2009 application:

- “Describe your project”
- “How will your project improve the way news and information are delivered to geographic communities?”
- “How is your idea innovative? (new or different from what already exists)”
- “What experience do you or your organization have to successfully develop this project?”
- “What unmet need does your proposal answer?”

⁸⁷ Because of the space constraints posed by the short-answer question format of the application, News Challenge applicants may submit additional supporting material, such as a figure or diagram, but there is no indication that such were coded by Latitude.

- “What will you have changed by the end of your project?”

Because the proposal document was the unit of analysis, Latitude coders were asked to conduct their evaluation “holistically based on the full submission,” according to the coding instructions.⁸⁸ However, these instructions indicated that these questions “may help direct attention to appropriate sections of the application.” For example, in assessing the background of an applicant, coders might pay particular attention to the section bracketed by the question, “What experience do you or your organization have to successfully develop this project?” Nevertheless, on every variable coders were asked to consider “all open-ended questions.”

Coding and Variables

The dependent variable was categorical, and referred to how far a submission went in the contest: whether it was an Applicant only (89%), a Finalist (11%), or a Winner (less than 1%). The coding scheme included 32 variables, most (but not all) of which were pertinent for this study.⁸⁹ After becoming thoroughly familiar with the data set, I chose those variables that seemed most relevant for this analysis. The vast majority of these variables were already coded as categorical data, but I recoded where needed to achieve a consistent set where 1 = *yes* and 0 = *no* across all variables. I will review the major variable clusters, in order as they appear later in Tables 2 and 3.

Background

There were three key variables related to one’s background:

⁸⁸ For a review of the complete codebook for the original content analysis, see Appendix D.

⁸⁹ For example, some variables had limited usefulness because they pertained only to a single contest year, as in the case of the question about commercial vs. non-commercial applications.

- First, coders were asked to assess whether an applicant was made by (1) an organization or (2) an individual.

- Secondly, coders classified the kind of organization or individual who had applied. For individual type, the options were: (1) journalist, (2) social activist, (3) artist, (4) IT/software developer, (5) architect, (6) innovator, (7) researcher, (8) educator, (9) executive/manager, and (10) other. For organization type: (1) newspaper, (2) media organization, (3) journalism school, (4) non-profit, (5) local community organization, (6) research foundation, (7) university, (8) communication organization, and (9) other.

Knowing these distinctions was useful in developing a basis for understanding the kind of people or organizations submitting to the News Challenge. But, because I was primarily interested in assessing if one had a “professional media” kind of background, I combined the “individual journalist,” “newspaper” and “media organization” categories to create a new variable that would reflect any applicant who met either of those criteria (i.e., *Media Background* = 1, all others = 0).

Thirdly, coders classified whether a project was focused on the United States (1) or elsewhere (0).

Features related to contest criteria

I was interested in assessing the extent to which criteria spelled out by the Knight News Challenge—namely: digital, open-source, innovative, local community, democratic engagement, and replicable⁹⁰—were manifest in those applications that advanced.

⁹⁰ For details, refer to Chapter 2, or see <http://www.newschallenge.org/content/frequently-asked-questions#projects>.

- First, Latitude classified applications according to the platforms they intended to use (coders selected all that applied): (1) Web, (2) mobile, (3) print, (4) TV, (5) radio, and (6) human. The first two were included to represent the *digital* criterion.

- Second, the *open-source* criterion was not directly measured in this data set, but the “software development” category (“Does this product involve the development of software? Yes or no”) was the best available approximation, given the synonymy of “open source” and some kind of software creation or modification.

- Third, *innovation* was measured through the codebook question, “To what degree does this project involve creating something entirely new or combining existing elements,” on a 3-point scale where 1 = invention (“creating an entirely new product”) and 3 = innovation (“taking products that exist and combining them in new ways, for new audiences, or for new purposes”). I recoded such that a “heavy” emphasis on innovation = 1 and the other two responses = 0.⁹¹

- Fourth, the *local* criterion was assessed by classifying how applicants conceived of “geographic communities,” whether as: (1) large city areas; (2) cities; (3) greater metropolitan areas; (4) state; (5) country region (e.g., New England); and (6) nation. Because of Knight’s historical and contemporary emphasis on “community” in the smaller, metro-like sense (e.g., the “Knight communities”), I recoded this variable such that a more narrow conception (neighborhood, city, or metro) of geographic community = 1 and the others = 0.

- Fifth, the *democratic engagement* criterion was measured via the question, “Does this project directly improve individuals’ engagement with local democracy and/or increase individuals’ input in their local community?” on a 3-point scale of “not at all,”

⁹¹ It is worth noting again that the primary reason for reducing this and other variables to a 1-0 scale was for overall consistency with the rest of the data set, which mainly was categorical (*yes* and *no*).

“a little bit,” and “a lot (focus of the project).” I recoded this variable such that “a lot” became “high community engagement” and = 1 and other responses = 0.

- Sixth, the *replicable* criterion was assessed through the question, “Is this project able to be replicated in *other* local communities? (must be directly addressed in submission).” Those projects that explicitly addressed “scalability” were coded as 1 and others as 0.

Participatory features of the submission

I was interested in assessing the potential for user participation in these proposed projects, but found that only two variables addressed this directly. *User Manipulation* refers to those projects that offered at least “some” or “a lot” in response to the query, “How much are users of this product/service able to manipulate/modify it?” *Crowdsourcing* refers to projects classified as “yes” on the question, “Does this product/service feature crowdsourcing?” The codebook went on to clarify the definition of this concept:

Crowdsourcing is the term for outsourcing a task to an undefined, generally large group of people or community in the form of an open call. For example, the public may be invited to develop a new technology, carry out a design task, refine or carry out the steps of an algorithm, or help capture, systematize, or analyze large amounts of data. (Appendix D)

Additional clusters of variables

For *Category*, coders could select all possible categories that might describe a project’s focus: Journalism, Politics, Social Networking, Technology, and Entertainment. Some additional categories appeared in the original coding (e.g., Health/Medicine and Environment) but were deemed less relevant for this analysis.

For *Type of Problem Addressed*, coders were asked to select all that applied when considering “What type of problem or unmet need does this submission address?”: (1) Information flow/access; (2) Community cohesiveness; (3) Information accuracy/credibility; (4) Organization of information; (5) Economic/financial.

For *Nature of the Proposed Solution*, coders were asked to select all that applied in categorizing the proposed project as: (1) Aggregation of information; (2) Transparency of information; (3) Accuracy/credibility of information; (4) Connectivity among data or data sets; (5) Connectivity among people (individuals and/or organizations); (6) Increase in information platforms.

For the *Nature of the Information Being Shared*, coders were asked to select all that applied in judging if the project’s information would be shared: (1) One-to-many; (2) One-to-one; (3) Many-to-one; (4) Many-to-many.

Finally, for the *Recency of the Information*, coders were asked to select all that applied regarding the “timeliness” of a given proposal’s approach to information: (1) Time-critical; (2) Recent but not time-critical; (3) Long-term and/or historical.

Data Analysis

Because the data were at the nominal level of measurement (1 and 0), I used a series of cross-tabulations and logistic regression to assess the impact of these variables on the criterion of advancement in the contest.

RESULTS OF THE QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Sample Profile

Before proceeding with the research questions, this chapter presents a descriptive snapshot of the sample as a whole. As Table 1 shows, in the 2008 and 2009 contest

cycles, the median applicant was 39, requested \$272,000 in funding, estimated her total project costs at \$350,000, and expected to take two years from start to finish.⁹²

Organizations accounted for just over half (53.6%) of all applications, and the broad category of “media organization” was used to describe 20.9% of all applicants—the largest such classification. While applications classified separately as organizations or individuals, coders could “check all that apply” when assessing what *type* of organization or individual a given application appeared to represent. Therefore, an entity described as a “media organization” may also have been classified as a “local community organization” or “research foundation.” Furthermore, because the coding scheme did not include explicit reference to TV and radio news outlets, these also would have fallen under the “media organization” label.

Perhaps the most interesting finding from this profile is that newspapers, by and large, ignored the Knight News Challenge, accounting for only 2.4% of all applicants. And this was in 2008 and 2009, at a time when the News Challenge had generated considerable publicity in the trade press after its debut class of 2007 winners. Even if we include the number of individual journalists (13.4%) applying, that still adds up to less than 16% of all those who applied.

With regard to the degree of media background possessed by these applicants, the variables “media organization,” “newspaper,” and “individual journalist” represent a combined total of 35.8% of all applicants. In other words, the majority of News Challenge applicants were *not* media professionals in this sense; they were educators, entrepreneurs, local activists, and software developers, or others—but, tellingly, they were from fields other than the media industry.

⁹² The median statistic was used here because of the misleading means associated with the two “money” variables—amount requested and estimated total cost—on account of serious skewness in the variables.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Profiling the Nature of Knight News Challenge Applicants Overall ($N = 4,929$) in the Contest Years 2008 and 2009

	%	Mean	SD	Median
Age of the applicant (where identifiable) [n = 4,380]		39.2	11.8	38
Amount requested for project [n = 4,715]		\$1,890,000	\$7,490,000	\$272,000
Estimated total cost of the project [n = 4,646]		\$1,500,000	\$2,310,000	\$350,000
Estimated time to complete project (years) [n = 4,443]		1.76	.96	2.0
Organization as the applicant	53.6			
Media Organization	20.9			
Non-Profit	9.3			
Local Community Organization	9.0			
Communication Organization	7.9			
University	5.3			
Journalism School	3.9			
Newspaper	2.4			
Research Foundation	2.0			
Other	9.0			
Individual as the applicant	46.4			
Software/IT	13.6			
Journalist	13.4			
Social Activist	6.9			
Innovator	6.3			
Educator	4.8			
Executive/Manager	4.4			
Researcher	3.0			
Artist	1.4			
Architect	0.1			
Other	14.2			

Notes: Unless specified, $N = 4,929$. Percentages may not add to 100% because coders could choose “all that apply” in deciding what *type* of organization or individual a given application represented; e.g., an applicant could be coded both as a “media organization” and a “newspaper.” Percentages are out of *all* applicants (e.g., 13.4% of all applicants, individuals and organizations, were “individual journalists.”

Distinguishing Features

RQ2a. Based on a quantitative analysis of proposals, what are the distinguishing features of applicants, finalists, and winners of the Knight News Challenge, and how are they predictive of one's proposal advancing in the contest?

To compare the breakdown of variables across the categories of applicant, finalist, and winner, I conducted a series of cross-tabulations to test for consistency in expected cell frequencies (see Table 2). At the outset, it should be noted that these findings must be understood in context, beginning with the vast size differences among the populations in these categories: Applicant (n = 4,369), Finalist (n = 535) and Winner (n = 25). These differences are so great, particularly given the very small size of the Winner pool, that I would not expect *always* to find neatly linear, stair-stepping increases or decreases from Applicant to Finalist to Winner—even if such trends might suggest something about the assessment of Knight judges. Of the comparisons, those between Applicant and Finalist are the most meaningful, because of the large population sizes for both categories and because of the idiosyncratic nature of a group as small as the 25 winners. Ultimately, these cross-tabulations primarily serve to highlight how certain features were represented among these different groups, descriptively; the logistic regression to come will add a more theoretical and predictive element to this process.

With that caveat, I would like to highlight some cross-tabulation findings of particular importance for gaining a picture of the News Challenge.

First, regarding *Background*: The chi-square tests suggest that being an organization ($\chi^2 = 18.41, p < .001$) and having a media background ($\chi^2 = 14.99, p < .01$) were associated with advancing past the Applicant stage. I will consider other variable categories in turn:

Table 2: Cross-tabulation of Applicants (n = 4,369) vs. Finalists (n = 535) vs. Winners (n = 25) of the Knight News Challenge in 2008 and 2009

	Highest Level Reached			Significance Test	
	Applicant (%)	Finalist (%)	Winner (%)	χ^2	Sig.
Proposal Characteristics (% yes)	89	11	1		
Background of Applicant					
Organization	53	60	84	18.41	***
Media Background	35	42	56	14.99	**
Based in the United States	67	71	76	4.70	ns
Features Related to the Contest Criteria					
Web as a platform for use [†]	92	96	84	10.21	*
Mobile as a platform for use [†]	16	22	32	17.52	***
Software development	20	26	40	15.40	***
Innovation (rather than invention)	32	41	88	52.58	***
Local definition of “community”	58	66	64	11.88	*
High community engagement	44	53	48	13.27	**
Scalability (i.e., replication is explicitly stated)	34	43	60	24.99	***
Participatory Features of the Submission					
User manipulation	62	74	88	38.30	***
Crowdsourcing	36	48	60	33.17	***
Category					
Journalism	46	65	76	77.35	***
Politics [†]	9	12	12	6.07	*
Social Networking	45	51	44	7.11	*
Technology	24	32	32	15.64	***
Entertainment [†]	14	12	12	1.04	ns
Type of Problem Addressed					
Information flow/access [†]	82	92	100	41.87	***

Community cohesiveness	59	67	64	13.63	**
Information accuracy/credibility	46	48	24	5.66	ns
Organization of information	57	61	72	5.74	ns
Economic/financial [†]	14	9	32	18.67	***
Nature of the Proposed Solution					
Aggregation of information [†]	88	95	92	23.83	***
Transparency of information	58	69	20	47.77	***
Accuracy/credibility of information	41	44	16	8.02	*
Connects data or datasets	30	39	80	47.47	***
Connects people	74	75	84	1.54	ns
Increases platforms of information	53	64	64	25.74	***
Nature of the Information Being Shared					
One-to-many [†]	97	98	100	2.69	ns
One-to-one	55	50	36	8.27	*
Many-to-one	43	51	8	24.57	***
Many-to-many	65	74	48	19.12	***
Recency of the Information					
Time-critical	29	42	52	41.71	***
Recent but not time-critical	79	79	52	11.02	**
Long-term and/or historical	54	47	80	17.79	***

Notes: $N = 4,929$. Cell entries for applicant, finalist and winner are percentages, which have been rounded. df for each variable = 2. χ^2 cell entries represent the chi-square statistic. [†] denotes variables that each had one cell with an expected frequency of less than 5, and therefore should be interpreted with caution. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Features Related to the Contest Criteria: There is an increase—from Applicant to Finalist to Winner—in the proportion of proposals that included mobile as a platform for use ($\chi^2 = 17.52$, $p < .001$), proposed developing software ($\chi^2 = 15.40$, $p < .001$), approached innovation as recombination rather than invention ($\chi^2 = 52.58$, $p < .001$), and explicitly described how they might be “scaled up” elsewhere ($\chi^2 = 24.99$, $p < .001$). On the software development variable especially, the jump from finalist (41%) to winner (88%) was rather dramatic. Meanwhile, the differences on using the Web as a platform, having a “local” definition of community, and pursuing high community engagement also were significant, and their proportions increased from Applicant to Finalist. Thus, as would be expected, all of the contest criteria were better represented among proposals that advanced beyond the initial stage.

Participatory Features of the Submission: Projects that afforded user manipulation ($\chi^2 = 38.30$, $p < .001$) and crowdsourcing ($\chi^2 = 33.17$, $p < .001$) were increasingly better represented as one moves up from Applicant to Winner, suggesting that such features were preferred by the judges—to the point that nearly 9 out of 10 winners offered some form of user manipulation.

Category: Projects classified as Journalism ($\chi^2 = 77.35$, $p < .001$) made up three-fourths (76%) of the winners—significantly more than the relative percentages for applicants (46%) and finalists (65%). The other categories, even when statistically significant, seemed rather inconclusive, with the possible exception of Technology ($\chi^2 = 15.64$, $p < .001$), which showed significant differences between applicant (24%) and finalist/winner (32%) levels.

Type of Problem Addressed: A focus on information flow and access ($\chi^2 = 41.87$, $p < .001$) was manifest among 100% of winners, significantly more than among applicants (82%). The other findings in this grouping were less clear or non-significant.

Nature of the Proposed Solution: The most stark difference in this grouping was the proportion of projects with a data-oriented solution ($\chi^2 = 47.47$, $p < .001$), which accounted for less than a third of applicants (30%) but grew to make up 80% of the winners. Other findings here were more muddled and uneven. Projects focused on aggregation of information ($\chi^2 = 23.83$, $p < .001$), transparency of information ($\chi^2 = 47.77$, $p < .001$), accuracy/credibility of information ($\chi^2 = 8.02$, $p < .05$), and increased platforms of information ($\chi^2 = 25.74$, $p < .001$) saw increases from Applicant to Finalist—which, as mentioned, is a more meaningful comparison than that of Applicant vs. Winner.

Nature of the Information Being Shared: The one-to-many approach to distributing information was evident in nearly all proposals (including 100% of winners), whereas those projects focused on delivering information *to the individual* (i.e., one-to-one and many-to-one) were far less represented. A many-to-many information-sharing approach, perhaps the one most associated with social and participatory forms of media, increased from Applicant (65%) to Finalist (74%) but was less apparent among Winners (48%). What is striking about this finding is that more than more than two-thirds of all applicants to the News Challenge (and even half of all winners) take a many-to-many approach to handling information, suggesting ample space for user participation.

Recency of the Information: Finally, only the time-critical classification ($\chi^2 = 41.71$, $p < .001$) was more represented among applications that advanced, suggesting that,

in the main, projects that focused on time-sensitive information—e.g., news—were preferred by judges.

Overall, it is interesting to note that on nearly every statistically significant variable, there was a proportional increase from Applicant to Finalist. This indicates that proposals that advanced beyond the initial round generally included more of the content features that the Knight Foundation was hoping to “find” (and thus measure in this content analysis), as would be expected. Moreover, it is instructive to take stock of the flip side—the content features that were *less* represented in moving from Applicant to Finalist: Entertainment as the project category; Economic/financial as the problem addressed; One-to-one in the nature of information flow; and Long-term and/or historical information. Taken together, these contrast with the Knight Foundation’s intent to facilitate civic news and information (not entertainment), do it in a nonprofit fashion (and therefore with less emphasis on the business model “problem”), reach as many people as possible (not merely the individual), and focus on news (as opposed to historical data).

Likewise, it’s important to note those content features that were overwhelmingly represented (e.g., 85% or higher) among the winning proposals: innovation (as opposed to invention), user participation, information flow and access, aggregation of information, and a one-to-many approach. Each of these factors is in sync with the rhetoric of the foundation, including its emerging focus on *information* and *participation*, as discussed in the previous chapter.

In sum, these findings set forth a descriptive portrayal of the distinguishing features of the Knight News Challenge’s applicants, finalists, and winners, and the relationship between advancement and certain factors. Nevertheless, these cross-tabulations treat each of the variables in isolation, without taking into account the

potential influence of other variables that might explain away these relationships. In short, to move beyond this and test the predictive influence of these proposal features, a regression was the necessary next step.

Predictive Factors

Based on these cross-tabulation findings and earlier depictions of the contest (see Chapter 2), I would argue that the variability of the Knight News Challenge judging process and the small number of winners analyzed ($n = 25$) together make it difficult to identify the precise factors that might explain ultimate success in the contest. A better and more meaningful measure would simply be to assess how certain factors contributed to a proposal's *advancement* in the contest—i.e., from Applicant to Finalist or Winner. Because less than 12% of all applications made it beyond the initial application stage, this process of advancing was a discriminating one, and thus should reveal something important about those factors that Knight considered most important in selecting its finalists and winners.

The data were recoded to distinguish Applicants ($n = 4,369$) from Advancers ($n = 560$). Because the data were nominal, a binary logistic regression was performed to predict applicants' likelihood of advancing, based on the extent to which certain features were manifest in their proposal. The outcome variable *advancement* was 1 = finalist or winner and 0 = did not advance. A test of the full model (see Table 3) was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 347.122$, $p < .001$), and 88.6% of the cases were correctly classified. Table 3 summarizes the unstandardized B coefficients, the standard error, the Wald statistics, and the estimated change in odds of advancement (with a 95% confidence interval). The explained variance (Nagelkerke's $R^2 = .13$) is adequate.

Table 3: Predicting the Likelihood that a Submission Advanced Beyond the Application Stage, Based on Features Identified via Content Analysis

	B	(S.E.)	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Background of Applicant					
Organization	.274	.098	7.844	**	1.315
Media Background	.125	.099	1.587	ns	1.133
Based in the United States	.162	.105	2.379	ns	1.176
Features Related to the Contest Criteria					
Web as a platform for use	-.050	.220	.052	ns	.951
Mobile as a platform for use	.282	.119	5.600	*	1.326
Software development	.419	.117	12.910	***	1.521
Innovation (rather than invention)	.469	.106	19.575	***	1.599
Local definition of “community”	.320	.101	10.112	**	1.378
High community engagement	.084	.107	.613	ns	1.088
Scalability (i.e., replication is explicitly stated)	.219	.100	4.783	ns	1.245
Participatory Features					
User manipulation	.380	.117	10.542	**	1.463
Crowdsourcing	.390	.104	13.941	***	1.477
Category					
Journalism	.543	.107	25.934	***	1.722
Politics	.206	.149	1.908	ns	1.229
Social Networking	.138	.110	1.579	ns	1.148
Technology	.445	.110	16.221	***	1.560
Entertainment	-.181	.146	1.539	ns	.834
Type of Problem Addressed					
Information flow/access	.686	.179	14.643	***	1.985
Community cohesiveness	.272	.117	5.390	*	1.312
Information accuracy/credibility	-.045	.111	.162	ns	.956

Organization of information	-.172	.108	2.517	ns	.842
Economic/financial	-.575	.159	13.159	***	.563
Nature of the Proposed Solution					
Aggregation of information	.332	.212	2.447	ns	1.394
Transparency of information	.418	.114	13.467	***	1.519
Accuracy/credibility of information	-.109	.115	.897	ns	.897
Connects data or datasets	.373	.105	12.629	***	1.453
Connects people	-.255	.129	3.888	*	.775
Increases platforms of information	.115	.111	1.074	ns	1.122
Nature of the Information Being Shared					
One-to-many	.269	.349	.595	ns	1.309
One-to-one	-.492	.113	18.858	***	.611
Many-to-one	-.099	.114	.761	ns	.906
Many-to-many	-.059	.122	.232	ns	.943
Recency of the Information					
Time-critical	.288	.111	6.776	**	1.334
Recent but not time-critical	-.216	.130	2.762	ns	.806
Long-term and/or historical	-.368	.110	11.314	**	.692
Constant	-4.670	.474	96.934	***	.009

Notes: Entries are the result of a binary logistic regression that included all variables in a single model. Cell entries are B coefficients (unstandardized), standard error, Wald χ^2 , significance, and odds ratio. All variables coded as 1 for *yes* and 0 for *no*. Dependent variable: advancing in the contest. Of all applicants (N = 4,929), 560 (11%) advanced as finalists or winners and 4,369 (89%) did not. Correctly classified: 88.6%. *df* for each variable = 1. Model statistics: $\chi^2 = 347.122$, $p < .001$. Nagelkerke's $R^2 = .134$. Odds ratio > 1 = advancing in contest is more likely. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

A general review of Table 3 shows that the number of statistically significant variables drops substantially, relative to the number in Table 2, when each variable's influence is assessed in relation to others, everything else held constant. For example, the statistical significance of having a media background that was evident earlier goes away in this model, as does the significance of two contest-criteria factors, community engagement and scalability (see Table 2).

