Day 2, April 22, 2017: Morning Session – 9:00-10:45 a.m.

Keynote Panel
The Transformation of U.S. Metropolitan Newspapers:
How Newsrooms have Changed from Print-Centric to Digital-Centric

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Chair: Mike Wilson, Editor, **Dallas Morning News**

- **Nancy Barnes,** Editor & Executive Vice President, **Houston Chronicle**
- **Neil Chase,** Executive Editor, **The Mercury News** and **East Bay Times**
- **Kathleen Kingsbury,** Managing Editor for Digital, **Boston Globe**
- **Aminda (Mindy) Marqués Gonzalez,** Executive Editor & Vice President, **Miami Herald**
- **Stan Wischnowski,** Executive Editor & Senior Vice President, **Philadelphia Media Network**

Kathleen Kingsbury: Hi. Good morning. Thank you all for being here. I know it's early. As many of you might have heard, The Boston Globe is in the process of reinventing itself. Over the last year, more than 60 people in our newsroom have been dedicated to this effort. Coming up with a plan for how to shed some of our old print habits and become more digital. This week we released a 4,000-word memo outlining this plan, but the good news is that we actually — it wasn't that interesting. A lot of the ideas in there we've taken from other newsrooms well represented in this room, well represented on this panel. We need to be faster. We need to carve out a print desk that's going to handle our print operations. We need to put our audience more front and center. And at our core, we need to be unafraid to experiment even when some things might fail.

I'm happy to go into more details on that as part of the panel, but I thought I would start actually by taking a step back and talk about what becoming more digital means at The Globe. First, we need to be more data driven. Second, we need to be more agile and adaptive. And third, we need to make sure that storytelling is front and center in all of these efforts. So, I'm going to start actually 100 years ago. There was the night of election night 1916. There was a horrible trolley crash in Boston. 46 people died after a trolley broke through a safety guard and plunged into the Fort Point Channel. Now you may wonder what this has to do with being digital, but this was, in the Globe terms, a homerun piece. It was a narrative piece that one of our best writers decided to take on in the fall of 2016. I had just taken over as the managing editor for digital. And this was our first big project. And we put—all of our guns were blazing. This story had it all. It had a social video. It had a searchable database. It had an audio version of it. It had, let me think, you name it, it had it, in terms of digital. And the team…. It was gorgeous. Every part of it was beautiful—graphs, you name it.

So, we do this beautiful work, and at the end of it we say, "What did we learn from it?" And realized we hadn't actually collected any data, any real data. We had a good sense of the page views, for instance, but we didn't really know how many people had subscribed because of it. We didn't know. We saw engagement time was over ten minutes on it, but we didn't — and we assumed that had to do with the fact that it had the audio version, but we had no idea how long people were listening for. We had no idea, you know, whether or not they even clicked on the audio button.

So, we decided that we had to stop doing that. And over the course of three months—the first three months that I was on this job—we did almost 30 interactive projects. So, they were big and small. They were, you know, some of them were highbrow, some of them were lowbrow. But on every single one of them, we collected as much data as we could. And for context, The Globe had done about that many projects in the previous two years. So, this was truly an experiment. And we just needed to be faster. We needed more swings at the bat. We needed to get our things out there and learn from them and find out what works.

And one of the things that we found was, for instance, this trolley piece ultimately converted about 30 subscriptions. When four months later we did a project that was very, very low data, we used a template to build it, but because that template had been informed by the data that we collected, it performed about 10 times better in terms of getting subscriptions.

Next, we've been really working on being lean about how we do our experimentation. One of the areas that The Globe had a lot of room for improvement in is audience engagement. We are behind our peers in a lot of ways, but we also don't have any new resources to do it. So, we've been trying to come up with new and fun ways to try these things out.

One of the things that we have done is, a few years ago, we killed our mobile app. We never rebuilt it, so we have no alert system—the on-screen alert system. So, we decided about a month ago to start testing out Facebook Messenger Bots. And this experiment literally cost us $10 a month. We're still in the very early stages of it, but the click-through rates on it are six times better than a Facebook post and 10—or excuse me—20 times better than a Tweet. And we see a lot of room for scale.

The other thing that we did is that we also — we didn't really have a good way to talk to our subscribers. We didn't really do audience surveys. So, we decided to create a Facebook subscriber group. So essentially, if you're a subscriber to The Boston Globe, you ask for permission to join this group. We have about 3,000 people in it now, but these are our most loyal readers. They are grouchy. They notice everything, right? And they always are offering their opinion, and they love to interact with reporters and editors. So, our editors do a lot of communication back and forth. They ask people what they like. They try to get a gauge on what works.

But our reporters are every better ambassadors in this group. They go in and they tell their stories about how their stories were made behind the scenes, and constantly, we get wonderful feedback from subscribers about how much they like hearing the backstory to how things were made, and also just they love the fact that they can now recognize our staff. So, just the other day, I was in the grocery store and this man came up to me and he asked me if I was Kate Kingsbury. I said, "Yes," and he was like, "I know you from Facebook." [laughter]

And then finally, I wanted to talk about a small experiment that we are doing right now. In May, we are going to have our first live event. We're going to have Globe reporters like Sasha Pfeiffer from our Spotlight Team—you may have heard of her—and others talk about their journalism in a live event that were going to Facebook Live, but otherwise the only way to really experience it is to be there. And that's one of the things that were doing, is inviting subscribers to buy tickets first.

And then, I wanted to say, not least, but not least, I wanted to talk about this idea of putting storytelling first. So at the end of the day, one of the biggest goals for our reinvention project has been to figure out a way to divorce our storytelling and our content creation from our platforms. You know, we really want to make sure that we are telling, you know, now that we have so many ways to tell stories, that we're picking the best way to do it in every case.

And I'm going to talk briefly about a project that we did last June in wake of the Pulse Nightclub shooting. I think on the staff of The Globe, the editorial page, in particular, which I was the editorial page editor at the time, we felt a lot of the fatigue that Americans felt in the wake of another mass shooting. This time, the largest. And we didn't really know what to do. We didn't want to write another long editorial that would just run on our website. And so we decided to go bigger. And we decided we really wanted to create something that allowed for an actionable and empathetic response on the part of our audience. And we wanted it to be a print and digital immersive experience.

So, we first of all, took over the front page of the newspaper on June 16th. I should say, this whole project took three days. About 60 members of The Globe staff worked on it overall, but it overall was an opinion product. We put the editorial message on the front page. We paired it with a beautiful print graphic display and a traditional editorial on the back of the page calling for a ban on assault weapons.

Then, we thought about, how can we do this with social media? And we tweeted out over 36 hours the name, age, and location of every person who had been killed in a mass shooting since the last assault weapons ban had been lifted in 2004. As I said, it took 36 hours. Ultimately, six million people interacted with these tweets.

And finally, we decided that—and this is probably the most controversial part of this package—we decided we had to give readers a call to action. That was something that we felt they really needed. And we created pre-populated tweets and emails that went out to six senators that we identified, who had the most ability to change

the law, who could actually make gun control happen in the United States. These were not people who were the most extreme on gun rights. They were people who were moderates, who were vulnerable for reelection, and who might actually—we might be able to change their mind. And we sent over 10,000 emails and 8,000 tweets over the course of about a week.

So, you know, at the end of the day, all this is about, is making sure that we are giving readers what they want, where they are, and meeting them, and always being afraid—or always being unafraid—excuse me—to be sure that we are putting them front and center, because The Globe can't take it for granted—no newspaper can take it for granted—that everyone is going to come back every day. We have to win every day. And these are some of the ways that we're doing it. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Stan Wischnowski: It's a pleasure to be here. I've got ten minutes, and I really want to take you through our unique experience in journalism. We are now owned by a non-profit. It's a little different story than the others who are speaking today. But the good news is, you know, we've had many years of such great stability in our company [and] consistent ownership. We've had such continuity that we've pretty much got it figure out, and I'm going to explain that today. [laughter] All right. That was my fake news. [laughter] It's 9:00 a.m. I'm just seeing who's awake out there.

In truth, as you know, many of you know, we've had seven owners in the last eleven years. And through that turbulence, we finally have reached a point where in the last 15-18 months, we've really had a really super stable environment. And the newsroom at the Philadelphia Inquirer and The Daily News at Philly.com, [I] can't say enough about how much they have really taken advantage of this opportunity. Just, you know, it starts with an ownership structure that really — what's unique about it is that we are owned by a non-profit. Every dollar we make stays inside—stays inside our company.

