

5

Stories!

“I feel like I’m too busy writing history to read it.”

- Kanye

Introduction

In this module, students will learn the importance of story writing when writing data articles. They will also learn how to use data truthfully, and to its fullest. With this, they will then be able to display their data more effectively. However, some journalists skew data and manipulate it in a way that is more beneficial to their standpoint. It is important that students are able to not only identify and avoid these articles, but also don't make skewed visualizations themselves.

Objectives

1. Students will understand how to write with journalistic flare.
2. Students will learn how to specifically write for data journalism and get practice writing.
3. Students will understand why empathy is necessary in data journalism.
4. Students will understand the ethics of journalism.

Agenda

1. Intro to Journalism
2. Engaging Storytelling
3. Ethics in Journalism
4. Overview of Data Journalism
5. Empathy in Statistics/ Journalism

Intro to Jazzy Journalism (10 min)

Purpose:

Give students an in-depth introduction to what journalism is through a discussion

Materials:

- [Merriam-Webster Definition](#)
- [Journalism Masterclass: 8 Tips](#)

Directions:

Review the information in the journalism resources presented above, and begin a discussion about the definition and applications of journalism.

journalism noun

 Save Word

jour-nal-ism | \ 'jər-nə-,li-zəm

Definition of *journalism*

- 1 **a** : the collection and editing of news for presentation through the media
- b** : the public press
- c** : an academic study concerned with the collection and editing of news or the management of a news medium
- 2 **a** : writing designed for publication in a newspaper or magazine
- b** : writing characterized by a direct presentation of facts or description of events without an attempt at interpretation
- c** : writing designed to appeal to current popular taste or public interest

As shown in the image above, present the Merriam-Webster definition of journalism to students. After the students have read the definition, ask them whether or not they agree with this definition (use the questions in the discussion below). Then, transition to a discussion about eight important qualities in journalism, as described in the MasterClass article:

1. Gather Information
2. Find your Angle
3. Write with a Strong Lede
4. Structure your Information
5. Use Quotes
6. Write Simply
7. Verify your Sources
8. Edit your Work

Discussion:

1. Do you agree with the Merriam-Webster definition? Why or why not?
2. Is journalism just about creating stories? If not, is successful journalism reliant on another factor for success?
3. How can journalism inspire leadership? Would data journalism be more effective as a centralized or decentralized discipline?
4. How can you use journalism to write effective stories?
5. In addition to these qualities, are there any additional qualities that encapsulate journalism?

Engaging Storytelling (20-30 min)

Purpose:

Get students to think creatively about finding stories and have students write/tell mock stories given a random prompt.

Materials:

- [Alec Chen's Guide to Journalism](#)

Directions:

1. Try making articles with prompts
2. Go over journalism guide
3. Rework articles for practice

Divide students into groups and ask them to give random prompts/topics. Add these prompts to a [random](#)

[generator wheel](#): students will have the opportunity to write brief articles about these prompts (one prompt per group).

Prompts:

1. New ceiling art in the loft
2. Sporadic weather (weird rain/hail thing) on Monday
3. Clash Theme Reveals
4. Glass Panels in the AC Pit
5. Productive Conversations GA (BELLAS)

Give students 5 minutes to brainstorm and think of ideas, then 10 minutes to write their stories. Make sure they are interesting and incorporate the 5 Ws. Have them present to the class.

Then, use the [Guide to Journalism](#) to teach them about journalistic writing (exclude the data part for the time being). Give them 5-10 minutes to rework their stories (with guidance).

Provide students with the ability to transition between different Breakout Rooms in Zoom to review each other's work.

Ethics in Journalism (5-10 minutes)

Purpose:

In this activity, students will learn about the ethics of journalism.

Materials:

Zoom Meeting's Whiteboard

<http://theconversation.com/ethics-and-writing-63399>

Directions:

Engage the class: ask them what they think the five principles of journalism are and explain each principle as they guess them. If they do not guess them all, briefly explain about the remaining principles.

Truth and Accuracy

- What's the point in journalism if what you write isn't accurate? You must always strive to give as much accuracy as possible.
- Students should use credible and reliable sources so their projects are accurate enough to be relevant and useful.

Independence

- Journalists should share their own voices and not lie about influences like sponsors or political leanings. This goes along with the truth category.
- At a place as politically charged as IMSA, acknowledging any political or other biases and motivations is critical to having an ethical project.

Fairness and Impartiality

- While objectivity is not always possible or even necessary, concealing or misrepresenting opposing sides of an issue calls the truth of the article into question
- Again, IMSA is very politically charged and a lot of students may be trying to prove a point with their research. We should prevent them from only displaying the data that they believe proves their answer

Humanity

- Journalists are not supposed to do harm by, for example, publishing sensitive data about a private individual. While stories may be hurtful because of their stance on an issue, they should not do more than cause emotional reactions.

- As a journalist, it is important to consider the consent of individuals who you're writing about.
- Though it's unlikely anyone will be dealing with sensitive information that threatens their humanity during the IMPACT year, this is something we should teach for future reference.

Accountability

- Acknowledge errors and possible mistakes in your article and research. This helps improve accuracy and trustworthiness.
- Make sure to keep the theme of your writing in mind, but also pay attention to the little details, as they have the ability to affect your writing as well.

Overview of Data Journalism (5 min)

Purpose:

Help students develop a basic understanding of data journalism

Materials:

- [Alec Chen's Guide to Journalism](#)
- [What Is Data Journalism? | DataJournalism.com](#)
- [What is Data Journalism?. Definition | by Ekapon Thienthaworn](#)

Directions:

1. Show students the articles linked above.
2. Facilitate a discussion about the definition of data journalism and how it is different from other forms of journalism:
 - a. In the first article, a definition of data journalism is mentioned: "Data journalism can help a journalist tell a complex story through engaging infographics."
 - b. The availability of information in the world today fosters an environment for data journalism to thrive.
3. Mention how the second article has a different definition: "Data Journalism is the process of reporting facts using structured data as the core of storytelling and managing it objectively."

Discussion:

1. Which definition of data journalism do you agree with more?
2. In the first definition, what makes a story more complex? Is it the addition of data or a different form of journalistic writing?
3. Do you agree with the levels of journalism (1.0, 2.0, and 3.0) as described in the second article? Why or why not?

Empathy in Statistics/Journalism (10 min)

Purpose:

Students will understand how emotion/empathy plays a role in how to choose statistics for a data journalism article.

Materials:

- <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/gun-deaths/>
- <https://abc7chicago.com/police-boy-11-found-shot-to-death-in-west-pullman-/3558560/>

Directions:

Quickly go through the statistics and article with the students. The first link is to show empathy's role in statistics. Discuss how statistics were used to make the reader empathize but also how statistics can dehumanize and reduce people to numbers, and what the downfall of this is. The second link is to show empathy's role in journalism in general. Discuss how the story was written in a way that made readers feel empathetic.

Discussion:

1. What was the tone of the statistics (first link)? How did it make you feel?
2. What was the tone of the article (second link)? How did it make you feel?
3. How did the way the second story was told make you react with more empathy than the first one?
(Compare with examples)
4. What are the dangers of dehumanizing data subjects?
5. How can statistics and stories be told differently to change what the reader thinks?