Because all the variables were loaded in a single block, the logistic regression makes apparent the unique contribution of each factor, and therefore allows the reader to identify the major predictors of advancement, based on the Wald statistics. To provide a simpler picture of the most salient predictors of advancement in the News Challenge, the most meaningful variables (i.e., those with a Wald statistic of 10 or higher) are listed in Table 4; they are sorted by odds ratios, depending on their positive or negative predictive impact on a proposal's likelihood of advancing in the contest, controlling for all other variables.

Table 4: A Summary of Key Predictors of a Knight News Challenge Application Advancing Beyond the Initial Stage, Sorted by Odds Ratios

	B	(S.E.)	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Positive Predictors					
Information flow/access	.690	.180	14.640	***	1.985
Journalism	.540	.110	25.930	***	1.722
Innovation (rather than invention)	.470	.110	19.580	***	1.599
Technology	.450	.110	16.220	***	1.560
Software development	.420	.120	12.910	***	1.521
Transparency of information	.420	.110	13.470	***	1.519
Crowdsourcing	.390	.100	13.940	***	1.477
User manipulation	.380	.120	10.540	**	1.463
Connects data or datasets	.370	.110	12.630	***	1.453
Local definition of “community”	.320	.100	10.110	**	1.378
Negative Predictors					
Economic/financial	-.580	.160	13.160	***	.563
One-to-one	-.490	.110	18.860	***	.611
Long-term and/or historical	-.370	.110	11.310	**	.692

Notes. These variables are extracted from the previous logistic regression model (see Table 3 notes for details). The higher the odds ratio above 1.0, the greater impact of that variable in increasing the likelihood of a given application’s advancement in the Knight News Challenge, controlling for all other variables in the model (see Table 3). By contrast, the lower the odds ratio below 1.0, the greater the effect of that variable in reducing the odds of advancing in the contest, controlling for all other variables in the model.

From Table 4, we find that Information Flow/Access and Journalism appear to stand apart in having the greatest effect in predicting an applicant’s success in the News

Challenge. When controlling for all other variables in the model, the odds of advancing increased by 99% if a proposal sought to address problems related to the free flow of and access to information, and increased by 72% if a proposal could be categorized as a form of journalism. These two variables could be thought of as a “news and information” grouping. Among the remaining positive predictors, there are five—Innovation, Technology, Software Development, Transparency of Information, and Connects Data or Data Sets—that could be thought of as a “technology” grouping, because the words *innovation* and *transparency* have become almost synonymous with digital media initiatives today. Each of these predictors increased the odds of advancing by roughly 50%. Two other predictors, Crowdsourcing and User Manipulation, could be classified as the “participation” pairing, because of their emphasis on putting some degree of control in the hands of the crowd; these factors increased the odds of advancement by 48% and 45%, respectively. Finally, the positive predictor Local Definition of “Community” can be thought to suit the News Challenge’s interest in projects being rooted in a locale to serve a geographically relevant population—in this case, the more *narrowly* that a proposal defines “local,” the better for advancing in the competition.

The negative predictors listed in Table 4 point to key content features that were associated with *not* advancing in the contest. The odds of advancement were reduced by 44% if the proposal sought to address an economic/financial problem, by 39% if a proposal intended to facilitate one-to-one information flow, and by 31% if a proposal took long-term or historical information as its focus—again, when all other variables in the model are being controlled. Considered together, these three variables are interesting for how they differ from the News Challenge’s emphasis on (1) the “problem” of information flow and access (rather than economic/financial concerns); (2) the need to

have *many*—in the community, in the crowd—engaged in civic information (rather than one-to-one communication); and (3) current news (rather than history).

RQ2b. In particular, to what extent do participatory media features predict advancing in the contest?

In this logistic regression model, the participatory-related features of User Manipulation (Wald = 10.54, $p < .01$, $\text{Exp}(B) = 1.46$) and Crowdsourcing (Wald = 13.94, $p < .001$, $\text{Exp}(B)=1.48$) both positively predicted advancing in the Knight News Challenge. In other words, when all other things are held constant, proposals that included features designed for end-user participation were nearly 1½ times as likely to advance in the contest. This suggests that an emphasis on participation, in addition to other factors noted above, is more often than not a discriminating factor in being chosen to advance in the News Challenge competition.

Bridging the Sections

Overall, a number of variables contributed significantly to one's likelihood of advancing in the Knight News Challenge during the 2008 and 2009 contest cycles. Most prominent among these were factors that focused on *news and information, technology, participation, and a hyperlocal definition of community*. Each of these themes works to reinforce the manner in which the Knight Foundation has framed innovation generally and the News Challenge contest particularly. The two most predictive individual variables, Information Flow/Access and Journalism, speak to the dual emphasis that Knight has placed on journalism (historically) and information (more recently). And the News Challenge was marketed as a news *and* information contest, reflecting the *both/and* nature of Knight's interest both in doing journalism and in opening space for all kinds of civic information—including that produced by citizens—to flourish and flow, under the

assumption that more is certainly better than less information in the public sphere. Furthermore, Knight increasingly has become interested in the issue of “information access,” making the digital divide and related concerns a central component of its strategies, most prominently so in the Knight Commission report that urged the federal government to make national broadband internet the digital equivalent of the public good achieved by the interstate highway system.⁹³ Furthermore, the *technology* cluster of variables not only fits with the contest’s digital criterion, but also suggests a kind of technological determinism that is apparent in Knight’s embrace of technology as a driver of innovation (see Chapter 8 for a more expanded discussion of this point). Finally, it’s significant to consider the presence of the participatory variables among the strongest predictors of advancement. While the other major predictors (*news and information*, *technology*, and *hyperlocal*) are closely related to the contest’s criteria, and therefore should be expected to figure strongly into the judging process, there was no imperative that Knight News Challenge applicants make user participation part of their projects. Nevertheless, the data indicate that participatory elements like Crowdsourcing and User Manipulation were in fact strongly associated with being selected as a finalist or winner, all other things being equal. This underscores Knight’s turn toward faith in the collective and its interest in promoting user participation in journalism as a normative goal.

The challenge is to more closely identify the nature of this proposed participation that was evident in the content of News Challenge applicants. This is especially true considering the limitations of the logistic regression model; with its Nagelkerke’s R^2 of 13.4%, there is substantial variance being explained by other factors—among these, perhaps, are other variables associated with participation. Qualitative research can

⁹³ For more on this issue, see examples such as this press release: http://www.knightfoundation.org/news/press_room/knight_press_releases/detail.dot?id=357218.

address this gap by affording a more holistic assessment of content and its context. The next section of this chapter takes up this task with a close reading of key proposal documents—in this case, those submitted by eventual winners of the Knight News Challenge. I did this in answer to RQ3:

RQ3. Based on a qualitative analysis of winning proposals, how do winners of the Knight News Challenge negotiate issues of professional control and open participation?

METHODS OF THE QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Data

This portion of the chapter is based on a textual analysis of the original proposals made by *winners* of the Knight News Challenge.⁹⁴ As noted above, proposals are structured according to a set of questions posed by the News Challenge. In addition to answering the basic questions described previously (e.g., “Describe your project”; “How is your idea innovative?”; “What unmet need does your proposal answer?” and so forth), the approximately 12% of applicants who advanced to the finalist stage were asked to complete a lengthier document that included those same questions again but with more space in which to reply, as well as additional questions such as⁹⁵:

- “What tasks/benchmarks need to be accomplished to develop your project and by when will you complete them?”
- “What potentially bigger thing might happen if everything went perfectly and the stars all aligned?”

⁹⁴ A textual analysis of a larger set of proposals, such as those representing all the finalists, was neither possible nor feasible within the scope of this dissertation, in part because of the difficulty in obtaining the proposals from the winners.

⁹⁵ The ordering and phrasing of questions such as these has changed in each year of the contest, but the core ideas presented here remain the same: Grantees who reach the finalist stage are expected to assess critically why their project is needed, specifically how it would be carried out, and to what potential effect.

- “How will you measure progress and ultimately success?”
- “Do you see any risk in the development of your project?”
- “Are you working with anyone else to complete this project? If so, please give the names and what they do.”
- “What do you guarantee will happen if you complete the activities in this proposal?”

These finalist-stage proposals were about twice as long as the initial applications that were the focus of the content analysis described above. A typical finalist proposal would run approximately 2,000 words (or 8 double-spaced pages) in length. Depending on the year and the preferences of the applicant, these proposals were public or private: e.g., in the 2009 contest cycle all applications had to be posted openly on the News Challenge website, whereas the year before applicants could choose to keep their idea secret. As a result, my access to these proposal documents was not entirely complete. The Knight Foundation was able to supply me with the proposals representing all nine of the 2009 winners, but could only provide about half of the 16 for 2008 winners. Furthermore, because of an apparent filing error at Knight headquarters, all of the 26 proposals for 2007 winners had been lost. Over the course of three months, I worked to fill this gap by contacting dozens of News Challenge winners, often via multiple e-mail requests, asking that they send me a copy of their proposals from their own electronic archives. In all, I obtained all but two of the 2008-09 winners’ proposals and about two-thirds for the class of 2007, giving me 45 proposal documents for analysis—representing nearly 90% of all Knight News Challenge winners. (Further details on all News Challenge winners may be found in Appendix A.)

Analysis

With these 45 proposal documents, I conducted a textual analysis using the Atlas.ti qualitative coding software.⁹⁶ In reading the proposals, I paid particular attention to passages that dealt with how applicants would associate with audiences and other “external” parties, and the extent to which the innovations would regulate control over content. My purpose in this analysis was to assess how these winners negotiated issues of professional control and open participation. I looked for target words and catchphrases that would illustrate, whether manifestly or latently, if and how the applicant (a) perceived the professional-participatory tension and (b) intended to act in relation to that tension. Operationally, terms like “citizen media,” “citizen journalism,” “engagement,” “participation,” “user-generated content,” “community-generated,” and so on might call up notions of participatory media-making; meanwhile, words like “accuracy,” “credibility,” “ethics,” “professional,” and so forth might signal some reference to the need for and application of professional control.

The importance for studying these proposals lies in the fact that they won. Just as the content in News Challenge proposals, across all applications generally, reveals something about how the contest was promoted and positioned by the Knight Foundation, the content of *winning* proposals should speak even more strongly to the underlying aims and ambitions of the foundation. The applicants who won passed through a vetting process that included interviews with News Challenge staff, in addition to rounds of revision to their innovation plans, and so the final product should be reflective not only of their own thinking, but indeed of the foundation’s, too. This is important in light of the professional-participatory tension, for how these winning innovators planned to deal with

⁹⁶ For a thorough discussion of the purpose for and use of computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), see Lewins and Silver (2007).

issues of professional control and open participation should indicate something about the Knight Foundation's own ideal calibration of the professional-participatory question in journalism.

RESULTS OF THE QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Overview

Descriptively, these proposals differed in the types of innovations proposed—e.g., wikis, virtual-reality games, news sites, software, reporting tools, etc.—and in the complexity and cost associated with their development. Some asked for millions of dollars, while most asked for far less—with one winner requesting just \$5,000 (although he was awarded thrice that amount). Some proposed to build elaborate software systems, while others focused on the simplest of cellphone features for the developing world. Some had point-by-point business plans and ambitious revenue targets, while other applicants acknowledged the experimental (even vague) nature of their project and the likelihood that it might fail—yet they emphasized that failure could lead to important learning, for them and others. At the same time, however, there were similarities that appeared across virtually all the proposals. They were united in their effusive optimism for journalism in the digital age, and in their slightly inflated expectations for what they might accomplish (encouraged by the “if the stars all aligned” question).

In relation to RQ3, there was a striking degree of sameness in the way these proposals discussed the roles that professional journalists and amateur audiences would have to play in their projects. While it's true that some projects did not address the professional-participatory nexus by virtue of their topical focus,⁹⁷ nearly all proposals

⁹⁷ There were several projects that, as proposed, would have little to no contact with “citizens,” such as in the case of the 2009 winner CMS Upload Utility, a \$15,000 plan to help smaller newspapers develop a “Web first” workflow through an easy-to-use desktop application. But, even in this case, there was an

touched on opportunities for collaboration and engagement with audiences. Analyzing those particular passages, I found that, in the main, winners articulated participation in three ways: (1) They embraced the notion of citizens participating in the news process, as a given; (2) they envisioned a symbiotic relationship between professional journalists and citizen collaborators; and (3) they saw that giving up control over content not only could be good for audience engagement, but indeed could be *good for journalism*. That is, it could improve journalism by using citizen participation to complement professional work as a whole compensate for the gaps in its coverage that have been made apparent in a digital media environment where a networked crowd can accomplish activities not possible by professionals alone. Each of these three facets deserves attention.

Citizen Participation as a Given

Virtually all winning proposals, whether focused on news or some other kind of information, seemed to take it as a normative baseline that citizens should have an enlarged part to play in the process, and indeed that communities would be enhanced to the extent that everyday people were more engaged in public discourse. Among the proposals, there were differences in degree, with regard to how much control over information would be placed in the hands of distributed end-users, but there were stronger similarities in kind. The vast majority of winners intended to build something—mobile tools, websites, interactive games, wikis, community hubs, blogs, and so forth—with the overriding goal of empowering ordinary people, particularly those in

emphasis on end-user innovation and iterative development as the result of participation on the part of software users (newspaper journalists).

marginalized corners, to have a more active and public voice. Such sentiments were common.⁹⁸

Our ultimate goal is to allow every Deaf person to gain *greater involvement* as citizens through both viewing and *participating* in the creation of the news. (Signcasts)

We are committed to using Freedom Fone as a tool to build *inclusive, participatory, engaged* communities. (Freedom Fone)

If all the stars align, dozens of these [citizen media] sites will be created and take off in a way that helps reinvigorate the kind of civic engagement, community activism and citizen discourse *too often missing* from contemporary culture. (Community Media Toolset)

It will be an open virtual project that will be based on participation. It will be a knowledge community: its members will enrich, educate each other by sharing their experience, impressions and information they acquire about the city they live in. ... This project will be truly democratic...

This normative emphasis on citizen participation often was portrayed as a corrective to the lack of diversity in media representation (including present iterations of citizen media). Moreover, winners pitched their projects as the missing link that would bridge problems of inadequate access and training among disadvantaged groups.

Blogs and citizen media have helped give voice to millions of individuals around the world. While this movement is helping to turn journalism “from a lecture into a conversation,” most of the participants in this new conversation are wealthy, well-educated and from developed nations. Global Voices was founded to amplify voices coming from the developing world. We’ve discovered that most people writing online from the developing world are also comparatively privileged. Our contributors are concerned that blogs currently represent only a segment of their nations, *not the entire diverse spectrum of citizen perspectives*. Our project will identify, support and disseminate the best strategies for bringing citizen media to a wider audience. (Rising Voices)

⁹⁸ These and other direct quotes that follow in this chapter were derived from the grant proposals, which are in my possession. Where a project title does not appear after the quote, it reflects that the proposal author asked not to be identified.

The user-driven new media revolution is changing the way communities engage and communicate, increasing the *diversity of the dialogue* that is the media. A major setback of this change is that the most disadvantaged communities continue to be left out. Without access to cameras, computers, education and high-speed internet, many communities cannot participate in the new media dialogue. (Tools for Public Access TV)

Why do we want to get our media onto mainstream television? Isn't it enough to stimulate local community action-taking in the myriad villages and slums where we work? *We fundamentally believe that **who produces the news is as important as what the news says**. We believe the best people to tell the world about issues like globalization's impact on the poor, living with HIV/AIDS, gender equity and human rights are the people who live those experiences, not fly-by-night outsiders with cameras or blogging software.* (Video Volunteers; bold in original)

With their concern for enlarging the pool of media participants, these winners referred less to an atomized “audience” presumed to be passive in the traditional sense, but instead expressed a certain reverence for “the citizen” —the symbolic embodiment of ordinary individuals who are active and ready to contribute, if only given the right tools.

At Ushahidi we're trying to rethink the way information is aggregated during a crisis, and how it can help in disaster recovery. So much thought, time and technology has been put into place for organizations to use, but so little has been done to *tap into the experiences of those directly affected by the problem: the citizen.* (Ushahidi)

A Symbiosis of Professionals and Amateurs

What's striking in this articulation of citizen-as-contributor is that, across all the proposals, there was little to no mention of the professional-participatory tension referred to in RQ3 and throughout this dissertation. There was little concern that citizen participation might pose some kind of threat to the authority, autonomy, and control of professional journalists. Perhaps this was because, in a number of cases, these winning innovators themselves had little if any background in journalism, and so they did not identify with its occupational ideology. Additionally, it's true that not all of the News Challenge winners intended to “produce journalism,” in any traditional sense of that

phrase⁹⁹; thus, we should not expect their references to citizen participation to be made in the context of professional journalists—or journalism at all. Nevertheless, even when winners discussed participation in light of professional journalists, the construction was complementary rather than competitive, highlighting *both/and* inclusiveness rather than *either/or* exclusivity. The overriding sense was that professional judgment and distributed participation could co-exist in a symbiotic whole: that the work of professionals and the contributions of amateurs could be mutually inclusive, reciprocal and beneficial in a networked environment.

The unique opportunity of VillageSoup’s approach is that it creates new revenue tools that take advantage of a new media instead of simply transferring old media tools to a new media. This is accomplished without sacrificing space for excellent journalism *and* public participation. As importantly, The Soup [as it is commonly known] has created an operational culture that integrates the newspaper model with the IT [information technology] model while inviting the community to *participate as an equal member*. (VillageSoup)

This was notion of symbiosis was particularly evident in the proposal for Smart Mobs for Local Beat Reporters, pitched by NYU journalism professor Jay Rosen.¹⁰⁰ His idea: to take one beat reporter for a local newspaper and develop around that reporter a “smart mob” (or social network) of potential sources who are knowledgeable, diverse, and well-positioned to offer expertise, particularly of the kind that the reporter might not already have from the usual sources he calls on from time to time. “The basic formula I want to develop is reporter + smart mob = richer coverage.” This enriched network would be different from a typical reporter’s Rolodex in that the sources would connect and collaborate with each other, horizontally, as well as up to the newspaper vertically:

⁹⁹ In Chapter 7, I analyze the class of winners who *did* intend to start news organizations/platforms, so as to assess how those innovators negotiated the professional-participatory tension in the context of journalistic practice.

¹⁰⁰ As shown in Appendix A, Rosen was named a 2007 winner but not given the full funding to implement his idea. Instead, he and a half-dozen others were given \$15,000 each to blog about their ideas.

In my scheme the sources would join a network because they have an interest in better news coverage from the beat reporter and they like to inform themselves. *They would participate in an ongoing forum where they engage with each other.* They would furnish tips, leads, suggestions, facts, feedback and guidance to the beat reporter. They would help inform, steer and refine the work that is published.

Such participation suggests that sources wouldn't merely offer the occasional quote for the reporter's story, but instead would become dynamic nodes in an intelligence network that would serve both the reporter and each other as mutual stakeholders in the news coverage. The underlying value in such a system would be the collation of distributed knowledge in a way unimaginable without digital technologies.

Every beat reporter in America who wants to do a better job could use the methods and forms we develop because the advantages will be obvious: more eyes, more ears, more intelligent ideas flowing in, better feedback, and greater accuracy, fewer missed stories.

Thus, in this idealized system of professional journalists and citizens in collaboration, the goal is to provide both parties with the right mix of incentives, training, and tools to achieve a synergistic whole that is greater than the sum of its parts, serving core societal functions of truth-telling and democratic engagement. By implication, however, this convergence of professionals and amateurs suggests that professionals yield some of their exclusive claim to "special class" to make space for amateur input, as MIT's Center for Future Civic Media proposal argued:

We want to empower citizen journalists by giving them the tools and training they need to do their work and, at the same time, offer professional journalists new models for how they might better serve their local constituencies. The result may be to develop a communications system that reflects the diversity of contemporary American towns and cities, one that promotes democracy and encourages shared experiences amongst all residents of a local area. As we do so, we have an opportunity to transform our understanding of the Fourth Estate from one focused on *special, professional classes of people* who have the skills and resources to investigate powerful institutions, to a Fifth Estate where *everyone* is

able to pool their knowledge, share their experience and expertise, and speak truth to power.

This utopian notion of a Fifth Estate (i.e., citizen media) should not indicate that winners on the whole had lost faith in the Fourth. On the contrary, a number of proposals emphasized the “credibility” afforded by professional reporters, and in one case emphasized that citizen journalists would be trained “so that they are competent in genre, format, ethical and other issues” (The News is Coming). Credibility, competence, and ethics point to a need for standards and protocols that ensure accuracy and accountability in a world where anyone can publish. In proposing a set of “basic journalism standards,” Sir Timothy Berners-Lee, creator of the World Wide Web and a 2008 News Challenge winner, argued that a Creative Commons-like licensing structure¹⁰¹ would help restore faith in news content by making the activities and sourcing of online content creation more transparent.

