

Ohio News-Times

SPECIAL EDITION

Kasich talks news' future at keynote

Owen Daugherty

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Gov. John Kasich arrived for his keynote address at the Ohio Newspaper Association to applause and a standing ovation, save for a few still seated, which Kasich certainly noticed.

He took to the podium, scanned the room, and joked “no access for you” in reference to those that weren’t standing upon his entrance. It was a fitting opener, as the governor spoke to a room filled with the press in a vision for the future of the state, and the future of the newspaper industry.

Kasich talked directly and pointedly about the role the media plays in what he called “an ever-changing and crazy world.”

“I stand for all of you who have real content,” Kasich said. “I stand for those that have decided that your point of view, your editorials, your writing, your articles are critically important.”

With the two days at the conference filled with discussing the changing world of media that Kasich pointed out, his speech touched on a multitude of points regarding just how to combat it.

Kasich strung similarities between his job and that of the media multiple times, touching on the difficulties of both jobs.

Not only do newspaper have to be cognizant of its readers he said, he too has to be aware of his voters and what they want.

While that is part of his job, he said his job isn’t to sit around and pander for votes, much the same way it’s not the newspaper’s job to write the



ASHLEY NELSON

Ohio governor John Kasich was the keynote speaker for the conference on February 8. He told those present that he wanted the media industry to survive.

news just to figure out how to get more subscribers.

Figuring out how to strike that balance, and handle the pressures, is how the industry will learn to survive.

“I want you to survive,” he said multiple times throughout his hour long speech. “I want you to thrive. As a business, we gotta figure out how my 17-year-old is going to access your newspapers.”

He continued, saying that survival hinges on adapting, but spoke highly of the work the newspapers have done in

the past.

“So I want to thank you for what you do, even if at times I don’t agree with it or like what you write,” he said as many in the room laughed. “But that’s just all part of the game.”

That game that Kasich spoke of is changing. Realizing that change is what will help the industry “thrive,” he continued to stress.

A thriving media was part of the “knowledge belt” slogan that Kasich placed on Ohio to have as the slogan moving forward, ditching the rust belt

tag that has followed the state since it became known for its industry prowess.

Calling on the media to have an eye toward the future, Kasich challenged the industry to grow, evolve and ask itself what it really is, and what it wants to be.

“Are you gonna sell your soul, or are you gonna look in the mirror?” Kasich asked the room.

With that particularly existential question sitting on the brain, the governor gave some advice.

“Follow your values,” he said. “Follow your principles. If you do that, no matter what happens, if the whole god darn thing goes down and you get replaced, at least you can look yourself in the mirror.”

“I want you to survive. I want you to thrive.”

John Kasich
Governor of Ohio



Meet the OSU news bureau

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I'm a third-year in Journalism with minors in creative writing and media, broadcast and analysis. I have experience writing for The Lantern as a senior reporter and have previous work experience at Columbus' own NPR talk show, All Sides with Ann Fisher. I have a particular passion for late night tv and politics and hope to one day be Lorne Michaels' right hand woman.



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I'm a third-year Journalism major at Ohio State and a Lantern reporter trying to spend as little time sitting down at my desk as possible. My major, combined with minoring in Geography and International Studies, will hopefully allow me to see some places while also not having to sit down at a desk all the time.



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I'm a senior graduating in May 2017 majoring in journalism and political science at Ohio State. In the newsroom, you're most likely to find me laying out pages or frantically calling sources to meet deadline. You can see more of my work at eileenmcclory.com.



Meet the OSU news bureau

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I'm a third year studying Journalism and Multimedia Production with a passion for videography. I spend most of my time attempting to create the perfect Spotify playlist or traipsing around Columbus, camera in hand.



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I'm Editor in Chief of The Lantern and a graduating senior from Ohio State with majors in Journalism and English, minors in popular culture studies, creative writing and economics. Basically, I love to write and am fascinated by the entertainment business. When not leading Lantern budget meetings, I'm probably at yoga or a craft brewery.



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I'm a third-year Journalism major with minors in creative writing and political science. When I'm not reporting for The Lantern, I can be found creating videos and engagement projects for the Alumni Association or teaching beginner ballroom dance.

