



# 2023 RETROSPECTIVE

**CEO AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
LaSarah S. Bunting

**ONA'S MISSION**  
Inspire and support innovation  
and excellence in digital journalism

# About the 2023 Retrospective

Welcome to the Online News Association's 2023 Retrospective. With LaSharah S. Bunting at the helm as CEO and Executive Director, 2023 was a year of new beginnings for ONA. This retrospective showcases some of the work and people that advanced our mission to inspire and support innovation in digital journalism over the past year. From practical AI resources to leadership and management training, our programs resonated with the evolving needs of the journalism community.

Thanks to our work, women executives found peer support for their career journey and the challenges facing their teams; newsrooms exchanged ideas and set standards for adopting emerging tech; and nearly 200 projects earned global recognition for their impact.

We proudly report 3,257 individuals helped sustain our mission through paid ONA membership in 2023. In Section 7, we also included a list of over 90 partners, sponsors and funders whose trust and investments helped bring this year's programs to life. They include news publishers, large tech companies, startups, major foundations, research and policy institutes, graduate schools and other groups who recognize the value of connecting with ONA's global community.

Thank you for being part of ONA in 2023. Explore the highlights here and join us as the mission continues. If your organization is interested in getting involved in 2024, contact Hanaa Rifaey, Head of Strategic Partnerships, at [hanaa@journalists.org](mailto:hanaa@journalists.org).

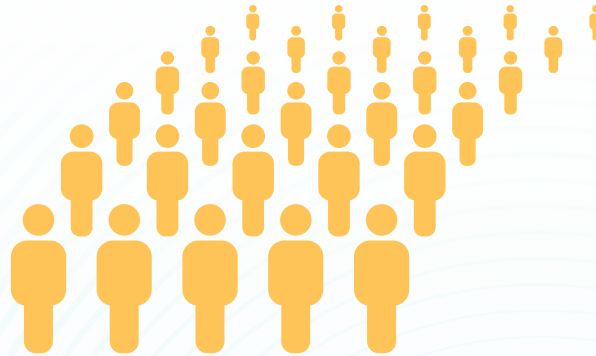
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# By the numbers