In 2006 the world generated 161 billion gigabytes of digital information. That is equivalent to 3 million times the information in all the books ever written. By 2010 we will be creating 6 times as much again. 70% of this, it is predicted, will be user generated. How can anyone be expected to navigate through this forest of information? How can people distinguish between accurate, useful information and inaccurate mis- or disinformation?

However, Berners-Lee’s Transparency Journalism project does not propose a top-down apparatus of professional control; rather, it is “independent, non-commercial, democratic, non-judgmental and ‘bottom up,’” offering a series of clear statements that people may answer to vouch for the authenticity of their creative work online. Putting this control in the hands of users “fosters the culture of openness and transparency that has characterized the best of the web.”

¹⁰¹ For details on Creative Commons licensing, see <http://creativecommons.org/>.

Thus, a symbiotic relationship between professionals and citizens can be thought of as a hybrid melding of (a) opportunities for engagement and peer production in a more networked relationship and (b) ethical ideals and best practices set forth by professionals but monitored in a distributed and transparent fashion.

Benefits to Giving Up Some Control

This reflection on *control* brings me to the third manner in which News Challenge winners articulated the negotiation of professional control and open participation. From their perspective as media producers, they appeared to believe that yielding some level of control over content both incentivized audience engagement and actually improved the output of news and information. On the first point, the Daily Phoenix’s proposal noted:

One of our service’s core features will be a “garage” where Daily Phoenix users can suggest (and help perfect) new functions [for this mobile/online news service connected to the light rail]. We will continue to roll these out. This also addresses [another] risk, which is audience loyalty. By encouraging and fostering collaboration on future Daily Phoenix features and functions, we will give users a stake in the project. This creates a “pride of ownership” factor that will increase their “switching costs” if another service comes along.

On the second point, winners indicated that yielding a certain degree of control could improve journalism’s reach and quality by enabling citizen participation to fill in the gaps of professional coverage—gaps that are a result of the downsizing of legacy news organizations as well the impracticalities of having mass-media professionals report on intensely niche communities and topics. For example, the New York news site Gotham Gazette proposed a wiki that would allow users to help keep track of city contracts, city council earmarks, and other watchdog-oriented information.

We could not realistically devote reporting time to every council member, race or earmark, but by creating a single structure that encourages our readers and other citizens of New York to add their own knowledge, we can create a *much more comprehensive resource*.

In this view, yielding control is a function of acknowledging weaknesses: recognizing what a professionalized news system cannot accomplish on its own, and opening the gates of content creation, manipulation, and distribution to make up for those shortcomings. The Spot Journalism (now Spot.Us) proposal is a good example of this. In his pitch for crowd-funded freelance reporting, David Cohn argues that regular journalists should do what they *uniquely* do best—investigate powerful institutions—and leave to the distributed crowd the work of choosing which stories are worth investigating through the micropayment donations they make. The result is a potential win-win for audiences seeking solid reporting and news organizations struggling to finance investigative journalism, made possible by user engagement: “readers will have a direct hand in what should be investigated and newspapers will have access to republish that content.” In a similar manner, greater citizen participation was seen as a way of solving the “gathering” problem of journalism—that is, the inability of the mainstream press to give sufficient attention to a topic of niche concern, not to mention the scarcity of eyewitness journalists in comparison to the large number of citizens affected by crises.

During a crisis situation, the mainstream press does not have a big enough footprint to report all incidents and/or needs in a given area. In addition, there is rarely a centralized point for reporting and searching for data about a particular situation—Ushahidi can help *fill this gap* by gathering reports from citizen journalists, governments, concerned outsiders and local organizations and presenting it at a central point. (Ushahidi)

Finally, the logic of distributed control assumes that end-users, as a whole, might have better ideas than the original creators—a notion that challenges the professional worldview. For instance, the DocumentCloud project, a partnership of ProPublica and the *New York Times* that was awarded more than \$700,000 in 2009, proposed setting up a website for the gathering and annotating of source documents used in investigative

reporting. The proposal included plans for releasing an application programming interface (API) that would allow third-party software developers to build applications around the data provided by DocumentCloud. “As with all API-based news products,” the applicants wrote, “it will be *the things people create with it that we can’t predict* that will be among the most exciting outcomes of DocumentCloud.” This emphasis on end-user innovation underscores the extent to which winners saw opportunities for improvement in giving up a degree of (editorial) control.

Conclusion

In summary, this qualitative analysis of winning Knight News Challenge proposals found that innovators negotiated issues of professional control and open participation in three ways: (1) embracing the idea of citizen participation in the news process as an overriding purpose and a taken-for-granted assumption; (2) envisioning a symbiotic relationship between professional journalists and citizen collaborators; and (3) acknowledging that giving up some level of professional control could result in improved forms of news and information, compensating for gaps in professional coverage that have become more apparent in a digital media environment. These qualitative findings amplify our understanding of *participation*, which otherwise was reduced to the variables Crowdsourcing and User Manipulation in the quantitative analysis. The secondary data analysis identified that giving some level of control to the crowd and trusting in its wisdom was associated with advancing in the News Challenge, but this follow-up textual analysis goes a step further in revealing the normative ethos that undergirds these references to participation. These innovators appear to have intended to engage in participatory journalism mainly because they thought *that is how journalism should be*. This conclusion should not suggest that an emphasis on participatory journalism was the

primary reason these proposals won; nevertheless, this evidence points to the extent of approval that such notions received in the Knight Foundation's judging. In short: the foundation shared some of these sentiments about the intersection of citizen and professional.

Overall, these findings reinforce what I found in Chapter 5: that the Knight Foundation, in reframing journalism as “information,” has broadened the rhetorical boundaries to encourage greater citizen participation in the news process. This normative emphasis on participation was evident in the way the foundation established and promoted the Knight News Challenge, and here in Chapter 6 it has been reflected in the nature of the proposals chosen as finalists and winners. If Chapter 5 represented a macro-level view (Knight Foundation) and Chapter 6 a meso-level view (Knight News Challenge), then Chapter 7 presents a more micro-level analysis of select News Challenge winners who intended to start news organizations. My aim is to assess how this negotiation of professional and participatory logics of newswork—described in larger contexts already—has played out in the perceptions and practices of news innovators doing journalism at present.

Chapter 7: News Innovators and the Ethic of Participation

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how the Knight Foundation has negotiated the tension between professional control and open participation in journalism; to understand if and how that negotiation has been manifest in its signature innovation initiative, the Knight News Challenge; and to discuss the implications of Knight's innovation logic for the profession of journalism. In Chapter 6, I described and analyzed the Knight News Challenge through a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, finding (a) that elements of participation (*viz.*, crowdsourcing and user manipulation) were associated with advancing in the contest, and (b) that, in their grant proposals, winners embraced the idea of citizen participation as a symbiotic complement to professional work. While it provided a general overview of the News Challenge and its winners, Chapter 6 was limited to analyzing initial texts. It could not capture a more focused picture of the winners *after* the point of applying. The purpose of this chapter is to address that problem with a focused investigation of News Challenge winners to explore their perceptions and practices, and to assess how such reflect the organizing logics of journalism innovation articulated by the Knight Foundation.

I conducted depth interviews with 13 winners who were selected because they met a particular criterion: They had proposed creating a news organization, or a related platform through which news would be gathered, filtered, and/or disseminated. By contrast, most News Challenge winners were funded to build something *other than* a news organization: They set up interactive games, academic centers, or blogs, or in some cases received money to build technological tools that would facilitate the work of existing professional news outlets—but not the *creation* of new journalistic output or

potential news institutions as such. This element of “journalistic output” deserves particular attention, as I hoped to speak with winners who directly had to wrestle with the professional tensions and practical challenges of control vs. participation in doing contemporary journalism (c.f., Lewis et al., 2010). In addition to looking for grantees who intended a news organization-like entity, I sought a degree of diversity within the group—a balanced representation of the three contest years, of U.S. and international grantees,¹⁰² and of the primary modes (e.g., professional or participatory) for doing journalism. Admittedly, the conceptual boundaries I have outlined here, of “news organization” and professional-participatory “diversity,” may be up for debate; nevertheless, my selection process represented a good-faith effort to identify a certain class of winning projects that intended to produce various forms of journalism in a variety of contexts.¹⁰³ Because of this journalism orientation and the innovative nature of the News Challenge contest, I classify the individuals running these projects as “news innovators”—and will refer to them as such throughout this chapter.¹⁰⁴ Information about these 13 news innovators may be found in Table 5.

¹⁰² This was particularly important given that, as the quantitative analysis in Chapter 6 demonstrated, there was no statistically significant advantage in being a U.S. applicant. Therefore, including a range of international voices was important for this portion of the project.

¹⁰³ Other (more minor) factors contributed to the selection process of this purposive sample. For example, Scott Rosenberg was selected not because his project, MediaBugs, intends to produce original journalism so much as it is positioned as a mediator between professional journalists and their audience, in an ombudsman-like fashion, helping the two sides reconcile errors (or “bugs”) in media coverage. Even more, however, Rosenberg was chosen because, as a founding editor of Salon.com, he is one of the most notable journalists to win a Knight News Challenge award. At the same time, he is also one of the most familiar with the software development and blogging communities, and therefore can speak as a field-spanning expert.

¹⁰⁴ To be clear, such labeling of “news innovator” is used for simplicity of reference, and should not imply that actors operating outside the Knight News Challenge framework would not “qualify” for a similar kind of designation.

Table 5: Profile of Knight News Challenge Winners Interviewed for this Chapter

Year	Project	Amount	Interviewee	Location	Background	Project summary
2007	Open-Source Community News	\$885,000	Richard Anderson	Bar Harbor, ME	Entrepreneur; newspaper publisher	To create an open-source version of VillageSoup’s community news software, combining professional journalism, blogs, citizen journalism, online advertising and “reverse publishing” from online to print.
2007	Rising Voices	\$244,000	David Sasaki	Cambridge, MA	Web developer; educator in Latin America	To build on the work of Global Voices by introducing thousands of new developing-world bloggers to the world, helping students, journalists, activists and people from rural areas to the blogosphere.
2007	Media Mobilizing Project	\$150,000	Todd Wolfson	Philadelphia, PA	Indymedia activist; anthropology Ph.D.	To develop online newscasts for Philadelphia’s immigrant community and to distribute them via the new citywide wireless platform.
2007	Boulder Carbon Tax Tracker	\$90,000	Amy Gahrn	Boulder, CO	Media consultant and environment journalist	To create a citizen/professional journalism project using innovative Web tools and citizen journalism practices to track the implementation of a carbon tax in Boulder, Colorado.
2008	Freedom Fone	\$876,000	Brenda Burrell	Harare, Zimbabwe	Social justice activist in Zimbabwe	To provide a voice database where users can access news and public-interest information via land, mobile or Internet phones, in a concept similar to a “telephone tree.”

2008	The News is Coming	\$630,400	Harry Dugmore	Grahamstown, South Africa	Professor of journalism/media	To facilitate local news reports, produced by professionals and citizens and disseminated through cell phones, so as to help connect an all-black township in South Africa with the white population living in the urban center—giving everyone in Grahamstown equal access to news and information.
2008	Sochi Olympics Project	\$600,000	Alexander Zolotarev	Russia	Magazine editor and travel writer	To build a website and database where the people of Sochi, Russia, can report on and discuss the impact of hosting the 2014 Winter Olympics.
2008	Spot.Us	\$340,000	David Cohn	San Francisco, CA	Blogger and freelance journalist	To facilitate “community-powered reporting” by building a platform through which the public can commission and participate with journalists to do reporting on important and perhaps overlooked topics.
2008	Video Volunteers	\$275,000	Jessica Mayberry	India	TV journalist in U.S.; activist in India	To train 100 people in rural India as community video producers—citizen journalists who will produce magazine-style video news reports, typically on local social issues, and show them on widescreen projectors in poor communities.
2009	MediaBugs	\$335,000	Scott Rosenberg	Berkeley, CA	Author, journalist, and co-founder of Salon.com	To promote transparency and provide recognition for those who admit and fix their mistakes through the creation of a public test website, based in the San Francisco Bay Area, that will allow people to report errors in any news report, offline or online.

2009	Councilpedia	\$250,000	Gail Robinson	New York City	Journalist	To expand the New York City Council coverage of Gotham Gazette through a wiki, open to the public, that's devoted to making transparent the campaign contributions and voting records of local legislators.
2009	The Daily Phoenix (now CityCircles)	\$95,000	Adam Klawonn	Phoenix, AZ	Journalist	To use print, web and mobile technology to reach commuters on a new light-rail system in Phoenix, Arizona—offering news and information, games, social networking features and promotions on a stop-by-stop basis so that riders can interact with the city on a more meaningful level.
2009	Crowdsourcing Crisis Information	\$70,000	Ory Okolloh	Johannesburg, South Africa	Lawyer, activist, and blogger	To build an open-source system of online mapping and timelines that journalists and citizens can use to contribute multiple reports during crises and other major events.

Notes. Project summaries are adapted, either in whole or in part, from the Knight News Challenge website (see <http://www.newschallenge.org/winners>). “Background” refers to a grantee’s primary activities before receiving the News Challenge funding. In certain cases, the interviewees had a co-applicant with whom they won the grant; in other cases, the interviewees were not the ones who personally won the News Challenge award, but nevertheless were selected to be interviewed because they ran (or still run) the day-to-day operations of the funded project. Moreover, all of these interviewees are considered “winners” in that they are included among the contributors to the Knight News Challenge’s Idea Lab blog (see <http://www.pbs.org/idealab/>). For more information on the backgrounds and bios of these individuals, see <http://www.pbs.org/idealab/author-bios.html>.

The purpose of these interviews was to understand how news innovators think about and act upon the conflicting tension of professional journalistic control on the one hand and participatory forms of distributed control, on the other, that are better suited to the cultural milieu of digitization. How news innovators perceive this tension—i.e., whether it exists at all, and to what degree—is dependent in part on the professional culture in which they operated previously. Not all of these News Challenge winners interviewed here were journalists originally. Nevertheless, by virtue of engaging in journalism, of entering this professional space, these innovators must navigate, at least perceptually, the challenging issues of control vs. participation.

In earlier chapters, I have described these opposing beliefs as the *professional logic* and *participatory logic*. Of critical concern for this study is how these logics are being negotiated in the context of news innovation, as exemplified in the transformation of the Knight Foundation and its News Challenge contest. Previously, I have explained how the foundation, long associated with the core of the profession, has made a strategic shift to broaden its definition of and approach to journalism. It has moved from a professional logic toward one that is more hybrid in nature, embracing the end-user participation that has become a hallmark of Knight's most recent and prominent news-related efforts. This chapter seeks to assess how this negotiation has been manifest in the approaches taken by news innovators, via the following research question:

RQ4. In their perceptions and practices, how do news innovators negotiate issues of professional control and open participation?

INTERVIEW METHOD

The interviews analyzed here were conducted by phone (via the Skype software) in February-March 2010. Roughly 20 winners of the Knight News Challenge fit the

parameters described above: namely, that they proposed to set up a news organization or platform that would be engaged in facilitating journalism creation. Each was contacted with an e-mail invitation asking them to take part in a interview (see Appendix C); as needed, a series of follow-up e-mails were sent. Although some grantees did not respond to my inquiries, virtually all of those who did agreed to be interviewed, giving me a total of 13 respondents (see Table 5). The interviews ranged in length from 25 minutes to more than an hour, with an average length of about 40 minutes.

In some research contexts, an interviewer may know very little about a respondent's background before the interview. In this case, however, these news innovators have left quite a "digital trail" to follow: Most have been blogging for years, or otherwise left a host of writings and videos in various parts of the web. Before the interviews, I familiarized myself with the grantees' work in general, but in particular with their writings for the Idea Lab (see <http://www.pbs.org/idealab>), which describes itself as a "group blog by innovators who are reinventing community news for the Digital Age." The writers for the blog are Knight News Challenge winners, and their posts often reflect much of their philosophy toward journalism, in addition to describing how that philosophy has been put into action through their projects. This gave me crucial insight regarding winners' perceptions and practices as I went to conduct these interviews.

Questions were prepared in advance, but the interviews themselves were loosely structured to allow for flexibility and exploration. Broadly speaking, news innovators were asked to describe how they define journalism and its principles; how they perceive citizen/participatory forms of journalism, and the role of the audience generally; and how they visualize their project and its challenges/opportunities in light of innovation and change in journalism today (see the complete interview protocol in Appendix B). Each

interview was recorded and transcribed in full, and the resulting texts—roughly 200 pages' worth of interview data—were analyzed using the Atlas.ti qualitative data analysis software. I looked for key passages and phrases that would illuminate how these news innovators were thinking and acting in the course of their News Challenge work, in relation to professional control and open participation. The professional logic and participatory logic described previously could not be operationalized and measured here in any systematic fashion; nevertheless, I was able to read for textual cues that would speak to elements of journalism professionalism and its occupational ideology of control, or alternatively of the participatory openness associated with digital culture.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Overview

The purpose of these interviews was to assess how select news innovators negotiated the tension between control and participation, both in their perceptions and the actual practices of their projects. Two brief observations should be made in this regard. First, the 13 winners interviewed were at different stages of completion on their projects: By the time of my interviews, the 2007 grantees generally had finished their projects and either moved on or found new sources of funding, while some of the 2009 winners I interviewed were only just taking their websites into beta testing. Because of these differences in level of completion, it was difficult to compare these projects on their *practices* relative to control vs. participation; therefore, I will give more attention in this Results section to the *perceptions* they articulated, even while offering examples of practice to put those perceptions in context.

Secondly, as I describe and analyze these innovators' perceptions, I will focus on outlining general trends and themes that emerged from my analysis of the interview data.

However, at the start I acknowledge that not all of the respondents' perceptions were in lockstep unanimity—nor did I expect to find such. For example, while all of the news innovators interviewed supported participatory forms of journalism, there were some variations in how they thought such participation ought to be achieved, or in the level of participation that should be afforded. Some news innovators were simply more “traditional” in their articulations of journalism norms than others, given their ongoing or recent employment in the news industry. Some news innovators, because of their experience in “future of journalism” conferences and discussion circles, had well-polished responses to questions that asked them to reflect on journalism norms—while others struggled at times to articulate their normative bases. Nevertheless, the findings I outline below represent my best-faith effort to aggregate and analyze how these news innovators, as a collective body, framed their perceptions and practices.

With that caveat, my major findings can be summarized as follows:

Finding 1: News innovators see journalism less as a proprietary profession to be protected and more as an open-source practice to be shared.

Finding 2: By resolving the professional-participatory tension, news innovators can “pull apart” journalism to preserve its best principles while discarding outmoded practices.

Finding 3: In addition to preserving certain practices, news innovators identify *participation* as a new normative ethic, as reflected in patterns of perception and practice that focus on public engagement: *viz.*, collective intelligence and community management.

Finding 4: In practice, however, internal and external challenges have made it difficult for news innovators to realize these goals, raising questions about long-run sustainability.

From Profession to Practice

Finding 1: News innovators see journalism less as a proprietary profession to be protected and more as an open-source practice to be shared.

This study began on the premise that the professional and participatory logics of media work are essentially at odds with each other: that the occupational ideology of journalism contrasts with the material and cultural contexts of digitization in such a way as to create an inherent (and seemingly irreconcilable) tension over control. However, in the minds of news innovators interviewed here, this professional-vs.-participatory conflict generally was rendered unproblematic. That is the first and perhaps most important finding of this chapter. It is not to say that they saw no potential for tension; indeed, they acknowledged that for some in the news industry this issue remains a cultural flashpoint. Nonetheless, when articulating their *own* constructions of the issue, news innovators spoke of the ease of and rationale for the integration of professional and participatory forms of journalism—not of the conflict or controversy such mixing might entail. Rather, they talked of “gifted amateurs” (Dugmore) working with professionals to form a “profitable cooperation” of hybrid activity (Zolotarev).

If news innovators had de-problematized the professional-participatory tension, it was in large part because of the way they constructed the profession itself. Whether explicitly or implicitly, many of them defined journalism as a *practice* rather than as a *profession*. This perspective was more explicitly manifest among a handful of news innovators, particularly Amy Gahrn, David Cohn, and Scott Rosenberg, who are closely

connected socially (they all live in the San Francisco Bay Area) and who are prominent in the “future of journalism” discussion that occurs at conferences and online via blogs and social media.¹⁰⁵ While a bit more subtly, this construction of journalism-as-practice nevertheless also represented the perspective of news innovators as a whole. In this logic, journalism should be considered more as an activity in which many can participate than an occupation to which a select few belong. Therefore, journalism need not be kept guarded and sacred as a “priesthood” (Gahran), but could (and should) be shared widely among professionals and amateurs alike. As Rosenberg described it:

We are, I think, a little too ready to use this phrase “being a journalist” as if journalism is a state of being. We should try to get into the habit of talking about *doing* journalism. *Journalism is an activity*. ... [B]ecause of the news tools that people have, a lot more people can do journalism today than they could before, and that’s good. Does it introduce new problems, new questions about trust, technique, and economic questions and all these things? Sure, of course. And some of them are troubling questions. But, overall, we’re living in a time when more people can *do* journalism than ever before, and I’m certainly happy about that.¹⁰⁶

When journalism becomes an “activity,” it loses its occupational exclusivity, and therefore the ideology of gatekeeping control around which it has been oriented historically (Deuze, 2005b). This decoupling from the ideology of journalism, in turn, renders unproblematic any challenge to professional control precisely because it obviates any reason to feel professionally threatened by amateur intrusion.

In sum, news innovators found little problem with the merging of professional and amateur activity in the news process, in large part because they saw little need for

¹⁰⁵ To use just one example of their prominence: Within a week’s time in late April 2010, Cohn and Rosenberg appeared on invited panels at separate high-level journalism conferences to discuss the nature of participatory journalism. Additionally, Gahran and Cohn served as Knight News Challenge judges in years after they won, increasing the likelihood that their perceptions reflect and have helped to shape the News Challenge’s philosophy as a whole.

¹⁰⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all of the italics within quotations represent my emphasis added.

distinguishing and discriminating along the lines of “professional” and “amateur” labels to begin with. Conceptual boundaries of professionalization, they argued, matter less than what people actually *do* with the tools of the press, now that these tools have become so fully available to the public at large.

