

NINA

NORTHERN ILLINOIS NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION



“
The rhythm of the news cycle has changed so dramatically that what’s really been excluded is the time that it takes to think.”

*Barry Schwartz
Swarthmore College
(Quoted in Columbia
Journalism Review)*

**‘DIGITAL INK’
BLOG**
www.ninaonline.org

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Route to:

- ___ Publisher
- ___ Managing Ed.
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- ___ Advertising
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- ___
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Time for NINA to revisit its mission

By Sharon Boehlefeld
OUTGOING PRESIDENT

As we’ve talked about conferences and workshops during the past few years, the NINA board has repeatedly discussed what we can do that will be most valuable to newspaper journalists in a multimedia world.

Last summer, we started talking about whether we should redefine ourselves in light of the new media realities. After all, even the smallest papers among our members are dabbling with Web sites. The largest are leading the way with a variety of multimedia platforms and partnerships with radio and television.

Board members also have talked briefly about whether we should change our name from Northern Illinois Newspaper Association to Northern Illinois News Association. In a straw poll at our fall banquet, about half the room supported a change. We aren’t yet bringing that to a membership vote, but we welcome pro and con discussion from our members at our blog, Digital Ink.

At our October board meeting, an ad hoc committee (Rick Nagel, Lonny Cain, Roger Ruthhart and Jim Killam) presented a proposal for a new mission statement.

Our current statement reads: NINA is an organization of newspaper professionals dedicated to advancing print journalism, print-journalism education and



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Join us on Jan. 16

Our regular board meeting includes a general membership meeting at 10 a.m. Any staffer from a NINA-member paper, and any individual member, is welcome to help set the course for 2009 workshops and conferences, as well as to vote on our revised mission statement. Location is the Northern Star office in the Campus Life Building, NIU-DeKalb.

training in northern Illinois.

Knowing that few of us are still only “print” journalists – even as we acknowledge a preference for the medium – the committee attempted to come up with a broader statement. The proposal reads: NINA’s mission is to advance the quality, integrity and credibility of journalism and journalism education in northern Illinois.

We all know our industry is reeling from changes, both in and out of our control. Printed newspapers are, in a sense, an endangered species. Yet, it was the printed word – the press – for which the First Amendment was penned.

We all believe our medium is still critically important in our communities, and will probably have some kind of future for years to come. We remain dedicated to professional standards in news gathering and reporting, professional standards that we believe should not disappear just

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Trouble spots for new reporters

By Jason Akst

Forget for a moment the mundane grammatical, stylistic and organizational problems that plague beginning journalists. They are important considerations, but in today's rant I want focus on conceptual journalistic issues our students battle.

Why? So that, just in case we're only partially successful at fixing everything below, you know where our training left off *when you graciously and wisely hire our talented, bright young journalists.*

LET'S TALK ABOUT ME

"The story is *not* about you!" Ad nauseum, I emphasize that beginning news writers are not columnists. I include the part about how there's no complete objectivity, but when we construct news stories, as much as possible, we're supposed to be accurate, impartial, dispassionate, careful observers and transmitters of what happened.

Deaf ears. Perhaps because of Facebook, texting, blogging, K-12 emphasis on personal expression, all of the above, novice journalists find it increasingly difficult to keep themselves out of the story. The signals aren't subtle. They write, "I think that"

NUMBERS, SCHNUMBERS

No matter the topic, I emote, good stories are a smooth, potent blend of humanity and data. "Humanity" comes from good quotes, descriptions, narrative, etc.; "data" comes from information upon which those good quotes, descriptions, narrative, etc. rely. News revolves around reports, deaths/injuries, statistics, research ... *something that measures something.*

They get the concept of compelling storytelling, and that's important, but we're supposed to tell nonfiction stories, and the nonfiction part comes from the numbers. They don't like that, often don't understand

the information upon which stories are based, and struggle with incorporating information into the story.

ACCORDING TO THIS WEB SITE ...

We have created the monster that's eating us. Even though students know that just about anybody can construct a Web site and make it seem real, they just can't break away from using the Internet as primary – and only – source material.

I can't tell you how many stories I read that say something like, "According to blahblahblah.com" No mention talking with anyone *at* the Web site, no effort to talk to actual people. Just the idea that information on the Web is good enough is very troubling.

REPORT, YES; CHEERLEAD, NO

I blast editorialization because I think bloviating journalists (in places other than the Op/Ed section) give our profession the black eye we all-too-often deserve. Later we can debate a responsible level of advocacy, but in a basic news writing class, I focus on the layup, not the alley oop.

Interesting, however, is that when my students editorialize, overwhelmingly, they cheerlead rather than criticize. Over the past decade or so, the harshest media analysis seems to point mainstream media's disinterest/inability to dissect and critique policy and policymakers in both public and private sectors. If anything, we should train our students to be more critical and less supportive.



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Mission

Continued from cover

because our means of delivering news may change.

But, just because this board thinks our organization might need some redirection as we move into the future, that doesn't mean our membership sees things the same way.

At our fall conference, I briefly explained the board's discussions and read the current and proposed versions of the

mission statement. I also invited comments on our blog, Digital Ink. The comment period remains open until Jan. 15.

A change of the mission statement requires approval of two-thirds of members voting at a general membership meeting.

A general meeting, part of our Jan. 16 board session, will begin at 10 a.m. in the Student Life building on the campus of Northern Illinois University. Please join us as we take the vote on our mission statement.

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What J-schools don't teach young journalists

By Jim Killam

Journalism schools try to prepare students for the world that awaits them. We offer tools in reporting, writing, editing, design, photography, new media, law and ethics. Too often, though, one set of tools goes missing: How to deal with trauma.

