



2020 RETROSPECTIVE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Irving Washington

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MISSION STATEMENT

Inspire and support innovation
and excellence in digital journalism

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About the 2020 Retrospective

2020 has been a year of adapting and reimagining. We faced the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and related lockdowns, economic crisis, widespread protests against systemic racism, racial reckoning in newsrooms and global attention on a tumultuous election season in the United States. Through it all, our focus was supporting our community to reimagine journalism and embrace the possibilities beyond the crises — from relationships with audiences and funding models, to workforce diversity, newsroom culture and collaboration within the industry.

We ended the year as a team of 12 and collaborated with 15 journalism consultants throughout the year. Together, we refined organizational strategies in the context of a global pandemic and built solutions for meaningful virtual connections. We hired our first Director of Finance and Administration, strengthened how we work as we became a fully-remote team, practiced what we preach about well-being and shared lessons with journalism and association executives.

The 2020 Retrospective highlights our impact across five areas of work:

- Training, Education and Resources
- Communities, Cohorts and Collaboration
- Awards, Recognition and Grants
- Career Services and Development
- Standards, Ethics and Advocacy

While 2020 was a uniquely challenging year, we are energized by what we accomplished and look forward to building on this work in 2021. ■

Training, Education, Resources



01

Bespoke platforms for virtual learning

The need to shift ONA's programs to a fully virtual environment for 2020 nudged our plans to explore new platforms for registration and content delivery.

A big achievement: We designed a system that not only met ONA's immediate needs in response to the coronavirus pandemic, but also will have an impact on our work for years to come – making ONA a go-to destination for high-quality virtual training, conferences and similar events.

The team assessed dozens of tools and ultimately decided to customize our own using WooCommerce and a variety of extensions. On journalists.org, the system is built to allow for individual events and courses, while on our conference websites (ONA20 and Insights), users purchase memberships that give them access to a variety of sessions and resources. We look forward to continuing to iterate on these platforms in 2021 to improve the learning experience and reach more members of our community. ■

Audience development and emerging technology deep dives

We hosted two virtual editions of ONA Insights, events aimed to provide subject-specific deep dives into areas of innovation in journalism. Our first event, in June, focused on Audience Development and Analytics, and engaged more than 350 participants over two days.

We hosted conversations with experts ranging from better understanding Key Performance Indicators to considering how Artificial Intelligence will impact audience research. This event also marked the initial roll out of our bespoke virtual learning management system. ■

Reimagining how newsrooms work

Our community often requests best practices in strategy, leadership and management. This year, we sought to address that need in part with a Newsroom Playbook Series, three virtual conversations hosted by the authors of recent best practice guides.

We tackled converting paid subscribers, better supporting journalists of color and managing distributed teams. Each conversation included a walk-through with an author or authors, Q&A with that expert, and interaction with other members of the community. ■

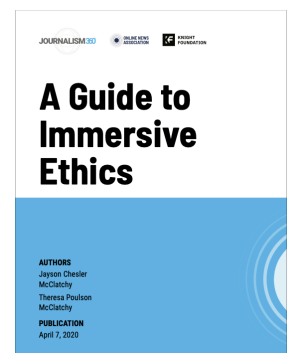
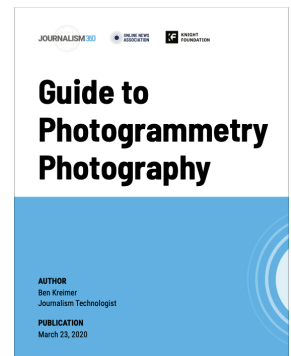
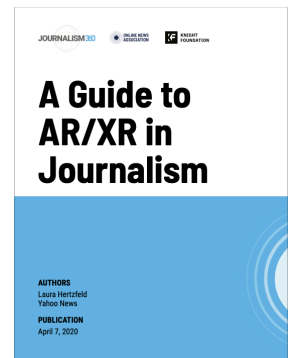
Guides to immersive storytelling

Through the Journalism 360 program, ONA created three guides to help journalists create more immersive stories.