Digital products help attract new readers

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What readers are actually interested in reading and how to engage them on a website was the crux of the digital products panel.

By collecting data on a newspaper audience, publishers have more information to woo advertisers and this information can also help to shape content creation choices. Essentially, the more information that publishers have about their audience, the easier it is to create relevant stories and sell advertising.

One way to gather that information is to track user reading behavior and predict the stories that they would most likely be interested in reading.

“Everybody expects personalized content right now. Every site that you’re using right now is personalized at some level: Google, Facebook, Netflix, Washington Post, BuzzFeed, all personalize the content that you’re seeing to some level or another. Some methods are more elegant than others but, nevertheless, you are getting personalized experiences now and it’s important for newspapers to understand that this works,” Mark Walker, president of Youneeq, a content personalization company, said.

A content personalization company tracks reader behavior and then suggest stories that would be relevant to an individual reader.

“The content that you’re viewing will be different than

“Everybody expects personalized content now... it’s important for newspapers to understand how this works.”

Mark Walker
President of Youneeq, a content personalization company



Tim Moore, executive director of Clixie Media, explains the importance of interactive video for both viewers and advertisers at the New Digital Products panel on Thursday, February 9.

the content that someone else is viewing because we are identifying what your content consumption behaviors are and then trying to find content that we think you’d like to see,” Walker said.

D.J. Cavanaugh, senior vice president of business development at CivicScience, a company that poses survey questions on a website in order to gauge reader opinion, takes a “demo-

cratic” approach to gathering audience information.

“We talk about democratizing research, and what that means, in its simplest form, is we let people participate in research without any coercion. We don’t pay them to do research. We don’t block content for them to do research,” Cavanaugh said.

“Publishers are really struggling to create content that their audience will engage with and come back to,” Cavanaugh said. “What you get from us is a very deep understanding of your audience.”

The goal of this deep understanding of audience sentiment is to use this data to help editors decide which stories to write so that the content will be relevant for the audience,

Cavanaugh said.

Another way to drive reader engagement and attract advertisers is to provide interactive video.

“Video keeps viewers on your website for longer. Video is more memorable than written content and video also capitalizes on the viewer impulse to buy,” Tim Moore, executive director of Clixie Media, a company that places interactive advertising within videos, said.

All of these different technological advances are aimed at keeping viewers on a website for longer so that they can engage with more of a website’s content and drive ad revenue.

HAILEY STRANGEBYE

Local news should embrace digital, says Brady



Jim Brady, founder and CEO of Spirited Media, speaks on digital journalism at the Ohio Newspaper Association conference on February 9.

ASHLEY NELSON

Ashley Nelson

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What do you think of BuzzFeed?

According to Jim Brady, founder and CEO of Spirited Media, this question is the litmus test for people's willingness to understand the evolving word that is digital media.

Brady says the answer to this question divides media professionals into different groups that determine their willingness to understand digital-first media. The ability for media professionals to understand and analyze what these types of organizations do is important to how news evolves in the digital age.

Buzzfeed, among other digital-first or exclusively digital companies, have found new answers to the question that

plagues the media and news business. And the question every newspaper and media organization must ask is: "How do we treat our readers?"

"We lost touch with our audience, we weren't talking to them on a daily basis," Brady said. "When you're in a smaller market with a fixed scale you have to be very careful about how you treat your readers."

Brady said that the digital grab for new ways to reach readers is not happening on a local level. Local news media is not evolving as fast as national organizations and it has given rise to questions about what a viable business model for digital companies looks like.

Brady cited his newest venture, Billy Penn, an exclusively digital news platform in Philadelphia, on how he's adapted his business model to treat his readers better.

The platform was designed with mobile users in mind, with the understanding that people now consume most of their news through their phone and social media channels. The decision to create a mostly mobile platform was also an attempt to circumvent the barriers in reaching readers.

"It's not about time spent, it's about time well spent," Brady said. "Something as small as loading time creates barriers."

Billy Penn's desire for a better user experience reaches beyond formatting and design

and ventured into new and different ways to deliver news Brady said.