[Journalism] is a practice. It is not a fine art and it is not a priesthood. ... It has evolved over the last 100 years or so through the culture of mainstream news organizations to be a priesthood that specializes in fine art. [laughs] I don't think that is particularly useful. Ultimately, journalism is the practice of gathering and sharing information and insight that helps people understand their world and make decisions about their lives and their communities. And that is not rocket science. And there is a reason why journalists are not licensed, at least in this country. That is because *journalists are doing what anybody is supposed to be able to do, and, in fact, what anybody can do, and, I think, should do.* (Gahrn)

In this view, the difference between professional journalism and so-called citizen journalism is more a difference of degree than of kind.

The way I define [journalism] is it is a process ... hence the title of my blog: “Journalism is a process, not a product.” It is a process of three steps, and it is collecting information, filtering information, and distributing information. ... A caveat is that the information is true and honest. And then, basically, you put in the [Society of Professional Journalists] Code of Ethics—minimize harm, it was accurate, and all that stuff. But that is what journalism is: the collection, filtering, and distribution of information, and that information is true. And, you know, *that can be done by a “journalist.” It can be done by anybody.* The distribution can happen anywhere. Filtering can be a lot of filtering or very little filtering. And the reporting, the gathering of information, can be done in all kinds of different ways. That is sort of my mental framework when talking about journalism and figuring out exactly what it means. (Cohn)

While Gahrn and Cohn both have training and experience as journalists, the news innovators I interviewed, like the News Challenge winners overall, come from a diversity of professional backgrounds: many from journalism, but a sizeable number from law, business, NGOs, education, and elsewhere. Therefore, we shouldn't expect them all to have incorporated and professionally identified with the kind of journalistic

occupational ideology described by Deuze (2005b), with its norms of public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics—all bundled within an overarching emphasis on gatekeeping control over information. Nevertheless, even for those “outsiders” who first encountered the journalistic field through the Knight News Challenge, the professional verities of accuracy, fairness, and independence remained salient markers around which to orient proper journalism. As Ory Okolloh, a lawyer by trade, put it:

Journalism implies that there are standards. And I do think *I associate journalism with standards* and a certain verifying of sources, doing some background research, etc. Whereas, I see what people call citizen journalism mainly as citizen storytelling, *vox populi*, whatever you want to call it.

Similar distinctions were made by Richard Anderson, an entrepreneur who feels as though he backed into journalism by becoming a newspaper publisher after finding success in the education services business previously: “[Journalism] has to do exactly what it continues to do. I’m very proud of our newspaper and the way that we hold our reporters to being reliable, timely, accurate and fair. ... *You don’t have to change journalism. That remains the same.* You [just] have some new tools available to you.”

Thus, news innovators, regardless of background, appreciated journalism for its normative role in society and recognized the value provided by professionals covering public issues with consistency and conscientiousness. In essence, no one was arguing that bloggers or citizens would somehow “replace” traditional journalists, as some professionals have wrongly feared (Cooper, 2008; see examples cited in Rosen, 2008a; Singer, 2007). Yet, in part because some of these news innovators *did not* come from an institutional journalism background, they were not “bound” by some of its conventional wisdom—particularly its underlying ideology of information control. For example, these

news innovators from the outside found less crucial the professional norms of gatekeeping and agenda-setting; they could be happy simply being role players in the community's discussion, as opposed to ones expected to control its shape magisterially. Unburdened by the occupational ideology of control, which was inhibiting innovation, these news innovators were "freed up" to envision new ways of making journalism, as a *practice*, more *open* through the use of *tools*. Each of those three elements—practice, open, and tools—deserves some attention, because they illuminate the process through which news innovators rendered unproblematic tensions of professional control and open participation.

Practice

As described above, journalism-as-practice implies that the process of creating, filtering, and sharing news/information should be an activity in which many take part, without the ideological complications of occupational boundaries demarcating "who counts" as a journalist or "what qualifies" as journalism. Moreover, the focus on practice implies that good journalism simply occurs *with* practice, or repetition, and that this is the better distinction to be made between professionals and amateurs. As Cohn puts it:

I think the difference between a professional journalist and a citizen journalist is really just that the *professional journalist does it every day, and so they are much, much better at it*. But that is not because citizen journalists are idiots. It is just because if you do something every day, you are going to be better at it. If I knit every day, I am going to be a really good knitter. If I play horseshoes every day, I am going to be really good at horseshoes. Better than someone who knits once a month or someone who knits once a year as a hobby, as a citizen knitter. *If I were a professional knitter and did it for money, I would be really good at it*. But, you know, that doesn't take away from the joy that the hobby knitter gets when they give their sweater to a friend, and the friend enjoys the sweater even more, maybe because it came from a friend rather than a professional knitter.

While Cohn acknowledges that the knitting and horseshoes analogies might be strained, his point remains the same: that journalism is a “profession” inasmuch as it involves a *sustained* set of practice, but it need not (and indeed should not) be limited to a set of paid practitioners to be useful.

In a related sense, Rosenberg had wrestled with how he should define “who is a journalist?” in the course of building his MediaBugs site. MediaBugs is being developed as a bridge between a Bay Area newspaper and its readers in tracking and resolving errors that appear in coverage, using the same kind of public “bug-tracking” model found in open-source software development. The Knight Foundation, he said, asked him to set up a protocol for understanding the background of site visitors by asking them to answer certain questions when they create an account. That includes this question, with a checkbox: “Are you a journalist?” After discussion and consultation with others, Rosenberg settled on the following clarification to go with that question:

“We say you’re a journalist if you were employed by a media outlet to cover the news, or if you *regularly* provide news reports to a community.” So, it’s a little narrower than anyone who publishes a blog. Lots of people who publish blogs aren’t doing journalism, don’t think what they’re doing is journalism, and that’s fine. But it’s not just, “You get your paycheck from a news organization,” because there are lots of people who are *doing journalism* today who don’t get their paychecks from a news organization.

Open

When journalism is seen as a practice, the logical next step, articulated by virtually all news innovators, becomes one of distribution and adoption. In effect: If we conceptualize journalism as a shared practice, rather than as an exclusive profession, then why not open it up and share it with everyone? Why not make it easier, technologically and normatively, for everyone to participate in the news-and-information process?

Perhaps the best metaphor for explaining this philosophy can be found in the differences between open-source software and proprietary software. The former refers to software that is intended to be “free,” both in the commercial sense and in terms of control: The application and its source code are free to be used, shared, and modified by end-users, unrestricted by traditional constraints of copyright protection.¹⁰⁷ By contrast, proprietary software is meant to be a closed, copyrighted system that remains true to its creator’s intent and managed within bounds of control. Both kinds of software can serve different purposes, but the core distinction is the element of control—whether control is invested in the creator alone or distributed to end-users.

By the Knight News Challenge’s rules, all winning projects, whether or not they involve software development, must be open-source in content and in spirit. That is, their source code—the DNA of a software application, or of any underlying core processes—must be freely available via a General Public License (GPL) or Creative Commons license.¹⁰⁸ The purpose of the open-source requirement is to encourage the rapid replication of successful innovations as others adopt and apply them in other communities beyond the test site. This approach contrasts with the news media industry’s general adherence to proprietary software for their publishing systems. For example, most newspaper firms have longtime content management systems (CMS) that are

¹⁰⁷ For a thorough discussion of the history and cultural significance of the Free Software movement, see Keltly (2008).

¹⁰⁸ The full requirement is spelled out on the Knight News Challenge’s FAQ page: “By ‘open-source’ we mean a digital open-source platform that uses a code base that can be used by anyone after the grant period to either replicate your project in their community or to build upon it. You will own your platform, but you will have to share under GPL or Creative Commons licensing. If regard to making your entire project open and available to the public we mean the following: You’ll need to share the intellectual property you create with the world. If you want to discuss how to create cell phone documentaries, for example, you’ll blog about it. If you make pilot cell phone documentaries in a specific city, you’ll share any source code and the process for how you created your project. If you create a national alliance of people who make cell phone documentaries, you’ll make the technology available to all of them.”

(<http://www.newschallenge.org/faq#opensource>)

exclusive to their firm—they don't easily “talk” to other systems, therefore reducing the potential for collaboration with others in the profession or with audience members at large. This level of control within a closed system can create efficiencies and economies of scale, but also limits the potential for adaptability and end-user innovation by individual journalists using the system.

Building on this metaphor, I found that news innovators speak of journalism as an open-source practice to be shared broadly, rather than a proprietary profession to be protected. This technologically deterministic view flips the publishing mind-set of journalism ideology on its head. Rather than seeing news as a proprietary “product” that needs a heavy dose of professional polishing and filtering for quality because it is published *just once* down a one-way track to audiences, news innovators perceive it more as an open-source “process” of incremental improvement, in the style of iterative software development. With an open-source outlook, bugs (or errors) are considered inevitable, and so end-users play a key role in flagging them and, where possible, contributing to their correction.

That last point is key: Journalism as open-source practice implies that the “software” of news allows end-users—the “people formerly known as the audience” (Rosen, 2006)—to contribute to its development through their own input. This is figurative, but in a sense quite literal in the case of Anderson's VillageSoup operation in Maine. His \$885,000 News Challenge grant, one of the largest given, was earmarked for creating an open-source version of his successful community news site, which combines professional journalism alongside user-generated content from businesses and citizens. What's unique about this arrangement is that all of these parties—the journalists who

work for Anderson, the businesses who pay to upload their content, and the everyday citizens—publish via the same CMS platform simultaneously.

When Anderson first discussed his grant proposal with Knight staff, he was reluctant to agree to the open-source requirement, recognizing that it could jeopardize his business by inviting competitors to challenge him on his turf using free software. But he soon realized that legacy media companies posed little threat because an open-source publishing system ran against the grain of their corporate culture.

Sure, a McClatchy [Co.] or a Gatehouse [Media Inc.], or somebody, if they wanted to, could take our open-source platform and operate it. They have the staff to do that. But you also get into the pride issue, and they're not likely to think that we have something they could use, that they could develop it just as well themselves or what they have—their legacy system. It's hard to ... you know, they have to throw away their legacy systems they have. And that is going on at *The Miami Herald* right now where they're trying to go hyperlocal [with user-generated content] and they're limited by what they can do because they're forced to use the legacy McClatchy system. And they can't do some of the things we can do, *because the legacy system wasn't constructed to operate that way.*

A logic of professional control precludes news organizations from imagining that publishing systems could be anything *other* than platforms for producing read-only news content. In this view, VillageSoup's read-write system of content management is truly radical, not only because it's open-source rather than proprietary in nature, but primarily because its technology assumes, as a starting point, that *everyone should have equal access to the press tools of publication*, co-existent on the same platform of production. To be clear, the CMS—the technology—cedes control over content to the distributed public, even if the human managers—the news organization—who run the CMS retain certain rights of filtering for quality, but only in rare occasions and only after the point of initial publication. What's important is to underscore the distinction between open-source platforms of journalistic practice and proprietary systems of professional control. With a

system like VillageSoup's, "you get *open access* to businesses, and to citizen journalists, and to be able to share content from one site to the other site. These are all things that *their legacy systems were never designed to do*" (Anderson).

Tools

In seeking to "open up" journalism-as-practice, news innovators focus on the tools that more readily make that possible. What's striking about the News Challenge winners from 2007 to 2009 is the number of projects that focus in whole or in part on developing tools—be they internet applications, mobile phone services, or other technological affordances. But what's especially striking is the extent to which these tools were pitched with the intent of being wielded by everyday people, not just the press, in practicing forms of journalism. "A few years ago," Cohn said, "this idea that you would have been creating tools that would have somehow *enabled people to do journalism*, that might have been kind of a silly idea. But right now it makes perfect sense." Similarly, David Sasaki, editor of the Rising Voices network of bloggers around the globe, described how he avoided the rhetorical minefields of terms like "citizen journalism" when he pitched his project to donors. Instead, he opts to sum up his project this way: "We're teaching people how to communicate with tools." In this sense, *tools* are de-ideological. By definition, they can be used by virtually anyone, indiscriminant of whether those handling the tool "count" as a professional journalist.

This kind of agnosticism about the relative occupational purity of a tool's user is evident in Cohn's Spot.Us model. Described as an experiment in "community-powered reporting,"¹⁰⁹ where the public can act as collective editors in assigning and funding freelance journalism projects, Spot.Us was designed to be a "platform"—a tool equally

¹⁰⁹ See <http://www.spot.us/pages/about>.

open to interested professionals and amateurs alike.¹¹⁰ Cohn has gone to great pains to distinguish his work from that of a “news organization,”¹¹¹ noting that the label *news organization* implies that the editorial body has a key stake in controlling the flow and agenda of the news it produces. Whereas a platform, he argues, is a mere conduit for someone else’s news agenda—in this case, the public’s agenda.

We have built a platform, and we’re opening it up, and other people can use it. Otherwise, I might not let other people use it, right? I mean, if we were an editorial organization that had to fight for a leg up on what other people are doing, it would just be our platform. ... [W]e don’t set the editorial agenda. The public does. Through our site, they tell us what we should or shouldn’t be covering. I know that for Alberto [Ibargüen,] that’s the shift that catches his eye ... that traditionally .0001% of the population sets the news agenda and they’re called “editors.” They are the ones who decide which stories do and do not happen. And it’s because they’re the only ones with a freelance budget, right? Editors. But on Spot.Us, the public sort of has a freelance budget and the public can sort of say, “Here’s the story that we’re going to do.”

Because of this distinction on the issue of editorial control, a news platform like Spot.Us never has to feel “trumped,” Cohn said. “We don’t really have an editor anyways to feel like feel somehow his or her decisions are being trumped by the community.” Linking this idea with earlier observations, I reiterate that when journalism is decoupled from the occupational ideology with which it has been associated, this shift renders unproblematic any challenge to professional control precisely because it obviates any reason to feel professionally threatened (or “trumped”) by the input of amateurs. Tools, as de-ideological objects, therefore are part and parcel of journalism-as-practice, made to be open-source in philosophy and action.

¹¹⁰ For a rich discussion about *platform* and its semantics in computing, see Gillespie (2010).

¹¹¹ See, for example, the comments that Cohn posted at http://www.cjr.org/the_news_frontier/trash_compactor.php?page=all#comments.

Preserving Good Principles, Discarding Bad Practices

Finding 2: By resolving the professional-participatory tension, news innovators can “pull apart” journalism to preserve its best principles while discarding outmoded practices.

The previous discussion of journalism as de-professionalized practice should not suggest to the reader that these news innovators had somehow “abandoned” journalism, as an integral component of democratic health and civic good. Quite the contrary, and regardless of their professional background before winning their grant, these news innovators spoke reverently and fervently of the role journalism should play in fostering informed discussion, community awareness, and baseline truth-seeking—all normative notions. The important distinction, however, is that news innovators, on balance, indeed had abandoned the occupational ideology of journalism, its sense of professional exclusivity and control. Whether explicitly or implicitly, they rejected the idea that journalism could fulfill its normative aims *only* (or even best) through the professional paradigm: i.e., specially trained practitioners exercising gatekeeping control over content to ensure accuracy, ethics, and accountability.

In effect, news innovators were separating *journalism*, the practice of informing a community, from the *professionalization* that had built up around the practice of western journalism throughout much of the 20th century (Anderson, 2008b). This “pulling apart” of journalism, rhetorically speaking, allowed news innovators to talk of preserving its essential functions for democracy even while discarding certain longstanding practices that had calcified into bad habits. News innovators readily embraced norms of being fair and accurate, speaking truth to power, and giving multiple sides a chance to respond. “One of the things we try to do is say, ‘Absolutely, fairness and right-of-reply,’ said Harry Dugmore, describing his program’s training of citizen journalists in Grahamstown,

South Africa. “Some of those conventions are critical, and *we can’t do away with them.*” This focus on preservation can be seen in how Cohn distinguished between journalistic *principles vs. practices*. He argued that the principles linked with the Society of Professional Journalists’ code of ethics—namely: seek truth and report it, minimize harm, act independently, and be accountable—are timeless and should remain in place; but that practices are just means to an end, and should be updated as needed. “The principles are sound, but the practices need to change a little bit,” he said.

As one example of a problematic practice, several news innovators pointed to the professional fascination with “scooping” the competition, which remains deeply ingrained in the occupational ideology of journalism (see the “immediacy” element described by Deuze, 2005b). This “huge amount of haste” (Burrell) not only leads to inaccuracies, but also reflects the extent to which certain professional ideals that served well in a previous era have become ill-suited to the culture and affordances of digitization of media, as Rosenberg explained:

This is a big part of what every kid who starts in a newsroom learns. If you get the story first, everybody is really, really pleased with you. If you beat the competition, that’s really great. The web is a new environment in which sort of the entire population is your competition. The idea of being first has almost become meaningless. And you still see in tech coverage ... these arcane fights for, you know, “We beat this other outlet by 10 minutes. We got the news about something 10 minutes before them.” Who cares? So, some of these *old totemic values* have been pushed kind of to their extreme by the web and almost become ridiculous.

On what, then, would journalists compete in the future, if not on scooping each other? The implication is that they should not be “competing” in the first place—that perhaps the chase of the scoop has less to do with serving public needs than gratifying one’s professional ego, and thus represents an excessively inward focus at a time when journalists need to take a broader view of the world around them.

Objectivity and Transparency

Even more problematic for many news innovators was the journalistic ideology of objectivity, the “absolutely distinguishing convention of the 20th century” (Dugmore). Despite its normative aim of neutrality and independence, objectivity had “stultified” and “ossified” into a “continual approach to all issues as if it were just a binary” of two sides to the story (Dugmore). By pulling apart objectivity, news innovators could set it aside and envision new solutions, such as greater participation in offering up “multiple sides to the story” (Wolfson), or replacing the ideal of objectivity with one of transparency. “*People need to understand your bias*, because I think everyone has a bias,” Burrell said. “I don’t think it’s bad journalistic practice to have a bias,” as long as it’s understood and made transparent. In a similar vein, Rosenberg, who has written extensively about blogging and has a popular blog of his own, holds up the blogging format as one that provides journalists a degree of “freedom” from the pretense of objectivity. “Freedom from the notion that you had to *pretend that you were not a citizen when you were a journalist*. You know, like the *Washington Post* telling reporters that they are not allowed to vote [laughs]—or if they do vote, goddammit, keep it to yourself!”

Objectivity implies that information may be trusted because it was filtered through professional routines—the “rituals” described by Tuchman (1972)—even when that filtering occurs within a relatively “closed” publishing system like that of institutional journalism. By contrast, transparency in journalism is fundamentally about “openness” (Allen, 2008a; Plaisance, 2007; Singer, 2007), both in disclosing the influence of one’s biases and background as well as in making more open the processes of gathering, filtering, and distributing information. Moreover, Karlsson (2010b) has described a form of “participatory transparency” that goes beyond mere disclosure to invite users to take part in the news production process. News innovators embraced this

kind of transparency as a journalistic norm (c.f., Phillips, 2010), arguing that bringing outside voices into the news process not only engenders greater trust among audiences but also leads to more truthful accounts. In one case, Dugmore's project in South Africa has led to changes at the Grocott's Mail newspaper, where newly trained citizen journalists are invited to join the daily news meetings—and not just as passive observers—in addition to the freelance articles they contribute.

We're *opening up* the sanctuary and this kind of enclave, *this very kind of protected space*. And it's a little threatening to a professional journalist who has been to school and the university for four years and is on the beat, and all of a sudden there's these kind of scruffy guys that have been in a six-week course, and we're all debating what should be on Page 3 tomorrow. So far, two weeks into it [as of March 2010], we're pretty inspired and it's certainly enlivening.

In this manner, the openness of transparency, as a corrective to binary objectivity, involves demystifying the professional “priesthood” of journalistic gatekeeping not only by allowing greater public observation and awareness of internal processes, but also of inviting outside stakeholders to take part in shaping the process of decision-making.

‘Ferrying the Values’

In sum, by de-professionalizing journalism, and then “pulling apart” that bundle of principles and practices to pick-and-choose the best from among them, news innovators can develop a perception of journalism that is more fluid and adaptable than that embedded in the occupation's longstanding ideology. This allows news innovators to craft their own hybridized perception of journalistic norms: e.g., one that preserves verities of accuracy and fairness, problematicizes objectivity and immediacy, and looks

for inspiration to the emerging norm of transparency (Deuze, 2003; Karlsson, 2010b; Phillips, 2010; Weinberger, 2009).¹¹²

In their minds and in their actions, news innovators—like the Knight Foundation funding them—are attempting to “*ferry the values*” (Rosenberg) in their migration to an uncertain frontier—preserving the “important values that we want to save from the old world of journalism and make sure that they make it into the new world that is being born now.”¹¹³ The migration metaphor is particularly resonant for Rosenberg, who remembers the *New York Times* describing the launch of Salon.com, which he co-founded in 1995, as “tribes of journalists” leaving their print home “to create vibrant electronic alternatives.”¹¹⁴ The ongoing professional diaspora in journalism (c.f., Silcock, 2009), hastened by rapidly fragmenting media and layoffs in the news industry, has proffered a reflective moment for deconstructing journalism.¹¹⁵ As Rosenberg said:

[W]hen you have any professional population influx this way, it causes people to question their assumptions in, mostly, really healthy ways. And so MediaBugs is a little piece of that in asking us, “Well, what about our professional attitudes towards mistakes and corrections is *important to hold onto*, and *what is important to change*?”

¹¹² For example, Wolfson said of his project, which focuses on giving voice to the disenfranchised in Philadelphia: “We aren’t interested in *objectivity*, but we are interested in *accuracy*. We believe that there are multiple sides to many stories and we want to tell the story that hasn’t been told.” In this hybrid view, being truthful is not synonymous with being objective, when objectivity is defined as trying to be detached and dispassionate in obtaining “both sides.” In short, one can be an advocate and still communicate accurate information.

¹¹³ It should be noted that Rosenberg said this in the context of discussing the Knight Foundation and its influence in the innovation of journalism, but in my interpretations I found that the statement could be broadly applied to the perceptions of news innovators studied in this chapter.

