

ISOJ 2022: Day 1

Welcome Session

- [Mallary Tenore](#), associate director, **Knight Center**
 - [Rosental Alves](#), ISOJ founder and chair, **School of Journalism and Media, University of Texas at Austin**
 - [Jay Bernhardt](#), dean, **Moody College of Communication, University of Texas at Austin**
 - [Alberto Ibargüen](#), President and CEO, **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**
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Mallary Tenore I'm so happy that you're here. We have about 300 people who are attending in person this year and 800 people who are tuning in online from about 75 different countries. So we're going to have lots of opportunities, whether you're in-person or online, for networking and connecting with your fellow ISOJ-ers, and we're just delighted that you're here. As many of you know, Rosental Alves created ISOJ in 1999. It was a very small gathering at the time. Since then, it has really grown into this very widely respected international journalism conference. As many people over the years have told us, it's the best journalism conference in the world, and we like to humbly agree. So hopefully you'll leave here after the next few days with that same thought. And with that said, I would like to turn the conversation over to my dear colleague Rosental and ask you to please give him a big round of applause.

Rosental Alves Good Morning, America. Good morning, world. Let's rock and roll. That's the way I have always started ISOJ. I mean, not always. In 1999, it was not that enthusiastic. But anyway, this ISOJ is very special because we are returning to in-person gathering after three years. As you know, the last two conferences were online-only because of the pandemic. We are delighted to be back in person, but we do so with caution, with strong recommendations for attendees here in Austin to use masks and to follow other preventive measures. We recognize that the pandemic is not over despite the huge improvement of the situation, which allows us to get together again. We have some protocols, and of course, masks are optional. But, you know, I think in the post-pandemic, some will use, some will not, etc. In the last two years we will we learned a lot about online conferences. So this is a hybrid ISOJ with innovative ways to ensure participation of hundreds of attendees from around the world. Please be patient with us with some technical issues because this is the first time we are doing so many aspects of a conference. But we're going to get there.

My warmest welcome to you all here in Austin and wherever you are now – in countries from A to Z, from Argentina to Zimbabwe. Now I think we have people from more than 80 countries. I want to thank the Knight Foundation and Google News Initiative for their generous contributions that make ISOJ possible. Also, I'd like to thank the Knight Center team and many people involved in the organization of the ISOJ, the Veritas Agency, the Moody College people, the AT&T Center people. Very special thanks to Dr. Amy Schmitz Weiss, our distinguished alumna and a professor at San Diego State University, who leads our research component of ISOJ. My gratitude to Dr. Jay Bernhardt, the Dean of the University of Texas Moody College of Communication, who will be hosting a Moody party (woohoo), our welcome reception this evening. Dr. Bernhardt will now welcome you all on behalf of our college and our university. So welcome, our dean, Dr. Bernhardt.

Jay Bernhardt Thank you. Good morning. Good morning. It's so great to be back in person in three dimensions and see all of you and to be here with you. Also to everyone watching around the world, good morning or good evening, depending on where you are, and we're delighted that you're with us. I love when I'm introduced at the beginning to say I'm also hosting a party tonight. So hopefully that will make my remarks even more welcoming to you this morning. And we hope you all, of course, will join us this evening for our in-person get together, which really is so cathartic to again celebrate each other's company, and experiences, and just the warmth of bringing people together is wonderful.

This is now the sixth straight year that I've had the honor of joining Rosental and the Knight Center team to welcome all of you to ISOJ. I'm thrilled, and I will admit, a little bit relieved that the 23rd International Symposium on Online Journalism has returned to an in-person or really hybrid format after two years of being online only. As the Dean of Moody College of Communication, I want to welcome all of you to our campus, to our city, and I really hope you enjoy the experience here. Also, welcome to all the remote people. We hope you will come to Austin and visit with us sometime in the near future, perhaps for next year's ISOJ.

This Fall the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas will celebrate its 20th anniversary. Let's give an applause for that. That's a big accomplishment. Of course, you know, it was created by Professor Rosental Alves, Knight Chair in International Journalism and UNESCO's Chair in Communication, thanks to a generous grant from the Knight Foundation, originally back in 2002. The Knight Center is one of 11 centers and institutes in Moody College of Communication, which is one of the largest and most comprehensive communication colleges in the country. ISOJ is one of several major programs that the Knight Center sponsors, including they are the home and a world leader in sponsoring massive online open courses, also known as MOOCs for journalists and journalism scholars around the world. Like ISOJ, the Knight Center courses have helped thousands of journalists and journalism scholars to navigate the challenges of the transition to the digital era of journalism. Since the inception of their MOOCs less than a decade ago, the Knight Center has already reached an incredible 270,000 students and learners from more than 200 countries and territories. Initially focused only on Latin America and the Caribbean, the Knight Center now has become a global operation, much like ISOJ. The challenges that journalism and journalists face during this transition to the digital era have been existential and universal. Throughout these difficult years for journalism, ISOJO has been a critical resource, anticipating the trends and creating a forum to discuss some of the most pressing issues among journalists and media executives and media scholars. ISOJ helps to bridge the gap between the news industry and academia and helps curate the most relevant scholarly presentations and best practices that can be shared and emulated.

We are proud and grateful for the outstanding work done by recently promoted Dr. Amy Schmitz Weiss, an alumna of Moody's PhD program, who is ISOJ's research chair and coeditor of the journal affiliated with the conference. The guest editor of ISOJ this year is Dr. Seth Lewis, professor and director of the journalism program at the University of Oregon. Like Amy, Seth is also an alum of our program, just a coincidence, and we look forward to the research panel that Amy and Seth will lead this afternoon on the very timely topic of news and A.I., artificial intelligence. Tomorrow, the traditional ISOJ Research Breakfast will focus on the outstanding work of Moody College's Center for Media Engagement, led by the incredible Dr. Talia Stroud and her phenomenal team of scholars, so we hope all of you will appreciate and enjoy that panel.

