

A Look Back at Phoenix

By Barbara Allen and Kelsea Gurski

From e-editions to advisory boards to attracting young journalists, sessions at the NAA Foundation's 2008 Young Reader Seminar were filled with useful information for young-reader professionals. Here is a look at the highlights from Phoenix.

Alts Rock

Think of a giant sandwich placed in front of you and how grateful you are to see that someone has cut it in half. Suddenly, things become more manageable to consume.

That is the concept behind alternative story forms, or "alts," according to Chris Courtney, design director for RedEye, the Chicago Tribune's free news and entertainment tabloid.

Courtney described an alt as a scannable, focused, reader-driven, non-narrative piece in which readers consume information in chunks. He said studies have shown that alts yield greater information retention than traditional narratives.



Chris Courtney

Readers have fewer free moments to digest daily news, and while traditional narrative story forms work well in many cases, readers should be surprised occasionally with a new, exciting way to consume information, he said, adding that younger readers would appreciate this approach.

Courtney said the best way to begin incorporating alts into newspaper storytelling is to consider presentation at the outset. Talking with everyone involved in production – “What’s the best way to tell this story?” – would better yield a readable, well-planned alternative piece.

“Over time, our uses and needs for all forms of [communication] has changed,” he said. Newspaper readers want stories that are unique, informative, surprising, funny, fast-paced and engaging, he added, and alts can help stories take on those characteristics.

Courtney outlined several types of alts:

- **Breakout boxes.** The oldest of alts, Courtney said, these can be used for entire stories. Take a long story, break out key information readers need to know and edit out overlapping information.

- **Charticles.** Best used when comparing things, these articles in chart form allow readers to scan information quickly for aspects they care most about.
- **Timelines.** These work best when dealing with six or more plot points.
- **Topic 101.** This format helps to make new ideas or products more familiar by breaking the idea into key facts.
- **How To.** These offer readers step-by-step explanations for timely tasks.
- **Graphic Novel.** This could be a hit with teens. Instead of using a photograph, or if you are reporting on something that cannot be photographed, consider using an artist to re-create the scene.
- **Quiz.** An easy way to engage your reader. Who can resist the thrill of competition? Instead of a story on the next Batman movie, offer readers a trivia quiz on Batman history.
- **Catch-ups.** In some way, these reorient the reader with previous events.
- **Combination.** “You can use several of these things together to tell a more whole and rich story,” Courtney said.

Alts require more time and planning, but the surprise factor they provide readers is often worth it. “Give ’em a reason,” he said, “to turn and open it up.”

Changing Business Model



Bruce Bradley

In his remarks opening the Young Reader Seminar, Bruce Bradley, chairman of the NAA Foundation Board of Trustees and president/publishing group of Landmark Communications Inc. in Norfolk, asked, “Is your company changing as fast as the world around you?” He challenged conference participants to encourage their employers to keep pace in an increasingly hectic business climate.

Bradley noted that in the Coke vs. Pepsi wars, both companies have changed from purveyors of sodas to “liquid refreshment providers,”

highlighting that the most successful companies use core competencies to guarantee success. He advocated a highly diverse workforce that understands market needs and challenged every media employee to think about “how the model needs to change.”

Editorial Cartoons

Keynoter Steve Benson, Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist for The Arizona Republic in Phoenix, kicked off the Young Reader Seminar with laughs.

Benson’s message was simple and clear: Newspapers can convey information and viewpoints to people in all sorts of ways, and one of the most effective is through laughter or, as is frequently the case for Benson, outspoken commentary on hot-button topics. He said it is his job to draw readers into the news pages and hold them with

cartoon commentary that provokes, engages and outrages.

Editorial cartoons are like bad accidents, Benson said. People find them aggravating, intriguing or horrifying, “but everyone slows down to look at them.”

Today’s world has provided the “best of times” for editorial cartoonists, he said, and in challenging times, they must to try to get beyond the sweet talk and to the “nut” of the problem.