- A Guide to Photogrammetry, authored by Ben Kreimer;
- A Guide to AR/XR in Journalism, authored by Laura Hertzfeld; and
- A Guide to Immersive Ethics, authored by Theresa Poulson and Jayson Chesler.

The guides provide simple entry points for those beginning to experiment, share best practices from journalism innovators, highlight compelling media projects and promote discussion in the immersive journalism space by supporting open-source learning. Additionally, we hosted virtual events and training sessions with all of the authors, where creators could dig deeper into how newsrooms are testing new ways of reaching audiences while providing unique new experiences for people to process information.

The guides and selected trainings are available online to accelerate learning and support content creators working in the immersive journalism space; guides and case studies are also available for download. ■



ONA20 Everywhere

Producing a global journalism innovation festival

Like most major associations and other event hosts, we re-imagined our annual conference for a virtual environment for 2020.

We built a new conference from the ground up, and ONA20 Everywhere stretched over 10 business days from Oct. 1-16. We hosted approximately 2,000 people, representing roughly 40 countries, in conversations related to all aspects of journalism.

ONA20 Everywhere contained more than 200 events, including training, networking and fun activities such as virtual tours and an immersive career fair. We tested a variety of innovative platforms, including an artificial-intelligence driven matchmaking software that allowed attendees to share digital tools in a rapid-fire chat meetup, visit more than 70 sponsors and exhibitors to understand the latest innovative offerings in journalism, or schedule meetings to connect 1:1.

Nearly all conversations were recorded, with subtitled videos still available in a robust archive, a significant benefit of operating in a virtual environment. ■



Creating value in an industry directory

One thing our members know is that information can be a valuable resource when gathered together in a useful way. In 2020, we applied that lesson to our sponsors listings. For all our ONA programs, we have an array of distinguished and high-profile partners and sponsors that look to provide resources for the ONA community. We built an Industry Directory to connect our members to a long list of organizations that value and support ONA. By browsing the list, they can learn of new tools, potential employers and likely allies for their work. ■

Communities, Cohorts, Collaboration

02



Meaningful connections during the coronavirus lockdown

Born in response to our community's concerns during the coronavirus pandemic, Community Circles are small virtual discussion groups that present an opportunity to address challenges while creating deeper connections among peers.

Starting in the spring, we matched more than 200 community members into more than 40 virtual discussion groups tackling major issues of concern to the ONA community, including stress management, bringing out the best in distributed teams, balancing work with caregiving responsibilities, combatting pandemic-related misinformation and coping with lost revenue.

Building on this initial pilot program, we launched two Community Circles in October working to create tangible resources on, respectively, tackling misinformation around the COVID-19 vaccine and ensuring information access equity in our communities. The resources are under development and scheduled to be shared with the community in early 2021. ■

Advancing women's leadership in journalism

In 2020, we deepened the work that we have been doing for years to support women in media, offering new ways for women to connect to each other.

We welcomed a cohort of 26 inspiring women to the Women's Leadership Accelerator, our intensive program that supercharges the leadership and management skills of women who are pushing digital innovation. Women in the program represent a range of backgrounds, newsrooms and expertise, including local news entrepreneurship, operations, product innovation, visual journalism and broadcast.

The Accelerator kicked off with a week of hands-on personal and professional work and inspiring visits with leaders at Disney Parks and Experiences, Flower Child, Netflix and Microsoft. Throughout the year, the cohort reconnected through online workshops, supporting each other as they led newsrooms and projects in a challenging year.

As we moved our work online, we created new ways to connect the women in our community, introducing our first Women's Leadership Accelerator: Summer Series. We hosted four conversations on the topics we most often hear women want support around, kicking off with a discussion around launching the 19th*. Over the course of a month, hundreds of women joined to share their experiences and to hear from women in product leading newsrooms, women in entrepreneurship, and for career advice.