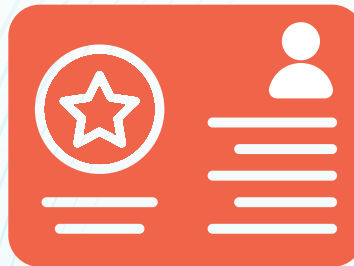
**3,257**

People who helped sustain ONA's mission through a paid annual membership



**2,348**

People engaging with ONA programs, including cohorts, fellowships and events



**32**

Countries represented among annual conference attendees



**360+**

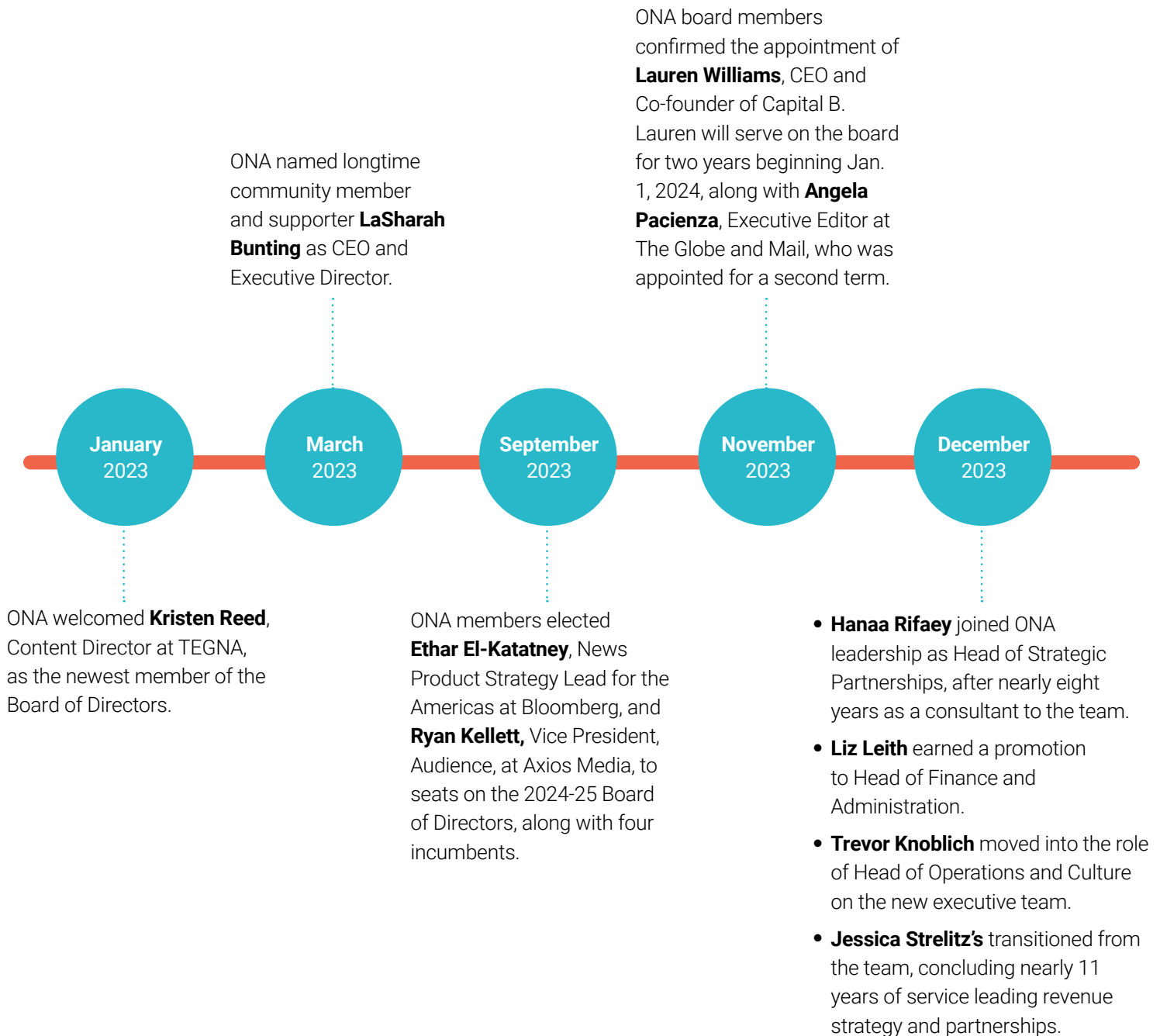
Volunteers who made our work better





# Leadership moments

Explore a few notable moments for ONA’s leadership from this past year.



SECTION

1

# Training and insights for responsible technology in newsrooms

# Enabling effective and responsible use of AI

ONA hosted discussions and trainings for the journalism community all year to make sense of the rapid expansion of AI. A diverse group of experts explored questions around mitigating inequities, staffing decisions, ethical use, misinformation and establishing newsroom policies. We also provided approachable guidance for AI experiments and encouraged ONA members to exchange ideas. For example, the community-curated [Practical Newsroom Guide to Artificial Intelligence](#) highlights tips for getting started and examples from local newsrooms like Michigan Radio (WUOM-FM) and El Vocero de Puerto Rico. And the ONA23 Start-Up Alley, where ONA’s annual conference attendees discover some of the most exciting innovations within the past two years, included an [AI Tools Showcase](#) to demo smart uses for day-to-day work.