Steve Benson

That does not come easily and certainly is not always popular. Benson said that he has received death threats during his career, the first as a result of a cartoon about Elvis Presley, and that many of his cartoons never made the newspaper.

“I think he definitely takes chances with stuff,” said Lily Reed, a Young Reader Seminar teen fellow from The Evening Sun in Hanover, Pa.

Although some of the teen fellows said Benson’s presentation bordered on being offensive at times (he is unapologetically liberal), it showed the budding journalists that having fun with your work and pushing the limits are OK and, in fact, often good to try.

Amy Friedman, a teen fellow from The Roanoke (Va.) Times, said what she took away from Benson’s presentation was to stand behind opinions and not back down to people who try to change them. “Don’t be scared to say what you really think about things,” she said.

NIE Advisory Boards

Not everyone needs an NIE advisory board, but those who use outside opinions to help form NIE programs should take care of the people who essentially take care of them, said Diana Boschen, director of educational programs and partnerships for the Daily News in New York.

Advisory boards give NIE professionals field knowledge and help them do their jobs better. Their makeup can include teachers only or a mix of community professionals with ties to the educational field and sponsors, along with representatives of other newspaper departments.

When deciding to form a board, Boschen advised NIE professionals to have a clear

proposal on how it will work, how members will be recruited, who will supervise it, how often it will meet, its goals and purpose, expectations of members and more.

Boschen said she does not pay her board members, but gives them a thank-you meal at the end of each advisory year and takes them on a newsroom tour to meet reporters.

Treat board members well, she said, and they will act as a barometer and forecaster for your NIE program. They can make recommendations on extending or improving curriculum materials and programs, or help with marketing.

Tips for structuring meetings include:

- Select an advisory board coordinator from among the group to help with communication between the NIE coordinator and the board.
- Run the meeting like a real business meeting with minutes, an agenda, old business and new business, then send minutes to members and extended group members.
- Meet when you can. Boschen's team meets once a year, but do whatever works best for your members.



Diana Boschen

Coaching Young Writers

After spending a day with the teen fellows, writing coach Richard Weiss visited with their editors, sharing a lifetime of tricks and tips for coaching young journalists. He suggested two main concerns facing journalists: the ephemeral and the eternal.

The ephemeral includes media platforms, the company and the boss, while the eternal includes well-told stories, value and imagination. Knowing your own story is critical in telling someone else's, he said, and he offered these suggestions for youth editors in encouraging economy in words:

- Avoid introductory clauses.
- Never use a big word when a simple one will do.
- View adjectives and adverbs with suspicion.
- Use active verbs.
- Find interesting nouns.

Weiss recommended "Writing for Story: Craft Secrets of Dramatic Nonfiction" by Jon Franklin, "Literary Journalism" by Norman Sims and Mark Kramer, "Stein on Writing: A Master Editor of Some of the Most Successful Writers" by Sol Stein, "The Art and Craft of Feature Writing" by William E. Blundell, "Follow the Story: How to Write Successful

Nonfiction,” by James B. Stewart and “On Writing Well” by William K. Zinsser.

Teacher-to-Teacher Marketing

When Cindy Piller, educational services manager for the Times-Call in Longmont, Colo., needed a creative, effective sponsor thank-you ad quickly, she turned to an amazing resource – teachers.

Pictures and stories from NIE teachers explaining benefits students have reaped from newspapers in the classroom have resulted in the most effective ads Piller has used, and the approach is simple.



“Teachers are at the core of what we do,” she said.

“You are selling learning. You are selling a different way for kids to learn that impacts them, that improves their test scores. You are selling learning, not just teaching, not just education. But these students will learn reading the newspaper.”

Why should the NIE coordinator be speaking in an ad telling teachers to subscribe? Instead, Piller said, let teachers use their own voices in ads about them, their students, their classrooms and their creative ways for using the newspaper as a teaching tool.