When the new governor of Pennsylvania was being inaugurated Brady said, "Every news organization in the state of Pennsylvania was going to do the exact same thing, they were just gonna tweet out everything Tom Wolf said."

Writers at Billy Penn pitched the idea of using emojis instead.

"One of the best lessons in management someone taught me was you should say 'yes' to a bad idea once a week, or something you think is a bad idea," Brady said. "We have to be more curious, we have to start thinking about doing things that we would not do."

Through Brady's passion for a better reader experience, Billy Penn hosts events curated by the organization that allows them to directly interact with their audience. These events allow readers' access to people and information that they would otherwise be lacking with national news organizations whose goal is to reach a nation rather than a specific audience.

Brady's message to continue being innovative and not cast the digital model aside is important for local news brands as the news media continues to change and evolve and readers become harder to maintain. Brady said that news organizations should continue to transform, and learn what their readers want and need from their local news organizations.

"The key for local news brands is passion, not pageviews," Brady said.

"We have to be more curious, we have to start thinking about doing things that we would not do."

Jim Brady
Founder and CEO of Spirited Media

Ad roundtable sparks innovation for local news

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As ad revenue for newspapers shrink, many publishers are watching their revenue shrink.

But at the advertising roundtable at the Ohio Newspaper Association Conference, many of the ad directors in attendance had innovative ideas that have worked for their papers.

Walt Dozier of AdOhio, a part of the Ohio Newspaper Association, began the roundtable with a discussion of a new initiative for native advertising, also known as “sponsored content,” across the state of Ohio. While some newspapers, such as the Dayton Daily News, have already experimented with native advertising, many newspapers in Ohio do not yet have these programs.

The new initiative partners an agency called BrandForge with AdOhio with the local newspaper. The advertiser will work with BrandForge to create their content, which will balance the ethical needs of the newspapers and help the advertiser market their products. How much money each newspaper would receive would be based off how many



EILEEN MCCLORY

Walt Dozier of AdOhio speaks to ad directors at the Ad Directors Roundtable. Dozier proposed a new initiative between AdOhio and Ohio newspapers to get native advertising onto local news websites and newspapers across Ohio.

readers visit the newspaper's website.

Some editors were concerned

with running the content. But AdOhio representatives stressed the content needs to be clearly labeled as sponsored and would be content the newsroom would not mind running.

Panel leader Lori Figurski asked those in attendance to give some examples of ad campaigns that have worked at their smaller papers.

Examples included Anne Chlovechok of the Journal-County Leader in Noble County and Pete Dennis of the Athens Messenger in Athens County. Chlovechok said she had launched a joint campaign with the volunteer fire department in her county to create a July

to July firefighter's calendar. There are two ads on each calendar page and they will sell the books for around \$10 to benefit the firefighters.

Dennis said he worked with the rebranded Southeastern Historical Society to create a commemorative book and sold the books for \$20 apiece. There were ads from the sponsors mixed with vintage ads and stories. Dennis said the project was helpful because there was both sponsorship ads and revenue from selling the books.

Attendees of the workshop went home with ideas to help raise ad revenues for their local newspapers.



ASHLEY NELSON

Some of the newspapers from the Cleveland Plain-Dealer were laid out on a display in the hallway in the conference.

Editors roundtable talks podcasts, innovation



SALLEE ANN RUIBAL

Peter Bhatia, editor of the Cincinnati Enquirer, talked about the success of the newspaper's podcast, "Accused" at the editor's roundtable. The podcast followed the unsolved murder of a Miami University student, Elizabeth Andes, in 1978.

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The ONA conference kicked off with the Editor's Roundtable, which celebrated and promoted innovation in reporting.

Doug Haddix, executive director of Investigative Reporters & Editors, gave a presentation on sites that can aid journalists in using social media to their advantage. Peter Bhatia, editor of The Cincinnati Enquirer, spoke on the wild success of Enquirer podcast, "Accused."

Haddix covered tools already built into social media, such as Twitter advanced and specialized search, along with Google

Scholar and reverse image search.