## Featured Experts



**Joe Amditis**  
Assistant Director of Products and Events, Center for Cooperative Media



**Charlie Beckett**  
Professor and Founding Director, Polis, London School of Economics



**Meredith Broussard**  
Associate Professor, Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute of New York University



**Andrew Rodriguez Calderón**  
Computational Journalist, The Marshall Project



**Liz Danzico**  
Vice President of Design, Microsoft



**Munmun De Choudhury**  
Associate Professor of Interactive Computing, Georgia Tech



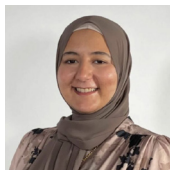
**Katie Drummond**  
Global Editorial Director, WIRED



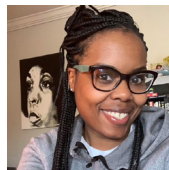
**Bryan Erdy**  
Video Manager, Houston Defender Network



**Karen Hao**  
Independent Journalist



**Dalia Hashim**  
AI and Media Integrity Research and Program Lead, Partnership on AI



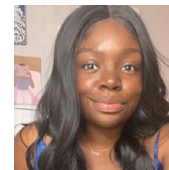
**Jaya Franklin**  
Director of Communications, Georgia State University College of Law



**Uli Köppen**  
Head of AI and Automation Lab and Co-Lead of BR Data, Bayerischer Rundfunk



**Ernest Kung**  
AI Product Manager, The Associated Press



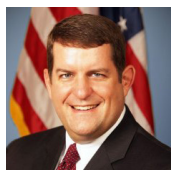
**Adriana Lacy**  
CEO, Adriana Lacy Consulting



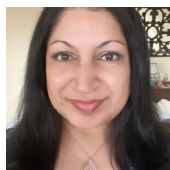
**Gideon Lichfield**  
Former Global Editorial Director, WIRED



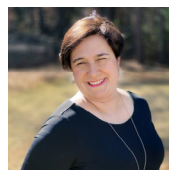
**Miranda Marcus**  
Head, BBC News Labs



**Matt Masterson**  
Director of Information Integrity, Microsoft



**Niketa Patel**  
Head of the Executive Program in News Innovation and Leadership, Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY



**Apryl Pilolli**  
Director Of Technology for the Knight x LMA BloomLab, Local Media Association



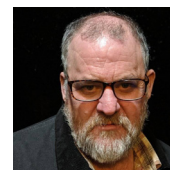
**Nikita Roy**  
Host, Newsroom Robots



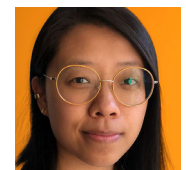
**Aimee Rinehart**  
Senior Product Manager AI Strategy, The Associated Press



**Jonathan Soma**  
Knight Chair of Data Journalism, Columbia University



**Hank Sims**  
Editor and Lead Developer, Lost Coast Outpost



**Sisi Wei**  
Editor-in-Chief, The Markup

# Annual Conference

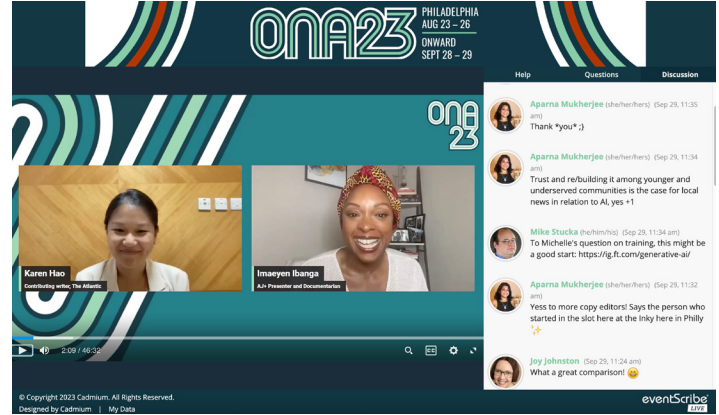
ONA's annual conference is the go-to gathering for leaders from both the technology and journalism industries. We presented the 2023 Online News Association Conference (ONA23) in two parts: **ONA23: Philadelphia** (Aug. 23-26), as an energizing four days of in-person learning and networking opportunities, followed by the virtual-only **ONA23: Onward** (Sept. 28-29) to hear more discussions on AI and related technology trends.