So, in our situation, every dollar stays inside the company. So, if you look back at the seven owners in eleven years, we were at — I think it was in 2007, we were $515-million in the red. That was probably our low point. In about two weeks, every employee at Philadelphia Media Network will receive a profit sharing check. And that sort of points to sort of the evolution, sort of the new vibe we have in Philly. [applause] Thank you.

It is sunnier in Philadelphia. [laughter] One of the big keys to this was in our transformation in the last 15 months, we've really had a ground level buy-in from the staff. The New York Time has its famous Innovation Report. We had something called Call to Arms. What we basically did is we asked our staff members that were now managers to spend three months and sort of figure out what they thought we needed most, and from that came a 30-page report that really melded really well with our strategic plan. And it put us in a position to really take off, and boy, have we ever.

So, I'm going to explain to you a little bit about where we are at in that process. This map…. If you've been to Philadelphia and you've ever seen a SEPTA map, this is sort of the version of that, our transit system. One of the big things we have decided to do was in the last handful of months, every employee in the newsroom has agreed to reapply for their job. And that was not a top/down thing that we could do. It was purely something that we took on as something that our guild leadership wanted, our Call to Arms Team was endorsing, and of course, that made it — that gave us the impetus to really drive forward.

To get to this point though, before I get here, to put us in position in this ownership structure, to do this, we had some good fortune. The Knight Table Stakes engagement that we had with many of the people who are on this panel was perfect for us. It provided methodology, a structure…. It put us on a course to be very disciplined about what we were doing. And again, everybody on staff really took that to heart. So, that was very key to us. And from that, came this notion of, "If you could build it from scratch, what would it look like?" Again, I can't emphasize enough, the staff, that impetus of saying, "Let's make this a grand scale. Let's really, you know, totally transform what we are doing."

And one of the elements of that is what you see here. And this is our notion of taking every staff member we have—all 250—and putting them in the best position to succeed, the best position to add value to the company. So, we've added 36 new beats. We have totally transformed what used to be a copy editor into a multi-platform editor. We've added more data biz help. We've hired a managing editor for audience development. That was a national search. Just two days ago, we hired a chief product officer. So, we're doing a lot of this internally, and we're doing a lot of external movements here.

A couple of things I wanted to highlight, again, in this notion of being owned by a non-profit and having the research and development come downstream. What we created was an experiments desk. And that desk, really, the call to that desk is, we're going to put 10-15 reporters in that space, and we are going to test out a bunch of storytelling concepts. And some of them are going to work, and we're going to—you know, once we figure out how they work, we're going to stream them out to the entire staff. Some of them aren't going to work, and we're just going to have to dispose of them and start again. Some of these things, these experiments, are things that have worked at other news organizations, so we don't have to reinvent the wheel.

But that's a desk where when we post those jobs, and the postings go up in about a week…. By the way, we've already hired our 50 managers. We had 50 managers placed. 75 people applied for those jobs. So, we are about just getting started, and we've got 200 jobs to fill. But this experiments desk has buzz in the room. People are excited about it. It really is our sort of notion of, you know, owned by a research- and development-oriented institute, this is a great landing spot.

Another example is just sticking to our core mission. About a year ago, less than a year ago, we hired Jim Neff from the Seattle Times, four-time Pulitzer Prize winner. This was a reminder to the room that [with] all this digital transformation, we have to stay to our core mission. So, this team here, for instance, a team of five becomes a team of eleven. It's the Philadelphia Inquirer, Daily News sort of bread and butter. The cool facet of this, and again, this is another one of those desks where there will be many applicants, is that this notion of a quick strike, of, you know, when news happens, you know, in some newsrooms, ours included, we tend to wait a couple of months, and it takes a lot of reporting. It takes a lot of resources. The quick strike team will turn these things around in days. And we've already had some early successes there with the current team we have.

And the last one I wanted to point out was this notion of connecting with our readers with 36 new beats. We've used the American Press Institute metrics for news. About 16,000 articles went through a funnel. We know where the high engagement resides. We have created beats that better connect with our readership. Our readers were telling us when we'd go out. In 2016, we had 15 or 20 events. We used those events not just to showcase our journalists or to hold panels on important issues in our community, but we also listened to the folks who were in those audiences, having sidebar conversations about what more do they want to see. And this is sort of a remnant of that. And you know, the challenge here and really the opportunity is for these new reporting beats to create a much different demographic segment than what we're used to.

So, you can imagine reporters stepping into these fresh beats and creating a whole new Rolodex list of sourcing. And we know that we're not hitting all the targets; particularly, in the millennial bunch. So, these jobs are really meant to sort of recalibrate. Again, I think, through this process, some people will remain in their same jobs, others will step into a place where they've never been, but clearly, these are — you know, we have proven out that these are the categories where we have potential audience.

So again, back to that notion, "If you could build it from scratch, what would it look like?" And we are totally transforming how we use our 255 people who are also, by the way, creating a new newsroom physically. And the notion being we're trying to get out of our print rhythms and really create sort of a digital first, audience-centered newsroom. And this space here is literally just the construction is just beginning. It's very similar to other newsrooms where there will be a digital hub at the center. But, you know, this is our attempt to integrate that collaboration, communication, responsiveness that you need in 2017 and beyond. And it will force us—this physical structure will force us to be much more respondent during those peak traffic hours.

Our print team will move into a different space. There's a wall separating them. We will still be committed to those two printed papers. You know, as part of this transformation, we use those printed products. We have really expanded our capacity there with premium products that yield six-figure revenue streams that are very specific to topics. One good example, Craig LaBan, if you've ever been to

Philadelphia, he is the source for food criticism. He did a 52-page guide to [the] Philadelphia food scene, and it was a mid-six-figure sum, a high readership, and that's really our bread and butter in terms of restaurants and food. One of our top topics.

So, how we've changed so far. Just back to sort to sort of the table stakes. We do these from/to's all the time. These are just an example of some of the things that we really feel like we're making progress on. You know, I have a couple other slides, you know, in this ten-minute period that I didn't put in here, but these are benchmarks. And I think the disciplined methodology, the structure of table stakes really got us to this point, where we're always assessing our work. And this here is just a sampling of where we are.

I do want to give a shout-out to the University of New York. You know, we've got a process in play now through a grant through the institute, where they are in our newsroom. They've been in our newsroom a couple of months now. They will probably be there for a few more months. And our journalists…. We are packing the room with our journalists learning everything from data journalism to visual storytelling to how to use social more effectively. And you know, to the credit of our staff, again, and the staff of CUNY, it's been a tremendous success. So I know Jeff Jarvis owes me about 40 bucks now. [laughter] Just kidding.

So anyway, last piece I wanted to throw out here is that traditionally we're not unlike any other organization, legacy organization. We tend to see what others are doing in our space—what's going on in Dallas, what's going on in Miami, what's going on in Boston. What's different about our situation now is, we've got a bunch of different minds in the tent. These folks that are on the screen here represent board members of both the institute, MPMN…. The guy who I report to at the bottom left, Josh Kopelman, he's a venture capitalist. He's one of the top venture capitalists in the country, and his specialty is technology. We know we have a gap in technology. I mean, that's what the Knight Table Stakes has provided. Somebody like Josh is helping us in that space. Hung Huynh, you know, was at the product stages of YouTube. You know, some of these are legacy oriented experts, but they also have a really deep appreciation for digital. On the upper right is David Boardman, who I'm sure many of you know.

So, the difference in our company today is that (a) we're moving as fast as I think humanly possible, and secondly, we are getting nutrition and nourishment from other people outside of our realm, and that's helping us make much better decisions.

So, I think it was three years ago in this very spot I saw something on the internet where Marty Barron was in this very space, and he said something that I thought was very profound. He said, "We cannot be successful if we are not optimistic if you're a legacy news organization." And I'd just like to say that that is ringing true in Philadelphia. We are very optimistic. We know we have an opportunity here. We want to seize on it. And we really, truly think that we could be a model for innovation going forward because of our very unique structure.

So, thank you very much.

[Applause.]

Nancy Barnes: Before I start talking about The Houston Chronicle, I just want to address this notion of legacy newsrooms not getting digital. Because I've been around a while, I'm going to show my age. I started at the Raleigh News Observer when they had launched one of the very first online newspapers. It was called The Nando Times. Does anybody here remember The Nando Times? In 1994, my reporters were writing breaking news stories for The Nando Times covering elections online. But the problem with our newsrooms, as most of you who have worked in them probably understand, is that we have this tremendous beast called the print newspaper. And the print newspaper has a way of gobbling everything up. And the challenge that we have had for years is steering people away from print and into these beautiful new platforms out there, which are great vehicles for engaging new readers and new audiences.

