

THE FUTURE OF LONG-FORM JOURNALISM
IN THE AGE OF THE DIGITAL PUBLISHING PLATFORM

This is a terrifying time for ink-stained wretches like me. I grew up in the newspaper business, with my earliest memories back in the age of the linotypes—massive, probably incredibly toxic typewriters that spewed out lines of hot head rather than pigmented stamps on paper—were the primary method of outputting the copy that went into the daily newspaper. Just before I joined the newspaper where my father worked—*The Times* in Shreveport, La.—the production company switched over to computer-based typesetting. Many people who lacked the skills to adapt to the new technology, or who were just not needed with the new technology, lost their jobs.

I was a member of that first generation of journalists who moved the news from fishwrap onto the World Wide Web. I was working at the *Daily Record* in Parsippany, N.J. I did not volunteer to become its Web jockey. I just knew the technology. I had already created my own site and was well-versed in composing and editing hypertext markup language (HTML) in simple text editors. Tony, the guy who founded the newspaper's Web site a few months before, knew that and volunteered me to be his replacement. At the time, many of my classmates at the Columbia

University Graduate School of Journalism were riding their recently minted master's degrees with a new media concentration into pretty incredible jobs. But a few years after our graduation, the dot-bomb burst. The technology was cool, but the money to pay for it—and for my classmates' salary and benefits—failed to materialize. A lot of them lost their jobs.

At the time, I thought the newspaper industry was pretty clueless about how to use this technology and make money from it. I ended up working for an experiment, *Digital City Hampton Roads*, part of the Digital Cities partnership between America Online and the Tribune Company. *DCHR* was housed at the *Daily Press* in Newport News, Va. AOL hoped that by offering such local content it would attract paying subscribers. Tribune hoped that by getting page views, it could make a lot of money from online advertising. As for me, I found the work mind-numbingly boring, as I was just repackaging four stories already written and edited by others for the AOL platform. The rest of my time, I tried to find something worthwhile to do—like create a searchable database for the long series on the history of the Hampton Roads area (which subsequently vanished in a Web site redesign)—but most of the time my mind bled out making animated GIFs for advertisements and contest promotions. When I was offered an escape to the *Daily Press* side to actually working on news, I jumped at it. Then, when I needed to quite driving 160 miles round-trip each day so that I could finish a book I had a contract to write, I left the *Daily Press*.

AOL never got all the paying subscribers it hoped to attract. The *Daily Press* did not get all the online advertising it hoped to get. By now you may be able to guess the outcome: a lot of people lost their jobs.

The book I left the *Daily Press* to write, *Upheaval from the Abyss: Ocean Floor Mapping and the Earth Science Revolution*, was published in 2002. I have been working pretty steadily, if not

lucratively, as a freelancer since. I have written for magazines, newspapers (of course), and contributed to scientific and historical encyclopedias. I contributed to two essay anthologies, *The Science of Dune* and *The Science of Michael Crichton*, in 2008. I authored another book, *Huntington's Disease*, which was published in 2009. My publishing output has kept up with the rise of e-readers, tablets, and other devices. *Upheaval from the Abyss* is available in Kindle and (according to the publisher) PDF editions, as well as available in print in a modified print-on-demand service. A digital edition of *Huntington's Disease* is likewise available. My *Science of Dune* and *Science of Michael Crichton* essays are likewise available digitally, either as part of the entire books or as standalone purchases.

Over the decades, I have created several blogs, have an ever-expanding, if idiosyncratic, Web site, and have accounts on almost all the currently fashionable social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Tumblr, and more. I can conceive, write, shoot, direct, and edit a decent short film. And I am pretty damned good with a single-lens reflex camera. And I have a smartphone, which gives me access to pretty much any information I might care to access—such as the name of the pretty decent coffee shop in Lewisburg, W.Va.—anywhere I can get a decent ping off a cell phone tower. And I just figured out how to use my phone as a mobile hotspot to file stories from a cabin in the mountains.

I think it is safe to say that I am not digitally illiterate, and I have managed to stay somewhere near the crest of the wave of publishing technology the past few decades. But my love is that relatively ancient format, long-form journalism—the stuff that takes time to report and write—and I have yet to figure out how to make a reliable and sustainable living at it in this ever-changing digital landscape. I am not alone.

Hence this project.

The Questions

The big question is this: How do I (how does anyone) survive as a writer of long-form journalism/narrative nonfiction in an age where photons replace cellulose? To get to the big answer, though, I had to break it down into four more smaller, more concrete questions:

1. What effect will the rise of alternate platforms (e-readers, etc.) have on the market for nonfiction books?
2. What effect will these changes have on the nonfiction author?
3. How can the nonfiction author better tailor book proposals and books for success in this changing market?
4. How can other those interested in other publishing jobs (editing, production, etc.) better prepare themselves for entry into and survival in this changing market?

