



DONALD W.
REYNOLDS
JOURNALISM
INSTITUTE



School of Journalism
University of Missouri

10 Innovative Years

2008–2018



Randy Picht
RJI Executive Director

Greetings,

Ten years! And what a great decade it's been.

As the saying goes (at least around here), time flies when you're working hard to ensure journalism has a long and bright future. And while we've had some great successes, we still feel like we're just getting started and the best is yet to come.

I hope you enjoy this overview about what happens at the institute, one of the few places in the country that is 100 percent dedicated to strengthened journalism in the service of democracy.

As you read, I also hope you'll think about ways you can get involved with us. When you have a great idea, you can be sure we'll be here. That's thanks to the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation, which arranged an endowment that continues in perpetuity.

That means our fellowship program, the most flexible in the country, will continue to give industry professionals opportunities to develop smart, innovative ideas into solutions for the industry.

It also means doing more to empower the next generation of journalists — the students at the

Missouri School of Journalism — via our student innovation fellowships, our digital ambassadors and our annual student competition, which has successfully launched three startup companies including the safety app Noonlight that attracted \$3.2 million in funding from venture capitalists.

We're also very proud of our efforts to help build important journalism initiatives including the Local Independent Online News (LION) industry organization, the largest trade association for hyperlocal news sites, and trustingnews.org, a hands-on resource for news organizations that want to have more effective engagement with their audiences and gain their trust.

There's plenty more to talk about but I'll stop there so this 10-year overview doesn't become one long letter from me. Just know that we're excited to be on the scene and we're looking forward to the next 10 years and onward!

The future is now.

Ten years of journalism innovation

Here are just a few of the moments we're remembering fondly as RJI officially celebrates its 10th anniversary:



FEBRUARY 9, 2004
Donald W. Reynolds Foundation awards \$31 million to create RJI.



AUGUST 29, 2007
Launch of first RJI Student Competition.



SEPTEMBER 8, 2008
RJI opens its new facilities on the 100th anniversary of the Missouri School of Journalism.

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Top: In 2016, the Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute’s Journalism Digital News Archive (JDNA) joined with the UCLA Library and the Educopia Institute to present “Dodging the Memory Hole 2016: Saving Online News,” where presenters and attendees explored solutions to the most urgent threat to cultural memory today — the loss of online news content.

Left: Between hosting speakers, daylong symposiums, or multi-day conferences, RJI facilities are always busy. In 2016, director Spike Lee spoke to Missouri School of Journalism documentary and photojournalism students during a “master class” in RJI’s Smith Forum.

- NOVEMBER 8, 2012
MU matches \$30 million gift from Reynolds Foundation to permanently endow RJI.
- NOVEMBER 20, 2014
RJI hosts Innovation and Transformation in Community Newspapers, the first in a series of workshops made possible by a gift from publisher Walt Potter.
- JANUARY 2016
14 newsrooms join RJI to launch the Trusting News Project. The Knight Foundation commits \$100,000 to the initiative on September 25, 2017.
- JANUARY 2018
RJI adds two new ways for students to support journalism. Five digital ambassadors spend a week helping five small Missouri newspapers improve their online content while four student innovation fellows start semester-long jobs at leading news organizations in New York and Washington.

The Most Flexible Fellowship Program in the Country

HOW RJI PARTNERS WITH INDUSTRY VISIONARIES TO SOLVE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS

The institute had yet to open its doors when mobile journalism pioneer Roger Fidler signed on as our first RJI Fellow and, later, our director of digital publishing. Fourteen years and 84 fellows later, we continue to attract media innovators and support research, products and big ideas that strengthen journalism in the service of democracy.

Fellowships focus

RJI tends to focus on **four key categories of innovation**: new technologies and services, community engagement, revenue models and news literacy. We can't do justice to all

84 fellows and their diverse projects in this space, but here's a small sample:

+ **David Cohn** founded Spot.us, an early model for today's efforts at community-funded journalism. After leadership stints at Circa and AJ+, David is now senior director for r&d at Advance Digital.