The 2020 Women's Leadership Accelerator program is supported by lead funder Dow Jones Foundation, with additional support from Microsoft, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; Inasmuch Foundation; Disney Parks, Experiences and Products; the John S. Knight (JSK) Journalism Fellowships; Flower Child and Alley. ■



Resources for self-care and wellbeing

Thanks to generous support from Democracy Fund, ONA Local groups hosted virtual wellness and self-care events for journalists all over the world. Sessions included origami lessons, yoga classes, sound bath meditations, mental health check-ins and a chair yoga session during ONA20 Everywhere. Many of the instructors featured in the series were also working journalists and were able to bring a unique perspective to supporting well-being for media professionals. ■

Awards, Recognition and Grants

03



Online Journalism Awards

In a year with multiple ongoing crises, the Online Journalism Awards created a particularly impactful space for the industry to come together and celebrate the value of digital journalism. We honored finalists and winners across 19 categories representing high-quality, innovative and engaging work..

The 2020 OJAs introduced two new categories. The inaugural Excellence in Newsletters award recognized Popular Information, created by Judd Legum to hold powerful people and institutions accountable. Pulitzer Center and Vox.com were awarded the Topical Reporting: Climate Change award for inspiring coverage of three tropical trees' superpowers as climate solutions. This new award included a \$5,000 prize thanks to support from McKinsey Publishing.

General Excellence awards, for outstanding reporting and digital presentation throughout the awards year, were given to the South China Morning Post, San Francisco Chronicle, PublicSource and The Marshall Project. Each award came with \$5,000, supported by SmartNews, a new sponsor for this award.

Additionally, The New York Times Magazine won the \$5,000 Knight Award for Public Service for "The 1619 Project." Documented and Southern California Public Radio each won a \$2,500 prize for the Gather Award in Engaged Journalism, supported by the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communications Agora Journalism Center.

This year's James Foley Award for Conflict Reporting went to Kabul-based visual storyteller and documentary photographer Kiana Hayeri.

The OJAs also honored Raju Narisetti with the Rich Jaroslovsky Founder Award, for outstanding contribution to ONA's mission over his 30-plus year media career (and counting), while Doug Mitchell received the ONA Community Award, a celebration of his longtime dedication to creating mentorship and career opportunities for journalists of color and young journalists.

Winners in this year's competition were announced throughout ONA20 Everywhere, culminating in a special event for our most popular awards on the final day of the conference. ■

Journalism 360 Challenge

In 2020, twelve projects were awarded a portion of \$100,000 in grant funding from Journalism 360, a joint initiative of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Online News Association.

Each winner will receive grants ranging from \$4,500 to \$10,000 to test, refine and build out an experimental, immersive idea. The challenge helps to fulfill Journalism 360's mission to invest in new technology and innovative projects, and support news organizations and individuals to explore immersive storytelling and share what they're learning.

Winners will help develop and expand best practices in immersive journalism, including virtual, augmented and mixed reality. The projects address issues including the COVID-19 pandemic, community engagement, race and cultural issues, creating training tools and new resources for immersive storytelling. Reflecting emerging trends and challenges in immersive storytelling, the projects will explore key areas such as audio tools, VR/360 video, photogrammetry and augmented reality. ■

An End-to-End Guide for Photogrammetry with Mobile Devices

New York Times Research and Development Team

Expanding the Circle: Black Women in XR

Cronkite School of Journalism/Arizona State University

AR For Everyone! Experiencing Augmented Reality News Stories in the Browser

The Brown Institute for Media Innovation

Youth Citizen Journalists Sharing Experiences of COVID-19 in Rural South Africa

Sunshine Cinema

A VR Project with The New Yorker

Sam Wolson

WebAR Producer Training Series

Yahoo News

In memoriam: An augmented reality experience to mourn and honor N.J.'s COVID-19 victims

NJ Advance Media (NJ.com & The Star-Ledger)

The Racial Divide: How I-81 Ripped Apart Syracuse's Community Fabric

S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University

The Spatial Podcast Project

Independent

Magic in the Desert

Wild Wimmin Films

Historias Inmersas: "Cero no es un numero para empezar"

Freelance. Credit: Creative Director

Project SHELL

Yellow Wood Immersive

Investing in journalism education and local news

Seven universities were each awarded \$20,000 for a total of \$140,000 in new support from the 2020 Challenge Fund for Innovation in Journalism Education.