"Who knew you could do this?" Haddix asked as he demonstrated reverse searching viral images, such as ones of seemingly apocalyptic tornadoes, to authenticate their source and reliability.

Haddix also touched on challenges in political reporting under the Donald Trump presidency with solutions such as sites that keep a record of website pages even after they've been deleted, as well as monitor changes to the sites. The disappearance of federal web pages shortly after Trump's inauguration is an example of how these tools could have been useful for coverage, Haddix said.

Along with social media, Haddix also promoted IRE's different trainings and conferences, designed for single staff members or total newsroom training. Haddix's presentation can be found at bit.ly/doughaddix.

Bhatia presented on "Accused," the Enquirer podcast following the unsolved murder case of Miami University student Elizabeth Andes in 1978. At its core, Bhatia said the project relied on the same reporting and skill as a typical project. A slide titled "Report Like Hell," summed up the lengthy process.

"Reporting is reporting no matter how you present it," Bhatia said.

Bhatia said the final episode

of the eight-chapter podcast was paired with a print story encapsulating the whole case. Some information was in the story that wasn't in the podcast, he said, and vice versa. Overall, both elements of storytelling helped to tell the reporting in an interesting way that appealed to readers.

In order to produce the podcast, the Enquirer enlisted help from a local station. The Enquirer newsroom now has its own podcast booth and staff is trained on how to edit audio — which will be put to use fairly soon as a second season of "Accused" is in the works, covering a new case.

Ohio Newspaper Association Awards



ASHLEY NELSON

Hayley Harding from *The Post*, Ohio University's student newspaper, accepts an award for the collegiate competition from ONA president Bill Southern (left), retired ONA executive director Frank Deaner (middle), ONA executive director Dennis Hetzel, and ONA vice president Monica Nieporte.



SUMMER CARTWRIGHT

College students from *The Cedars*, Cedarville University's student newspaper, accept their first place overall award in the collegiate competition from ONA president Bill Southern (left), retired executive director Frank Deaner, executive director Dennis Hetzel, and vice president Monica Nieporte.



SUMMER CARTWRIGHT

Ellen Kleinerman (left), editor of *The Chagrin Valley Times*, accepts the Hooper Award for Newspaper of the Year, Division A, from ONA executive director Dennis Hetzel and ONA vice president Monica Nieporte.

Ohio Newspaper Association Awards



ASHLEY NELSON
Dennis Hetzel, ONA executive director, at podium, speaks at the ONA conference. The Ohio Newspaper Association voted to change its name at the conference to the Ohio News Media Association.



ASHLEY NELSON
Maxine Rahtbun, right, hugs her daughter Nicole Reel after accepting the ONA's President Award on behalf of her husband Keith Rathbun, who passed away in 2016. The President's Award is ONA's highest honor and is given for exemplary service to both the association and Ohio's newspaper industry.



ASHLEY NELSON
Adam White speaks after receiving the Champion of Open Government Award from the Ohio Coalition for Open Government. While serving on the Olentangy School Board, White filed a lawsuit against the other board members for violating the Ohio Open Meetings Statute. Adam took his case all the way to the Ohio Supreme Court, which ruled that prearranged discussions by e-mail violate the Ohio Open Meetings Statute.



ASHLEY NELSON
Frank Beeson accepts the Ohio Newspaper Association's Maxwell Award for service to the newspaper industry at the ONA conference's annual luncheon.

Designer talks fonts, page layouts for newspapers

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High on the list of Kevin Slimp's no-no's for design is the use of the font Chancery in newspaper design. Unless, of course, you are a church secretary.

"If you've ever been to church, you open up the hymnal, it's all in Chancery," Slimp said.

The misuse of Chancery is not the only design problem Slimp cited in his quest to make newspapers across the country look better. Slimp travels the country and Canada talking to conferences about how to create better-looking pages. In his time, he's looked at a lot of papers. He had plenty of advice for convention-goers.

Slimp first asked those in attendance to name some good and bad design practices. The suggestions included dominant headlines, dominant images, limiting font choices, limiting words on an ad and use of white space. Slimp noted these are all vital to the look of the paper.

"Consistency is a huge thing to get people to stay on the page. What can I do to make people look at the page?" Slimp said.