+ **Tim Griggs**, former publisher of the Texas Tribune, used his fellowship to pilot the position of "growth hacker" to promote the online-only news site on a limited marketing budget.

+ **Jaci Smith**, managing editor at the time of a small-town newspaper in Minnesota, developed strategies for turning native advertising into a new

revenue source. She's currently digital planning editor at the News Journal Media Group in Delaware.

+ **Alejandro Gonzalez** used his RJI fellowship to develop a membership model for 14ymedio, Cuba's first independent digital news platform. Based in Miami, Alejandro is currently working with another RJI Fellow, **Rebekah Monson**, at The New Tropic, one of her local news startups under the WhereBy.Us umbrella.

+ How to convince skeptics of the value of science? Public radio's **Christian Skotte**, co-director at Science Friday, worked with RJI and Missouri journalism students to produce social-friendly videos and infographics about climate change, GMOs and vaccines that listeners can share with family, friends and co-workers.

+ **Trina Chiasson** took Infoactive, her data visualization company, public while at RJI. Her current job is probably the most intriguing of all our former fellows: She's shaping the future of food. Her Bay Area startup farms insects with the help of robots!

+ As we move into our 11th year, RJI looks forward to a great group of new fellows including **Kelly Whitney**, the chief product officer at iCivics. Her non-profit will develop classroom tools to help millions of high school students break through fake news to find reliable, journalistically sound information online.



2018 RJI Fellow Jarrad Henderson chairs the Visual Task Force for the National Association of Black Journalists. During his fellowship, he is developing a digital resource guide offering best practices, ethical considerations and tools for visual journalists bridging the gap between editorial video and documentary filmmaking.



Roger Fidler was named as the first RJI Fellow in 2004 and was RJI's program director for digital publishing. He coordinated digital publishing research projects and the Digital Publishing Alliance, a member-supported initiative that includes The New York Times, the Los Angeles Times and The Washington Post.



Tamara Power Drutis served as project lead for the Crosscut 2016-'17 institutional fellowship. The project focused on developing an online tool to help news organizations determine the optimal email newsletters to launch. Tamara (l) is shown with another Crosscut staffer, Sangeeta Singh-Kurtz, who also worked on the project.

Changes drive results

Over the past decade, we've made big changes to the **fellowship program to make it more flexible** for applicants and more likely to deliver results that help journalists and citizens.

We started 14 years ago with a traditional, residential model where fellows spent eight months in Columbia, Missouri, working on their projects full-time. They receive an \$80,000 salary, plus reimbursements

for moving and relevant project expenses. We continue to offer those fellowships to one or two applicants each year.

In 2013, RJI created a non-residential fellowship for individuals who want to work part-time on a project. A year later we added a third category, institutional fellowships, where the applicant, her company and RJI work together to carry out a big idea. In either case, the fellow or

his employer receives \$20,000 plus approved project expenses.

If you have a journalistic product, service, business model, engagement strategy, research agenda or new technology application that might benefit from our support, please contact RJI Associate Director Mike McKean at mckeanml@rjionline.org. We begin accepting applications for the 2019-20 class of fellows in mid-December.