The conference engaged more than **1,800 attendees representing 32 countries and 44 U.S. states**. They included a mix of digital journalists, technologists, entrepreneurs, educators and other changemakers in digital media with expertise ranging from emerging tech to leadership development.

In Philadelphia, we hosted **150 speakers** who presented at about 90 learning sessions. Women represented 60% of the speaker slate, and people of color represented 40%. We also welcomed **90 sponsors, exhibitors and funders** who helped bring ONA23 to life. These organizations contributed thought-provoking sponsored learning events and numerous opportunities for networking and fun for all attendees.



# Annual Conference



## ONA23 Volunteer Program Committee

**Aala Abdullahi**, Innovation Editor, Sahan Journal

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**Jeremy Littau**, Associate Professor of Journalism and Communication, Lehigh University

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**Kat Sheplavy**, Senior Director, New Products & Experiences, McClatchy

**Myrka Moreno**, Audience Engagement Producer, The 19th\*

**Najja Parker**, Newsletter Coach, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

**Nirma Hasty**, Producer, NBC News

**Robin Kwong**, New Formats Editor, The Wall Street Journal

**Shawn Mooring**, Head of Philadelphia Programs, The Lenfest Institute for Journalism

**Uli Köppen**, Head of AI + Automation Lab, Co-Lead of BR Data, Bayerischer Rundfunk

SECTION

# 2

## **Building leaders who thrive through change**

# Women's Leadership Accelerator

The 2023 Women's Leadership Accelerator brought together 26 changemakers for a year of robust workshops, one-on-one coaching and meaningful connections with a career-long network of support. The majority of this year's cohort identify as women of color, and the group represents a range of expertise, from local news and broadcasting to analytics and product design.

“Participating in WLA gave me the **much-needed time and space to take a step away from the grind and think about how I want to show up** (in my personal and professional lives) and what kind of support/resources/tools I need to do so. It was a gift to be surrounded by a community of other women determined to be one another's sounding boards for questions ranging from: How do I have this hard conversation with my boss? To... How do I say goodbye to something to open up space for something better?” — **Anita Rao**, Host and Creator of Embodied, Managing Editor of On-Demand, North Carolina Public Radio WUN

“It's been a highlight of my career – I feel so lucky to have been on the scheme and the skills I've learned will benefit my work and my life beyond that too. The people I've met will stay as great contacts and friends – **it's so powerful to connect with a group of like-minded women from around the world**, who are so supportive and have similar challenges and goals.” — **Louise Ridley**, Senior Features Editor, Business, Insider UK





# Women's Leadership Accelerator



“The ONA Women’s Leadership Accelerator program **affirmed for me that I am on the right career trajectory for me**. The experience dovetailed with a period when I was trying to decide if I needed to narrow the scope of my job going forward, and ONA staff and my peers in WLA coached and encouraged me that my multi-faceted role in my newsroom is one I should continue to embrace, rather than feel obligated to pick a lane. — **Lydia Belanger**, Director of Production, Fortune

“The ONA WLA transformed the way I approach my career and **made me analyse what impact I wanted to make on journalism**. Connecting with a group of women at a similar stage in their career has been revolutionary to learn from them and the amazing coaches and mentors we had.”  
— **Elaine Okyere**, Assistant Editor, Digital, Sky News



# First-Time Managers Training

Moving into a management role can be messy, with plenty of ambiguity to navigate. Many people make the transition without any practical training. In partnership with the Maynard Institute, we launched the [First-Time Managers Training](#) to set up for success anyone recently or soon to be promoted to manage staff. This year, **40 budding managers** received training on topics such as nurturing an inclusive workplace and understanding the budget process to advocate for direct reports.