Picking the right teacher is not as important as simply putting teachers in the ads. Include teachers with clout, male teachers and those who teach English language-learners, Piller suggested, and incorporate plenty of comments about student response. Photograph teachers in their classrooms and your newspaper studio against white backdrops for Photoshop cutouts and take more than just headshots. Make the message and photographs big, and show teachers and students together.

“My advice is, if you can, turn it up a notch,” Piller said.

Results she has seen from these ads include:

- Teachers sharing more information on how they are using the newspaper
- Teachers calling the NIE coordinator about cool projects they are doing
- Teacher orders increasing
- Sponsors becoming easier to recruit
- Sponsor renewals becoming easier and bigger
- Vacation donations increasing because explaining what teachers are doing with newspapers is easier.

In Search of Teen Journalists

Vicki McCash Brennan, managing editor of Teenlink at the South Florida Sun-Sentinel in Fort Lauderdale, led this informative session on recruiting students for teen sections, suggesting many recruitment tools. These included Web pages with photo galleries or videos and applications; in-newspaper promotions (house ads); school visits to newspaper, yearbook and English classes; slide shows and videos of the program; teacher mailings; and recommendations from current staffers.

Brennan also suggested that newsroom tours, visits to teen hotspots, awards programs and accepting submissions are great ways to engage potential staffers. When choosing a staff, she said, require an essay about the applicant's desire to join the program and look for students with experience. Make sure to include a few younger students and avoid those whose applications are loaded with misused SAT vocabulary words.

To retain correspondents, she said, make sure what they write is published, run staff listings or pictures in the newspaper to recognize teen staffers, give awards for good work and behavior, provide solid journalism training, bring them into the newsroom, have fun staff events and give them T-shirts.



Marketing to Mom

Vicki Whiting, president, editor and founder of the syndicate Kid Scoop, discussed what moms seek in a newspaper, how NIE programs can serve them and how newspapers can cultivate their brand loyalty.

Noting that women make 80 percent of household spending decisions, she emphasized the importance of “marketing to mom.” She used the book “EVEolution: The Eight Truths of Marketing to Women” by Faith Popcorn, condensing Popcorn’s eight truths to these five for NIE professionals:

1. If she has to ask, it is too late. Anticipate needs and wants, then provide them.
2. Show up helpfully in her world. Show her the world but explain its significance.
3. Walk, run, go to her. Be a service, not a solicitation.
4. Co-parenting is the best way to brand. Ask moms, “What else could we do to help you?” instead of “What content do you want?”

5. Everything matters. Women want to do business with those they trust, so keep that in mind with every action.

Their Cheatin' Hearts

As a professor at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University, John D'Anna, metro editor for The Arizona Republic, has become pretty good at sensing instances of plagiarism every semester.

In looking back on his experience of working with a colleague fired in 1999 for allegedly fabricating sources, D'Anna said he realized he was not skeptical enough as an editor to notice details that indicated questionable material. Now he is, he said. He suggested that other editors, especially those working with Internet-loving youths, be just as cynical.

“The Internet has changed how we perceive information,” he said. “It really has changed how young people think of information. They don't think of [Web content] as intellectual property.”



Young people's personal stresses and insecurities may lead them to feel pressured to submit things they think editors want, but that teens themselves think they cannot do alone. Most believe they can get away with plagiarism and many do, D'Anna said.

He offered these tips on preventing plagiarism:

- Challenge information reporters bring to the newspaper. Do not be shy in questioning what they report. The more you do, the more likely it is they will ensure that they can stand behind what they write.
- Do not be too trusting. Take time to check potential red flags.
- Train reporters to think critically. Ask: “How do you know what you know?”
- Discuss reporting standards constantly so reporters know what is expected. Be clear about what happens in the worst-case scenario.
- Be frank with reporters. Tell them to talk to you before taking an unethical shortcut.
- Define terms. Tell them what plagiarism means on all levels.
- Have reporters sign an ethics policy every year.
- Require reporters to submit stories for editing with sources' names and phone numbers. Call those sources occasionally before or after stories are published.