RJI Fellows

Archer, Dan (2014-2015)
 Austin, Linda (2017-2018)
 Bair, Madeleine (2018-2019)
 Balakrishnan, Brimal (2014-2015)
 Banaszynski, Jacqueline (2009-2010)
 Bartimus, Tad (2015-2016)
 Bell, Fergus (2018-2019)
 Bentley, Clyde (2009-2010)
 Bolts, Paul (2011-2012)
 Broffman, Matt (Sokoloff) (2012-2013)
 Brooks, Jeanne (2014-2015)
 Broussard, Meredith (2018-2019)
 Caswell, David (2015-2016)
 Chiasson, Trina (2013-2014)
 Clark, Tracy (2015-2016)
 Coats, Janet (2011-2012)
 Cohn, David (2010-2011)
 Collins, Kent (2012-2013)
 Cromer, Alisa (2012-2013)
 Danto, David (2016-2017)
 Densmore, Bill (2008-2009)
 Derryberry, Anne (2010-2011)
 Deuze, Mark (2015-2016)
 Duffy, Margaret (2008-2009)
 Fancher, Mike (2008-2009)
 Farrow, Connie (2012-2013)
 Ferrier, Michelle Barrett (2016-2017)
 Fidler, Roger (2004-2005)
 Galperin, Simon (2018-2019)
 Garretson, Kim (2013-2014)
 Gendron, Nicolette (2018-2019)
 Golding, Barrett (2015-2016)
 González, Alejandro (2016-2017)
 Griggs, Tim (2014-2015)
 Grigsby, Mary (2014-2015)
 Guess, Christopher (2017-2018)
 Haeg, Andrew (2016-2017)
 Henderson, Jarrad (2018-2019)
 Hensel, Brian (2015-2016)
 Hernandez, Victor (2015-2016)
 Herzog, David (2010-2011)
 Houston, Brian (2012-2013)
 Jungmann, Conrad (2014-2015)
 Leybovich, Misha (2013-2014)
 Martin, Chad (2014-2015)
 Mayer, Joy (2010-2011)
 McKinney, Mitchell S. (2012-2013)
 McLellan, Michele (2009-2010)
 Meng, Peter (2011-2012)
 Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting (2017-2018)
 Morisy, Michael (2018-2019)
 Newton, Eric (2013-2014)
 Nienhueser, Mark (2015-2016)
 Oshinsky, Dan (2011-2012)
 Padgett, Stephanie (2009-2010)
 Power-Drutis, Tamara (2016-2017)
 Proud, Kelsey (2014-2015)
 Reeves, Jennifer (2008-2009)
 Reily, Sean (2009-2010)
 Remington, Alex (2014-2015)
 Schultz, Daniel (2013-2014)
 Science Friday NPR (2017-2018)
 Seymat, Thomas (2018-2019)
 Sharockman, Aaron (2016-2017)
 Sheets, Connor (2016-2017)
 Shipley, Chris (2013-2014)
 Skoler, Michael (2009-2010)
 Skube, Lisa (2010-2011)
 Smith, Jaci (2014-2015)
 Stevens, Jane (2008-2009)
 Sullivan, Will (2010-2011)
 Swafford, Scott (2013-2014)
 Taneja, Harsh (2015-2016)
 Tessier, Marie (2015-2016)
 Thompson, Anne (2015-2016)
 Thompson, Matt (2008-2009)
 Usher, Nikki (2014-2015)
 Volz, Yong (2013-2014)
 Wheeler, Mike (2016-2017)
 WhereBy.Us (2017-2018)
 Whitney, Kelly (2018-2019)
 Witschge, Tamara (2015-2016)
 Woelfel, Stacey (2013-2014)

The Futures Lab

REAL-WORLD TESTING AND SHARING FOR A NEW WORLD OF JOURNALISM INNOVATION

From its inception, RJI has seen itself more as a “do tank” than a “think tank.” And much of the doing happens in the Futures Lab, a high-tech space where outside partners, RJI staff and tomorrow’s journalists – students at the University of Missouri – test the tools and practice the skills to secure the future of our profession.

The **Futures Lab does its own testing of new technologies**, including voice-based computing, data visualization and drones. Our most recent product, a bot called TweetsToText, helps reporters who live tweet from games and other breaking news events. By mentioning the account, the reporter’s tweets are captured in chronological order then sent back in a universal format that she can copy into her news organization’s content management system or other editing software to lay the framework for a polished story. The Futures Lab is making a soft launch of the tool in the fall of 2018.

The staff of the Futures Lab also co-teaches a mobile app development class with Mizzou’s College of



RJI’s Futures Lab is a real-world testing venue for new journalism tools and technologies. The lab provides an environment where University of Missouri journalism students, faculty and visitors prototype journalism innovations for delivery to media audiences.

shared more effectively with news organizations. The Futures Lab does that in a variety of ways, including a regular series of web videos. Starting in early 2013, we launched the *Futures Lab Video Update* with

You can find *Innovation in Focus* on RJI’s website, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter accounts.