**Many thanks to the presenters who guided this program:**

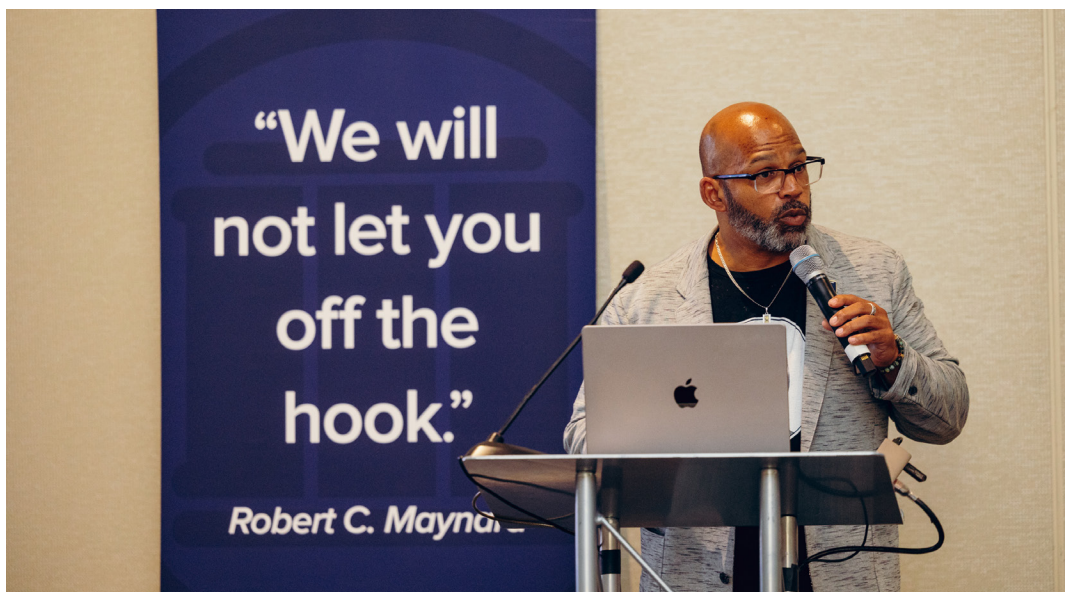
**Martin G. Reynolds**, Co-Executive Director – External Affairs and Funding, Maynard Institute

**P. Kim Bui**, Director of Product and Audience Innovation, The Arizona Republic

**Trevor Knoblich**, Chief Knowledge Officer, Online News Association

**Susan Leath**, Consultant

**Angilee Shah**, CEO and Editor-in-Chief, Charlottesville Tomorrow



# Executive Women Leaders Salon

Despite conclusive research that diverse leadership makes organizations more sustainable and resilient, women remain underrepresented in the highest ranks across journalism. This year ONA hosted the [Executive Women Leaders Salon](#) for off-the-record conversations on key challenges in the C-suite and to promote peer learning and collaboration.

## Salon sessions:

- Setting Organizational Culture Intentionally from the Top  
led by **Nabiha Syed**, CEO, The Markup
- Career Moves in Executive Leadership  
led by **Susan Leath**
- Building, Retaining and Leading Innovative Teams  
led by **Fran Scarlett**



SECTION

3

# Online Journalism Awards

# Online Journalism Awards

The 2023 Online Journalism Awards (OJAs) received **1,594 entries** across 23 award categories, a record level of participation in the program. Winners this year included exceptional journalism recognized through two new awards: *Topical Reporting: Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Identity* and *Excellence in Technology Reporting*.

The OJAs proudly presented a total of \$52,000 to 11 stand-out projects in the categories for science reporting, community-centered journalism, investigative data journalism, climate change reporting and general excellence. The prizes were sponsored by 3M, the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication, the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications, McKinsey Publishing and SmartNews.

ONA also bestowed special awards to five journalists whose work stand out as inspiring examples for their peers and who have created long-lasting impact on the community:

- **Siri Carpenter**, Co-founder and Editor-in-chief of The Open Notebook, honored with the [ONA Community Award](#)
- **Finbarr O'Reilly**, Independent visual journalist and author, honored with the [James Foley Award for Conflict Reporting](#)
- **Jean Friedman-Rudovsky** and **Cassie Haynes**, Co-founders of Resolve Philly, honored with the [Impact Award](#)
- Digital news pioneer **Mandy Jenkins**, posthumously honored with the [Rich Jaroslovsky Founder Award](#).