So in my newsroom…. So, I came to Houston in the fall of 2013. And we have a somewhat different challenge than some of these other newsrooms. We have a two-site strategy. And the two-site strategy is something that has come from the top of Hearst. Hearst is a big investor in BuzzFeed. And they wanted a free site that was free and buzzy and engaging to engage the millennials, but they wanted to have their—eat their cake, too. They wanted a paid subscription site which was behind a hard wall that you would pay for as well.

So, one site has fun and [is] lively and engaging, and at one point, most of the breaking news. And the other site was all this serious, heavy, hard journalism. And when I first got there, that was pretty much all they were doing with that. And it has created a terrible culture war in the newsroom.

So, I have this group over here—the producers and writers for the free site—and they're looking for their audience, and they're doing fun, and they're doing slideshows, and they're [doing] breaking news, and they are very, actually, ahead of the game in using social to identify stories and going after their audience there.

And then I have these serious journalists over here going, "What are you people doing? And you don't understand news. And you're denigrating our brand. And we're out here doing the real journalism. And, oh, by the way, we don't really have to worry about that digital thing, because they're doing it, right?"

So, my job when I came in was to try to find a way to bridge this gap. And it has been quite the challenge. So, we have now moved to a different strategy. Part of the challenge in the culture wars was that for several years the free site was chasing clicks at all cost. Because those of you who understand digital revenue know that there is a lot of passive revenue that can come through clicks. So, slideshows, for example. We gave comics away for free, because we got passive revenue there. But that also led them down some roads that I was uncomfortable

with. And then on the other side, we had people who'd never measured their audience. Didn't measure how many clicks they were getting. Didn't know whether[clicking was, as Katy was talking about, translating into subscriptions.

So, we have in the last six months changed our strategy, and we're still in the midst of implementing this. So, the free site is going to be our funnel for readers, who we are going to use to toggle over and try to convert into subscribers. We are moving away from chasing clicks at all cost to chasing what I think we all understand as a value in our markets, which is the loyal, unique visitor who comes back multiple times. Because if you are producing content for that person, and they become more and more attached to what they're reading, you're going to be able to, as the business side will tell you, pull them down a subscription funnel and eventually get them to engage.

So, the free site, there are producers there. There are 15-20 producers plus some content folks who go after some of the more fun, top restaurants, foody stuff, entertainment. They are continuing to do that. We are moving away from, you know, anything that resembles click bait that isn't part of our journalism and putting more of the content that now is behind the very hard wall here to see what engages readers, so we can measure what they're reading, what's keeping them on the website, what we need to do more of, what would actually get them to jump over and become a digital subscriber.

We are sharing. On the other site then, we are giving new engagement tools on the premium site. One of the biggest problems—we call it the paid site—is it is behind a true hard wall. And so, what have we done? We have shared all of this content out socially to get it, you know, past the wall. So, we share our content on Facebook and Twitter and, you know, we do Instagram and all that. So, it is a growing audience.

Both sites are successful, by the way. The Chron website is the #1 news site in the market. And The Houston Chronicle dot-com website is the #4 news site in the market. But now, we are moving towards, on the premium site, we are going to have a meter, which will allow you to sample the content, which you haven't really been able to do unless we shared it out socially.

And we're going to have an engagement tool that allows us to build and cater to different audiences, so we can experiment at a very micro-level and see what audiences are engaging with what content [and] where we might want to turn the needle a little bit more. You could really customize this to a great degree. This will start on May 1st and will really open up sort of a new era in the relationship between our two sites and the rest of the newsroom.

But some of it has to be on how we all work, too. So if you remember, I said there was this group over here who said, "Oh, we don't have to worry about digital. They've got it covered." We are moving to training everybody on the same analytics engagement tools in the newsrooms that our producers have always had. So, some of the resentment that went on in our newsroom was, we had a team of folks who,

uh, you know, they were measured by how much content they generated. Their success was measured on how much audience they pulled in. They paid a lot of attention to their audience. They would complain over here, "You're not paying any attention to your audience. You folks can spend days and days working on a story…" That's true, and they still will. "…without having any sense of whether anybody's reading that." And that was true.

So now, we are very deep in the process of giving everybody, you know, their metrics, so that you can see who's engaging with your content, [and] some audience engagement tools. We have Chartbeat for the moment. We want to move to something else. Everybody had their training last week. So now, every journalist in the newsroom is paying attention to their audience, trying to understand who's reading their content, who's not reading their content, [and] what content isn't getting any engagement at all.

So, one of the things that we did was, we pulled the metrics for all of the stories for a couple of months. And what we found—won't be too surprising to some folks—was that some of the content that we thought people were really engaging with, they weren't. We found that the big breaking news stories got a lot of engagement. The big investigations got a lot of engagement. And then we found what was sort of the murky middle, in which case, ehh, nobody's really reading that that much. So, why are we spending so much time there?

But you've got to be careful here, because here's one of my lessons. One of the things that people weren't paying attention to in Houston were stories of immigration and detention. That was before the election. Those stories now get high engagement. So, I think you have to pay attention to what stories are hot to know, you know, when your audience is engaging with it and when it's time to sort of turn around and reassess what's working and what's not working.

So, as we give everybody these new tools and turn them all into one team using the same metrics and the same goals, we hope to unite as a newsroom and not be this very angry, you know, "You're doing this; you're doing this," group. We're taking the decision of what's free or paid off the table, and we're saying to every journalist, regardless of what their job is, "Your job is just to create great content or great journalism, you know. And we'll decide, is this something that's supposed to be free? Is this something that we're going to ask people to pay for? Is this something that's going to go on Facebook? Is this something that we're going to put on a different platform? You don't have to worry about that. We'll work with you on your stories. We'll work with you on the different complementary pieces that go with it. You know, every story will have—every major story will have a social media component or other digital components, but you don't sit there and think, 'Oh, I'm on the free team,' or, 'I'm on the paid team.'"

So, reporters are going to be making decisions about what makes the most sense for them. And yes, they're going to do some fun content, because every beat should have some fun content. And yes, they're going to do some of the meat and potatoes of beat reporting. And yes, they will be doing heavy investigative stories

as it makes sense. And then, the producers are going to work together to toggle readers back and forth from one site to the next.

So, if we say we have…. For example, one of our big pieces a week or so ago was an investigation. This was actually a very serious investigation into why a serial rapist had been allowed to go free for so long in Houston. And the fact was they had arrested him over and over again, but he was raping homeless women, and they just didn't take much—pay much attention to trying to get him through the system until the prosecutor jailed a homeless woman in order to get her to testify, and then people cared. But this story, we worked on three components. We had videos that went on the free site that toggled you over to the paid site to get you to engage with this major investigation.

And this is how we see these two sites working back and forth. One being a big audience funnel that will draw the readers down into the sort of neck of the funnel. And there is where we hope to engage them and get them to subscribe. Because growing digital subscriptions, as some of you will hear repeatedly, is a major goal for us. And it's a major goal for every newsroom in America, because people are giving up print. We still need their consumer revenue, and we need them to subscribe to our digital products.

All right. Neil.

Neil Chase: Thank you. I have been to this conference off and on over the past 18 years. More on than off, I think. Probably—I don't know—two-thirds of them. And it's amazing what Rosenthal has done. And I've been here with different hats on, right? So, I came here as a journalism professor. I came here as managing editor of a business news site. I came here when there was a panel of us running breaking news desks at all of the major newspapers one year, which was a blast. And then I showed up as a marketing consultant, which is kind of weird.

And a lot of the presentations you've seen this morning are editors who are driving their newsrooms in very important new directions, especially with this Table Stakes Program. Thank you, Jennifer and Knight, for making that happen. It is really bringing that marketing kind of thinking to all of us who have to figure that out in news.

And so, when I got this job…. I'm the editor of The Mercury News and The East Bay Times in the Bay Area. I got the job a year ago. And I walked into the newsroom and I said, you know, "I'm happy to be back." I'd spent the last ten years doing various kinds of marketing and ad sales things. "I'm excited to be here. I'm surrounded by tremendous journalists. And I have some news for you that might be a surprise—you're all in the business side now." Nobody threw anything at me. Yet. And a lot of people looked at me kind of funny. I told the department heads they are now product managers. They had to go look up the phrase to find out what it meant.