That Dog Won't Hunt

An annual conference highlight for youth editors is the “show-and-tell” session showcasing the best work of youth sections nationwide. Here is a summary of several newspapers’ best efforts:

- Teenlink of the South Florida Sun-Sentinel produced “My Teacher Rocks,” in which students nominated favorite teachers for prizes. Winners were spotlighted for several weeks.
- The VOX of The Spokesman-Review in Spokane, Wash., featured eco-friendly prom choices and prom alternatives.
- The Voice of The State Journal-Register in Springfield, Ill., had students swap lunch hours and review food at each other’s schools.
- Voices of The Post-Standard in Syracuse, N.Y., asked teens to show who they really were in a self-portrait contest. More than 400 entered. Submissions could be in any artistic medium and included photos, illustrations, verse and even sound and video.

Bridging the Gap Between Print and E-edition

With cost-cutting measures common at nearly every newspaper, NIE programs are pursuing use of electronic editions to deliver newspapers to students more economically.



Andrew Nicholson

Emilia Pastina, national sales representative for Hollister Kids in Wynnwood, Pa., and Andrew Nicholson, NIE consultant for the Canadian NIE Association, discussed ways of adapting programs to take advantage of technology. “Think of this as ‘Don’t reinvent your program, adapt it,’ ” Pastina said.

The first consideration is whether to jump into a full-fledged e-edition, which has major cost-cutting and time-saving advantages, or to offer a combination of print and digital delivery. The second option lets teachers ease into the new format and does not leave behind schools lacking sufficient technology.

Teacher buy-in is a major consideration, so Pastina and Nicholson encouraged NIE professionals to explain differences between an e-edition – a replica of the printed newspaper, including ads, graphics and photos – and a Web site, along with the advantages that e-editions have over print. These include the ability to:

- Expand text or graphics, search with keywords or phrases and browse archives
- Scan pages easily for stories
- Send a quick e-mail to the reporter who wrote a story.

Students love technology and feel comfortable using the newspaper electronically. By

providing an e-edition, NIE professionals are giving students an “adult” medium, the newspaper, in a format and language they know, Pastina and Nicholson said. Kids are ready for e-editions.

“They’re already beyond what we’re giving them now,” Nicholson said.

Other e-edition tips:

- Offer teachers and sponsors a free trial of the new e-edition to help with buy-in.
- Find opportunities to reach schools previously not in circulation reach.
- Invite school technology coordinators to a workshop on e-editions so those schools have no problems incorporating them into classrooms.

Engaging Teen Readers



Stacie Jones (standing)

Stacie Jones, Voices editor of the Reading (Pa.) Eagle, suggested that youth editors jump on trends when they first sniff them out and incorporate them into their teen sections. A perfect example includes sections that have turned to social networking, via Facebook and MySpace profiles, as a way to engage teen readers.

An audience member suggested that teen sections send “friend” requests to

anyone featured in upcoming stories and use social networking sites to alert online friends about upcoming content, contests and promotions.

Jones said Voices has had luck with reader submissions that include photos. She said editors should visit schools to contact students and teachers, distributing material as they go.

Your First Customer

Mary Miller, education services director of the New York Newspaper Publishers Association, offered simple advice: Remembering to take care of yourself is the best way to take care of everything else.

She asked participants to write down things about themselves they would like to change and then write about things they thought were perfect about themselves. Guess which lists were bigger?

Miller said taking care of yourself is simple when you follow these rules:

- Put up notes to remind yourself to smile.
- Do not try to change everything at once.
- Dump “busy” stuff that drains time and energy.
- Learn to say no.
- Choose quality over quantity every day.
- Eat properly and exercise.
- Stop trying to be perfect.
- Talk positively.

- Treat yourself as you would treat your best friend.
- Most important, have fun and laugh.