Before I close, I do want to just take a moment to thank Rosental, and Mallery, and the Knight team, and everyone who's been involved with planning this for their incredible hard work, putting together the conference this year. Let's please give them a hand for their great work. And I, too, want to share my personal gratitude to the Knight Foundation and to Google for their strong support of ISOJ and to the work of the Knight Center. And now, in conclusion, it's my great pleasure to introduce on video my friend Alberto Iburgüen, president and CEO of the Knight Foundation, to share his greetings and welcome to all of us at ISOJ.

Alberto Iburgüen Thanks, Jay, and good morning, everyone. I'm delighted to be here representing Knight Foundation as a sponsor of this 23rd edition of the ISOJ. When this symposium began, very few journalists were thinking digital, never mind acting digital. But not Rosental Alves. I remember on a trip to Argentina that he and I both made, sponsored by the newspaper Clarín, he was early in preaching a gospel that included quality, independent journalism, paying attention to the crowd and how it wants to be served, and being aware that the crowd was on their way to digital. It reminded me of the Yogi Berra saying that if the fans don't want to come to the ballpark, nobody can stop them. Rosental understood that. And thank you, Rosental and the University of Texas, for having started this symposium while Google was still getting going, a decade before the first iPhone, and before Facebook had even gone to college. Editors thought they were invincible, and business executives in television and newspapers thought so, too. Rosental knew we were not, and I was one of the lucky ones to be in on his insights.

All of us have noted the decline in traditional media's reach, the increased power of social media, the rise of mis- and disinformation, and the evolution of media technology. We've lamented the shrinking of newsrooms, the blurring of the lines between news and opinion, noted the rise of the shift of ownership of traditional media, from persons to corporations to institutional investors and now hedge funds. Each step taking us further and further away from a balance between commerce and mission, from owner to reader or viewer. Yet at the same time, we've seen the growth of news deserts in America. We've also seen plenty of green shoots that now feel more like a movement, a trend toward local, independent online media, and the beginning of private philanthropic support for the idea that this democracy does not work if citizens are not reasonably well informed. And we've also seen, if you need proof, the power of local news reporting in the recent coverage of the war in Ukraine, which to the people using a smartphone to record and report a bombing or a killing is a local story. Even if to the rest of us, it's the dominant international story of the moment. Or the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. That was a local murder that became national because of that young woman, that citizen reporter. Or the weekly or daily community or government meetings in Chicago covered by citizen reporters for documenters. The challenge for all of us, of course, is to ensure that this proliferation of news also deals with the reality that the same technology that allows the reporting can be used to misinterpret, dissemble, even warp the context in which the story should be fairly understood. These are the times we live in, and I'm very glad that you've decided to be in the conversation.

As we begin, I confess I'm sorry I can't be with you in person. But in some ways, though, this pivot to a new kind of hybrid conference, this necessary embrace of technological change, fits a post-COVID moment, and very much is in the tradition of both the Knight brothers and Knight Foundation. Jack and Jim Knight were committed to three things that made them successful. Quality local journalism, good business practices, and the intelligent application of technology. A three step path to success. They set up a

foundation to follow that model, and we have. All in service of local journalism and local communities. And why local? Because we believe trust in society needs to be repaired. So we started the shortest distance between reporter and news consumer, at the local level. Local news is verifiable. Sitting in my office in Miami, I can't know if what I'm being told about Afghanistan or Brazil is actually what's happening there. But when the Miami Herald reports on highway construction on I-95, I know it's true because I can see it and I've gotten stuck in traffic there. I might know some of the politicians our local news organizations cover, members of a school board they report on, or even some of the people in the human interest stories. Local builds trust because we're close enough to feel connected, close enough to know what's true. This is based not just on intuition, but on extensive research from Gallup that we have supported. It's all available on our website at KF.org, showing Americans trust local news much more than national news and perceive less bias with local reporting. So it's really no coincidence that trust collapsed in this country at a time when the business that supports local news was also collapsing.

But there's reason for hope. There are just a few examples in the United States alone. Chicago Public Media acquired the Chicago Sun-Times, the first combination of a leading public radio station and a large metro newspaper led by the MacArthur Foundation. In Memphis, the Daily Memphian was a digital startup funding just a few years ago and now boasts a newsroom larger than the legacy paper in town. Axios Local is a for-profit news organization that has already launched local efforts in 14 cities, with plans for a network of 100 cities across the country. News organizations like Voice of San Diego, MinnPost, New Haven Independent, ProPublica and Texas Tribune have become established. They've been joined or are about to be joined by digital news organizations in Baltimore, Fort Worth, the Carolinas, Capital B in Atlanta and countless others. These are very, very hopeful signs, and they have great support from philanthropy and from local sources.

And at the same time, we must be mindful that technology will continue to evolve and challenge our understanding and application of values. That means journalistic and First Amendment values. This is really tough stuff. Journalism, however, must adapt, as tens of millions of especially younger people are much more comfortable seeing and hearing news than reading it. What does that mean? Well, maybe we just simply have to figure out how to report on TikTok. We don't know what business model will prevail. We don't even know what format will. I do know that this is not for the faint of heart or for the closed minded. And I know in my bones that a news organization must be sustainable to be independent and like any other species, must evolve to survive. Representative democracies require informed citizens to be effective, and that makes the work you do nothing less than essential. Thank you for that, and thank you for engaging with us at this 23rd edition of the ISOJ.