I showed them some slides. I'll show you a couple of things here in a minute. I said, "Here's what's happened to the newspaper business in the last 17 years. We've lost 80% of our revenue." Right? And people grumble about greedy for-profit corporations that are shrinking their newsrooms. Brilliant move to making the Philadelphia newsrooms non-profit is—I love that model—rather than no profit, right? We're all going to work for you someday, I'm sure, which will be great. But it's not just the greedy corporations of smart news organizations, it's that the revenue is gone. Not everybody wants to advertise in the newspaper anymore like they used to. And so, it's up to us. The ad site hasn't solved it in the past 17 years—with apologies to the ad folks in the room. So, we have to do it. We, in the newsroom, have to figure out how to make this business work. And we're actually the best positioned ones to do it, because we know how to tell stories. That's what marketers want to do these days.

So, this is where we are, roughly. The red line you see is print advertising revenue. And this is a very rough projection from five years ago to five years from now. The green line in the middle is circulation. Circulation revenue is stable. It's flat. But how do we do that? We do that by charging more per subscription as fewer people subscribe. In that model, by the year 2030, we'll have one person paying $50-million a year for their subscription. [laughter]

But it's okay, because digital is going to save us, right? So, the orange or yellow line down there is digital revenue. The dotted line is our total digital revenue. It's going to replace some of the print ad revenue. But we have an amazing digital ad operation in our company called Ad Taxi. They're selling all kinds of great stuff. It's not all in the newspapers and the news websites. It's search and SEO. They can do amazing things for the local merchants who have been our customers for years, but not all of it is supporting the part of the business that pays the journalists and creates the news for the community.

So, in that model, we have to figure out how the newsroom can start generating the kinds of things that will bring in the revenue without compromising our standards, without crossing that thing that used to be a wall, that's now more of a sort of a screen or a little picket-fence. And we've been doing that by trying little projects. "Hey, let's do this thing. Let's do this new site." We built a pot site. We built a new tool for realtors to reach their audiences. We built a local site kind of aimed at a younger audience. Each of which can make a little money. But that red bar is how much we're losing every year in print advertising revenue; while, those other colors are the little things we're trying to build some new things.

So, when I got there a year ago, I looked around and I saw a group of tremendous, high-quality, professional journalists. You know, if you're still in an American newsroom today, you're there because you care, right? You're not there for the money. You would have gone off and done something else if you had something else that you wanted to do because you didn't care about journalism. You want to do what you're doing. And good managing editors. They'd been without an editor for eight months, so the managing editors were working really well. The place was running well on the journalism side. And I said, "I would love to fall into sort of the

traditional editor role, but I can't. I have to get in there and try to figure out the revenue part."

So, while they're having news meetings, I'm in the news meetings some days. Other days, I'm going on advertising sales calls, which is kind of weird, but it's how I meet people who are out there and figure out what they're doing and help figure out how we start to build products that will synchronize with what some of our marketers want to do.

We have a lot of little projects going on. An ad sales rep, who's selling something interesting to a client, who comes to the newsroom and says, "Hey, do we have a health section that this client could sponsor?" And the answer is always the same answer, "You know, we were going to start that next week, so sure! Absolutely. Bring it on!" Right? Individual little projects. But we don't have what—I don't want to say real—what other companies have, which is the ability to build new things constantly. We don't have a great infrastructure for product marketing, for product development, [and] for all the kinds of stuff that a tech company would do. We're in the middle of Silicon Valley. We should.

My publisher was at a meeting of local company executives and was grumbling about, "The life cycle of print newspapers is winding down. The product life cycle…"—she's an MBA—"…the product life cycle of print newspapers is ending after a nice, long run." And these people laughed at her. They said, "Are you kidding? When you build a tech product, it has a product life cycle of about ten minutes. As soon as you release this product, you're working on the next version. You guys have had a product life cycle for the last 500 years. Yeah, you better be working on the next one." Right?

So, we are trying to build, led by the newsroom. Because we are the ones who I think see how this has to happen, and not everybody in the newsroom. We've got people, who are working very much on the old schedules, the ones who are standing like Nancy said and saying, "What is all this new stuff? You're driving us crazy." But they're not pushing back. They're not complaining. They're all saying, "We know we're in a tough spot. Help us out."

So, we want to build a mentality in the newsroom of having a product machine. We want to have…. I hired a VP for innovation, who when I first met her, she was the features copy editor at the San Francisco Examiner when I worked there. She went off and did some different marketing things. Brought her back into the newsroom. She works in the newsroom, but she's the VP or Product. And we are starting to build out. I've got a budget pitch next week that I hope will work to get some money for this thing, in case my bosses are watching. We're starting to build out a product infrastructure that says, we're going to start a bunch of new stuff. We're going to build these products. We're going to market them. We're going to test and fail and succeed quickly. We're going to incubate these things in the newsroom.

If you are the sports editor, you're in charge of coverage of a bunch of great teams. You're also sort of a product manager. Right? When the Golden State Warriors got

Kevin Durant last year, we went out and hired the reporter from The Oklahoman, who covered Kevin Durant in Oklahoma City, and brought him to the Bay Area. Very smart guy. One of my few brilliant hiring moves. And he is a machine. He cranks out a newsletter. He does video at every game. He does a quick-hit story the minute the game ends about five highlights. He does a mailbag piece. He's creating all this stuff himself and putting it out there. And we're saying, "Yeah, that was a good idea. I'm glad I thought of it and assigned you to do that." Right? He's just a very creative reporter. He's also the smartest person about basketball. When you read his stories, you actually learn about the sport. So, he's doing that on his own, which is great. But I need my sports editors to say, "That's an interesting model. Let's do that for hockey. Let's do that for football. Let's do that for baseball." That's the difference between having some one-off successes and having a machine in the newsroom that can build this stuff and support it.

To do that, we need to really think about what we're doing. I have stolen a million ideas already from the Table Stakes process—just from last year's first round. In Mindy's slides you're about to see, I got a preview of them last week, I already stole ideas off of that and shared them with my video team. We have to learn from everybody. Collect this information as quick as we can. Share stuff out. Get the newsroom, on the editorial side, thinking about products and why we do them. Look around and decide, what are we good at? What do we own? What do we know? We are the newspaper of Silicon Valley. Why are we not the best news source on Silicon Valley? We cover one of the best teams in Bay Area sports. Why are we not the best on that? GO where we are. Go with our strengths. Build those up aggressively.

And don't forget, like you've heard these other editors say…. And you're looking at me wondering, is anybody actually editing the newspaper? Yes. We have to do great journalism. We have to do the kind of stuff that matters to the community. We have to become more relevant than we are. We used to be more relevant. We've got to bring that back by engaging more deeply with the community. Partnering with other ways to get in there.

Are people familiar with Next Door, the neighborhood news site? They built what we should have built, right? They have a connection with everybody in a neighborhood. In my neighborhood, more than half the houses are on Next Door. Right? If there's a siren, somebody's on Next Door telling you what happened. We should have built that, but since we didn't, we and The Houston Chronicle and others are partnering with Next Door and saying, "Hey, take us into your communities. Let us provide some news. Let us engage with people." And they love it. They're working very closely with us, and they'd love to work with everybody in the room. That's the editorial side. How do we connect with these communities and give them great journalism?

The financial side has to be thinking about that lost revenue and how we get it back, right? How do we start to make up for what we've lost? If we can just get to flat, we'll be geniuses, right? We'll be the financial heroes of the news business. Just stop the losses. So, run it like a business. Not just selling advertising, but

helping marketers really engage with their communities, just like we're trying to engage with our communities.

If we can do that, if we can turn into the kind of product machine that can build what our community wants, get the newspaper back to being what it used to be—the most important thing in the community, the most important way people connect with their neighbors—I think we've got a decent chance of getting to where we need to go.

How are we actually doing that? We're identifying these niche verticals that we're good at. We've had a pets column, an animal life column, for 42 years, four days a week on Page 2 of the East Bay papers, and people love it. One of the recent columns was, "What's eating the rats in my neighborhood?" People were finding rat carcasses in the neighborhood and wanted to know why. And Joan Morris, the animal expert, tells you why and what's going on. So, let's take that, and let's take all of that old content, build it into a new vertical with lots of—optimized for search. Build products around it. Email newsletters. Getting into those communities, like I said. Helping our ad folks figure out what content marketing [is]. Not the native advertising that pops up on your site, but the content marketing helping businesses really tell their stories. Video. Photos.

Forgetting about doing it on our own. We need partnerships more than ever. My main competition in the Bay Area is not The San Francisco Chronicle, as good as they are. It's everything else that people are reading every day online, right? We've got to focus on the partnerships with the right people to replace some of the things we used to do on our own.