Each university will partner with local news organizations to explore new ways of teaching journalism and delivering information to their local communities.

Additionally, Northern Arizona University, a 2018 grantee, was awarded a \$15,000 research prize, in recognition of their work to cultivate culturally sensitive reporting and expand representation of Indigenous communities through citizen-driven news.

Since 2014, the Challenge Fund has supported universities and journalism educators as they've led collaboration among students, local news professionals, researchers and technologists. For this round, ONA partnered with the Democracy Fund, the Inasmuch Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and The Scripps Howard Foundation. In total, 48 collaborative projects to boost journalism education and local news have received over \$1.7 million of support through the fund. ■

Boston University

Justice Media Co-Lab: Media Racial Bias Self-Assessment Tool

Craig Newmark School of Journalism at CUNY

Civic Newsroom

Colorado College Journalism Institute

Mapping and Engaging Allies to Build Colorado's Local News Future

Hussman School of Journalism and Media, UNC Chapel Hill

Operationalizing Professional-University Investigative Reporting Partnerships

Universidad del Sagrado Corazón

Nuestro Barrio Community Media Lab

DePaul University

Journalism for Health Equity in Chicago

University of Southern California

The LA Taco x USC Collaborative Community Zine Project

Career Services and Development

04



Connecting journalism talent to diverse opportunities

ONA continues to be a leader in career development and placement in the digital news space.

With the pandemic impacting business much of the year, there was especially high demand for job and career resources. The ONA Career Center saw a record number of visits, with more than 1,600 people using the job board to seek full-time work, fellowships and freelance contracts.

In response, we offered new ways for our community to stay connected to job opportunities, journalism training, and networking with peers and recruiters:

ONA membership extension: As many countries went into lockdown, we recognized it would be a financially challenging time for some our members. We offered a 90-day extension to membership to provide some immediate relief.

Conference scholarships: We awarded nearly \$44,000 in scholarships to more than 150 people for ONA20 Everywhere. The scholarships covered conference registration for roughly 10 percent of attendees, selected across four categories: students and new professionals, diversity and inclusion, local news professionals, and those experiencing financial hardship due to the impacts of the global pandemic. The scholarships also expanded how we collaborate with our partners; we worked with 10 sponsors to make these opportunities possible.

Virtual networking platform: We introduced a fun, AI-powered tool—Grip—to connect conference attendees according to shared interests, job functions and expertise. Customized to ONA’s needs, Grip recommended connections and provided opportunities for one-on-one video or text chats, scheduling meetings with recruiters and exploring a virtual exhibit space. Fifty percent of attendees actively used the platform, well above the average benchmark of 25 percent for other Grip events.

Career networking events: We experimented with different event platforms to facilitate meaningful virtual interaction during a time of physical distancing, including ONA’s first-ever virtual career fair for job seekers and students, and a career opportunity “round robin” event with 13 news and academic organizations. As an extension of these events, we also collected resumes from over 100 job seekers for our recruiting partners to review. ■

Standards, Ethics and Advocacy

05



Building racial equity in newsrooms

ONA is committed to the movement that seeks to build journalistic institutions where newsrooms are actively anti-racist and collaborative, and journalists of color feel like they truly belong.

With the Maynard Institute for Journalism Education and Open News, we announced a unique industry collaboration that aims to be a catalyst in this movement. We're calling it Vision25. Research on social change has found that movements can start when as few as 25 percent of a given population commits to speaking up and taking action. We're aiming for Vision25 to be that 25 percent "social tipping point" for racial equity in journalism.