The **Futures Lab also staffs its own studio and control room.** We use it to record and livestream RJI industry events and to produce weekly programs on media criticism and international journalism for the local NPR station. We partnered in the summer of 2018 with Raycom Media Group to produce a regular series of stories on investigative journalism for the company’s TV stations and other media professionals.

Ebony Reed, director of Innovation and the RJI Futures Lab, is always on the lookout for new ideas to test and share. Contact her at reedes@rjionline.org.



Useful applications of new technology need to be shared effectively with news organizations

Engineering to expand the skillsets of journalists and computer scientists while they also learn how to work in teams across disciplines.

New tech by itself doesn’t improve journalism. Useful applications of that technology also need to be

stories about the South by Southwest conference, the role of programmer-journalists and reflections on The New York Times’ “Snowfall” project. Two hundred episodes later, we re-tooled the program, building multiple stories each month around a single subject.

Keeping Community Journalism Strong

HELPING LOCAL NEWS MAKE THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Thanks to the Walter S. Potter Sr. endowment, RJI can devote ongoing resources to fostering innovation among news organizations — the small daily newspapers, the weeklies, the local radio stations — and supporting the sustainability of community news sources.

In addition to inviting editors to come learn about new revenue opportunities or get hands-on training from representatives of Facebook and Google, RJI also uses a very direct approach to provide the necessary knowledge that community

journalists need to make the digital transition and thrive.

Two examples, both involving terrific collaboration:

+ RJI partnered with the University of Missouri Extension, which has offices all over the state and regularly works with local newspapers and broadcasters, to provide regional **Potter Innovation Workshops** on making the most of mobile video. Another workshop on understanding online analytics is also on the whiteboard.

“I can’t wait to start making

videos. This was a huge help,” was one of the comments from an event in Springfield, Mo.

+ RJI collaborated with journalism students to leverage their “digital-native” skills to help community journalists keep up with things that drop out of the cloud, figuratively and literally.

The future makes house calls

In mid-January, just before they return to the MU campus, a group of **Potter Digital Ambassadors** work for a week at rural Missouri papers to give them a hand with social media, online videos or whatever training will make it possible for them to do more with limited budgets and personnel. And the program has already proven its value. As Houston Herald editor Jeff McNiell told Poynter.org, “It showed us that there are things we can do just to expand our reach online and it doesn’t have to be time-consuming.”

RJI Executive Director Randy Picht and the Missouri Press Association will identify the next group of newspapers ready to work with a Potter Digital Ambassador in early 2019.

MU student Travis Meier, standing, in a training session with the staff of the Washington Missourian. He is coaching them on capturing and editing videos quickly and efficiently with high production values. (Photo by Jeanne Abbott)



Students Bring Insights and Energy

RJI, THE INDUSTRY BENEFIT BY GIVING THEM OPPORTUNITIES TO SHINE

News organizations need young, tech-savvy journalists to help engage their peers with compelling content worth paying for. RJI partners with the Missouri School of Journalism's top students to address that need through a variety of practical, innovative projects.

Budding entrepreneurs

Even before opening its doors 10 years ago, we started our annual **RJI Student Competition** that brings together teams of students from journalism, computer science and business. They're given a challenge and, with mentoring and financial support, create prototypes of products and services that meet the challenge. The winners have built everything from mobile marketing tools for real estate to real-time interview transcripts using artificial intelligence to code that authenticates the source of news images through cryptography.

Sometimes, the competitors work with industry clients. More often, they develop their own intellectual



Humera Lodhi, Chris Mitchell and Evan Teters of Team MindFlow exchange ideas with Google engineers Peng Zhuang and Dan Wang June 1, in Mountain View, California.

the U.S. you can get that information with Maply. The company behind the crowdsourced mobile app is based in Austin, Texas, but co-founder Jeff Orr says they got their start in

Got an idea for the next competition? Contact Futures Lab Director Ebony Reed.