The community celebrated winners and finalists at the 2023 OJAs banquet and ceremony in Philadelphia, which was hosted by NPR's **Gene Demby** and made possible with generous support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.





# Online Journalism Awards

**More than 200 volunteers** make the OJAs possible each year by screening entries, serving on judging panels and supporting the awards ceremony in person. Here's what a couple of them had to say about the experience:

“Volunteering to judge the OJAs inspires me each year. Diving into entries from newsrooms big and small opens my eyes to courageous, innovative journalism and gives me such hope for our industry. Plus, working with other judges who represent a range of publications is a treat.”

— **Rodney Gibbs**, Senior Director, Strategy & Innovation, Atlanta Journal-Constitution

“Judging the awards allowed me to lift up out of the day-to-day grind to look at excellence across the industry. It challenged my assumptions and it forced me to think about my own approaches differently.”

— **Nation Hahn**, Chief of Growth & Founder, EducationNC



SECTION

# 4

# Networks of Support

# Idea swaps and networking meetups



We continued to organize virtual and in-person events to connect journalism changemakers who are tackling similar problems. In 2023, these events focused on topics such as implementing AI, accessibility practices in newsrooms, combating misinformation and engagement in broadcasting. We also organized a meetup series for newsletter professionals to swap ideas on growth and revenue strategies, audience engagement and metrics.

“It caught my attention that ONA was concerned about accessibility in the media, because there are few journalism organizations that promote this issue. I have been covering disability issues for many years, and there are few journalists who talk about disability and accessibility, in addition to being few journalists with disabilities. When I read about the virtual workshop on accessibility in the newsletter, I didn’t hesitate to sign up and I was very happy to see that there are more people working in this area. I was happier when I was able to attend ONA23 and witness panels dedicated to these topics.”

— **Andrea Medina**, Founder and Director, Integrados Chile

# ONA Career Day

ONA's virtual Career Day is all about connecting great journalism talent with recruiters for jobs, internships, fellowships and academic programs. More than 500 people representing many facets of digital media attended this year's event. The day included live and asynchronous networking, learning sessions related to career development and a Resume Drop.

## Select recruiters





# HBCU Digital Media Fellowship

Four students were selected to participate in the HBCU Digital Media Fellowship. With support from lead mentor **Michael Grant**, CEO and Founder of Get Current Studio, they have benefited from opportunities to level up their digital skills and network with industry leaders. All fellows received all-access passes to ONA23 and complimentary one-year memberships to ONA.

- **Ianna Fenton**, Howard University
- **Brelan Holston**, Fort Valley State University
- **Kyla Hubbard**, Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University
- **Kiana Stevenson**, Clark Atlanta University



“Participating in ONA23 with the HBCU Fellowship gave me more clarity on my path for my career and education. It’s because of ONA that I was able to secure my first job post grad and create meaningful friendships with the other HBCU fellows.”

— **Ianna Fenton**, now Associate Producer for Bay News 9 in Tampa, Florida

# 2023 MJ Bear Fellowship



Each year the [MJ Bear Fellowship](#) identifies and honors exceptional digital journalists under age 30. Fellows get access to ONA's annual conference, three-year ONA membership, workshops tailored to the group's projects and career goals and other opportunities to showcase their talents to the journalism community.