¹¹⁴ See <http://www.nytimes.com/1995/11/13/business/with-a-debut-a-test-of-on-line-publishing.html>.

¹¹⁵ In a much-publicized blog post titled “Migration point for the press tribe,” Rosen (2008b) took up the “tribes” metaphor when he wrote, “The land that newsroom people have been living on—also called their business model—no long supports their best work. So they have come to a reluctant point of realization: that to continue on, to keep the professional press going, the news tribe will have to migrate across the digital divide and re-settle itself on terra nova, new ground. Or as we sometimes call it, a new platform. . . . And like reluctant migrants everywhere, the people in the news tribe have to decide what to take with them, when to leave, where to land.”

As such, the process of “ferrying values” isn’t just about preserving the seeds of principles from one land and replanting them in another; it’s also about opening space for new ones to be planted, take root, and ultimately flourish to become established in the journalism conventions of the future. The next section considers just such a change, in its earliest embryonic form.

Participation as a New Norm

Finding 3: In addition to preserving certain practices, news innovators identify participation as a new normative ethic, as reflected in patterns of perception and practice that focus on public engagement: viz., collective intelligence and community management.

I have shown how news innovators have resolved the professional tension over journalistic control, precisely because they tend to articulate journalism as a practice rather than a profession. This notion of journalism-as-practice is portrayed as something in which anyone, including citizen “hobbyists,” may take part, because the tools of media production and the activities of newswork are not limited to a professional class. This de-problematicization allows news innovators to unpack and “pull apart” journalism, seeking to safeguard its truth-seeking imperatives while questioning some of its routines that have become ossified ideology. In this section, I describe the next step in this progression: For news innovators who see journalism as an open practice, and who emphasize the need for openness (i.e., transparency) as they unpack journalism’s core principles, the natural conclusion is to hold up *participation* as a new normative ethic.

In this sense, it’s not that journalism *can* be participatory in some fashion, for that is well-established already; indeed, virtually all professional news media have shifted toward providing space for greater user input. Nevertheless, much of this present user input is post-hoc—after the point of publication, as in user comments appended to news

stories—and therefore has little influence on the actual process of news creation (e.g., Domingo et al., 2008). Rather, what’s significant about this ethic of news innovators is that it suggests that journalism *should* be participatory, in its very nature.

Participation as a normative ethic was invoked in different ways by different respondents, and with varying degrees of conceptual cohesiveness. In the main, however, this ethic was portrayed as an imperative by which journalism should be more open, collaborative, and democratic—that journalism, in its idealized form, would reflect the public’s interests and its collective wisdom more fully. “I’m trying to make journalism as transparent as I can and to *include people in every step of the way*,” Cohn said.

Multiperspectivalism and participation

This inclusion of public input was described in ways that called to mind Herbert Gans’ (1979) depiction of “multiperspectivalism” in journalism. For Gans, the ideal form of news was pluralist and egalitarian, drawing on the broadest possible array of sources to go beyond the top-down, elite-oriented portrayal of traditional journalism and instead present multiple sides to a story. He acknowledged that attempting to make the news more multiperspectival “would require changes in the journalistic *modus operandi*” (p. 314), altering not only sourcing routines but also the manner in which journalists allow outsiders to take part in decision-making (see p. 322-4). It was difficult to imagine how such systemic changes, particularly external participation, could come to the news process when Gans wrote *Deciding What’s News* more than 30 years ago. But the digitization of media has created an environment in which multiple perspectives are suddenly abundant and (potentially) globally distributed through the means of cheap and easy publishing software. However, because professional journalists still adhere to routines that favor elite sources and traditional forms of storytelling, for these news

innovators there remains a persistent concern for getting more marginalized voices into the mainstream conversation—both indirectly through wider journalistic sourcing, and directly through more effective communication via digital media generally. It was this belief that animated the work of Video Volunteers, a project in rural India that teaches activists to become video journalists who regularly screen films in the public square to stimulate community discussion about local problems. Said founder Jessica Mayberry:

I fundamentally believe that we will have much better journalism when the people who experience these issues—this is particularly related to information and news related to development and poverty and things like that—are the ones *creating the news*. ... That is what I would like to see in journalism: *more diversity, more representation* by the people who live these issues. I think the stories will get a lot more accurate.

In this view, the journalism principle of accuracy (or truth-telling), the most fundamental of all principles and a value worth “ferrying” (as noted above), becomes a function of multiperspectivalism—of multiple inputs in the news process, for the normative purpose of reflecting that “on any potential issue there are so many angles” (Gahrn). Indeed, for a number of news innovators—but especially those working in or with developing countries (i.e., Burrell, Dugmore, Mayberry, Okolloh, and Sasaki) or disadvantaged peoples in the United States (i.e., Wolfson)—the ethic of participation was primarily one of multiplicity: more voices, more inclusion of people previously left out of the news, and more opportunities for people to connect and communicate in a many-to-many fashion, outside of the one-to-many rubric of typical journalism. These aims are at the heart of the Rising Voices initiative run by Sasaki. Before that project was funded in 2007, Sasaki was working for Global Voices, a Harvard-based nonprofit network of blogs and citizen media sites around the developing world.

I was covering Latin America at the time, and ... it got to be uncomfortable kind of given there is a rhetoric of, “We’re more representative of these countries than

traditional media because traditional media will only cover certain types of stories for each country.” But we were only covering bloggers who tended to come from certain neighborhoods of big cities of each of those countries. So a big focus of mine early on [with Rising Voices] was how to get *more representative voices* of entire countries and regions rather than just these small pockets where bloggers tended to be.

Similarly, in describing his Philadelphia-based Media Mobilizing Project that gives tools and training for citizen journalists in low-income communities, Wolfson said,

We aren’t interested in objectivity, but we are interested in accuracy. We believe that there are *multiple sides to many stories* and we want to tell the story that hasn’t been told. ... Rather [than focusing on objectivity], we want to make sure that the stories and perspectives of those *who aren’t getting a voice elsewhere* are coming out here. (Wolfson)

These reflections resonate with the public journalism movement that was popularized in the 1990s, with its interest in helping journalists better appreciate and act upon the problems of ordinary people (Haas, 2007; Rosenberry & St. John III, 2010). For Dugmore and his project in Grahamstown, South Africa, this means bringing a greater diversity of voices (via newly trained citizen journalists) to bear on issues of public concern that need to be properly “framed” so as to generate discussion and action. It’s journalism with a dose of advocacy—of taking a stand and framing it as such, not only to inform but also to encourage public action of a particular kind.

We try to change things in the world. We’re not just saying, “Our job as media and journalism is to describe the world.” We have a bigger end, and that’s where we link into public journalism. And that’s another important reason why citizen journalism is so absolutely critical to this project. It is the way in which we work much, much better than we’re able to do with our three or four or five professional staff. We can work on what the real issues are on the ground. ... People are aware that they’re not alone—that, you know, the one side of Grahamstown is having exactly the same problems with refuse and rubbish not being picked up on time, as the other side of Grahamstown. Then people can start a conversation, and we can all get on the town council’s case and say, “Come on, guys, we’re going to go talk to the mayor and see if we can do something about this refuse-removal problem.” ... So what we do with our Knight money is

figuring out where the levers of power are in our society and *trying to frame things—a slightly more framing of journalism*. (Dugmore)

Beyond this tweaking of traditional journalism's approach to objectivity, participatory journalism goes farther as a "corrective" (Wolfson) to public journalism, in that it's about improving citizens' opportunities for connecting and communicating *directly with each other* (horizontally), without necessitating the intermediation of professional journalists who link people up (vertically) to government and other powerful institutions.

To this point, I have highlighted the extent to which the ethic of participation articulated by news innovators can be understood as a form of multiperspectivalism. This perspective suggests that journalism is both normatively and empirically better—that is, more ethical and more truthful—when it involves (a) *more people* who hold (b) *more diverse views* and who in turn (c) *actively participate* in constructing media frames. This emphasis on multiple modes of input can be thought of as a larger system of faith in the public, confidence in the collective. These news innovators appeared to believe that traditional systems of individual expertise—such as professional journalism—should give way, at least somewhat, to new systems of collective intelligence that use digital tools to harness and make use of the wisdom possessed by the community at large. This shift in thinking, which in fact reflects a wider social shift from individual to collective expertise (Deuze, 2008a, p. 113), was evident in the way news innovators talked about two key elements of their participatory ethic: *collective intelligence* and *community management*.

Collective intelligence

As described in Chapter 3, *collective intelligence* (Lévy, 1997) posits that knowledge may be richest and most accurate when it reflects the pooled inputs of a distributed population, as opposed to the expertise of a single (professional) agent.

Collective intelligence is the theoretical grounding for popular conceptions of “crowdsourcing” (Brabham, 2008; Muthukumaraswamy, 2010), a process through which digital technologies are used to take a task traditionally performed by an organizational agent and outsource it, in small pieces, to a large, undefined group of people (Howe, 2008). A prototypical example of crowdsourcing is Wikipedia; another is the development of open-source software. The important thing to understand is that collective intelligence *assumes the crowd knows best*, as long as processes are properly gauged to suss out this aggregate wisdom. Therefore, under the right conditions of task management, crowdsourcing allows a distributed public to produce something better than could be accomplished by a single expert. As explained in Chapter 6, crowd knowledge is an important component to the Knight News Challenge, not only as a statistically significant predictor of advancement in the contest but also as evidenced in the number of winners that have implemented forms of crowdsourced labor, most notably in the cases of Ushahidi and Spot.U.S.

When news innovators articulated the participatory norm, they did so in ways that emphasized the power and potential of the distributed crowd. Okolloh’s project, Ushahidi (which means “testimony” in Swahili), grew out of her experience witnessing the 2007-08 Kenyan election crisis. A Kenyan citizen living in South Africa, she returned to Nairobi to vote and blog about the election, the results of which provoked wide-scale unrest.

When the violence and everything happened, I found myself then covering the story quite intensely on my blog, because the media, due to self-censorship and threats from the government, a lot of the main media houses were divided quite strongly on one side or another, making it hard for them to tell their story for a whole bunch of reasons. Basically, you were hearing gunshots, seeing smoke, getting text messages about killings. And I turned on the TV, and it was like the “Tom & Jerry Show” was on, and the radio still playing music 24/7. So, there was

a huge gap, in terms of at least local media, between what we were seeing as citizens and what the media was telling us was going on. So I opened up my blog and said, “OK, well, why don’t you people send me your stories of what you are hearing and seeing and I will post them up on my blog.” So I did that for about two or three days, and then the volume and intensity became too much for me to do by myself. And, you know, I was just doing this from a laptop in an apartment where I was staying in Nairobi.

In search of a better way to handle the crowd’s input, Okolloh collaborated with computer programmers on the Ushahidi system that allows for easy and rapid crowdsourcing of crisis information, in places around the globe. Witnesses submit information on critical incidents from their mobile phones, and the data is automatically mapped online to provide a visual, contextual representation of a local crisis.

Technology can allow for an alternative medium, whether it’s traditional journalists themselves and how they engage with people or whether it’s just *allowing for new voices to come to the fore*, and a greater sort of recognition that storytelling is not the exclusive domain of journalists ... and that’s definitely a lot of what animates Ushahidi. ... If no one else is going to tell the stories, then at least *let’s hear from the people themselves directly*.

In sum, news innovators put faith in the public, confidence in collective intelligence, not because they disdain the professional judgment of individual experts but rather because they recognize that digital technologies have afforded new opportunities for harnessing crowd wisdom—and that to disregard such opportunities because of the implicit threat they pose to professional control would be, in fact, unethical. In short, such a disregard of collective intelligence would violate their normative ethic of participation in the news process.

Community management

To go one step further, the ethic of participation suggests not only that journalists should seek to aggregate and highlight collective intelligence, but indeed that this may be one of their primary functions. A number of news innovators referred to “community

management” in articulating this curatorial function of journalism: helping to facilitate and foster community discussion, collaboration, and collective improvement. As

Anderson of VillageSoup described it:

There really is a whole mind-set here about the role of the news organization, the role of citizens, the role of businesses... We really see ourselves as a community network company, not a community newspaper company; that *we've gone beyond a newspaper company and broadened our reach to be a community network*. And newspapers still today haven't gone there. ... We are still a news organization, but we've gone beyond that and become a community network organization as well.

This perceptual shift from “news organization” to “community network” requires a degree of de-professionalization, as journalists must abandon the top-down authority and status of professional distance that is associated with one-way news publishing. By contrast, the community manager must co-exist with fellow community members in a more horizontal, networked relationship—in a sense, a peer-to-peer arrangement. This, in turn, implies that journalists as community managers would have to rethink their role in relation to traditional conceptions of “the audience.”¹¹⁶ Adam Klawonn, a 2009 winner, described just such a “huge brain shift” for himself in going from a recent print journalism background to his present role developing CityCircles (formerly called Daily Phoenix), a mobile/online tool that seeks to build community news and discussion around Phoenix’s new light-rail train system.

I see [my audience] as collaborators. I also see them as users. They are using some of these tools that we are giving them. ... *I've never considered them readers*, which is the *huge brain shift for me* from being trained as a classical print journalist.

As framed by these news innovators, community management as a journalistic function can be seen as a natural outgrowth of the participatory ethic, in that it embraces

¹¹⁶ For a review of the journalism profession’s understanding of and relationship toward changing audiences, see Lowrey (2009).

journalist-audience engagement as a baseline good. Such engagement, of course, threatens journalistic conventions of detached neutrality. Moreover, engagement means that journalists go beyond simply “telling stories”—often seen as the quintessential journalistic activity (Zelizer, 2004a, p. 129)—to help community members express themselves. Even more, this logic suggests that journalists should create spaces for the collective sharing of information—like the geographic metadata of Ushahidi—that falls outside the traditional narrative norm. Gahrn critiques this narrative norm as the self-limiting “story box,” because it curtails journalism’s imagination about communicating through data points and user engagement generally.

It is really hard [for journalists] to break out of the story box. I mean, it is like this: People who come up through traditional journalism culture, it is like they make the best cakes in the world. They are the best bakers. And they are absolutely convinced that their business is making and selling cake boxes. For instance, a lot of what journalists do, especially beat reporters, is *community management*. [Yet] if you were to ask most journalists what community management is, they would say, “No, I write stories.” And they would actually view the field of community management with suspicion, because *they like to downplay how engaged they are with their communities*. They like to just focus on this end product—this box and the story.

Perhaps the ultimate role of the community manager, in this context, is simply understanding the community: in particular, understanding what it already knows (i.e., collective intelligence) and what it might not realize without the influence of a trained journalist acting as something of a “community guide.” In this view, journalist-as-expert is not incompatible with the participatory ethic and its emphasis on the collective; rather, news innovators articulated these as complementary roles and functions in a hybrid fashion of “ferrying the values”—embracing what traditional journalism does well in original news-gathering, while discarding the professional reluctance to engage more

fully with audiences on their level. Klawonn captured this hybrid rendering of the journalist as community guide when he said:

When there is a train collision, someone could easily tweet that in or text it in from that stop and warn everybody on the system probably 45 minutes—or who knows long, but it will definitely be a noticeable time—before the transit authority gets that news out themselves. So, there is a breaking news function that really the community could take care of itself. On the flipside, the transit authority did a lot of damage to the community when it built the light rail in some instances along the route. And they face claims from several of the businesses and property owners for damaging this or damaging that. ... So, no one really knows that. *No one has any idea except we journalists, and we know how to file a Freedom of Information Act request to get it and then talk to everybody and put together a pretty cool story about, “Here is how much money in damages the light rail owes all these people, and we are now entering year two and they are still in court.”* That is a good story, and it’s something that the [Arizona State University] student or the businessman who is just trying to get to work probably is not going to have the time to figure out. And if that is something we write, there is no reason someone who made out a claim that didn’t get on the list, or maybe it is still pending, can’t chime in and say, “Yeah, great story. By the way, my business still has this claim and here is the paperwork.” That is the kind of thing *as a community* we can do with the users of CityCircles.

An ethic of participation

In summary, news innovators claim participation as a normative ethic of journalism. This ethic suggests not only that journalism can be participatory on account of digital technologies, but indeed that it *should be*—and not in the margins of comments sections on newspaper websites, but in the very heart of the news assembly process. Implicitly, the underlying philosophies of this ethic are notions of multiperspectivalism (Gans, 1979) and public journalism (Haas, 2007), which together posit that journalism is best when it includes a diversity of voices and reflects the concerns of ordinary people. Even more, however, the participatory ethic can be thought of as something of a “corrective” to public journalism in that it goes one step further in emphasizing the need

for end-users to employ the media tools at their disposal to communicate directly, actively working to construct their narrative framing. Finally, this ethic of participation is part of a larger social shift from emphasis on individual expertise to collective intelligence, as evidenced by the way news innovators spoke of community-oriented functions of journalists. The emphasis through it all is that journalism should play a curatorial kind of role in helping publics contribute to the news-making and news-framing processes in a more dialogical, communitarian, and participatory fashion.

Challenges of sustainability

Finding 4: In practice, however, internal and external challenges have made it difficult for news innovators to realize these goals, raising questions about the long-run sustainability of these and other news innovations.

Up to this point, I have focused primarily on the perceptions on news innovators: how their mental frameworks (a) construct journalism as a practice, (b) unpack journalism to preserve certain principles while discarding other practices, and (c) articulate participation as a normative ethic of journalism. Put together, these elements compose an emerging logic of news innovation—an overriding sense for how journalism ought to be organized in a networked digital media environment today. But, as it quickly became apparent in my interviews, actually translating that logic into practice often has been rather difficult, if not impossible, for a number of Knight News Challenge winners. To be sure, it should not be surprising that virtually all of these projects have experienced setbacks of some kind along the way; these are experimental initiatives by nature, and the Knight Foundation never expected to have a 100% success rate. Even the most highly touted Knight News Challenge winner, Spot.Us, has faced some difficulty in getting donors to stay active on the site. Nevertheless, it is striking to note how many projects have struggled to become sustainable—both in the financial sense of the word, as well as

in their efforts to make user participation an ongoing and active part of their communication output.

Let's consider the financial component first. While some grantees intended to carry out a project that was to be short-term only—as in the case of Gahrn's one-year Boulder Carbon Tax Tracker—most are building sites and tools that, they hope, will last beyond the life of the News Challenge funding. That means constantly having to prepare for a future when additional nonprofit funding will be needed, or when the project will need to generate its own revenue or rely on the private investment of others. Grantees know that justifying future funding of any kind will require them to prove that their project has promise—and, in the digital realm, that often means using measures of user “traffic” as the primary currency.

Media producers have long been concerned with the size of their audience, particularly for advertising reasons, but for nonprofit news startups there is a different set of audience-related expectations to untangle. First, the internet makes it vastly easier and richer to measure content consumption, through metrics such as number of unique visitors, time spent on the website, and so forth. News organizations no longer rely merely on intuition to divine what their audiences desire. But, while such metrics have become an increasing point of discussion in newsrooms and a force for shaping journalistic behavior (e.g., MacGregor, 2007), the news innovators examined here said that they don't feel nearly as much pressure to produce high-traffic numbers—nor does the Knight Foundation ask for detailed statistics. Nonprofit status affords them some safety from having to chase pay-per-click advertising and the like. Nevertheless, these news innovators remain acutely aware of the attention (or relative lack of it) that their efforts are attracting, and they understand that building traffic now is important for

securing more funding in the future. This is compounded by the problem of the “attention economy” (Davenport & Beck, 2001), in which cognitive attention becomes the truly scarce resource amid the rapid fragmentation and information abundance offered by digital media (Chyi, 2009). Simply put: getting attention and retaining it over time becomes the real challenge for news innovators, just as it is for anyone attempting to succeed online. Cohn noted this in the context of his efforts to get repeat donations for story funding at his Spot.Us site:

[W]e have shifted, I think, to an *attention economy* a little bit, right? And it’s easy to get people around your tool or your concept or your news organizations to contribute. But it’s much harder to *keep their attention*, and it’s much harder to monetize their attention as well. That’s partly why advertising online hasn’t really figured out how we monetize people’s attention.

In certain cases, news innovators acknowledged that they erred in “pushing content,” much like a traditional publisher, without giving sufficient attention to stimulating interest in that content. Part of the problem, they said, is that the Knight Foundation, perhaps reflecting its legacy newspaper mind-set, is primarily interested in having grantees produce content—“a stream of content,” as one put it—rather than use their grant funds to tackle the supply-and-demand question more thoroughly.

When we designed the [Rising Voices] project, we were thinking in terms of giving more supply, of producing more content from more voices from more regions in the world. And *the shortage really is on the demand side*—that’s where a lot of the focus nowadays needs to be given. So, I think it would have been good if we had thought more holistically about it and thought about building some sort of media literacy component to the project where we would work with students and universities to get them reading the content produced by these communities, thinking about how that affects their outlook. Maybe with history or sociology students, I don’t know, but *building in a component of demand* for the content that’s being produced by these projects—that we didn’t do, and it’s been really difficult to try to create that sort of demand. (Sasaki)

This attention problem goes beyond online traffic statistics. More vexing, in some cases, was the frustration grantees felt in trying to get people to participate in the news process—or even to simply leave comments. “One thing that was kind of frustrating was that even though we had all these people reading our site who care about the city and who care about policy, we were not getting much a discussion ever going,” Robinson said.¹¹⁷ With the Boulder Carbon Tax Tracker, Gahran and her collaborator, Adam Glenn, had proposed to build a site that would be the go-to place for analyzing and discussing the nation’s first carbon tax, with their professional reporting mixed with contributions from volunteer citizen journalists.

The thing about citizen journalism is you need to kind of take people as they are and deal with what they do and how they work. A fallacy that Adam and I fell prey to is that we hoped that we could convince people to get in there and write posts about it or comment publicly on a very locally politically contentious issue. ... I totally thought that since everywhere I went in Boulder people were talking about this that it would be easy to get them to post about it. Not so. (Gahran)

The struggle for user engagement is at the crux of the sustainability challenge: In an increasingly diversified mediascape, how does any one innovation attract enough attention to stick, both in having a long-run business model and in fashioning the kind of participatory exchange that is so idealized by these innovators? But if lack of attention is the primary external threat, there is another, more internal, problem that has arisen for several Knight News Challenge winners: an apparent lack of support, beyond the seed funding, from the Knight Foundation.