The power of teams

RJI has also worked from the beginning with teams of Missouri students in strategic communication, entrepreneurial and convergence journalism capstone classes to **try out new ideas with media partners** such as The Washington Post, the BBC, the Minneapolis Star-Tribune, the AP, Newsy and Science Friday... to name a few. With RJI's help, these young innovators have launched podcasts, devised social media strategies, helped

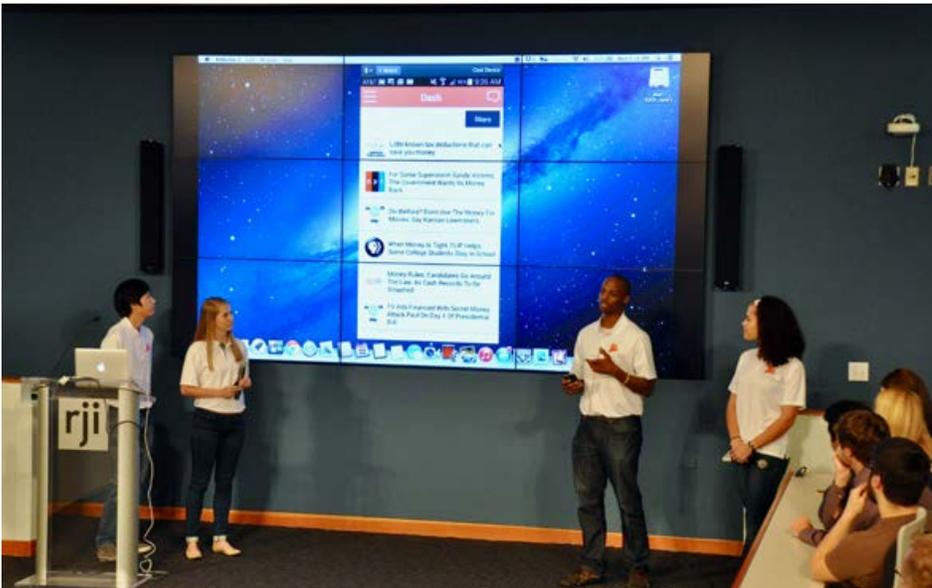


Young innovators have launched podcasts, devised social media strategies and helped newsrooms regain public trust

property with the opportunity to launch a viable business.

Need to know about a fire down the street or a happy hour downtown? In an expanding list of cities around

Columbia, Missouri. "We probably wouldn't be here, if it wasn't for the RJI competition. And throughout the entire journey they've been very much in our corner."



Top: Members of Soundstir present their app during the 2015 RJI Student Competition. The group went on to win the competition. Their Android app was designed to be “the only mobile community for public radio listeners.”



Left: Team Recordly reacts to being announced the winners of the 2016 RJI Student Competition.



Below: University of Missouri Journalism student Hannah Turner, of Austin, Texas, pilots one of the Missouri Drone Journalism program’s drones over the Missouri River on April 24, 2018. RJI launched a program in 2017 that explores drones and other journalism opportunities in the sky.

newsrooms regain public trust and much more. Using the RJI website, they also share key takeaways with other journalism professionals.

They come to you

Students line up to compete for newsroom internships during the summer months. But they’re harder

to find in the spring and fall when school’s in session. Especially those with proven talents across news and social media platforms. That’s why RJI launched in 2018 the **Student Innovation Fellowship** program. Participating newsrooms and RJI subsidize a student’s expenses while they work full-time on a project



Student brings new skills to ABC News

One of RJI’s first student innovation fellows, Soorin Kim, took her data journalism skills to the ABC News Washington Bureau in the spring of 2018. The network was so impressed, they hired her to join a new, cross-platform investigative team. What has she done since then? Here are a few examples from Deputy Bureau Chief Stacia Deshishku:

“Whether collecting geo coordinates to create a map of every mass shooting since 2014 or digging through FEC records to find a hilarious story about the parents of a candidate who want to discourage his political ambitions... by donating to his opponent, Soorin’s ability to make sense of the numbers has been an amazing asset.

“She’s also reported which lawmakers have received the most money from the NRA, profiled megadonors spending millions during the election season, and found payments from the Trump campaign to defend the president’s former attorney Michael Cohen. Soorin is now an invaluable member of our investigative task force bringing her abilities to bear on our most sensitive and important story lines.”

involving a new technology or new approach. The institute has already placed students at ABC News, PolitiFact, Mic, NowThis, Raycom Media and The Seattle Times.