It is vital to have some breathing room around headlines as well, Slimp said. Using negative space can make a large headline stand out.

Body font, he said, is often too small and too hard to read for most people, whether they are young or old. It's key to make the font legible to everyone.

Slimp offered suggestions on good body fonts that are currently popular in news design. Nimrod is one of the most popular, he said.

"Nimrod is extremely popular and I see it more than any other font except for something old like Times (New Roman)," he said.



EILEEN MCCLORY

Kevin Slimp speaks to conference attendees on ad and page design at the Ohio Newspaper Association conference. Slimp recommended new fonts and brushed attendees up on basic design.

Georgia is also a great body font, he said. It has been around forever and is clean and easy to read.

Georgia and Nimrod are large fonts, so Slimp suggested using a nine-point font instead of a 10 or higher, as would otherwise be used.

For headlines, Slimp suggested using Kepler Semibold Display, Antenna and Phontina, though a classic font like Lucia Sans also works. Variants of headline fonts are important to make the newspaper look interesting.

As for ads, Slimp said Keilium, Populaire, Mishka and Giorgio Sans are great ways to make ads stand out. He suggested making sure there is not too much text in a tiny ad as using space is just as important in ads as it is in newspaper design.

Placement of ads is also

important, Slimp said. He showed examples of ads placed immediately next to stories that contradicted what the ads were saying, undermining the meaning of the message.

Use clip art sparingly, Slimp said, because it looks outdated. If advertisers must use it, it has to be interesting.

Slimp gave a few quick suggestions on page design to wrap up his session: use baseline grids, design pages to wow, design pages to inform, design pages to make sure it's easy to take the eyes around the page and design pages for balance.

"Look at a page and ask yourself, is it clear? Is it easy to read? Is it interesting?" Slimp said. "That'd be scary in a lot of papers, wouldn't it? Does (the page) leave the impression I want to leave?"

Fonts to avoid:

BlackChancery
Comic Sans
Cooper
Black

Page fonts to try:

Georgia
Lucia Sans

How to leverage social media in newsrooms



HAILEY STRANGEBYE

Moderator Kirk Dougal of APG Media of Ohio (far left) listens as panelists Ashley Bethard of Cox Media Group Ohio, C. Lee Smith of SalesFuel and Jackie Reau of Game Day Communications discuss social media.

“Social media experience shouldn’t just be about headlines. As the name says, it should be social.”

C. Lee Smith
President/CEO at SalesFuel

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The panel on “Leveraging Social Media” focused on utilizing journalistic tools in an ever-changing social media landscape.

Ashley Bethard of Cox Media, Jackie Reau of Game Day Communications and C. Lee Smith of SalesFuel presented and discussed their theories and thoughts on social media.

“Newspapers should take a really strong, analytical look at their social media,” Reau said, setting the tone for how news

organizations should approach social media.

Smith echoed the need for social media needing to be engaging.

“Social media experience shouldn’t just be about headlines,” he said. “As the name says, it should be social.”

Panelists emphasized that one cannot predict what the next great app will be, but the skills are transferable.

“You’re a journalist, stay curious,” Smith said, advising journalists to download new apps weekly, test them out and see if they fill a need for news.

Putting the customer first to make a profit



OWEN DAUGHERTY

Denise Sandoval, manager of account services at NSA Media, Shawn McCort, vice president of Group Account Directors at Novus, and Anna St. Charles, chief revenue officer at Dispatch Media Group, speak at the Ohio Newspaper Association conference for a panel on "What Clients Want."

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"If we put our customers first, everything else falls into place," Anna St. Charles, Chief Revenue Officer at Dispatch Media Group, said to a room full of newspaper ad directors and publishers.

With that adage still ringing true today, the panelists of media buyers focused on teaching papers how to better engage readers with effective advertisements that attract their attention and continue to bring them back.

Each newspaper is dealing with problems of how to better connect with customers in a changing digital world. Novus Media Group Vice President Shawn McCort said that his group is partnering with companies like Walgreens and Walmart to combat the changing times in the

media landscape.