I think if we can all do that, we've got a decent chance. Thank you.

Aminda (Mindy) Marqués Gonzales: I want to say one thing. We've heard over and over again, you know, the number one thing is great journalism, and so, I think it's worthwhile to mention, because these folks won't do it, is that every single one of these newsrooms that are represented today were either finalists for the Pulitzer Prize this year or winners of the Pulitzer Prize. [Applause.] So clearly, they are driving digital traffic while maintaining excellence in journalism.

So, I was part of the first class of what we call the Knight Temple, the digital transformation, and we had a really great year. We grew overall traffic 80% in the Miami Herald alone, not including El Nuevo Herald, our Spanish language newspaper, and local uniques 29%. But I want to talk about something really, really narrow that we didn't kind of expect to happen, so sometimes you make a move and you really don't know that it's going to be successful. And it's this thing that we did with our video traffic.

So in 2015, our total video views were — I think we hit one million for that year. That was for the entire year. In 2016, we, uh, our goal was 6.4-million, and we ended up hitting 14.2-million views. Miami Herald alone had more video views than

the entire McClatchy organization in 2015. And I can tell you that it was — exactly when it happened, right there.

So in early March, the McClatchy Corporation decided, "Hey, you know what? We're gonna do this." They had started this whole video push. They had a team in Washington, D.C. We got a new player, which was a big leap. And so, we decided to rearrange our photo, our visuals department, and hire a video director. And two internal guys applied for that job, right? One had worked on the El Nuevo side creating like photo galleries that, as many of you know, nobody really looks at. And he did this like day in and day out. And then one of the other guys, he was a producer for the Miami Herald and he had a TV background. And in talking to these folks, we realized they had some interesting skillsets that we really could be harnessing in different ways. And that's when we made both of [them], each of those guys, we turned them into what we call video aggregators.

And much like the aggregators that you might have on your news desk, the only thing these folks do is that they are out there scouring for video all the time. They are looking at Facebook. They use…. They are using Crowd Tangle. They are going to YouTube. They're, you know, they're just trying to find that video before it goes viral, so that we can post it and it goes viral on our site. One thing, because I know folks are going to care about this, but one of the things that they like to use is Facebook Signal. Of course, this is Miami, so we use key words like *alligator* and *pythons*. And that's the thing, you have your own things that you could, you know, I'm sure look at, but it's that. And then that's in addition to the bread and butter, the crime, which we all know, crime videos and anything interesting that you might see on social media.

They can also — they have editing skills, so they can take clips and throw something together. You might remember during Obama's visit to Cuba, there was this really interesting moment where Raul Castro tries to lift his head in that kind of Communist salute thing, and it didn't work, because Obama's like six-foot-four or something, and Raul's down here, and it was really bizarre. He quickly put together a really fun video of all these little like Communist salute things throughout the years, and it did really well. So, these guys can edit. They can find it. They get permissions. They can sweet talk people into letting us have it.

And so, I already mentioned crime. You all know crime does pay for traffic. And I will say one thing. You know, we finally figured out, right, what broadcasters [have] known for decades—you have to go for that video, the one that captured the crime happening. The other area that I think it depends on your public records laws, but we've been very successful, and we've had to be sensitive, because there's been some efforts with the legislature in Florida to hinder our use of video, crime video. And we, many of us, still have crime reporters, and TV does not. And another really rich area for us has been getting folks — getting the video right before the case goes to trial. Prosecutors are usually really eager to give that—those videos to us right before their cases go to trial. And at least in Florida, they have a compelling legal case to do so. So, those have done really, really well.

I'm not going to show these, because really the second one is so graphic. Actually, it lasts like a nanosecond, but literally you see a man die because he's hit, and so I'm not going to actually show it, because I'm going to save it for the alligator video, because, again, I said I'm from [Florida]. I think many of you know this video. This became national news when a caretaker for an autistic man in Miami was shot by police in the middle of the street. He had his hands up. And so, the fact that we were able to get that video, that video did very well for us. And it was a helluva story, right? That police officer who shot [him] was just indicted. The first police officer indicted in South Florida in 25 years in a shooting. So, that was really significant.

And then, I'd say freaky Florida animals. We have our own unique things, but…. And I am going to let…. We should let them see this one. [Video plays of a huge alligator crossing a field with people nearby taking pictures.] Yeah, I wouldn't want to see that on my outing. It's like…. It's an alligator. I know it looks like a dinosaur that got lost in time. So, we look for that. We know, yeah, it's viral. It's gonna go viral. It's a little fun, too. And we will write…. The other thing I will say is, really, is when you find a great video, you know, write a story to go with the video.

In another alligator example, one of our aggregators found a YouTube video, and it was a tour group that was looking at the alligator in a swamp until the alligator jumped onto the boat. And so, that was a pretty good video, as you can imagine. Flopped inside the boat. So, we ended up contacting the folks who posted it. Got permission to use it. I mean, we will pay sometimes. I mean, honestly, it's not very expensive. Folks don't expect to make money off their videos. And that one video I just mentioned got 89,000, you know, streams, so that's pretty decent.
I would say that you may not have alligators, but you have some other freaky critters in your communities that you could probably be, you know, taking advantage of.

So, obvious tips. Add video to all stories. And I think that you don't have to create a new video for every story. It's going into your own library and seeing what you have and adding related videos. I mean, I think we have videos that we've gotten incredible views over time because we just keep adding them to stories. I mean, there is not a python story that we're going to write that you're not gonna see one of our favorite python videos. And again, this involves, you know, this exotic invasive species in Florida that's creating quite a bit of havoc. You know, obviously Facebook Native. I mean, use that as well as the platform. I will say that we've had incredible success with aggregation to the point of the top ten videos last year, nine were aggregated videos. One was only a staff video, which is, I'm sure, not something that my staff videographers would want to hear, but it just shows you what you can do with content that's already existing, and that's already out there, and you can just take it and reuse it.

So, that's it. And I would say with your reporters, they are really…. Obviously, we have our courts reporter is on it, our police reporter is on it, but again, my environmental reporter is now very actively looking. You know, she covers this pretty rich. People want to see the streets of Miami flooding, you know, during a full

moon, and they want to see, like I told you, the bizarre animals and things. So, there are a lot of beats that are ripe for video, and if they just ask their sources, you're going to get a really amazing array of videos that you can use. And it really helps their stories do better. And I think that when reporters understand that when their stories have a video with it, that it's gonna do better, that people will click on it, I think they're more, you know, they're more apt to kind of buy into this.

And like I said, I think, honestly, if you can just do one thing, I think creating this position on your continuous news desk that's really focused singularly on video, either creating it so that if your reporter is out there, they are at a shooting, they send a video clip, they can quickly get it online and edit it. These guys can edit. They have edit news skills. They also understand how to convert different formats. So all of that's important. But I think that this has become best practice for all of McClatchy now. And I guess it's almost, I would say, something that we almost…. I wish I could tell you that Myriam and I—Myriam being the editor of El Nuevo Herald—we had this brilliant idea, but we really just used almost this idea from the talent in the room, put them [in place], let them do what they do, and have seen really great results. Thank you.

[Applause.]

Mike Wilson: Thanks, Mindy. That's terrific. And I think, you know, there's something Mindy is doing here that I think all of us can relate to, where she and her team are trying to find ways to connect with readers on things that they will really care about, that they will find interesting. Prehistoric creatures walking across the road is interesting and newsworthy. At the same time, she hasn't lost sight of great journalism. So, the Miami Herald is the winner of two Pulitzer Prizes in this cycle; one an explanatory reporting for its work on the Pentagon Papers and the other in editorial cartooning. And so, you know, and congratulations to them, certainly. [applause]

But that's the challenge for all of us. I'm going to be talking about engagement, which is our focus right now. For us, engagement begins with great journalism. I just want to give a little pitch here for a piece that we're going to launch in the next few days, that I won't name, and I won't name the author of, but watch your social media streams the next few days for the announcement of a serial investigative piece out of the Dallas Morning News that is 18 months in the making. And when we talk about engagement, we cannot disconnect that from the great work we do in journalism. It's all the same thing. OK?

So, my title is, "We got them. Can we keep them?" Well, the theme that I'm going for here is, 'we got them' meaning we came together and learned how to deliver journalism effectively on digital platforms over the last couple of years. We've done that. We're not perfect, but we do some things really well. We've learned a lot with the help of the Knight Foundation and some other sources. We've learned a lot. And now the question is, can we keep them? It's not just about numbers for us. It's about getting people to come back and building them as loyal customers over time.