¹¹⁷ Robinson noted that a change in Gotham Gazette’s commenting system corrected some of this problem, but this lament is a common one for media producers in an attention-deficit environment.

From ‘Ideas to Institutions’

Nonprofit foundations do not toss around money lightly; they often have strict guidelines of compliance and expect regular reports on progress. They want a return on their investment much like a for-profit investor. This, presumably, would be particularly true of a high-profile grant-funding process such as the Knight News Challenge. As I described in Chapter 5, the Knight Foundation approached the News Challenge as a grand experiment—a chance to renovate and rejuvenate journalism with a host of projects that would shake up the field. And even while the News Challenge’s \$25 million budget is rather small when compared to the outlays of the Knight Foundation as a whole, the ambitious nature of the contest has made it the symbolic representation of the foundation’s overall transformation in recent years. All of this serves to make Knight’s lack of oversight—an approach that is “too hands-off,” said one grantee—baffling and frustrating for a number of News Challenge winners. Several respondents spoke of receiving little, if any, feedback from the foundation after their initial vetting and the awarding of the grant. Progress reports were filed, they said, but without corresponding responses from Knight. More troubling to some grantees was the relative lack of support from Knight in “institutionalizing” these projects—e.g., helping grantees connect with other foundations for long-term funding, teaching them how to navigate nonprofit legal complexities, and otherwise giving them the assistance necessary to gain a more permanent footing.

Knigh could have very easily given their leverage in the funding world to help us and help dozens of other new organizations establish themselves. ... They didn’t do that, and I think it’s a failing of the program. ... It’s not only in the interest of the [individual grantee], it’s in their interest, which is why it baffles me. If they really want this idea, this innovation idea, to take hold, and they are going to put massive amounts of money down on certain groups to re-imagine what journalism means in the digital age... If they wanted this to shake the establishment, which I

think it has done a good job of doing—but if they really wanted this to make the kind of impact they expect, then *moving these new ideas to institutions* seems to make perfect sense. It seems like a no-brainer. And so the first step is granting groups. *But it is the first step in what would be clearly a process.* That is obvious to me, and I don't understand why they didn't figure that out. They do this work in other places. They help support institutions. That is part of what the Knight Foundation does. And it just seems to me like a glaring misconception on their part.¹¹⁸

The notion of “ideas to institutions” illustrates a key shift for the Knight Foundation: Whereas previously it supported a stable set of (journalism) institutions that produced ideas, increasingly the foundation is underwriting ideas, originating with individuals, that need help in *becoming institutions*—i.e., in “moving from a project to an institution that supports a project,” as one grantee put it. Viewed more broadly, this ideas-to-institutions (or, projects-to-permanence) kind of challenge represents a larger conundrum for journalism in the 21st century: How does the profession and the field at large balance the pressing need for innovation and fluidity on the one hand, with the concurrent need for institutional authority, stability, strength, and routines on the other? And, to the extent that news innovators are relinquishing control in opening the gates to more participatory forms of journalism, at what point should control be reclaimed so as to foster institutionalization? These are questions I will explore in the next chapter.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this chapter has sought to describe and explain how news innovators—select winners of the Knight News Challenge who intended to start news organizations/platforms—have tried to reconcile the tension of professional control and open participation. Through a series of depth interviews, I found that news innovators see journalism less as a proprietary profession to be protected and more as an open practice

¹¹⁸ The grantee quoted here asked not to be identified in this portion of the interview.

to be shared. This conceptualization resolves the professional-participatory tension, allowing news innovators, rhetorically speaking, to “pull apart” journalism, preserving its best principles while discarding outmoded practices. In this process of unpacking and re-assembling journalism, news innovators identify *participation* as a new normative ethic—one that embraces a diversity of voices and a greater emphasis on the concerns of ordinary people, and one that is manifest in philosophies and practices associated with collective intelligence and community management. Finally, however, these participatory ideals are difficult to attain in practice, because of the challenge in attracting sufficient user attention and activity, as well as the relative lack of support from the Knight Foundation in taking one-off projects and translating them into sustainable institutions.

This general shift in emphasis from *profession* to *practice* raises some intriguing questions. If journalism is merely an activity, how do we know when we are engaging in it, or witnessing others “doing” journalism? Can the very concept of *journalism* have any codified meaning, or any set of boundary markers, when it becomes just another process of gathering, filtering, and distributing information? This blurring of boundaries brings us back to the journalism-vs.-information problematic raised in Chapter 5 on the Knight Foundation. However, whereas the foundation there seemed to back away from journalism, the news innovators interviewed here celebrated journalism even as they de-professionalized it. They invoked journalism’s ideals and ethics, but separated those principles from less-desirable practices that have developed through the professionalization of the press. In all, these news innovators seemed to suggest that information *becomes* journalism not when it is handled by someone claiming professional status, but rather when it is gathered, filtered, and distributed in an ethical way and through a set of practices and tools that are optimized for a digital media environment.

This points to a potentially larger shift in how we think about journalism. Historically, information was classified as “news” because it was delivered through the means of professional journalists; in this way, journalism was defined *a priori*. Now, because journalism is conducted by a wider array of actors and in a growing variety of ways, perhaps a designation of “journalism” comes *a posteriori*, after the public has had a chance to consider the effect of the information in circulation.

One important finding of this chapter is that, in the view of these innovators, *participation* is a journalism ethic. This implies that the process of translating information into journalism should involve the public to a greater degree, and indeed that the ethical quality of the information shared may rest in part on the extent to which crowds and communities have been invited to contribute their wisdom. This notion runs counter to the control mind-set of professional journalism, and thus reinforces the stickiness of the tension confronting journalism, professions generally, and society at large: How do we handle issues of professional quality-control in a digital culture that privileges open participation? This isn’t a question so much about where the boundaries *are* anymore, but more about the struggle over where *should* they be drawn, and why.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Chapter 8: Participation and the Professions

“The ultimate test of Knight Foundation’s involvement may be a lasting, networked system, its virtual whole greater than its tangible parts. And the stronger the network, with its increased value and expanded choices, the more likely the idea upon which it is based will live on.”

—The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, 2004 annual report, p. 11¹¹⁹

This dissertation had a three-fold purpose: (a) to explore how the Knight Foundation has negotiated the tension between professional control and open participation in journalism; (b) to understand if and how that negotiation has been manifest in its signature innovation initiative, the Knight News Challenge; and (c) to discuss the implications of Knight’s innovation logic for the profession of journalism. This tension over control matters because it is the pre-eminent challenge to the profession’s identity; therefore, how that tension is navigated—by the Knight Foundation as well as by other major actors in journalism—will affect the ultimate shape of the profession and its role in society. The Knight Foundation’s influence is particularly salient because of its centrality to the field as *the* leading nonprofit funder of journalism education, mid-career training, and (lately) innovative experiments and virtually all major news startups (Osnos, 2010; Sopher, 2010). More broadly, however, this case study matters for what it suggests about professions and innovation in turbulent times. Influential institutions can bring change to their professional fields by acting as boundary-spanning agents—stepping outside the traditional confines of their field, altering the rhetorical and structural borders of professional jurisdiction to invite external

¹¹⁹ See http://www.knightfoundation.org/about_knight/annual/images/2004_KF_Annual_Report.pdf.

contribution and correction, and altogether creating the space and providing the capital for innovation to flourish.

This chapter proceeds in four parts: first, a review of the empirical findings of this dissertation, in order to abstract larger lessons from them; second, a discussion of what these findings suggest about the future of journalism, its boundaries, ethics, and institutions; third, a wider consideration of how this case contributes to an understanding of professional innovation beyond journalism; and, finally, a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of this case study, and how they point to future research.

A SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

As explained previously, the components of this case study can be seen as a three-step progression: from the macro-level view of the Knight Foundation, to a meso-level consideration of the Knight News Challenge, to a micro-level analysis of select News Challenge winners who sought to engage in journalism. Through it all, my ultimate aim was to understand how these organizational and individual actors perceive and act upon journalism in light of professional and participatory logics: namely, how they situate themselves in relation to journalism and other fields, and how they articulate journalism's boundaries and ethical norms. The "professional project" (Sarfatti Larson, 1977), with its emphasis on the struggle over jurisdiction (Abbott, 1988) and boundaries (Gieryn, 1983), led me to put special emphasis on the way the actors under study here—the Knight Foundation and its leading officials; the Knight News Challenge and its aspirants; and the news innovators who intended to do journalism—negotiate the tension between professional control and open participation. The major findings at each step of the analysis deserve some consideration, so as to identify themes that unite them.

In Chapter 5, which examined the foundation’s innovation efforts as a whole, I found that, under the guidance of Alberto Ibargüen, the Knight Foundation has made a key transformation in recent years. First, it has accepted that the “problem” of journalism in the digital era is not one of saving newspapers so much as finding new ways to accomplish journalism’s core function of “meeting the information needs of communities.” Second, Knight has turned away from its longstanding reliance on professional expertise—both the news industry’s *and* its own—to acknowledge that the solutions may well come from the aggregate expertise of a participatory crowd of contributors, including and perhaps especially those outside of journalism. Third, these connected assumptions led the foundation to conclude that it should *give up control* over some facets of its philanthropy, while likewise giving up control over maintaining journalism’s professional boundaries of exclusion to participation. For Knight, this marked no small departure from its historical emphasis on journalism professionalism, and represented a growing faith in the “wisdom of the crowd.” These rhetorical adaptations were associated with changes in the Knight funding process, most notably in the development of the Knight News Challenge, which challenged the traditional, top-down grant-funding method as well as traditional understandings of journalism. In more recent times, however, the Knight Foundation has undergone a further evolution in moving from “journalism” to “information.” By downplaying its roots in professional journalism and highlighting its boundary-spanning interest in promoting “information” for communities, Knight has been able to expand its influence as an agent of change among fields and funders beyond journalism.

Because these changes at Knight Foundation were first and most prominently made manifest in the introduction of the Knight News Challenge, this prize-philanthropy

contest received closer attention in Chapter 6. I did this with a mixed-methods approach, beginning with a quantitative analysis of secondary data on the content of original grant proposals made by more than 5,000 applicants. In line with the foundation’s movement away from professional expertise and toward crowd wisdom, the contest featured surprisingly few submissions by newspapers, and those applications that advanced to the finalist and winner stages tended to include forms of participation and distributed knowledge—e.g., crowdsourcing and user manipulation—as well as other features (e.g., software development) not typically associated with journalism. Additionally, through a qualitative textual analysis of winning proposals, I found a striking similarity in the way the winners embraced citizen participation, envisioned a symbiosis between professionals and amateurs, and saw the benefits of giving up editorial control (under certain circumstances). The overriding sense was that winners believed that professional judgment and distributed participation could co-exist in a harmonious whole: that the work of professional journalists and the contributions of citizens could be mutually inclusive, reciprocal and beneficial in a networked media environment.

Finally, when I went deeper by interviewing select winners of the Knight News Challenge, in Chapter 7, I found that “news innovators” see journalism less as a proprietary profession to be protected and more as an open practice to be shared. By framing it this way, news innovators resolve any supposed professional-participatory tension, precisely because in this view there is no priesthood-like claim to exclusivity that might be “threatened” by amateur intrusion in the news process. By separating *journalism* from its longstanding *professionalization*, news innovators are able to “pull apart” journalism, rhetorically—holding fast to essential functions for democracy even while discarding certain professional routines (e.g., “scooping” and objectivity) deemed

outmoded. In this process of unpacking and re-assembling journalism, news innovators identify *participation* as a new normative ethic. That is, journalism not only *can* be participatory, but indeed *should* be—and not just marginally so, but integrated into the very fabric of news production. User participation is embraced for what it accomplishes normatively (making the news process more transparent and democratic), and for how it represents a larger confidence in collective intelligence. Ultimately, however, these ideals are challenged in practice, as several news innovators report struggling to attract sufficient activity from users as well as ongoing financial support from the Knight Foundation, raising questions about the sustainability of these innovations—and, indeed, the longevity of the ideas about journalism that they espouse.

PARTICIPATION AND THE PROBLEMS OF JOURNALISM

These findings, while gathered in distinct ways and through a mixture of methods, are best understood as a composite whole, forming a picture of the Knight Foundation as a catalyzing agent in journalism that has sought to reshape the boundaries, ethics, and institutions of the field. *The overarching conclusion is that Knight and its grantees have worked to make user/citizen participation a normative given in journalism—an ethical imperative like the verities of accuracy and fairness.*

Why have they done this? Their motivations certainly vary, as does the degree to which these organizational and individual actors actually encouraged and enabled such participation in their projects. For example, among the innovators featured in Chapter 7, many of them touted the emancipating potential of participation—its power to open space for marginalized voices and thereby create a more egalitarian, enriched, and engaged democracy; yet, on the other hand, the business professional among the group (Richard Anderson of VillageSoup) was just as interested in what participation could do for his

bottom line as it could for his community. In the case of Ibargiñen and the Knight Foundation, they appear to have embraced participation in part because of their growing fascination with technology and the open-source ethos of cyberculture (c.f., Turner, 2006). Additionally, an embrace of participation, with its contrast to the professional logic, offered a break from the field—even some crucial distance from the sinking newspaper industry. Simultaneously, a people-first, outward-looking emphasis on peer-to-peer participation presented a genuine opportunity to appropriate the populist ideals of the foundation’s founders: “to bestir people into an awareness of their own condition, provide inspiration for their thoughts and rouse them to pursue their true interests.”¹²⁰

Regardless of the precise motivation, however, these various forms of entertaining and espousing participation, manifest throughout this dissertation, can be traced back to a common theme: a frustration with journalism’s status quo. This was both a frustration with journalism’s *ideology* of professional control as well as its *practices* that had calcified as a result of that ideology. The professional paradigm of journalism, in this view, had become too ossified, too inflexible, precisely at the time when a globalizing world demanded greater fluidity and freedom, when the digitization of media and culture had ushered in a general expectation for a dialogical conversation rather than a one-way lecture. Yes, journalism’s professional hardiness—even arrogance—has served its purpose in giving journalists the autonomy and authority to hold powerful interests accountable. But this intransigence in the face of change has also served to reify certain professional routines that have proven damaging—as in the case of horserace-style coverage leading to cynical politics (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997)—or at least

¹²⁰ See <http://knight.stanford.edu/jsk/principles.html>.

incompatible with the times—as in the case of “scoops” coming at the expense of explanation.

As so many authors have shown (e.g., see Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Carey, 1987; Fallows, 1996; McChesney, 2003; Rosen, 1999; Underwood, 1995), the problems of journalism had been mounting for decades, long before the Web’s arrival. But the diffusion of digital technologies, because they facilitated widespread and easy participation in media, served to highlight what had gone wrong: Professionalized journalism had lost touch with its community, and it featured little citizen participation in the important work of shaping public agendas and discourse (c.f., Haas, 2007). This was understandable, even acceptable, when mass media messages ran in only one direction, but not when society’s technological capacity *and* cultural expectations held the potential for something better.

In some sense or another, nearly all of journalism’s reformers today lay claim to this line of reasoning—that the profession needs “rebooting”¹²¹ in order to remain relevant in society, and that this rebooting *ought* to include greater acknowledgment of and engagement with the public and its contributions.¹²² While it’s true that user participation has emerged as a growing feature on news websites, it remains almost entirely marginalized in the news process, or otherwise normalized into existing routines (as discussed in Chapter 3). Thus, what’s significant about the innovators under study here is that they have gone substantially farther. They have broken free of professional constraints, in part because some of them were never socialized into the occupational

¹²¹ See, e.g., the discussions of journalism professor Jay Rosen and technologist Dave Winer advocating a “rebooted system for news” (<http://rebootnews.com/>).

¹²² As I discussed in earlier chapters, this desire for participation in journalism has its roots in the public journalism movement of the 1990s (Rosenberry & St. John III, 2010).

worldview to begin with; and they have created a space for participation to enter journalism as an ethical good—indeed, as a founding doctrine of news innovation.

BOUNDARIES, ETHICS, AND INSTITUTIONS: THREE KEY TAKEAWAYS

This pairing of participation and innovation is an important finding of this study, but there are other, more subtle lessons to be learned by stepping back and considering the *process* through which this participatory ethic was pursued by the Knight Foundation and its innovators. This case study’s results, when viewed holistically, reveal a number of conclusions not readily apparent when approaching the chapters in isolation. I will discuss three takeaways that speak to the future of journalism—its boundary work, ethical norms, and institutions.

The Knight Foundation, to accomplish innovation, backed away from journalism, but these innovators brought journalism back in.

Under Ibargüen’s leadership, the Knight Foundation pursued an innovation strategy that, over time (from 2006 to the present), increasingly has been framed in terms of “information” rather than “journalism.” Even while the foundation remains committed to its historical role in “journalism excellence,” the foundation’s overall emphasis clearly has shifted away from *journalism as a profession* and toward *information as a community need*. Because “information” has none of the ideological baggage of “journalism,” and is sufficiently vague as to be universally applicable, the Knight Foundation has effectively leveraged this new focus to broaden the base of its influence, particularly among a network of place-based nonprofits with whom it increasingly partners on community media projects (FSG Social Impact Advisors, 2010). These extra-journalism actors, such

as nonprofit foundations and corporations, speak the language of “information,” but they have little love for “journalism.” Recall again these words from Ibargiñen:

One of the lessons for me is that when I *used to talk about this as journalism*, I’d get the great glazing of the eyes, as people would say, “Get over yourself, you’re just not that important, you know!” And now I know to say, “OK, this matters, this is at the center of almost anything. *You tell me your subject, and I’ll tell you how information matters.*” (personal interview, February 23, 2010)

Knight’s shift from journalism to information, therefore, can be seen in two ways: first, as a simple resource-dependency kind of adaptation—recognizing that the news industry was failing and so the foundation needed to find a different environment and set of partners through which to preserve its good name; and, second, as a conscious effort to innovate journalism by breaking down its boundaries—recognizing that digital media offered new access to new kinds of information that may well accomplish journalism’s democratic purposes of informed communities, without having to go through professional filters or be labeled “news” as such. In sum, and most optimistically, this change represents Knight’s effort to *save journalism by redefining it*. In attempting to solve the crisis of local information brought on by contractions in the news industry, the Knight Foundation is trying to make “journalism” more palatable to potential philanthropic partners by recasting it as “information.” However, even if the ultimate aim of this strategy is to revitalize journalism, its short-term effect is to downplay “journalism” as a rhetorical construction and actual practice.

Furthermore, and just as importantly, this conflation of “journalism” and “information” begins to blur the distinctions between them, losing sight of the fact that not all information is journalism. I am not suggesting that the foundation *always* conflates the two concepts—for, in fact, its communications aimed toward the professional

community clearly focus on “journalism”—but rather that Knight’s recent outreach beyond the field has given this impression.

Perhaps it is ironic, then, that just as Knight has backed away from journalism, its leading innovators appear to be bringing it back in. The news innovators I interviewed in Chapter 7 do not distinguish between professionals and citizens in the news process, but they *do* separate journalism from information. They argue that it doesn’t matter whether a professional or amateur is doing the gathering, filtering or distributing of information, but that piece of information only *becomes* journalism when it is engaged with and enacted through a set of ethical practices. From the news innovators’ perspective, those ethical practices include the verities of accuracy, fairness, and public interest—the tenets of journalism on which virtually no one disagrees—as well as newer additions, such as a commitment to transparency (i.e., making the journalistic process and one’s biases more open) and participation (i.e., actively encouraging citizen contribution in the news process).

This is a new way of perceiving journalism’s boundaries. Rather than marking jurisdiction according to one’s employment or training, these innovators are calling for something of a higher standard: that despite whatever your press pass may say, you are not a journalist until you are acting as one—gathering, filtering, and distributing in a manner consistent with traditional and emerging ethical practices. By this standard, the partisan hack posing as a television news commentator would not deserve the institutional imprimatur of journalism, while the citizen journalist just might to the extent that he is acting with transparency and public interest in mind.

This approach to seeing journalism as a *set of behaviors* rather than a *state of being* is a healthy step for the field. The critical question going forward, however, is the

obvious one: What exactly does it mean to *do* journalism? How should we know when information *becomes* journalism? David Cohn and other innovators pointed to the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics as the unchanging standard: seek truth and report it, minimize harm, act independently, and be accountable. Those values, they argue, remain the same; what should change are the *bad habits* that journalists have developed: ignoring public input, professing false objectivity, failing to be transparent about sources and motives, and so forth. Good journalism, in this view, becomes a function of traditional values (such as honesty and public service) coupled with newer ones made possible in a digital environment (such as transparency and participation). This constitutes the “ferrying of values” spoken of by Scott Rosenberg: the process, initiated by the Knight Foundation and enacted by the innovators it is funding, of preserving the “important values that we want to save from the old world of journalism and mak[ing] sure that they make it into the new world that is being born now” (personal interview, March 10, 2010). “Ferrying the values” implies more than preservation, for it includes the ongoing negotiation about which *new* values—among them, participation—will become more salient than others in the reformulated ethics that will yet emerge.

Overall, because Knight broke down the boundaries as it stepped away from journalism, it created an opportunity for news innovators to step back in to the field and introduce a reformed (and improved) version of journalism—the boundaries of which have less to do with professional affiliation and more to do with ethical practice.

In seeking to reform journalism, news innovators are not de-professionalizing journalism so much as re-energizing its ideals.

A cursory reading of these findings, particularly the above emphasis of practice over profession, might suggest that Knight and its news innovators are intent on somehow tearing down professionalism in journalism—in effect, de-professionalizing the occupation to the point that it loses its authority, power, and control in public life. It's true that many of those I interviewed were quick to criticize the failings of the profession—its insularity, its reluctance to change, etc.—but it would be false to connect these critiques with a desire to disrupt and displace journalism's basic mission. On the contrary, I would argue that these innovators, in bringing journalism “back in,” are not pushing journalism away from professional norms, ethics, and values, but in fact actually embracing the earliest and most essential of journalism's ideals—its commitment to and ground-level connection with the public, facilitating a space for the community to have a conversation with itself (c.f., Deuze et al., 2007). In this sense, many of the Knight grantees are innovating toward the most idealistic form of journalism: a dialogical conversation like that envisioned by James Carey (1987) or Jürgen Habermas (1991). At the same time, they are innovating *away* from that part of professionalism that indeed is worth discarding: the rigid, almost mindless devotion to owning the discourse—the ideology of control.