"Media channels across the country are seeing an erosion in readership and circulation, so we need to be innovative in how we connect with people," McCort said. "It's not a scattershot anymore. We need to connect at a one-on-one level."

McCort said that the businesses placing the ads are changing, and that newspapers need to reflect that to better suit the companies, hence the "What Clients Want" moniker.

At the end of the day, advertisement revenue is the lifeblood of the newspaper industry.

But St. Charles took it one step further, saying "We are not newspaper companies anymore. We need to get away from that title. We are now multimedia companies, and our ads and content need to embody that."

With multimedia in mind, the media buyers on the panel

laid out practices on how markets can better reach target audiences. Digital advertising revenue is playing a larger role resulting in advertisement agencies using more data and analytics to better understand what works and what doesn't.

Denise Sandoval, an Account Services Manager at NSA Media, said that readers' insights and interactions are critical to advertisers, and that knowing how to best accommodate readers comes from strategic planning.

"We need to be less reactionary as a whole," she said. "We have got to look ahead and plan for the future."

While the panelists contin-

ued to advocate flexibility and forward-thinking to help foster healthy relationships that benefit both parties, the message was clear. Providing specific, curated advertisements to readers was the best way for newspapers to thrive.

St. Charles said that working together is the best way to better serve the customers, and Sandoval agreed.

"The decisions should benefit both the advertiser and publisher," Sandoval said.

St. Charles ended the same way she started, saying that "the goal is still customer first. It's about making it easy for them."

"The decisions should benefit both the advertiser and publisher."

Denise Sandoval
Manager of account services, NSA Media

How journalism impacted the 2016 election

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The Ohio Newspaper Association Convention offered journalists a deeper look into how reporting affected the election, or vice-versa.

Speakers on the election panel included: Doug Oplinger, the managing editor of the Akron Beacon Journal; Ashley Bunton, a reporter for the Washington Court House Record-Herald; John Green, the interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and director of the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron and Curt Steiner, the CEO of Steiner Public Relations.

The dialogue delved into what role the media truly played this past election, in particular the relationship between politicians, journalists and citizens.

While pollsters and journalists alike were surprised with the election of Donald J. Trump, one area in particular is considered to be the driving and determining factor of his win: rural America.

Bunton incorporated her unusual perspective as a reporter covering rural Ohio. She explained that when she began her writing career at the Record-Herald she was reporting from her point of view, not her readers.

"Some of the things people would say to me didn't match up with what I was hearing from different media outlets, so initially I sort of doubted what I was supposed to be reporting on," Bunton said.

She began reaching out to different communities around her, trying to find an answer to this disconnect, but after a failed attempt at getting the answer she was looking for in a local Amish community, she rethought her approach.



ASHLEY NELSON

Curt Steiner (left) with Steiner Public Relations and Ashley Bunton with the Washington Court House Record-Herald (right) speak at the panel on the impact of journalism on the 2016 election.

Bunton decided to report not from what she was hearing from other news outlets, or what she was feeling internally, but from her town's perspective.

"That changed the way that the information flowed throughout the article," Bunton said. "With eleven million different people in Ohio we could have eleven million different perspectives across the state."

Oplinger and the Akron Beacon-Journal reached a similar conclusion. After many years at the paper, he along with his colleagues decided to investigate the gray area between journalists, politicians and citizens.

He said that after meeting with groups including all of the demographics listed above, he discovered that journalists were not thinking about the

people they were reporting on.

Oplinger said journalists were separated from politicians and civilians during this session and were asked to describe the other groups.

"The media people -- when they talked about politicians -- said they were in it for money, in it for power and for journalists: overworked, underap-

preciated," Oplinger said. For citizens, journalists described them as out of touch, pathetic and uninformed.

The groups then all joined together and were asked to put their sheets of thoughts on the wall for everyone to see.

"I was literally moved to tears as a citizen stood up and

Election continues on A14

"Some of the things people would say to me didn't match up with what I was hearing from different media outlets, so initially I sort of doubted what I was supposed to be reporting on."

Ashley Bunton
Reporter, Washington Court House Record-Herald

Election from A13

said ‘You all treat us with disdain, you think we don’t care. You think we’re uninformed. Give us a break.’,” Oplinger said.