I'm going to give you a little overview of our transformation process. When I became editor in 2015, soon after that, I talked to the staff and sort of laid out a vision for what we could be. I said, "Imagine a newsroom where we respond to readers needs quickly, and where we come together as one group of journalists focused on digital reporting, and where at the end of the day, we have a team that is curating the best work that we've done that day into a great newspaper." This was sort of the broad idea.

We hired a consultant, Jim Friedlich, from New York, to come in and help us guide this process. And just to sort of connect things for you, Jim Friedlich is now the director of the Lenfest Institute, which is owner of Stan's operation. So, a lot of this DNA is kind of coming together in our industry.

Robin and I, Robin Tomlin, my terrific managing editor, and I got together and we launched teams in our newsroom to study the content that we do, and our workflows, and our technological capabilities and issues. And sent them out for a summer to study this and bring back a report, which they brought back a longer one than the one Stan got, it sounds like. Ours was 150 pages or something. Called The Empirical Report. And they told us, "Here's the newsroom we need to be. Here are the ways we need to change in terms of technology, culture, content, in order to be where we need to be." We went through a long process.

We also reopened every job description in our newsroom. We said…. We put out an organization chart where we said, "This is the work that needs to be done. This is the technology we need to do it. Now, everybody come on up and tell us how you think you can contribute." Right? So, that's the stage where my first slide starts.

We completed this newsroom reorganization. And we had about half of our full-time staff landing in new jobs or doing significantly different things. About 130 people doing new or substantially different jobs. Now, what that meant was there was a tremendous amount of excitement in the newsroom over the new possibilities. And it also meant that you had a lot of people who only kind of knew what they were doing. Right? So, we're learning together.

We added a lot of positions. We changed out some positions and added some new jobs. People with abilities in data. We had one person doing essentially data journalism full time. When I arrived, we quickly built that team up to four. Digital page designers. We brought in an analytics person into the newsroom to help us understand the numbers we were seeing and strategize changes we could make. Video became more of a focus. Audience engagement became a big focus. We had an audience editor, whom we appointed, whose job would be to sort of, number one, teach the newsroom how to engage with the audience, but also to lead audience engagement through social and other means.

The mindset and workflow changes were extensive. We wanted to publish all of our content for digital first, and that was a big challenge. Because when I arrived as editor, the morning news meeting was at 10:30, and the discussion was among editors saying, "Here's what I have that might contend for the front page

tomorrow." And yes, there was sort of a mention of, "We have this on the site or that on the site." But the website was a separate operation run by one fantastically energetic person who accounted for something like half of the traffic to our site—one person. Do I have that stat right, Robin? It was….

Robin: It was more like 20%.

Mike Wilson: 20%. But in my memory it's a better story if I say half. [laughter] Did a whole bunch of content. But it was—everything was out of whack. You had one person really dominating the whole web operation, and then sort of a fracture between the way metro and the digital operation worked. And so, we sort of erased all of that, and we said, "You all are digital journalists. This is a website. The Dallas Morning News is a website that at the end of the day publishes a great newspaper." That was a big part of the project.

We had some great help in that we were developing our own spoke CMS. We hired a local technology and design firm to help us build a CMS that would meet our needs. And that's been, I think, a huge part of our transformation, and a big success. And you'll hear more about that in a minute.

All right. So, that's what we did. End of the first year, we had gone from, you know, we probably increased monthly uniques by about 33%, and some months it was a crazy kind of 100%, but there were some quirky things about the data there, but anyway, the audience was coming. The audience was coming. So, at the end of the year, though, digital revenue didn't really sort of knock our socks off, though we had built a lot more audience. Because of low CPMs and other reasons, the money wasn't coming in the way we needed it to. So, our publisher, Jim Moroney, sent a note out to the staff this January and said, "It's time for us to prioritize audience engagement. We're not going to chase clicks." Not that that's what we were really doing, but we're not going to be so [much] about, "Hey, how many clicks did this get?" as, "Who are the people who clicked?" Are they people who kept coming back?

So, we have goals for 2017, which by the way they are my performance goals. They roll down to Robin and to everybody in our newsroom. That there is an expectation that we will improve the return frequency, the number of people who come back to DallasNews.com and our other sites. We will increase depth of engagement. So, we want to increase the number of people who come back three times a month. We want to increase the number of people who go to a story and then go to other stories at that same time, and also drive up the number of people who like us on Facebook or follow us on social media.

And we are seeing improvement early in the year in those numbers; particularly, on the social side. The reengagement numbers are challenging for us, because our baseline for our goal setting was the fourth quarter of last year, which was a great quarter for us. The Cowboys were on a huge playoff run. And the fourth quarter is always seasonally a better quarter, so now we're comparing it to the first quarter

where the Cowboys aren't playing, and seasonally we're doing a little worse. So, it's a push for us to meet these goals, but that may not be a bad thing.

So, what are we doing to engage the audience? Well, because of this CMS called Serif, we're able to engage the audience in some good ways. I'm skipping ahead a little bit. I'll start first with some social things. What you see on the screen is a Facebook page about Texana. We have a reporter who has an obsession, kind of, a beat focus on Texas and Texas culture. And he and others have built a Facebook page around that subject, where he's contributing his stories. Others in the newsroom are contributing stories and just telling stories of their own and engaging Texans in discussion. So, I had a 30-year newspaper career in Florida. Now, I'm in Texas. And people ask me about the difference, because politically they're not so different, and there's a lot of in-migration to both places. The thing that I say, though, is that people from Texas really like that they are from Texas. They are really into that. People from Florida, a lot of them, it's like, "Yeah, it's just where I am right now." You know, so, people in Texas love Texas. So, we've got Texana and we're excited about that.

We also have Facebook groups now around a couple of other topics. We've just launched one on literary Dallas. Had the idea, "What are people reading? Who's coming to town to read?" We launched it and suddenly, damn, there's about 860 people who are pretty loyally coming back and talking about the books they're reading and when they read. One of our editors the other day posted something about, "Where do you like to read?" Because he said that he used to like to read in bed, but then he was sort of disinvited from the bedroom while reading, because his partner didn't appreciate the light on. So, there's just little discussions that are going on around that engaging us. And the idea is to establish us as a convener of conversations around things people care about.

So, this is, you see, a page from our site scrolling up. This is built on Serif. When you come back to the top, you'll see this is Tony Romo, the former quarterback of the Dallas Cowboys announces retirement recently. And though, sadly, he never won a Super Bowl in Dallas, he's very beloved in town. Very visible. Everybody's been pulling for him for a long time. His retirement was a story of the magnitude roughly akin to the death of Castro in Mindy's community in Miami. So, everybody was talking about that. So, we used our tools on Serif to do a homepage takeover about Romo's retirement. And what you see scrolling by are article embeds. These are other pieces about Tony Romo that are gathered into an embed, so that it's actually a collection page that you can go through and see other things about his career. So, that's one of the tools we have available. We also have embeds that we could drop into a story at the story level so you can see [them] get recirculated through to other things you may care about.

And there are some other tools that we count on for engagement. One of the things that we find really effective is just quickly embedding social tweets in breaking news. It's a great way to get people into the story and sometimes to circulate to our Twitter accounts. We've also had some success on the social side doing teaser videos. If you look at our feed this week, you'll see teaser videos about the package

that I was just describing to you. And we were able to generate some interest just in a 15- or 20-second video with no auto sound. They're usually captioned, so you have to click through if you want to hear the sound. And that's been really effective.

There are many other things that we are doing that I can talk about when we get together. And one of the things that I will mention when we get the panel up to talk is, we are using technology tools for engagement, but we also have a very ambitious program of connecting with the audience directly through personal contact or through a much more personal digital means, because all of this is coming together. The need to engage with the audience for business reasons is meeting right now with the need to engage with the audience because the audience isn't sure about us right now. I think you know this. There is skepticism about what we do. I'm not saying it's justified, but I'm saying that there is a lot of doubt and disbelief in quality journalism right now. So, we want our readers to know who we are, what we do, and how we do it.

So, let's take a minute, bring out some chairs, and we'll spend a few minutes talking as a group.

[Applause.]

Panel Discussion

Mike Wilson: So, I have many questions about my colleagues presentations. And I think it's mostly I'm hoping to learn some things from your experiences, but I wanted to go back to Katy's presentation, the very first one. You talked about learning about how certain pieces drove subscriptions. So, connect the dots for us. How do you follow that? And how do you know what makes that happen?