- **Laura Anaya-Morga**, General Assignment Reporter, Long Beach Post
- **Ugur Dursun**, Audience Engagement Producer, KQED
- **Bertin Huynh**, Senior Journalist, BBC News
- **Maria Mendez**, Service and Engagement Reporter, The Texas Tribune
- **Blake Stoner**, Founder & Chief Reporter, Vngle Grassroots News Agency
- **Alice Wilder**, Producer, American Public Media Group

*The MJ Bear Fellowship is made possible through generous contributions by the MJ Bear Estate, friends of MJ Bear and ONA, MSN International and Microsoft.*

# Student Newsroom and Innovation Lab

Twelve volunteer mentors collaborated with **19 students** in the Student Newsroom and Innovation Lab to [produce multimedia coverage](#) of ONA23. Since 2009, the newsroom has provided a unique opportunity for students to get digital media training and build their professional networks during the annual conference. This year's group was led by **Peg Achterman**, Associate Professor of Communication & Journalism, at Seattle Pacific University, and **Jaya Franklin**, Interim Director of Communications, at Georgia State University College of Law.



“ONA23 was an incredible opportunity to network and learn more about the industry ... I was able to produce content about the conference and the surrounding area, and the advice of my mentors has helped me tremendously in my career.”

— Noah Lyons, San Diego State University

“The student newsroom was a phenomenal experience. It allowed me to get feedback from professionals while working in a newsroom environment. Also, it gave me confidence in myself and the future of journalism to meet other student journalists.”

— Allison Mawn, University of Georgia

“The ONA Student Newsroom changed my entire perspective on journalism! I have never been surrounded by so many passionate student journalists, and they pushed me to be the best version of myself. I will be forever grateful that I was able to be part of this amazing opportunity.”

— Aubrey Rhoadarmer, Seattle Pacific University

*The ONA23 Student Newsroom and Innovation Lab was generously supported by Microsoft Start and Democracy Forward, the TEGNA Foundation and Canva.*



SECTION

5

# Fiscal Sponsorship of The Pivot Fund

# Supporting The Pivot Fund's mission

Following transformative investments in Georgia and South Carolina, The Pivot Fund is poised to broaden its grantmaking footprint across the South as well as explore more local news ecosystems in other regions of the U.S.

Under the guidance of **Tracie Powell**, a longstanding ONA member, the team is gearing up for landscape analysis in the Great Lakes states to inform The Pivot Fund's grantmaking strategy. Just like in Georgia, The Pivot Fund is on a mission to seek out hidden gems, those trustworthy news sources that fly under the radar of conventional philanthropy.

ONA's expertise in financial and grants administration continues to provide essential support to The Pivot Fund's work. ONA has been instrumental in administering funds, helping to produce reports and aiding in creating a solid grantee cohort experience for newsrooms in Georgia and South Carolina.

Since the start of the fiscal relationship, The Pivot Fund has raised more than \$4 million to advance investments in independent, nonpartisan community news outlets led by Black, Indigenous and other journalists of color. The Pivot Fund is in the final stages of securing its 501(c)(3) status, and ONA is excited to extend this fruitful partnership into 2024.



**Tracie Powell**



SECTION

6

**In  
memoriam**

# In memoriam

ONA lost two visionary community members this year. These leaders played key roles in ONA's history and growth and supported countless community members in navigating career opportunities amid rapid changes in technology.

**Doug Feaver***(1939-2023)*

ONA co-founder and past president, who brought credibility to ONA in the early years and helped guide The Washington Post's digital transformation

**Mandy Jenkins***(1980-2023)*

Digital media trailblazer and past ONA board president, who shaped several flagship programs in ONA's second decade and mentored hundreds of journalists

SECTION

7

# Acknowledgements

# Partners and supporters

**Ford Foundation**  
**Democracy Now**  
**Dow Jones Foundation**  
**John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**