Still, is there a place for the professional outlook and its normative structure? Of course, and news innovators understand this, committed as they are to journalism's ethics and higher purposes. Moreover, they recognize as well as anyone that bloggers and citizen journalists are by no means going to “replace” the work of trained professionals who are regularly engaged in monitoring society. What they hope to change, however, is a stultifying professional culture that has served only to block innovation in journalism. The professional paradigm, even as it remains, will inevitably change, coalescing around

key ideals—most notably, participation and transparency—that are more suited to a digital environment. All of this, again, can be seen as a form of interventionist innovation: attempting to save journalism by breaking down its barriers, allowing fresh ideas to grow, and rebuilding its jurisdiction around a set of ethics and practices that better match contemporary needs and trends.

It used to be hard to start a news organization but relatively easier to sustain one; now that the equation has flipped, news innovators are struggling to institutionalize.

The first two takeaways from this case study suggest that, if these innovators have anything to do about it, the future of journalism will be participatory *and* professional. It will change in positive ways, and yet retain an ethical core around which field-spanning norms can be built. The professional-participatory tension, so vexing at the moment, may yet melt away from the scene as a new articulation of journalism emerges in the years to come: a hybrid sensibility that accommodates (and even encourages) citizen input in the news process, while simultaneously seeking to hold fast to values that give journalism consistency, meaning, and purpose. Achieving this balance will be essential. If journalists of the past overreached in assuming that they (and they alone) should wield gatekeeping control over information, then the journalists of the future may risk going too far in outsourcing the work of informed communities to the crowd's wisdom, particularly if they fail to recognize that collective intelligence only works under the right circumstances (see Brabham, 2008; Howe, 2008; Muthukumaraswamy, 2010). There is a calibration of control that, when accomplished, may create the true symbiosis these innovators envision: allowing professional journalists the autonomy and authority to do what they do best—investigate and hold the powerful accountable—even while allowing

citizens to do what they do best—provide distributed forms of intelligence, made possible by digitization.

And yet, all of this idealism comes with a serious caveat. The experience of news innovators studied here indicates that taking lofty ideals and translating them into actual practice is a difficult leap. Old habits die hard, including among audiences who have come to expect a passive role in the news. Getting people to pay attention to your startup news site, in an information market that is saturated in abundance (Chyi, 2009), is challenging at best, virtually impossible at worst. Just as the economic model for producing news has become precarious for legacy news media, it is clear that most journalism-focused experiments will rely on philanthropic subsidy for the foreseeable future. This is especially true of the smaller, more citizen-focused projects that have emerged from the Knight News Challenge, as well as from another Knight Foundation initiative, the J-Lab's New Voices seed funding for citizen media.¹²³ While the larger news startups like Voice of San Diego and Texas Tribune have the potential for a more stable and diversified set of revenues beyond nonprofit philanthropy, generally it is these smaller organizations—the ones most intent on engaging in participatory journalism—that are most reliant on Knight funding, and therefore are most vulnerable when the grant money dries up. David Sasaki, who leads the 2007 Knight News Challenge winner Rising Voices, wrote presciently of this problem in a 2008 blog post:

The Knight Foundation is single-handedly making citizen media both more serious and more respected by giving financial support to some of the field's most innovative thinkers. But is this a sustainable model for the transformation of media? What happens when the News Challenge's five-year funding period concludes? *All of the News Challenge grantee projects are impressive, innovative,*

¹²³ See <http://www.j-newvoices.org/>.

*and important, but not a single one is turning a profit, nor do they seem poised to any time soon.*¹²⁴

This sobering assessment is about more than financial sustainability; it points to the larger challenge of institutionalization—of becoming permanent in and instrumental to the network of journalism. The professional field, for all its economic breakdown, remains dominated by leading institutional actors—e.g., *The New York Times* in the industry, Columbia University in the academy, and Knight Foundation in philanthropy—and will continue to be in the years ahead, even if the exact composition of institutional leaders changes over time. The field is ever shifting; formerly peripheral blogs like the Huffington Post grow into institutional fixtures, even as erstwhile luminaries see their agenda-setting influence fade. Indeed, even as the media landscape fractures, the question is not, “Will there be news institutions in the future?” but rather, “How will they be shaped?”¹²⁵ Knight is attempting to wield this shaping influence over news innovation in the nonprofit realm. The innovators Knight is funding now must navigate the challenge of positioning themselves in the field so as to attain sufficient capital, financial and professional, to claim a lasting foothold. Most, clearly, will not accomplish this.

Ironically, the very features that make these startups innovative—their nimble size, flexibility, earnestness, and idealism—also make it difficult for them to institutionalize. They lack the heft, the rootedness, and even the bureaucracy through which to claim a measure of credibility from the public and their professional peers. Whereas it once might have been very hard to start a news organization (given the high costs of presses and broadcast towers) and yet relatively easier to sustain that

¹²⁴ See <http://www.pbs.org/idealab/2008/03/can-the-knight-legacy-lead-to-sustainability005.html>.

¹²⁵ C.W. (Chris) Anderson elaborated on this point during a future-of-journalism panel discussion at Stanford University in April 2010 (see <http://blogs.law.stanford.edu/futureofnews/2010/04/30/panel-3-unpacking-we-are-all-journalists-now/>).

organization (because of media monopolies in local markets), today the equation has been turned upside down: News startups are easy to create, but far more difficult to institutionalize. It is in this context that news innovations struggle for survival, with no easy solution in sight.

For the Knight News Challenge winners analyzed here, their startup funding generally was quite generous, and has given them an opportunity to experiment (and fail) with a level of freedom unavailable otherwise. Several innovators expressed concern, however, that the Knight Foundation has not done enough to help these projects succeed beyond the life of the grant. The challenge, as one grantee noted, is in going from “ideas to institutions”—taking one-off projects pitched by ambitious individuals, and turning them into something that has staying power. The foundation, for example, has not taken an active role in connecting winners with other nonprofits for additional funding after the News Challenge, to the dismay of some observers. Nonetheless, we should not be surprised that Knight has not gone out of its way (or so it would appear) in helping every one of its News Challenge winners institutionalize, for that kind of prudence would run against the hands-off, let-a-thousand-flowers-bloom libertarianism of the contest. Indeed, when Knight Foundation put its faith in the crowd’s wisdom, it was suggesting at the same time that the distributed forces of the market would do the work of sorting out winners and losers in the game of news innovation. As Ibargüen himself said he told his staff when they grew overconfident in believing they could identify surefire successes among grant applicants, “What the hell do we know about innovation?” (personal interview, February 23, 2010).

PROFESSIONAL INNOVATION BEYOND JOURNALISM

Thus far, I have emphasized why the Knight Foundation and its innovation strategy are important within journalism and for the field's future. But this case study can be linked to broader social processes. The professional-participatory tension, while looming large in journalism, is merely one facet of a larger crisis facing professions in contemporary society. Since the rise of professionalization more than a century ago, the professional paradigm has been based on a stable pattern of safeguarding a body of abstract knowledge and its associated practices, and maintaining such control for the normative purpose of doing "good work" on society's behalf (Gardner et al., 2001). In this bargain, professionals asked the public to acknowledge their exclusive claim to jurisdictional authority (Abbott, 1988), and in turn professionals promised to use their power, prestige, and autonomy from corporate and government interests to act in accordance with standardized ethics and public-service ideals. A growing confluence of social and material forces—not least of which is the rise of do-it-yourself culture and user participation afforded by digital technologies (Deuze, 2006)—has challenged professionals' capacity to keep control of their jurisdictional claims, in journalism especially but in the information professions broadly.

In such moments of crisis, what becomes of the professions? How is their paradigm repaired? The case of the Knight Foundation presents an opportunity to see how a profession can innovate and adapt through the influence of a catalytic agent—or what I have referred to as a *professional innovator*. Professional stewards—such as leading nonprofit foundations in their respective fields—may be uniquely positioned to bring systemic change to their professions, because they have the requisite reservoir of capital and credibility to stimulate innovation within and across professional boundaries. In this case, only the Knight Foundation could have undertaken this kind of profession

reformation in journalism. No other organization was both so central to the field and yet not beholden to it. Because of its history in journalism as well as its nonprofit and well-endowed status that shields it from market and donor influences, Knight has a rare (and seemingly contradictory) combination of *institutionalized authority*, through which to command the profession's attention, and a *free-floating autonomy*, through which to step beyond journalism's bounds when it suits the foundation's interests. Just as crucially, the foundation has money to spend, which serves as a bridging mechanism for attracting other fields (e.g., computer science) and funders (e.g., place-based foundations) to take an interest in journalism. In this sense, Knight can be seen as a boundary-spanning agent, using its clout on both sides of the fence to create a space for change to occur.

This boundary-spanning element is important for what it contributes to the sociology of professions and field theory. Among other things, the sociology of professions suggests that expert occupations seek to professionalize themselves for purposes of power, authority, and prestige by seeking to widen the scope of their *control* over certain knowledge and practices. And, the greater that control, the more a given profession may claim influence in the relational fields of cultural production envisioned by Bourdieu (1983). Additionally, the literature suggests that expert occupations tend to react defensively in the face of outside threat, guarding the gates of professional entry and generally resisting change and innovation—just as journalists have done. However, my findings shed new light on this narrative of occupational closure in several ways. First, this study indicates that even the most institutionalized of organizations within a profession may exercise its agency in unpredictable ways during a time of stress—embracing change, taking risks, and otherwise adjusting to absorb outside influences rather than push back against them. While such behavior may be specific to a single

organization, when that organization has an agenda-setting role within the profession, its approach can have a ripple effect on the field at large. This, in turn, points to intra-professional heterogeneity, and the need for understanding how different professional actors respond in different contexts of crisis and change. More interesting still, this dissertation suggests that innovative organizations attempting to effect change on behalf of their professional fields may well seek to expand the cultural capital of their occupation by *relinquishing* control, rather than the other way around. This notion of giving up some level of control and autonomy in order to gain greater trust from and influence among the public is different; it challenges traditional ideas of expertise and monopolization as the portals to professional power (Sarfati Larson, 1977). Finally, in light of field theory, this dissertation suggests that the role of the boundary-spanning agent needs to be more fully understood in the field approach to the study of professions, including journalism. Bourdieuan sociology, while good at identifying core institutions and comparing cross-national differences relationally, is not so adept at conceptualizing the boundary zones—where fields begin and end—nor the activities that occur around and across those boundaries (Anderson, 2008a). Fields, therefore, need to be understood in a more fluid sense, with greater capacity for recognizing innovation within fields, bridging activities across them, and the cross-pollination of that can occur through the influence of a boundary-spanning agent.

We can liken the Knight Foundation’s boundary-spanning position to the “network forum” concept described by Fred Turner (2005; 2006) in his research on Stewart Brand and the rise of digital utopianism. A network forum is a place where members of different communities come together (physically or virtually), exchange ideas and legitimacy, and in doing so “come to see themselves as members of a single

social network” (Turner, 2005, p. 489). In the case of Stewart Brand, his Whole Earth network brought together the counterculturalists of San Francisco and the technologists of Silicon Valley to reimagine personal computers and virtual communities as new democratic frontiers. In the case of Knight Foundation, I would argue that the Knight News Challenge, among other initiatives, has created the beginnings of a network forum that brings together a diverse set of actors—social activists, computer programmers, academics, and yes, journalists—through the shared interest in getting seed funding and “hacking” the problem of news/information. Thus, professional innovators are not only well-placed within a network, but they are also effective at creating a network forum in which boundaries are crossed and interdisciplinary connections get forged.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The primary strength of this case study is that it addresses perhaps the most dynamic and important phenomenon in journalism today—the rise of innovation, within and beyond the field’s traditional boundaries—and it does this through an examination of the leading funder of that innovation. To date, little academic research has explored these experiments and initiatives, and none has attempted a systematic study of the Knight Foundation as a whole and its News Challenge contest in particular—the two primary catalysts that have contributed much to this innovation moment. Moreover, this case is made richer and more revealing through the use of *mixed* methods (qualitative and quantitative), *multiple* methods (combinations of depth interviews and textual analysis, for example), and *macro/meso/micro* distinctions in assessing the case study and its components. The result has been a holistic portrayal of a case that has implications for the future of journalism and its professional outlook.

On the other hand, this depth of focus makes it difficult to generalize too greatly, as with any case study. A study of journalism innovation only begins with the Knight Foundation, and thus needs to include empirical data on a greater set of foundations, news organizations, and individual innovators for it to have real validity in explaining the present trends and predicting the future directions of journalism. Even within this case study, there are weaknesses that limit its dependability and credibility. First, with a seemingly bottomless well of texts from which to choose, my analysis of the Knight Foundation (in Chapter 5) was inevitably limited to those I deemed most salient; others in my position might have drawn different conclusions about which texts to study, let alone how they ought to be interpreted. Secondly, there are limitations to the secondary data analyzed in Chapter 6, given that the data were coded outside of my control, using a coding scheme that was not designed for the particular analyses I had hoped to undertake. Moreover, the original content analysis of these Knight News Challenge proposals was funded by the foundation itself; this raises at least some conflict-of-interest concerns about the quality of the data. (However, I found no evidence to suspect any problems.) Finally, because I chose the set of News Challenge winners to be interviewed in Chapter 7, my own biases about who “counted” as a “news innovator” played into these selections; again, another researcher might have come to another conclusion.

Taken as a whole, these weaknesses point to the need for further research. At the macro level, there remains much to be learned about the nature of journalism innovation. Exactly how, and under whose influence, is innovation being encouraged, underwritten, and enacted, across the field at large? Among these innovations, how is the professional-participatory tension being negotiated? To the extent that journalism’s boundaries have become more porous, how are actors from other fields stepping in, and with what kind of

assumptions about concepts such as “information” and “journalism”? Ultimately, these questions have to do with capturing a sense for how journalism is changing, descriptively, in order to assess the relevance of existing theories and/or suggest new frameworks through which to understand and predict what all of this disruption means for the profession and its place in society. If I turn this analytical lens to the more narrow (but no less important) question of the Knight Foundation specifically, there is more to be understood as the organization evolves—as its innovation strategy matures, its challenge grants run their course, and its innovators either move on or find sustainable funding. To what extent has the Knight News Challenge had a ripple effect on the industry and its professional culture? How has the challenge of institutionalizing shaped Knight’s innovations? And how can we identify actual change (or lack thereof) in the professional norms and practices of journalism, beyond the ideals of Knight innovators?

CONCLUSION

What I have argued in this dissertation is that the Knight Foundation, by recasting the rhetorical and actual boundaries of journalism jurisdiction, has opened space for professional innovation—principally, the introduction of participation as an ethical norm, through which the profession may adapt more effectively to a networked media environment. To accomplish this innovation, Knight had to step outside journalism in order to provide the cover for innovators to move back in. The end result has been a modified rendering of journalism, particularly on the part of news innovators, that is hybrid in nature: committed to the professional ideals of journalism, even as it embraces new ethics and practices.

This *both/and* nature of news innovation was reflected in a telling passage from one prominent Knight News Challenge grant proposal. The pitch came from MIT, and it

proposed a Center for Civic Media that later would be awarded the contest's largest prize (\$5 million) and would be heralded in 2007 as the headline winner of the inaugural News Challenge. In the years since, the Center for Civic Media has acted as the organizing hub for Knight News Challenge conferences, and so its mission and purposes are in sync with those of the Knight Foundation. In this proposal, the authors acknowledged the need for a "reliable system" of news professionals, while also arguing that civic media are about empowering people to participate at the grassroots level, to ensure a "diversity of inputs" and "mutual respect" for democratic dialogue. As a result of this professional-participatory hybrid, they concluded: "Some of what emerges here *looks like traditional journalism*; some of it may pull in *radically new directions*."

This not only underscores the professional-participatory tension, but also speaks to the ultimate challenge for journalism. The profession needs to retain a sense of stability and traditional moorings in uncertain times. But it also needs something radical and new—a shock therapy of innovation to enliven a professional field that lost its way. I became interested in studying the Knight Foundation, its News Challenge, and the winners who have come from that competition precisely because collectively they represented a "radical new direction"—the most prominent attempt to make a break from journalism's ideology of control, from its general reluctance to engage its audiences in a co-creative fashion. On the surface, Knight and its affiliates seemed to be moving into that lesser-known fourth quadrant that I displayed in Figure 1 from the introduction: the intersection of alternative (nonprofit) funding models and alternative (participatory) news-assembly models. Because this constituted a new space in journalism, I was interested in assessing what this innovation movement signaled about the future of the

profession. So, my inquiry began with this question: What are these innovators doing *with* and *to* journalism?

The answer is complicated but, on the whole, encouraging. First, there are concerns about the extent to which the Knight Foundation has come to “own the field” on journalism innovation. Should any one institution have such a ubiquitous influence on a profession’s internal development? Knight funds nearly every major journalism conference, news startup, and the like, and so its presence is pervasive, if often below the radar. This influence largely is very positive, but a number of observers privately have expressed concern about the extent to which this makes the field too dependent on a single foundation when it comes to funding innovation.

That being said, I am optimistic about the foundation’s role in journalism and innovation as a whole. Perhaps I can illustrate this concluding point with an analogy. Journalism, as a profession, is like a tree that needs tending. In a mighty struggle against slow internal decay and fast-charging external winds, some of its branches have died, their fruit withered. A professional steward has looked after this tree for a long time, watering and fertilizing over the years. It genuinely wants what is best for the tree, even though it knows its limitations—that it can’t save the tree by itself. So, the steward goes elsewhere in the orchard for help, looking to see how other branches might bring new life to the tree. The steward returns and begins a two-part process: pruning the dying branches—much to the chagrin of some who preferred the old tree as it was—and grafting in fresh branches cut from a variety of other trees, in hopes that together they will reinvigorate the (journalism) tree and get it producing good fruit again. The goal is worthy: to save the roots—in this case, an enduring commitment to accuracy, fairness, independence, and public well-being that forms the bedrock of journalism—even while

clearing away some of the dead wood of outdated professional practices. This purging, in turn, allows the grafted branches the requisite space and sunlight they need to take hold.

My parable isn't perfect, but it captures what I believe is the most heartening element of this innovation moment: that it's pushing the field toward a sustainable balance, of preserving ethical principles while also making room for new norms—like participation—to become integral parts of the life system. If journalism is to survive and fulfill its democratic functions in the coming years, it will have to integrate the conflicting impulses of tradition and change, letting both grow together and welcoming the hybrid fruits of professional and citizen collaboration that they may bring.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Overview of Knight News Challenge Winners (2007-09)

Year	Project Title	Amount	Winner	Organization	Location	Project Summary
2007	Center for Future Civic Media	\$5,000,000	Chris Csikszentmihályi, Mitchel Resnick, and Henry Jenkins	MIT Media Lab & Comparative Media Studies Dept.	Cambridge, MA	To create the Center for Future Civic Media, a leadership project designed to encourage community news experiments and new technologies and practices.
2007	EveryBlock	\$1,100,000	Adrian Holovaty	EveryBlock	Chicago, IL	To create, test and release open-source software that links databases to allow citizens of a large city to learn (and act on) civic information about their neighborhood or block.
2007	Open-Source Community News	\$885,000	Richard Anderson	VillageSoup	Bar Harbor, ME	To create an open-source version of VillageSoup's successful community news software, combining professional journalism, blogs, citizen journalism, online advertising and "reverse publishing" from online to print.
2007	Mobile Youth Journalism	\$700,000	Ian V. Rowe	MTV	New York, NY	To cover the 2008 presidential election with a Knight Mobile Youth Journalist in every state and the District of Columbia who will create video news reports specifically for distribution on cell phones.
2007	Digital News Academic Program	\$639,000	Rich Gordon	Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern U.	Evanston, IL	To create an academic program blending computer science and journalism, designed to fill a staffing void at many digital news sites.
2007	Taking Radio 'Out of the Box'	\$600,000	Alex Villari	WNYC Radio	New York, NY	To improve a city's awareness of its arts and culture by bringing more diverse voices to WNYC public radio using a new type of interactive web site.