Kathleen Kingsbury: So, it's an imperfect science, I'll admit. We have a good sense of where…. So, the Boston Globe has, obviously, has a paywall. It's metered right now. People get five pieces of free content. Very soon we are actually going to decrease that to two pieces of content before you hit our paywall. That will be rolling out in early May. And so in a 45-day period, people can sample up to five pieces—soon two pieces—before we ask them to pay. So, we really don't have great analytics looking at the path to subscription, but we have a better sense than we previously did in terms of what people engage with, what people share, recirculation, and those are the analytics that we're really paying attention to every day. And we're trying to see, kind of, in the path to subscription, how often those kind of analytics play a role. And so, that's really what we're paying attention to.

But previously, we would do things. We would do things like photo galleries, which really no…. We just got into the habit of doing them, right? But nobody really was looking at them. And so, we almost had an overcorrection. We knew we wanted to do more visual storytelling, but we were doing *every kind* of visual storytelling, and that's what I wanted to kind of get away from. I really wanted to have a sense, for

particularly our logged in users, what kind of content they interacted with. And that's the change that we've made.

And we've done a lot of what Nancy was talking about now as well. We had a newsroom that was very hungry for analytics. And so now, everyone has access to ChartBeat. Every day departments receive an email in which they understand not only what their page views were, but also what those logged in users—so logged in users are our subscribers—are looking at and interacting with. I think we're actually learning a lot about that.

Mike Wilson: So, Nancy Barnes, The Globe used a two-site strategy to bring people into the first site and sort of train them into the pay site, and they built a very healthy subscription base, digital subscription base, on that. I think others in the room have thought about doing a maybe 'click here' first site that would lead to a second site as well. You said a little bit about culture. What do we need to know if we're going to go into that as newsrooms to make that work?

Nancy Barnes: I think it would have to be brand consistent even across the two sites. So, where I feel that we fell down in the first couple of years is that one site had a very different brand feel than the other site. And you felt like I would—ahem—pardon me—complain, like, "I'm going to Nordstrom shopping, but you're making me go over to, you know, Target to buy my socks," right? So, I want a brand that is consistent across, that feels the same even if one is a different type of content, that it feels like I'm visiting the same brand. I think that's really important.

So, in the community, people would say to me, "I don't… Where is your news? I don't understand." Because we didn't put much news out there unless it was a big breaking story. So, we're trying to reconfigure the mix to have it, you know, still not give it all away for free, but have it feel more—not like all traditional news, but more of the type of content they might expect from us, plus, you know, the fun, you know, videos and pieces about the local real estate market, and people like to see inside their homes, etc., but brand consistency.

Mike Wilson: Stan, you have an experimentation desk that you're launching. What are we talking about here. Are we like, you know, sort of political coverage in Haiku or what are we looking at from that desk?

Stan Wischnowski: Well, it's—first of all, it's very experimental. It's very [much] at its infancy stages. We really want to use that as sort of the test kitchen for innovation. I mean, that sort of is the nerve center of that. I showed you that schematic that sort of showed the digital hub in the center of the room. This is our place to bring some of our top practitioners currently. I mean, those who can perform well on Facebook Live. They can produce, you know, sort of a Storify approach to their storytelling. Different, different things. So then once we master that and that drives more traffic to the funnel, we can start spreading it across the room.

And the flipside of that is, you know, we are definitely going to like, you know—some of these things are going to fail very fast. It's like, we're going to try it. If it doesn't work, we're going to move on. But the whole notion is, like, we plant the seed on that desk and we spread that DNA across the room. And again, there's no limits. I mean, we don't want to set, like, "You're only supposed to do these three or four things." It's really, you know, "Let's take the best practices from all over the industry, [and] what's working from a really innovative standpoint, and let's put them to the test." And I think it correlates well with Jim Friedlich at the Institute as they funnel some of those…. You know, if there's an app that needs to be tested in a major newsroom, we want to be that place, but we want to be able to receive that and actually test it. At the current state of our newsroom, we weren't aligned that way. So this reset is really meant to put our digital rock stars in a place where they can iterate, you know, test, and then spread it out to the rest of the room.

Mike Wilson: Mm-hmm. Mindy….

Neil Chase: The political coverage in Haiku—we're gonna try that.

Mike Wilson: Yeah, yeah, right. Well, so, let me follow up on that. So, that sounds like a real, sort of, a marketing guy's, sort of, "I'm catching onto a cool idea. Let's do that." When you came to your newsroom and said, "All you guys are product managers," I don't know if they told you, but some of them were thinking, "I don't want to be a product manager."

Neil Chase: Right.

Mike Wilson: Right?

Neil Chase: Right.

Mike Wilson: So, did they tell you? And what did you tell them to make it okay, make them understand?

Neil Chase: I didn't get a lot of pushback. I got a lot of questions. And I got a lot of people saying—the biggest reaction was, "Are you kidding? We don't have time to do what we have to do now. I gotta do this. I gotta do this. I gotta do this. How am I supposed to do that, too?" And it wasn't a, you know, "You're an idiot. This won't work." It was, "Please tell me, how are we possibly going to do this stuff?" And a lot of it has to be deciding what you're not going to do, right? We had a story on the front of the Metro Section last week that was 13-inches long about a contractor who got busted going into court and entering a plea of not guilty. The first sentence said that. The next 12 inches were background on this story that people had seen a million times. It's a habit. Until you get out of those habits, until you say to that editor, "You know, that reporter maybe doesn't have to go to that event. That reporter could have been two hours away from here when we've got a source who knows something about that Gosha fire that we're trying to collect. And that person couldn't go for that because they had to cover this court hearing."

You have to first of all sympathize, right? We've lost a lot of people out of the newsrooms. We are trying to do twice as much or more with half or a third of the staff. And you have to understand that and be sympathetic to it, and you have to help people by saying, "Here's what you're going to drop."

Mike Wilson: You know, we're all — all of us are kind of in the same boat, in one sense. I'll put it sort of in the context of Mindy's life, right? So, I'm betting that if you took your message from McClatchy overlords at the beginning of this year, the message was basically, "Mindy, here's less money than you had last year. I want you to go innovate. It would be nice if you were still a major force in coverage of Latin America and won us some prizes." And so, how do you think about that challenge of still doing great journalism and innovating and saving the business at a time when you know that the newsroom budget will probably be smaller year over year?

Mindy Gonzalez: You know, I think the most difficult part is to really stop doing some things. And we just think they're important, and we keep doing them even though the traffic shows that nobody is reading it. And I'm really careful when I say this in my newsroom, because there are certain things, certain coverage areas that we're always going to cover regardless, right? Those are mission based. So, I'm not going to stop covering county hall. It's mission based. By the way, my county hall reporter is one of the top ten traffic generators, so obviously he's doing something right.

But even at the beginning of this year, I had to make some difficult decisions about some beats that we had for a long time that just weren't getting the kind of traffic— or quite frankly, frame it this way, do we have to do this? And do *we* have to do this? So, I still had a part-time movie critic, believe it or not. I mean, and somehow this was shocking news in my community when I then moved my critic to another beat. But the reality is there are a lot of places to get movie reviews. I do have a local, big, annual film festival, and I'll find coverage for that that's relevant. But, you know, there are things that we can do and still get coverage that *we* don't have to do, so we can move our rare resources to those areas that we do have to cover.

Mike Wilson: What are you doubling down on?

Mindy Gonzalez: I'm doubling down on government coverage. I don't think we've really figured out how to do this in a way that is interesting to readers. I think we need to move away from coverage issues to covering troubles, as Jay Rosen likes to say. And so, I think we've tried to shift, like, for instance, our government team to like public accountability and looking at…. And it's really hard. And I don't have the answer yet, so we're experimenting on that. But we're really doubling down on things that this is coverage that you can't get anywhere else. Only the Miami Herald is going to cover these sets of things and [not] the things that either we can get from other places or really are not mission critical. So, we're going to have to get rid of some things, you know, that are maybe more fun or light, because we're going to have to move resources, too.

Mike Wilson: We have a few minutes left, and I want to make sure people have a chance to come down and go to the mics if they have a question. But in the meantime, I wanted to ask Nancy Barnes, what investigative stories are you considering doing that we might do instead? [laughter] What I mean is, what are you doubling down on? What are you focusing on?

Nancy Barnes: Well, you know, every year, we start by identifying what our big targets could be, and then we sort of whittle them down. And I have four or five big targets. One is explanatory and three are investigative and one is narrative. And I would love to collaborate with you on one. [laughter]

Mike Wilson: Terrific. Questions.