Mary Miller (right) and Kriss Johnson

Community Journalism for Youth

The Children’s Online Privacy Act has not made it easy for editors to share youth content on the Web. But Jill Armstrong, youth content editor and webmaster for Colorado Kids with the Denver Newspaper Agency, has found a way.

YourHub.com/NextGen is a community journalism Web site where students in grades four through eight can post stories, reviews, columns and photos by registering with both the site and Armstrong. Students must have parental permission.

Armstrong worked with a software programmer to change how *YourHub.com*, a compilation of 47 individual Web sites geared toward various interests of Denver-area citizens, was structured to meet COPA laws. The changes included limiting the type of advertising that rotated through the site.

Some of the students’ best stories and columns are published in a YourHub supplement mailed weekly and on The Denver Post’s Colorado Kids page and The Mini Page in the Rocky Mountain News.

YourHub.com/NextGen allows registered students to interact by leaving comments for stories, sharing Web links and voting in a weekly poll. Information on contributors is limited to name, hometown and a photo if they choose.

“This is theirs,” Armstrong said. “They own it. They love it.”

Youth Advisory Boards

A different way to involve teens in the newspaper is by placing them on advisory boards.

At The Record in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, youth readership specialist Jonathan Clayton leads Catch 21, an advisory board of 21 teens representing 21 area schools. He recruits them by visiting schools and weeding through applications made available online. The application asks teens these questions: Do they read the newspaper? If not, why not? What can the newspaper do to be more relevant to them?

When his staff is in place, Clayton sets a schedule for the year and ground rules. The group meets for three hours every three weeks and does a range of work, from meeting



Jonathan Clayton (left) and Steve Benson

with the newspaper's editorial board and community groups to helping with marketing.

"You cannot ask for better community relations for your newspaper," Clayton said. "We're getting kids excited about the newspaper."

The group is a mix of student leaders and creative souls. Teen advisers earn the 40 hours of community service required by their schools, a free meal every

three weeks and a free subscription to the newspaper. In addition, each teen adviser has a blog at <http://www.catch21.ca>.

Clayton offered these suggestions for launching an advisory board:

- Pick no fewer than 10 or more than 25 members.
- Pick a demographic. Do you want all overachievers? A blend of students? What age? What schools?
- Where will you meet?
- Build bridges. Connect with local schools or teachers so you have help recruiting and spreading word about opportunities being on your board provide.
- Distribute marketing materials such as posters and pens.
- To help with future projects, keep contact information for students not selected.
- Decide as a group how to communicate. E-mail? Social networking sites? Instant messaging?

Walking the Tightrope

Part-time telecommuting. Working from home. Flextime. Through careful planning and working with an employer, you might be able to swing a schedule that works better for you, your family and your employer.

Wendy Zang, director of special sections for McClatchy-Tribune Information Service, drew on her own experience as well as the experiences of several women she interviewed about their with nontraditional schedules.

Highlights included:

- Do not expect your boss to solve your work/life problems.
- Research what others inside and outside of the company are doing.
- Be familiar with company policies.
- Put a proposal in writing.
- Be sure to mention how this new schedule will benefit the company.
- Anticipate concerns and know how to address them.
- Do not apologize.
- Be ready to negotiate.



Wendy Zang (right) and Monte Dauphin

Zang suggested that part of balancing work and life is finding helpful shortcuts, such as hiring housekeeping help, commuting, setting up automatic bill-paying, having groceries delivered, finding a regular babysitter and ruthlessly prioritizing life to eliminate ephemera.

Straight From the Source

While the adults attended sessions, the Young Reader Seminar teen fellows worked on a presentation that closed out the second full day of the conference.

This year's fellows were: Elliot Butay, Tulsa World; Gwendolyn Collier, Reading (Pa.) Eagle; Amy Friedman, The Roanoke (Va.) Times; Mercedes Machado, South Florida Sun-Sentinel, Fort Lauderdale; Lily Reed, The Evening Sun, Hanover, Pa.; Jackie Slack, Tribune Chronicle, Warren, Ohio; Katlin Stinespring, The Charleston (W.Va.) Gazette; and Conor Wigert, The Spokesman-Review, Spokane, Wash.