He said after the eye-opening experience, the journalists agreed to do something different in December 2015.

The Akron Beacon-Journal paid for polling of its readers to truly find out what they were interested in reading about and partnered with Green at the University of Akron to conduct their research.

The polls consisted of many open-ended questions, Green said.

They found that many readers said they cared more about the issues pressing America, rather than the character of politicians.

Green said that while neither candidate was well-liked, when it came to Clinton readers were more likely to favor her based on her character, however more people were more likely to disagree with her stances on various issues than with Trump.

“Lower educated people, let me tell you, are by no means stupid. They simply have a very different cognitive style than people with degrees and advanced degrees,” Green said.

As fragments of communities become more divided along lines such as education and political view, new organizations can run into trouble with their coverage. The discussion began to evolve into what local news organizations’ responsibilities were in their communities and how to identify the issues that affect everyone.

The panelists cited the

“There are far more people dying in Ohio of heroin overdoses than terrorism.”

Doug Oplinger
Managing editor, Akron Beacon-Journal



ASHLEY NELSON

From left to right: Doug Oplinger with the Akron Beacon-Journal, Curt Steiner with Steiner Public Relations, Ashley Bunton with the Washington Court House Record-Herald and John Green with the University of Akron speak on the 2016 election panel.

opioid epidemic in Ohio as a community-centered narrative that seems to go untouched in recent political debate.

Oplinger recalled attending a breakout session with only seven people present, and as they went around the table Oplinger realized almost everyone he came in contact with had been affected by the opioid epidemic. One person was a recovering addict, one had worked at a heroin clinic and one had lost his brother to an overdose.

“There are far more people dying in Ohio of heroin overdoses than terrorism,” Oplinger said. “So if you want to talk community narratives, there is something that news organizations can help communities

come together and talk about solutions and how do we work towards those solutions.”

The panelists were in agreement that community-centered narratives are important and have become next to obsolete as the political narratives arch towards broad, national topics that have little effect on the day-to-day lives of these communities. Shining a light on the problems plaguing these smaller communities is the responsibility of the news media, Oplinger believes.

They continued to discuss what their media organizations’ role was by discussing the media’s place in polling and making predictions on election results.

“It doesn’t seem that the basic work of journalism is about predicting outcomes, it’s about describing the conditions that lead up to outcomes,” Green said.

The panelists discussed the difficulties that came with polling in this past election. There were societal pressures that could sway them from telling pollsters how they actually voted, grossly changing the figures reported in the main-

stream media for so long. There were minor inaccuracies among a collection of reporters that created a culture of distrust with news organizations that published polling numbers.

However, Green believes that the work of journalism is in identifying the factors that lead to the outcome of the election. Why was Trump elected President? Why were some people outspoken in their support for him and why were others willing to cave to societal pressure?

“In highly polarized, highly controversial campaigns or issues of that nature, social desirability effects are very powerful,” Green said. “This means two things: One is that you have to ask the questions differently, and the other is that you have to be especially skeptical of the results.”

This leaves news organizations and its readers to do one thing, and that is continue asking these questions. Continue to question what is important to your communities and maintain an open dialogue.

“Report from their perspectives, and not just about their perspectives,” Bunton said.

New public records laws help journalists

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Journalists and citizens seeking access to public records have reason to smile under the rays of Ohio's newly streamlined sunshine laws.

On September 28, 2016, a new public records mediation law took effect and it aims to provide a speedy and cost-effective way to mediate disputes over access to public records.

Prior to this legislation, public records requesters that had been denied would file a mandamus action to release the records. Unfortunately, these proceedings were both expensive and time-consuming for all parties involved.

"The court could stretch out all of this and, no matter where (the mandamus) was filed, the case often took up to a year to get a result in the first court. Then there's always the right to an appeals court which, again, no deadline," Jeff Clark, public records master at the Ohio Court of Claims, said.

This boggy bureaucratic process was especially troubling for journalists that requested time-sensitive records, Clark said.