Kelly: Hi. I'm Kelly from Texas State University. The profs always like getting good ideas they can steal, so I'm totally going to take Mindy's and start teaching viral video and aggregate video. But my question is for Stan. You mentioned new beats, different beats. I assume they are targeted at audience you don't have already. Can you tell us what some of those beats are and what's working?

Stan Wischnowski: Yeah. There's—one of the more competitive beats was the Trumpadelphia beat. I'm not sure why. It happened to draw a lot of attention. You know, we've got an opioid crisis. You know, I mentioned the Trumpadelphia. We're not just, you know, grabbing all the headlines that come out of the White House these days. We are taking the Trump Administration's, you know, all the changes, you know, immigration, education, you name it, all the way down the line, and we're really localizing that story. The opioid crisis is a major thing across the country; particularly, in some of our suburban areas and inner city. Our homeless rate is going up, and a lot of it is tied to that crisis. So, we've got to put people on that story.

We had a soda tax issue, a very controversial soda tax issue in Philadelphia. In retrospect, I wish we would have placed that person a year ago when that issue was really bubbling into that space for a long time, but we didn't. So, there's beats like that.

You know, there's demographical segments that we are not reaching. So, you know, again, I mentioned the American Press Institute and going through 16-20,000 articles and sort of dissecting what came out of that. There is a lot of urbanism issues—gender, race, inequality. We're getting back to some of our public policy roots. And you know, as mentioned previously, I think Mindy mentioned, you know, sort of letting go of some things, the commodity type stuff.

Partnerships, partnerships, partnerships. I mean, the work that we've done with our NPR affiliate just broadens the scope of how many people reach our stories. Just a couple of weeks ago, we partnered with Billy Pen for the first time. And you know, I'd like to think both groups benefited greatly. I mean, we don't have a great track record in reaching millennials. You know, Jim's group does. We put the two forces together. The reporting was great. The editing was great. The visuals were great.

So, these are…. You know, again, back to your question about the beats. We're going to zoom in on those things that we, you know, that we really know there's audience and there's potential for premium content that people might be willing to pay for, and we're going to let go. And we just haven't had a great track record of that.

Neil Chase: Real quick. Something that we're thinking about along those lines that comes out of our table stakes process is, is there one unifying theme to almost everything we do—not everything—but almost everything we do? We live in the San Francisco Bay Area, right? So, education, transportation, housing, things like that keep coming up. And in kicking it around, we got to one sentence, which is, "It's really hard to live here, and we love it." Right? [laughter] And now we're going back and taking that and saying, can we take that sentence or something like that and apply that to—I don't know—60, 70, 80% of what we do? And does that start to give us a theme for reconnecting with the community in a better way and addressing the problems, the challenges, not just the issues.

Mike Wilson: Great comment. Question on this side.

Iris Chyi: Iris Chyi from UT Austin. It seems like the underlying assumption of this panel is the future of newspapers is digital, but I have two questions about your digital revenue. First thing is, newspapers digital ad revenue has stopped growing since about ten years ago, so I wonder how you think about that. And also, last year, we published a study—my co-author is here—on 51 metro newspapers printed online readership in their home market. I think all your papers are included in our study. So it seems like after 20 years experimentation with digital, now the print edition still reaches about 30% of local population; however, the online edition reaches only 10%, and online *only* readership is only about 5% of the local population. So, I wonder if the key to this digital centric model is digital subscription, but given the underwhelming number of digital users, how realistic is [that]? First of all, how many digital subscribers can you get? And how realistic is it, really, to expect that digital revenue to make up for the loss on the print side?

Neil Chase: That's a great question.

Mike Wilson: Thank you for going right to the existential nature of this. [laughter]

Neil Chase: Right? Thanks for coming. The conference is over. It's been great. [laughter]

Mike Wilson: Professor Chyi, we are very familiar with your excellent work and somewhat haunted by it. [laughter] But I would say that what we have learned, as you have, is that the digital ad revenue perhaps does not hold the key to the future. I find myself more optimistic about digital subscription revenue and the potential for making that at least a part of the solution for our company. But as you know, the Dallas Morning News has sort of a broader strategy of expanding its business reach into marketing services and other means of revenue that can

support our journalism. So, I'm skeptical myself about—or not skeptical—but I am aware of the depth of the challenge of making any of these digital journalism funding sources completely do the trick. And I interrupted my colleagues.

Nancy Barnes: No, actually, I mean, you expressed my sentiments exactly. I don't think *we* think that digital advertising is part of the solution. I mean, it may be a small piece of the bucket, but it's actually a shrinking piece of the bucket. I think everybody knows passive revenue in particular is on the decline, especially now as more people are moving to mobile. But even though the growth in digital subscriptions has been slow, except the Boston Globe has had some great success, we do think that there is still a lot of hope there because our readers increasingly engage first digitally. And then if there are people who used to like to read newspapers in print but now want to read digitally, we want to be there for them, and we think we can get *those* people to subscribe. I don't think the printed paper is going away any time soon, but digital subscriptions are key to our future.

Mike Wilson: Got an easier question from Jeff Jarvis. [laughter]

Jeff Jarvis: Jennifer Preston should be very proud by now to see the fruits of table stakes. And I'm delighted with so much of what I'm hearing. I think that there is a willingness to change in every newsroom. There is a thirst for innovation, which is the most important thing. There is an eagerness to collaborate and share. There's a willingness to look at things in new ways. You're waiting for the *but*. It's only this—coming back next year, I have a wish, and my wish is that now that the newsrooms have been turned around, now turn them inside out, and start with the public. And we call this social journalism at CUNY. Carrie Brown is here. You can ask her all about it.

Woman: Whoo!

Jeff Jarvis: Yeah, Carrie! But the thing I've learned from my students or our students in social journalism is that by first listening to community, not a fake community, not the whole town, not millennials, not Hispanics, but self-defined communities, understand what the community's needs are, and then we bring journalism in, and then we measure our impact based on that. And if we're trying to return to trust, I hear local editors all the time say, "We do community. We know community." Yes, to an extent, but now we have new tools to do it better. So, all I'm really saying is that I think you've made huge progress, and that's what I would love to see next.

Mike Wilson: So, Jeff, may I speak to that? And I'm going to give you some information about some things we're doing. And not just because I want to get an A in your class. [laughter] So, I've been working with my colleagues, with Robin, with Keith Campbell and others, on a trust building initiative. And it includes a lot of personal connection to the audience. So, just some examples of things that we're doing. Under the heading Meet the Audience, [we are] organizing public meetings at which we hear the concerns of readers about news events and about the way we do things. Inviting people in. Last week, we had representatives of a group called

Faith Forward Dallas that has very specific kind of political and community concerns that they wanted to address to us. So, we talked to them. We invited them to some meetings. We're examining and explaining what we do.

Keith is working up an idea to do a Year of the Editor sort of interactive, where we would present ethical challenges that editors face to readers and engage with them in that, and have some back and forth. Some video explainers of our stories. Listening to the Audience is a category. We already have a hotline to our iTeam. There's always a member of our investigative team carrying the Bat Phone, so that if someone calls in with an investigative tip, there's a person to talk to. We're using Google forums to ask people, "Tell us your experience about being an immigrant." Or, "Tell us your experience about some other aspect of the news."

We need to label our journalism more clearly. Keith gave me a great example in a meeting the other day. We had headlines on our website. The first four or five of them were clearly news stories, and the last one said…. What was it?

Keith: We must boycott United.

Mike Wilson: We must boycott United. And it didn't say, "Opinion: We must boycott United." It just said, "We must boycott United." So, here, Dallas News tells you, "Don't take that airplane." And then finally, you know, just explaining who we are, so, both in person, but also in the pages of the paper, on the website. Who are we who make these editorial decisions? Where do we come from? What's our background? How do you reach us if you want to talk about it?

I've been giving a speech criticizing the current office holder of the presidency for calling journalists the enemy of the people. But in the end of the speech, what I say is that ultimately, he's not our enemy. We're not his enemy. And we have to own up to our responsibility for connecting with readers, because if we do, we can be the best friend the people ever had, is the idea.

Stan Wischnowski: I just want to add, if you remember right, at ASNE, we had a group talking about gentrification. We went into the community, tapped that group, got them into the arena. Back to the previous question asking about beats, we have a gentrification beat. It is so big in Philadelphia. And we know now from that experience at ASNE, we have a list of six, eight, or ten people who are in that space who are good sources for us. And it's really a pro/con thing. You know, it's a story that in Philadelphia, you know, that could be a beat that last for years, but….

Mike Wilson: Thanks for the question. Thanks all of you for listening. Thanks to the panel as well.

[Applause.]