2007	Knight-Kauffman Center	\$552,000	Christopher Callahan	Walter Cronkite School of Journalism & Mass Communication, Arizona State U.	Tempe, AZ	To support the development of media entrepreneurship and the creation of new digital media products through the establishment of the Knight-Kauffman Center for Digital Media Entrepreneurship at Arizona State University.
2007	Chi-Town Daily News	\$340,000	Geoff Dougherty	Chi-Town Daily News	Chicago, IL	To recruit and train a network of 75 citizen journalists—one in each Chicago neighborhood—who will work with editors to produce a professional, comprehensive daily local news report.
2007	Citizen Journalist Resources	\$250,000	David Ardia	Citizen Media Law Project, Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Harvard Law School, and the Center for Citizen Media	Cambridge, MA	To create a set of online resources for citizen journalists—including state and federal legal guides; advice on business formation; and a database of lawsuits, subpoenas and legal threats involving citizen media.
2007	NY News Games	\$250,000	Gail Robinson	Gotham Gazette	New York, NY	To develop online games to inform and engage players about key issues confronting New York City (e.g., the environment and waste management).
2007	Playing the News	\$250,000	Nora Paul and Kathleen Hansen	School of Journalism & Mass Comm., University of Minnesota	Minneapolis, MN	To build a news simulation environment that allows citizens to play through a complex, evolving news story through interaction with the newsmakers.
2007	Rising Voices	\$244,000	Ethan Zuckerman	Global Voices, Berkman Center for Internet and Society, Harvard Law School	Cambridge, MA	To build on the work of Global Voices by introducing thousands of new developing-world bloggers to the world, helping students, journalists, activists and people from rural areas to the blogosphere.
2007	Digital News 'Incubators'	\$230,000	Diane Lynch, Jane Briggs-	Seven U.S. universities	Various	To create "incubators" at seven academic institutions to foster creative thinking about

			Bunting, Ann Brill, Pam McAllister, Angela Powers, and Ardyth Broadrick Sohn			solutions to digital news problems. (The schools: Michigan State, University of Kansas, Kansas State, Western Kentucky University, Ithaca College, University of Nevada-Las Vegas and St. Michael's College.)
2007	Placeblogger	\$222,000	Lisa Williams	Placeblogger	Watertown, MA	To make it easier for people to find hyperlocal news and information about their city or neighborhood through promotion of "universal geotagging" in blogs.
2007	Media Mobilizing Project of Philadelphia	\$150,000	Todd Wolfson	Media Mobilizing Project of Philadelphia	Philadelphia, PA	To develop online digital newscasts for Philadelphia's immigrant community and to distribute them via the new citywide wireless platform.
2007	Boulder Carbon Tax Tracker	\$90,000	Amy Gahrn and Adam Glenn	I, Reporter	Boulder, CO	To create a citizen/professional journalism project using innovative Web tools and citizen journalism practices to track the implementation of a carbon tax in Boulder, Colorado.
2007	NextNewsroom (Ideal Newsroom)	\$60,000	Chris O'Brien	The Chronicle, the student paper of Duke University	Durham, NC	To plan an "ideal newsroom" for the digital news era and create an online resource for student newspapers and other news organizations looking to bring their facilities up to date with new media trends.
2007	Oakland Jazz Scene Game	\$60,000	Paul Grabowicz	University of California - Berkeley	Berkeley, CA	To re-create Oakland's once-vibrant jazz and blues club scene as an online video game and virtual world.
2007	Beat Reporters & Social Networks (blog)	\$15,000	Jay Rosen	Department of Journalism, New York University	New York, NY	To blog about how beat reporters can work with social networks to improve their reporting.
2007	Community Media Toolset (blog)	\$15,000	J.D. Lasica	Ourmedia.org	San Francisco, CA	To blog about a Community Media Toolset that will provide publishers, editors and developers at citizen media sites with easy-to-use social media tools—plug-ins, scripts, guides and tutorials—to expand public participation.

2007	Connecting People, Content and Community (blog)	\$15,000	Dan Schultz	Carnegie Mellon University undergraduate student	Elkins Park, PA	To blog about giving all individuals a voice within their local and global communities through a centralized, user-maintained news system.
2007	Creating and Maintaining Diversity (blog)	\$15,000	Dori J. Maynard	Robert C. Maynard Institute for Journalism Education	Oakland, CA	To blog about creating and maintaining diversity in digital media.
2007	Interactive Community Spaces (blog)	\$15,000	Leslie Rule and Paul Lamb			To blog about the Interactive Community Spaces project—the use of GPS tracking to inform people through mobile media.
2007	Paulding.com (blog)	\$15,000	G. Patton Hughes	Neomaxcom, LLC		To blog about making Paulding.com a financial success—from discussing practical aspects of building its revenue base from advertising and paid subscriptions, to sharing prior (and future) technical and strategic successes, failures, objections and issues.
2007	Related Items (blog)	\$15,000	Benjamin Melançon	Agaric Design Collective	Natick, MA	To blog about Related Items, a module for the community-oriented and open-source content management system, Drupal, which enables people to quickly and easily connect any item (news, idea, group, event) to any other content they consider related.
2007	The Ideas Factory (blog)	\$15,000	Steven Clift			To blog about The Ideas Factory, which will generate and share big ideas from the world of citizen engagement online via the Knight Foundation blog for innovators in online news and citizen media.
2008	Freedom Fone	\$876,000	Bev Clark	Kubatana	Harare, Zimbabwe	To provide a voice database where users can access news and public-interest information via land, mobile or Internet phones, in a concept similar to a “telephone tree.”
2008	Printcasting	\$837,000	Dan Pacheco	The Bakersfield Californian	California	To allow individuals to easily create ad-supported, customized publications with a mix

						of local news and information.
2008	The News is Coming	\$630,400	Prof. Guy Berger	Rhodes University	Grahamstown, South Africa	To facilitate local news reports, produced by professionals and citizens and disseminated through cell phones, so as to help connect an all-black township in South Africa with the white population living in the urban center—giving everyone in Grahamstown equal access to news and information.
2008	Sochi Olympics Project	\$600,000	Alexander Zolotarev	CUNY Graduate School of Journalism; Moscow State U.	Russia	To build a website and database where the people of Sochi, Russia, can report on and discuss the impact of hosting the 2014 Winter Olympics.
2008	Tools for Public Access TV	\$380,000	Tony Shawcross	Denver Open Media	Denver, CO	To build a toolset to help public access television stations and community technology centers collaborate on a non-commercial media network for greater community reach.
2008	Transparent Journalism	\$350,000	Sir Tim Berners-Lee and Martin Moore	Media Standards Trust	England	To design a way for content creators to add information on their sources to their reports, as a form of “source tagging”—so as to help the public identify fair, accurate and contextual news.
2008	Spot.Us (Spot Journalism)	\$340,000	David Cohn	Spot.Us	California	To facilitate “community-powered reporting” by building a platform through which the public can commission and participate with journalists to do reporting on important and perhaps overlooked topics.*
2008	RadioEngage (RadioDrupal)	\$327,000	Margaret Rosas	Quiddities Development, Inc.	California	To create a turnkey website platform for radio news organizations using the open-source content management system Drupal.
2008	News on Cell Phones	\$325,000	Dr. Joel Selanikio	DataDyne	Washington, DC	To make it easier for basic cellphone models—like those often found in rural and less-developed areas—to select and receive news feeds, expanding the news universe for those whose only digital device is a cell phone.

2008	Community News Network	\$275,000	Anthony Pesce and Dharmista Rood	UCLA <i>Daily Bruin</i>	Los Angeles, CA	To create online publishing software geared to mobile editing, with the intention of helping college journalists use the content management system to remotely assign and edit stories, videos and photos for online college sites.
2008	Video Volunteers	\$275,000	Jessica Mayberry	Video Volunteers	New York, NY	To train 100 people in rural India as community video producers—citizen journalists who will produce magazine-style video news reports, typically on local social issues, and show them on widescreen projectors in poor communities.
2008	Community Radio in India	\$200,000	Aaditeshwar Seth	University of Waterloo	India	To help rural radio stations in India connect to the internet by using new software and computer-based FM transmitters.
2008	Beanstock'd	\$40,000	Angela Antony and Sandra Ekong	The Beanstock'd Project	Massachusetts	To encourage green living through an interactive game that allows users to track their environmental impact, discover how they stack up against neighbors, and team up in a friendly competition to leave the smallest imprint on their community.
2008	Reporting On	\$15,000	Ryan Sholin	ReportingOn	Fairport, NY	To help reporters working on similar topics to communicate and share ideas using a social networking tool and website created through this project.
2008	Signcasts	\$15,000	Brein McNamara	Signcasts - Sign Language Community Journalism Initiative	Minnesota	To blog about ways to empower deaf people to become citizen journalists.
2008	The Includer	\$15,000	Andrius Kulikauskas	Minciu Sodas	Lithuania	To blog about different methods for getting digital information to rural areas that don't have internet access.
2009	DocumentCloud	\$719,500	Eric Umansky, Scott Klein, and Aron Pilhofer	DocumentCloud	New York, NY	To enhance investigative reporting by making source documents easy to find, share and read, via an online database of documents

						contributed by a consortium of news organizations, watchdog groups and bloggers, and shared with the public at large.
2009	MediaBugs	\$335,000	Scott Rosenberg		Berkeley, CA	To promote transparency and provide recognition for those who admit and fix their mistakes through the creation of a public test website, based in the San Francisco Bay Area, that will allow people to report errors in any news report, offline or online.
2009	Councilpedia	\$250,000	Gail Robinson	Citizens Union Foundation	New York, NY	To expand the New York City Council coverage of Gotham Gazette through a wiki, open to the public, that's devoted to making transparent the campaign contributions and voting records of local legislators.
2009	Data Visualization	\$243,600	Aaron Presnall	The Jefferson Institute	Washington, DC	To create a suite of easy-to-use tools for making data visualizations, allowing smaller news organizations and everyday citizens to make sense of complicated data (e.g., government statistics).
2009	Mobile Media Toolkit	\$200,000	Katrin Verclas	MobileActive	New York, NY	To offer media production toolsets for download and use on a variety of cellphones across regions of the world, so as to help citizens become more active in creating and sharing news and information.
2009	The Daily Phoenix (now CityCircles)	\$95,000	Aleksandra Chojnacka and Adam Klawonn		Phoenix, AZ	To use print, web and mobile technology to reach commuters on a new light-rail system in Phoenix, Arizona—offering news and information, games, social networking features and promotions on a stop-by-stop basis so that riders can interact with the city on a more meaningful level.
2009	Crowdsourcing Crisis Information	\$70,000	Ory Okolloh	Ushahidi	Orlando, Fla.	To build an open-source system of online mapping and timelines that journalists and citizens can use to contribute multiple reports during crises and other major events.

2009	Virtual Street Corners	\$40,000	John Ewing		Roxbury, Mass.	To connect two Greater Boston neighborhoods—close in proximity, but separated by divisions of race and class—through citizen journalists’ video newscasts that will be projected on life-size screens to enable real-time interaction between citizens.
2009	CMS Upload Utility	\$10,000	Joe Boydston	McNaughton Newspaper Group	Placerville, Calif.	To create easy-to-use tools that will allow news organizations to essentially drag and drop articles onto an online news site, saving news organizations—particularly small community newspapers—significant time, money and manpower.

Notes: All information in this chart—including the text for “Project Summary”—is adapted, either in whole or in part, from the Knight News Challenge website (see <http://www.newschallenge.org/winners>). Where no information is provided in a particular category, the Knight Foundation made none available. Project titles that are followed by “blog” in parenthesis refer to a special category in 2007 in which several winners received \$15,000 to start a blog *about* their idea, as opposed to receiving the full funding through which to carry out their proposal. For more information on the backgrounds and bios of all these individuals—including others who run the day-to-day operations of some of these projects—see the following website: <http://www.pbs.org/idealab/author-bios.html>.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Introduction: “As I mentioned in the e-mail, I’m conducting a case study of the Knight News Challenge, including reading some of the proposals pitched by finalists and winners like yourself. I was especially intrigued by your winning innovation and would like to learn more: about how you developed the idea, how things are progressing so far, and what you plan for the future.”

Tell me a little about your background. What attracted you to journalism / media / the KNC?

There’s a lot of talk these days about “news innovation.” What does that mean to you— what constitutes innovation in journalism?

What are your thoughts on the role the Knight Foundation has played in the general innovation of journalism? How does Knight’s work compare to that of others?

There are a lot of opinions about what journalism is and ought to be. In your view, how do you define journalism? What should it be, and what should it do?

(What is citizen journalism?)

(Who is a journalist?)

(To what extent has the role of journalists changed or remained the same?)

From your perspective, what are the most important journalistic values—and why?

(For example, how do you think about issues such as...?)

- Credibility (authenticity)
- Responsibility (accountability)
- Control over content (autonomy)
- Competence (quality)

* *How are you incorporating these ideas about journalism into your project?*

* *In your view, to what extent should the users have control?*

Do you consider your project to be a “news organization”—and why?

Looking back, how did you envision your project? (Where did you get that image?)

What kind of challenges and opportunities do you face (or did you face) in running a startup?
(How would you assess your success?)

Tell me a bit about your funding model, in the short term and the long term.

(What does being a non-profit — or for-profit — mean in terms of your operations?)

(How do you handle the Knight Foundation’s open-source requirement?)

There's a lot of discussion these days about what kind of role the audience should play in the news process. What is your opinion?

(Who do you see as the "audience" for your project? *What is their role in your project?*)

(To what extent do users have *control over content*? Why do you have it that way?)

(How do you see your relationship with those users?)

(How do you see your work attracting users as a non-profit vs. a for-profit news org?)

Appendix C: Approval from the Institutional Review Board

IRB APPROVED ON: 12/15/2009

EXPIRES ON: 12/14/2010

IRB PROTOCOL #: 2009-11-0076

Consent Form

Title: Innovation in Journalism: A Case Study of the Knight News Challenge

IRB PROTOCOL #

Conducted By: Seth Lewis, Doctoral Candidate

Of The University of Texas at Austin: *School of Journalism*; seth.lewis@mail.utexas.edu; 512-739-2492
(The faculty sponsor is Dr. Steve Reese, School of Journalism; steve.reese@austin.utexas.edu. Funding is provided by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.)

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact current or future relationships with UT Austin or participating sites. To do so simply tell the researcher you wish to stop participation. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent for your records.

The purpose of this study is to better understand how innovation is developing in journalism, through a case study of the Knight Foundation's News Challenge grant-funding process. The goal is to assess how news innovators—particularly those with an interest in setting up a news organization or news platform—came about their idea and brought it to fruition, so as to help us see how innovation is changing within journalism today. About 15-25 people are going to be interviewed for this study.

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following things:

- take part in a journalistic interview by phone

Total estimated time to participate in study is approximately 30 minutes

Risks of being in the study

- The risk associated with this study is no greater than everyday life

Benefits of being in the study

There are no benefits for participation in this study.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:

- The interview will be recorded and later transcribed
- Your name will be associated with the transcription because this is “on the record,” as with a typical journalistic interview
- However, you may request anonymity during the course of the interview (“off the record”) as you deem appropriate
- The recordings and transcripts of this interview will be stored securely on the researcher's password-protected computer. You may request a copy of the transcript for your records.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study, please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation call the researcher conducting the study. His name, phone number, and e-mail address are at the top of this page. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the research please contact Jody Jensen, Ph.D., Chair, The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at (512) 232-2685 or the Office of Research Support at (512) 471-8871 or email: orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Please keep a copy of this information for your records.

IRB APPROVED ON: 12/15/2009

EXPIRES ON: 12/14/2010

IRB PROTOCOL #: 2009-11-0076

Below is the e-mail invitation, including full consent language:

Dear [XXXXXXXX],

I'm a Ph.D. student in the School of Journalism at the University of Texas, and I'm hoping you might be able to help me with a research study that relates to journalism innovation and your role in it. The research study is titled, "Innovation in Journalism: A Case Study of the Knight News Challenge."

For this dissertation research, I've been looking at Knight News Challenge proposals to see what can be learned about the nature of innovative startups for news in the 21st century. I've read about your winning project, and would like to learn more about your experience with the News Challenge and your future goals.

I know you're very busy, but I hope you might be willing to carve out a little time for a phone interview with me. We could do this at your convenience, so please let me know what day/time works best for you. The interview would last about 30 minutes, and of course your participation is entirely voluntary.

This "journalistic" interview would be recorded, and your name might be included in future research reports on this subject. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at (512) 739-2492 or seth.lewis@mail.utexas.edu. Further details about this study are in the attached consent form; please read through this and make sure you're OK with the interview plan.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please let me know when you are available for a phone interview and how best I can reach you.

I look forward to hearing from you and sincerely appreciate your time.

Best regards,

Seth Lewis
Ph.D. candidate, Journalism
University of Texas at Austin
512.739.2492 (c)
sethlewis.org

Appendix D: Original Codebook Used by Latitude in its Content Analysis of Knight News Challenge Proposals

#	Category	Code	Coding Instructions	Possible Corresponding Questions <i>(Note: Codes will be evaluated holistically based on the full submission. Listed below are some corresponding questions that may help direct attention to appropriate sections of the application. These correspond with questions from the 3rd year application)</i>
	ID	Unique ID		
1	Submission Details	Year		
2	Submission Details	Open or Closed Submission		
2a	Submission Details	Commercial or Non-Commercial		
3	Submission Details	Submission Level	Application, Full Proposal, Top 100 or Winner	
4	Submission Details	Project Title		
5	Submission Details	Person	Submission by Individual or Larger Organization	
6	Submission Details	Individual Type (if individual in #5)	Select all that apply: Journalist, Social Activist, Artist, IT/Software Developer, Architect, Innovator, Researcher, Educator, Executive/Manager, Other	"What experience do you or your organization have to successfully develop this project?"

7	Submission Details	Organization Type (if organization in #5)	Select all that apply: Newspaper, Media Organization, Journalism School, Non-Profit, Local Community Organization, Research Foundation, University, Communication Organization, Other	"Organization or Business Name" & "What experience do you or your organization have to successfully develop this project?"
8	Age	Year of Birth		
9	Project Logistics	Annual Operating Budget		
10	Project Logistics	Requested Amount		
11	Project Logistics	Total Project Cost		
12	Project Logistics	Estimated Completion Time		
13	Geographic	US or International		
14	Geographic	City (if US in #13)		
15	Geographic	Country (if International in #13)		
16	Geographic	Community Definition	Select one: Does this project convey of "geographic communities" as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • neighborhoods • large city areas ("boroughs") • cities • greater metropolitan areas • state • country region (e.g. New England) 	All open-ended question, but especially: "How will your project improve the way news and information are delivered to geographic communities?" and "Describe your project"
17	Geographic	Community Replicability (Stated)	Is this project able to be replicated in <u>other</u> local communities? Yes or No [stated response -- must be directly addressed in submission]	All open-ended question, but especially: "How will your project improve the way news and information are delivered to geographic communities?" and "Describe your project"

18	Geographic	Community Replicability (Inferred)	Is this project able to be replicated in <u>other</u> local communities? Yes or No [inferred from submission content]	All open-ended question, but especially: "How will your project improve the way news and information are delivered to geographic communities?" and "Describe your project"
19	Innovation / Invention	Innovation/Invention Presence (Definition #1)	To what degree does this project involve creating something entirely new or combining existing elements? 3 point scale, with 1 being invention and 3 being innovation; Invention: creating an <u>entirely new</u> product, Innovation: taking products that exist and combining them in new ways, for new audiences, or for new purposes	All open-ended question, but especially: "How is your idea innovative? (new or different from what already exists)" and "Describe your project"
20	Innovation / Invention	Innovation Type (if answered 2 or 3 in #19)	Select all that apply: Does this project involve 1) combining products in new ways 2) for a new audience and/or 3) for new purposes?	All open-ended question, but especially: "How is your idea innovative? (new or different from what already exists)" and "Describe your project"
21	Innovation / Invention	Innovation/Invention Presence (Definition #2)	To what degree does this project involve creating something for the express purpose of creating something, and to what degree does the product/service have a clear, delineated purpose? 3 point scale, with 1 being invention and 3 being innovation: Invention: a product with no intended purpose Innovation: a product with a clear, delineated purpose or application	All open-ended question, but especially: "How is your idea innovative? (new or different from what already exists)" and "Describe your project"
22	Innovation / Invention	Software	Does this project involve the development of software? Yes or No	All open-ended question, but especially: "Describe your project"

23	Solution	Recency	Select all that apply: The information that is manipulated is 1) time-critical 2) recent but not time-critical 3) long-term and/or historical	All open-ended question, but especially: "How will your project improve the way news and information are delivered to geographic communities?" and "Describe your project"
24	Solution	Frequency	Select all that apply: Is the information being shared: 1) one-to-one 2) one-to-many 3) many-to-one 4) many-to-many	All open-ended question, but especially: "How will your project improve the way news and information are delivered to geographic communities?" and "Describe your project"
25	Solution	Manipulation	How much are users of this product/service able to manipulate/modify it? 3 point scale: none, some, a lot	All open-ended question, but especially: "How will your project improve the way news and information are delivered to geographic communities?" and "Describe your project"
26	Solution	Crowdsourcing	Does this product/service feature crowdsourcing? Yes or No; Crowdsourcing is the term for outsourcing a task to an undefined, generally large group of people or community in the form of an open call. For example, the public may be invited to develop a new technology, carry out a design task, refine or carry out the steps of an algorithm, or help capture, systematize or analyze large amounts of data.	All open-ended question, but especially: "How will your project improve the way news and information are delivered to geographic communities?" and "Describe your project"
26	Solution	Community Democracy & Engagement	Does this project directly improve individuals' engagement with local democracy and/or increase individuals' input in their local community? 3 point scale: not	All open-ended question, but especially: "How will your project improve the way news and information are delivered to

			at all - a little bit - a lot (focus of the project)	geographic communities?", "Describe your project", and "What will you have changed by the end of your project?"
27	Solution	Solution Nature	Select all that apply: Which of the following categories does the solution fall under? 1) aggregation of information 2) transparency of information 3) accuracy/credibility of information 4) connectivity among data or data sets 5) connectivity among people (individuals and/or organizations) 6) increase in information platforms	All open-ended question, but especially: "How will your project improve the way news and information are delivered to geographic communities?" and "Describe your project"
27b	Solution	Solution Focus	Is this product/service designed for the "consumer" of information, the provider of information, or both? (<i>Note: "Both" also applied if consumer and provider are the same audience</i>)	All open-ended question, but especially: "How will your project improve the way news and information are delivered to geographic communities?" and "Describe your project"
28	Problem	Category	Select all that apply: Which categories does the submission fall under? Health/Medicine, Environment, Entertainment, Journalism, Politics, Education, Social Networking, Technology, Business, Other	All open-ended question, but especially: "Describe your project"
29	Problem	Problem Nature	Select all that apply: What type of problem or unmet need does this submission address? 1) information flow/access 2) community cohesiveness 3) information accuracy/credibility 4) organization of information 5) economic/financial	All open-ended question, but especially: "Describe your project" and "What unmet need does your proposal answer?"
30	Problem	Problem Focus	Does this problem or unmet need affect the "consumer" of information, the provider of information, or both? (<i>Note: "Both" also</i>	All open-ended question, but especially: "How will your project improve the way news and

			<i>applied if consumer and provider are the same audience)</i>	information are delivered to geographic communities?", "What unmet need does your proposal answer?", and "Describe your project"
31	Platforms	Platform Type	Select all that apply: Which of the following platforms does the product/service use: web, mobile, print, TV, radio, human	
32	Platforms	Cross-Platform	Is this project cross-platform (i.e. does it use more than one of the platforms listed above in #31?) Yes or No	

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VITA

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