That was the subject of a November workshop at Chicago's Loyola University by the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma. Attendees ranged from professional journalists to psychologists to high-school and college journalism teachers and advisers. The common theme: Young journalists need this kind of training – and without it, they're often unprepared for what they encounter.

Young reporters' first full-time jobs often are police and fire beats. They may be exposed to traffic accidents, natural and man-made disasters, crime scenes and, unfortunately, events like school shootings. Maybe all of those things in a relatively short time period. Even young journalists on sports or government beats almost invariably find themselves called upon to help cover big, traumatic events.

And it may be getting worse.

"We have been pounded left and right with a level of intensity never before seen in journalism," speaker



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David Handschuh told workshop attendees. Handschuh brings a special kind of credibility to this conversation. A photographer for the New York Daily News, he was severely injured on 9/11 as one of the World Trade Center towers collapsed. The shock and debris wave hurled him a block through the air and nearly killed him.

"We have to look after the people we interview, and we have to look after each other," Handschuh said.

A University of Maryland study shows that, in 75 percent of college journalism programs, trauma is not formally taught in any way. Those schools that do teach it usually place it in an ethics class rather than as part of any skills classes.

Here's what Dart believes all journalists need to know: Even the most cynical and hardened among us can't escape some basic human characteristics. We are programmed to trust the world. We go about our daily routines assuming we are basically safe. And, we are programmed for survival – that's the fight-or-flight (or freeze) response. In the face of traumatic events, those two characteristics can clash.

At the Northern Star, we have firsthand experience with the Dart Center and the tremendous work it does. A few weeks after the Feb. 14 NIU campus shootings, Dart dispatched its director, Bruce Shapiro, and board member Deb Nelson to DeKalb. They met first with area journalists who covered the tragedy, and then with the Northern Star staff.

Those sessions helped students and professionals understand and, in

some cases, recognize signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. Shapiro said they include:

Intrusion: Images that just won't go away. Or, even just a continued sense of unease. Disturbing dreams.

Hyper-arousal: Extreme sensitivity to potential danger. Jumpiness. Irritability. A short attention span.

Numbing / avoidance: Avoidance of anything that will arouse those other two problems. The person's emotional life is constricted. Long-term, you don't feel things in a normal way.

These symptoms are completely normal immediately following exposure to trauma. It's also normal for symptoms to show up four to six months after an event, Shapiro said. What should set off alarm bells is if a person experiences all three symptoms for six weeks or more. Left untreated, it can persist for years.

Also of concern is something called vicarious traumatization. Basically, journalists who listen to other people's traumatic stories – even without an at-the-scene experience – have to be careful, too, Shapiro said. And, we need to realize we can have the same effect on readers and viewers.

It's not all about PTSD. Journalists through the years have experienced anxiety, depression, substance abuse and relationship breakdowns. Certainly not all of that can be attributed to covering trauma. But as Dart creates a field of knowledge where none existed previously, it's providing some "aha" moments for journalists, too.

It strikes me that this topic would make a great NINA workshop.

Northern Star wins Pacemaker award

NIU News release

DeKalb — As the horrible events of Feb. 14 unfolded at Northern Illinois University, young journalists employed by the Northern Star responded with notebooks, cameras and professionalism.

"It wasn't a matter of, 'Let's make sure we do really good work.' It was a matter of, 'Let's make sure we do the right thing.' It was a matter of doing the only thing we knew to do," said John

Puterbaugh, editor of the student newspaper at the time.

Eight months later, and for the first time since 1974, the Star won the Pacemaker.

The company is good for 2008's college press parallel to the Pulitzer prize: the Daily Northwestern, the Indiana Daily Student, the Harvard Crimson, the Daily Tar Heel, the Daily Iowan, the Kentucky Kernel, the State News (Michigan State University) and the Battalion (Texas A&M).





Congratulations to our 2008 Sweepstakes winners, and to all winners from our annual contest. See the full list at www.ninaonline.org.

Daily Herald's Frisk ends 50-year career



DAILY HERALD PHOTO

Bob Frisk and the trophy recently renamed in his honor, awarded to the Mid-Suburban League's top boys and girls athletic programs.

"I have finally run out of adjectives."

With that, the Daily Herald's Bob Frisk launched his final column Dec. 5, after 50 years of covering high-school sports for the paper.

"I can't begin to estimate the number of high school sports events I have watched or the number of coaches or young athletes or parents or administrators I have been honored to know," he wrote. "... It's time to stop writing and start living a new life. As a former high school track athlete, I can say now I have finally reached the finish line of my 50-year dash."

In a tribute column, fellow sports writer John Radtke quoted Dundee-Crown girls basketball coach Joe Komaromy. "When you read Bob's articles you always knew he was writing from the heart," Komaromy said. "And, he gets his point across. We cut a lot of his articles out and pass them out to the kids. No one exemplifies the way high school sports should be like he does."

Add NINA's collective voice to the accolades from journalists and community members alike. At a time when the newspaper industry doesn't have a lot to celebrate, Frisk and his amazing career are a reminder of all that is good about community journalism.

CALENDAR

Friday, Jan. 16

NINA Board meeting / general membership meeting. 9 a.m. (board), 10 a.m. (general); Northern Star, NIU-DeKalb.

Friday, March 20

NINA Board meeting, 10 a.m., Northern Star, NIU-DeKalb.

Friday, April 24

NINA Spring Conference, Northern Star, NIU-DeKalb.

Friday, June 26

NINA Board meeting, 10 a.m., Northern Star, NIU-DeKalb.

Friday, Sept. 11

NINA Board meeting, 10 a.m., Northern Star, NIU-DeKalb.

Thursday, Oct. 22

NINA Board meeting (dinner).

Friday, Oct. 23

NINA Fall Conference, NIU-DeKalb.

Friday, Dec. 4

NINA Board meeting, NIU.