Contact Associate Director Mike McKean to pitch a capstone project or sign up for your own student innovation fellow.

Startups

ENTREPRENEURS ARE INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT TO JOURNALISM. WE'RE HELPING.

From little things, big things come. We've seen that over the years when it comes to startup journalism. RJI funds help bring new approaches and solutions to journalism to invest in founders and entrepreneurs.

RJI has made a handful of these types of investments and, so far, has a pretty good track record.

We helped along Newsy, an online video news platform that was sold to E.W. Scripps for \$35 million in 2014 and is still going strong as a new news source for millennials. Newsy founder Jim Spencer was one of the first folks to recognize the power of video news on mobile devices.

Another RJI investment was Relay Media, an innovative company that was created to help news organizations speed up delivery of their content to mobile devices. It was sold to Google in 2017 after helping numerous companies drastically improve the loading of a screen of news from 5 to 6 seconds to nearly instantaneous.

RJI has also supported startup companies that have been launched via its annual student competition including: Noonlight (formerly Safe Trek) that received \$3.2 million from venture capitalists in 2017 and more or less invented the app-based personal safety market; Recordly, a recording and transcription application for reporters, and Maply, a mobile-based event and marketing tool.

And, of course, we're always on the lookout for smart new ventures that we think can make journalism stronger, faster, better. Have something in mind? Contact Randy Picht, RJI director, with your idea.



Dave Gehring talks with RJI Director Randy Picht about Relay Media, a Silicon Valley-based startup he helped found. Gehring, who previously worked at Google and The Guardian, played a key role in 2015 in developing the Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP) standard. That standard makes it possible for news organizations to have their content load quickly on mobile devices, which is critical for user satisfaction, revenue generation and keeping up with technology.

RJI startups

Since opening our doors in 2008, RJI has partnered with or invested in several startups to help bring new approaches and solutions to journalism:

- + Newsy
- + Circlabs Inc.
- + Relay Media
- + Distributed Media Labs
- + GStory
- + Journalism Accelerator
- + Noonlight (formerly SafeTrek)

newsy

CIRCLABS INC.

RELAY MEDIA

DISTRIBUTED MEDIA LAB

gistory

JOURNALISM Accelerator

NOONLIGHT

FORMERLY SAFETREK

POY

THE PHOTO CONTEST EVERYONE WANTS TO WIN

Who knew that when the iPhone arrived on the scene in 2007 it would lead to an explosion in digital photography? After all, it's called an iPhone not an iCamera. More than ten years later, the number of photos taken throughout the world each year passed the trillion mark.

Yes, a large number of those are likely selfies and nice shots of pasta dishes. But ...

The interest in capturing images of what we do, where we do it and how we do it has never been higher. And, along with that, the appreciation of photojournalism and its important role in chronicling the "first draft of

history" has also been growing.

RJI is lucky to be the home of the world's oldest and most prestigious photojournalism contest – Pictures of the Year (POY). The contest

judge more than 40,000 images from hundreds of photographers in an array of categories from Photographer of the Year to Best Spot News photo to a "Community Awareness" award.



The interest in capturing images of what we do, where we do it and how we do it has never been higher

celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2018 with an exhibit at the Newseum in Washington, D.C.

Every February, several panels of prestigious photojournalists

All of the judging is made available online in real time so a photographer with an internet connection can see their work evaluated no matter where they are.



Pictures of the Year (POY) celebrated 75 years with a special exhibit at the Newseum in Washington D.C. Called "Pictures of the Year: 75 Years of the World's Best Photography," the exhibit showcased archived images from the contest. Guests explore the POY exhibit at the Newseum in April 2018.

10 Innovative Years

2008–2018



The **Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute** (RJI) works with the news industry, professors, students and others to make sure journalism has a long and bright future. As a “think-and-do” tank that opened its doors in 2008, RJI uses its guaranteed funding to work exclusively to strengthen journalism in the service of democracy. It’s part of the Missouri School of Journalism.