Since announcing the initiative in October, together with our partners, we engaged in 30 conversations with journalism organization leaders to understand goals and pain points, explore strategies and build an alliance of supporters. We co-hosted two community events on belonging in the news and reporting on race in the U.S. that featured Nikole Hannah-Jones, award-winning reporter for The New York Times Magazine and author of the 1619 Project, and Maria Hinojosa, award-winning executive producer of Latino USA and creator of Futuro Media Group. Our next steps include plans to launch training and resources in 2021. ■

Championing access to information and government transparency

ONA pressed for access to records and proceedings in the U.S. that would help the public understand stories of local and national importance.

We also continue to challenge restrictions on digital journalists' ability to gather and report the news. Collaborating with other journalism organizations, we:

- Joined amicus efforts that successfully opposed the Chicago police union's attempt to require that police misconduct records (which are subject to state public-records laws) be destroyed after five years.
- Supported a nonprofit advocating for reform of Philadelphia's bail system in creating recordings of bail hearings.
- Sought public access to information about the suppliers of lethal injection drugs in Indiana.
- Supported a challenge to a Maryland law that prohibits dissemination of recordings of trial proceedings made by the courts.
- Supported a challenge to the constitutionality of an "ag-gag" law in Arkansas (as we have in other states) targeting undercover investigations of commercial agriculture facilities.
- Joined a coalition of press advocates in two cases arguing that tweets and hyperlinks are not "republications" of earlier-published articles so as to restart the statute of limitations.

- Joined a U.S. Supreme Court amicus brief in the closely-watched case *Van Buren v. United States*, which challenges overly broad interpretations of the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA) on First Amendment grounds. The case was argued in November 2020, and the decision will be announced by mid-2021.

As millions of people across the U.S. protested police brutality and racial injustice in the wake of the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer, ONA joined other media organizations to send letters to police departments in Minnesota, New York, Colorado and California condemning attacks on credentialed journalists covering the protests. We also joined an amicus brief in a class-action suit by the ACLU on behalf of journalists targeted by law enforcement while covering Black Lives Matter protests in Portland, successfully arguing that the court should not require journalists covering the protests to obtain credentials — whether from the government or a third party like the ACLU.

Throughout the year, ONA also sought transparency for journalists covering the White House and the federal government. Among these efforts, we:

- Joined other journalism organizations in seeking meaningful access to the proceedings in President Trump's first impeachment.
- Supported journalist Brian Karem's successful challenge to the White House's suspension of his press credentials.
- Supported a successful challenge to interventions by Michael Pack and leadership of the U.S. Agency for Global Media that interfered with editorial independence at USAGM broadcasters, including Voice of America.
- Are supporting an ongoing challenge to the enforcement of NDAs signed by Trump campaign staff. ■

Acknowledgements

This retrospective was assembled with input and contributions from the entire Online News Association team:

Irving Washington, Executive Director/CEO

- Provides oversight of all operations, partnerships and strategic planning;

Trevor Knoblich, Chief Knowledge Officer

- Oversees all programming and events;

Jessica Strelitz, Chief Strategic Partnerships Officer

- Oversees all sponsorships and new revenue development;

Bill Brady, Strategic Partnerships Coordinator

- Supports business development strategy, including managing exhibit spaces at events;

Liz Leith, Director of Finance and Administration

- Manages ONA finance and administrative functions including human resources, retirement and cash management;

Diana Lopez, Administrative Assistant

- Supports team needs and manages ONA's general administrative activities;

Adam Martin, Meeting Manager

- Manages event logistics, including food and beverage, audio/visual and some travel;

Jen Mizgata, Director of Programs

- Directs our grant-funded initiatives and diversity programs;

Meghan Murphy, Senior Manager, Communities & Local Journalism Initiatives

- Manages our growing ONA Local community and local programming;

Adam Nekola, Senior Digital Manager

- Manages all of our digital properties and design, including this report;

Karolle Rabarison, Communications Manager

- Manages organizational communications strategy and messaging;

Hollie Schultz, Program Manager, Awards and Grant-Making

- Manages the Online Journalism Awards, as well as supports application processes and microgrant distributions.

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