The new legislation expedites the process by forbidding discovery, which means that after the complaint and evidence are submitted the case moves immediately to mediation. To save money, there are no attorney fees for either side and the mediation is conducted over the phone, Clark said.

This time and money-saving legislation was then contrasted by the panel to the level of resistance that many reporters face with community and governmental relations.

"We're in an age of increasing hostility to the media. President Trump is undercutting and undermining the importance of the role of the media," Monica Dias, of Frost Brown Todd, said in her discus-



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Jeff Clark, public records master at the Ohio Court of Claims, explains the recent development in public record law that makes legal action for public records more efficient and less expensive.

sion of media safety.

This hostility toward the media is a concern for access to government proceedings and, more recently, is also a concern for the physical safety of reporters in the field.

"I never had to worry that someone would touch me in a threatening way," Dias said of her 17 years experience as a newspaper reporter, prior to becoming an attorney.

That's not necessarily the case anymore.

Dias referenced the incident where Trump's then campaign manager, Corey Lewandowski,

grabbed Michelle Fields, a Breitbart News reporter.

"What do you do?" Dias said, on the growing number of violent threats targeting journalists. "Maybe increase security for her. Maybe send a buddy

with her when she's out in the field. But don't stop reporting because what these people want is the chilling effect. They want reporters to stop covering the news and if we do that, then they win."

"We're in an age of increasing hostility towards the media."

Monica Dias
Lawyer, Frost Brown Todd

Print news is not dead, says Kevin Slimp

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The headlines are everywhere. Entire websites are devoted to this idea.

Print is dead. Just ask newspaperdeathwatch.com, a website devoted to creating obituaries for failing newspapers that has different links for layoffs, declining sales and anything else the creators could find to support the claim.

But, wait, what if these websites and articles and ideas aren't correct? What if the journalists who devote their lives to public work are actually doing something right?

Kevin Slimp, a nationally-known lecturer regularly at various newspaper conventions and newsrooms, believes just that.

Slimp, who is also the technology director for the Tennessee Press Association, said that there is one group of people to blame for the idea of a dying print: journalists.

He compared the popularity in this belief to that of Y2K, the idea that most computers would crash and the world might end in 2000.

"Do you know why people thought that was going to happen?" Slimp asked. "Because you told them it was going to... You convinced people it was a good story so you ran it over and over and over again... It's the same thing you're doing with your papers right now.

"Guess what? It worked. Your readers believe you. What's more, your advertisers believe you."

The headlines were just the beginning Slimp said, as broadcasters and other forms of media soon began to latch on to the idea.

Next, he said, the popular program 60 Minutes devoted an entire episode to the dying newspapers.

"I started calling experts around the country who are ex-



Kevin Slimp, a nationally-known speaker, spoke on why print news is not dead at the ONA conference.

EILEEN MCCLORY

perts about things they talked about in the newscast... They said the statistics they gave were not true at all, basically almost nothing they said in that "60 Minutes" story was true."

Slimp wrote a response to it, which hundreds of newspapers ran that week.

But this combative attitude did not always remain.

In 2014, the popular talk began to catch up to him. "You heard so much you were just about ready to give up."

"Community newspapers were doing really well. They were starting to really come back. But all around me I kept seeing reports that the industry was dying," Slimp said.

After growing tired of seeing research that didn't match up with what he saw everyday, Slimp began his own research.

"In 2015 I did my first research project and more than 600 publishing across America took part in it," he said.

In his research, he asked publishers what role social media plays in their primary product, as well as the benefit social media creates in business and product. A vast majority of publishers -- 86 percent-- said they assign staff to social media. Less than two percent said it influenced their primary product.

He found that social media investing throughout companies was a result of believing it could fix the "failing print."

When he asked publishers if they would think their

paper was successful without a printed version, the majority said no. Whereas, when asked if they would feel successful with printed versions and no digital site, many said yes.

Slimp also asked how healthy the publishers think their papers were. Of the respondents, 37 percent said that their company's health was better.

"If you leave here with any information today I hope you leave with print and newspapers are not dying," he said.

"Community newspapers were doing really well. They were really starting to come back."

Kevin Slimp
Conference speaker