**Inasmuch Foundation**  
**Microsoft**  
**Google News Initiative**

AFP  
 AllSides  
 American Press Institute  
 American University School of Communication  
 Arc XP  
 Arizona State University-Walter Cronkite School of Journalism & Mass Communications  
 Associated Press  
 Ballard Spahr, LLP  
 Better Government Association  
 Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law School  
 Canva  
 Chartbeat  
 CNN Newssource  
 Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism  
 Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY  
 Dataminr  
 Democracy Fund  
 Echobox  
 Forth  
 Gannett / USA TODAY NETWORK  
 Hearst Newspapers  
 Houston Landing  
 Inside Washington Publishers  
 JournoDAO  
 Joyce Foundation  
 Knight-Wallace Fellowships at the University of Michigan  
 Legitimate  
 Letterhead  
 LWC Studios  
 McClatchy  
 Muck Rack  
 N2 Media Holdings  
 National Press Club Journalism Institute  
 NBCUniversal  
 News Revenue Hub  
 NewsBreak  
 NewzDash  
 OpenOrigins  
 Outpost  
 Pew Research Center  
 Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists  
 Philadelphia Inquirer  
 PRConnect  
 Reddit  
 Report for America  
 Reuters  
 Reynolds Journalism Institute

Rolli LLC  
 Scripps Journalism Journey / E.W. Scripps Company  
 Sinclair Broadcast Group  
 SmartNews  
 SnapStream  
 Socialflow by Piano  
 Spectrum News  
 Stacker  
 Stand Together Communications  
 Study Hall / OutVoice  
 Stylebot  
 Syracuse University, Newhouse School of Public Communications  
 Tagboard  
 Tansa Systems LLC  
 TEGNA  
 TEGNA Foundation  
 Temple University, Klein College of Media and Communication  
 The Associated Press  
 The Atlanta Journal-Constitution  
 The Carter Center  
 The Carpenter Family Charitable Fund  
 The Diversity Pledge Institute  
 The E.W. Scripps Company  
 The Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson & Johnson  
 The Lenfest Institute for Journalism  
 The Marshall Project  
 The New York Times  
 The Tiffany Shackelford Foundation  
 The Wall Street Journal  
 The Washington Post  
 Trisolute NewsDashboard  
 University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications  
 University of Maryland Philip Merrill College of Journalism  
 University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication  
 USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism  
 Viafoura  
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 WordPress VIP  
 YESEO  
 YouTube



# Staff and Consultants

## Staff

**LaSharah S. Bunting**, CEO and Executive Director

**Trevor Knoblich**, Chief Knowledge Officer

**Jessica Strelitz**, Chief Strategic Partnerships Officer

**Lauren Anderson**, Events and Membership Manager

**Carrie Blazina**, Communications Manager

**Bill Brady**, Strategic Partnerships Coordinator

**Liz Leith**, Director of Finance and Administration

**Diana López**, Program Coordinator

**Meghan Murphy**, Director of Programs

**Kelsey Proud**, Learning Director

**Karolle Rabarison**, Director of Communications

**Hollie Schultz**, Director of Awards and Community Resources

## Consultants

**Stephanie Backus**

ONA23 Volunteer Coordinator

**Julia DiLaura**

Development

**Brian Duff**

ONA23 Learning Consultant

**Bridget Gallagher**

Development

**Tran Ha**

Women's Leadership Accelerator

**Hanaa Rifaey**

Partnerships Consultant

**Leah Rush**

Registration and Operations

**Alison Schary**

General Counsel

**Cornershop Creative**

Web Consultant

**Manami Kano**

Development

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**Graham Watson-Ringo**

*Senior Director of Member Strategy, News Revenue Hub*

**Elana Zak**

*Head of Newsletters, POLITICO*

SECTION

# 8

# Get Involved

# Join us in 2024

## WEEKLY UPDATES

[Subscribe to the ONA Weekly newsletter](#) to stay updated about the latest opportunities and resources from ONA.

## PARTNERSHIPS

If you are interested in exploring partnerships and other ways to invest in ONA's programs and events, contact Head of Strategic Partnerships Hanaa Rifaey at [hanaa@journalists.org](mailto:hanaa@journalists.org)

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

ONA membership connects you with the leading thinkers and doers in the media industry, plus discounted or complimentary access to training, conferences and practical resources. [Become a member](#) to help sustain our mission to inspire and support innovation in digital journalism.