The group worked under the supervision of Guy Coviello, managing editor of the Tribune

Chronicle, and Becky Fleenor, a former NIE professional and youth editor who now is school and marketing coordinator for Love in a Big World in Nashville.

Before sharing ideas for making newspapers more youth-friendly, the teen fellows first addressed what they do not like about today's newspapers – they are boring, go over a teen's head, lack visual appeal, take too much time to read and are disconnected from teen lifestyles.



Mercedes Machado (left), Katlin Stinespring, Jackie Slack, Conor Wigert, Elliot Butay, Amy Friedman, Gwendolyn Collier and Lily Reed

The key to attracting teens as readers, the fellows said, rests with embracing technology and customization. Consider launching a news site along the same lines as Facebook or MySpace, a hands-on site in which teens can control what greets them when they sign on. Throw in a breaking-news ticker so they will feel informed and in control. In print, do not use stilted language and find ways to create symbiotic relationships between students and the newspaper.

The teens articulated the appeal of community journalism. However, they noted that a print product offers portability and sentimentality the Internet will not soon replace, as well as reliability, convenience and credibility. They also highlighted technology that newspapers should keep tabs on, including Microsoft Surface and Sony's flexible OLED screen.

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The Latest From ABC

The way NIE circulation is reported to the Audit Bureau of Circulations is about to change – and then change again.

Here is a look at what NIE professionals can expect in 2009 and 2010, as well as current rules regarding e-editions for those considering switching in the near future, according to Jessica Griffith, publisher relations manager for ABC.

Current policies regarding e-editions:

- An e-edition can be an exact digital replica of the newspaper or what ABC considers a “non-replica,” meaning it is close to the same as the print product but with slightly altered content or without certain ads. ABC must approve a non-replica as acceptable.
- Pricing must follow the same format as that for the print product. The newspaper cannot establish a basic price just for e-editions, but it can use home delivery as a basis for determining frequency, term and zone.

- E-editions are lumped into one number on the ABC report (total electronic circulation). A Supplemental Data Report must be filed with the Publisher's Statement if the circulation for e-editions is more than 5 percent of the total average paid circulation and greater than 3,000 average copies.
- E-editions must adhere to all pricing and fundraising guidelines that print editions follow, including thank-you ads.
- Instead of ordering newspapers, schools order a certain number of licenses for students to access the e-edition.
- If sponsors pay for licenses, teachers must sign an affidavit to confirm when and how the e-edition was used.
- If the newspaper offers a combination of print and e-editions, it can claim only one copy on the ABC audit. One student cannot be counted for a print copy and an e-edition license.

Changes to NIE effective April 1, 2009:

- NIE professionals may charge a minimum of 1 cent per newspaper, net of all considerations (the amount paid by the sponsor for the newspaper after subtracting the value of "inducements" from the donation).
- Sponsorship and fundraising guidelines apply as they do today.

Changes to NIE effective Oct. 1, 2010 (pending second passage):

- Newspapers distributed for NIE purposes will be reclassified as "verified" circulation, meaning they are nonpaid copies distributed to a controlled educational environment. NIE e-editions will stay lumped under the same category – "electronic and unique editions."
- These newspapers will be "verified" regardless of whether any payment occurs for their use, meaning newspapers no longer have to charge for NIE subscriptions.
- Newspapers can be distributed to after-school programs, Boys & Girls Clubs, etc., and still fall under this new NIE umbrella.
- If the newspaper raises money for NIE, ABC no longer will govern fundraising or how sponsors are recognized.
- NIE newspapers still will count toward total, but not "paid," circulation.
- For more information on these changes, visit www.accessabc.com/resources/qandr.htm.

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