To get answers, I consulted recent reports on the state of the publishing industry, interviewed several journalists and authors (of both nonfiction and fiction), posted a survey on SurveyMonkey,¹ and attended a panel discussion on “The Future of Longform Journalism,” at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York on March 4.

Reports of Death Premature?

No responsible analyst of the news business would argue against the notion that circulation among print publications is declining. Sales of newspapers, magazines, and print books has dropped—sometimes precipitously. The daily newspaper industry has arguably suffered the most. Afternoon papers largely disappeared from the landscape as more and more people turned to evening news broadcasts, or skipped checking in on the news altogether. Daily newspapers suffered as more and more people opted to drop their subscriptions and get the same news from

¹ The survey instrument and responses are given in Appendix A.

the same source—their daily newspaper—for free from its Web site. I would argue that the profusion of politically-motivated news sources—whether we are talking about talk radio, cable television news, or Web sites and blogs—gives “news” consumers the ability to seek out the message (if not the facts) they find most reassuring and consistent with their pre-existing world view.

Times in the news business are so bad that CareerCast.com, using somewhat questionable logic, ranked being a newspaper reporter as the worst job in American in 2013. The web site’s method took into account the following factors: environment, income, outlook, and stress. The logic is somewhat questionable with respect to journalism because it failed to take into account societal importance, sense of mission, personal satisfaction, or other factors that draw people to the profession. But, given the survey’s reliance upon likely job growth and average pay, it does say something relevant to the current discussion. The number of newspaper jobs is shrinking, and the declines there are paralleled in other segments of the legacy (i.e., print and broadcast) media. There is hope in the CareerCast.com report, however: “But journalism is not a dying art, nor is reporting a profession without prospects. Rethinking the industry has made reporters adapt.”²

New Opportunities

While print circulation is declining, it seems that the demand for news—including long-form journalism—is actually increasing. A Pew Research Center study released last year found that half of U.S. adults own some form of mobile access to the Internet, such as a tablet or smartphone. More than 60 percent of those use those devices to consume news.³ Another Pew

² Kensing, Kyle. "The Worst Jobs of 2013." *CareerCast.com* (2013). Published electronically April 23. <http://www.careercast.com/jobs-rated/worst-jobs-2013>.

³ Project for Excellence in Journalism. "The Future of Mobile News: The Explosion in Mobile Audiences and a Close Look at What It Means for News." Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, http://www.journalism.org/analysis_report/future_mobile_news.

studies found that a growing number of Americans consume news from two or more mobile platforms—and that the more devices they own, the more time they spend consuming news.⁴ A third Pew study found that men, college graduates, and the young are more likely to consume news from mobile devices.⁵ The young “... are much lighter news consumers generally and have largely abandoned the print news product, young people get news on mobile devices to similar degrees as older users. And, when getting news through apps, young people say they prefer a print-like experience over one with high-tech or multi-media features.”⁶

The Experience

The Pew finding that younger readers’ preferences for “print-like experience,” may hearten older writers still unsure about the new technology. For example, New Yorker writer David Grann, staff writer for the *New Yorker*, author of *The Devil and Sherlock Holmes* and *The Lost City of Z*, and one of the participants on the “Future of Long-Form Journalism” panel said that he has not changed the way he approaches his work. Dean King, author of *The Feud, Unbound, Skeletons on the Sahara* and *Patrick O’Brien*, does think in terms of multimedia potential, but ultimately—for him—the words are most important. “Ever since these things came along, these possibilities came along, I don’t think anybody’s found a good way to marry text and video,” King said. “I’m sure there is the really exceptional work where that makes sense.”

Courtney Baird, a former magazine journalist who is now managing editor for GrindTV.com, argues that multimedia thinking will have to become more integral to the writer’s process: “... these alternative platforms will force writer-journalists to think with a ‘web first’ mentality and

⁴ Project for Excellence in Journalism. "Mobile Devices and News Consumption: Some Good Signs for Journalism." Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, <http://stateofthemedias.org/2012/mobile-devices-and-news-consumption-some-good-signs-for-journalism/>.

⁵ Project for Excellence in Journalism. "The Demographics of Mobile News: Men, College Grads and the Young Are More Engaged." Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism, <http://www.journalism.org/node/31859>.

⁶ Ibid.

spend time producing interactive charts, photos, maps, and video of their interviews, as these are now integral aspects to any story,” Baird said. “I think writer-journalists of the past only considered what words they were going to create—and now they must almost think like an editor or even a broadcast journalist. What are the ‘assets’ that can be added to this story and make it more interactive for the user?”

While King focuses on his text, he does consider the role of multimedia from a broader perspective.

“When I go someplace, even when I consider my topics, I consider all [these] things,” King said. “I’m going to be creating intellectual property, one of which is going to be the text of my book. But because my books are research-intensive, and often involve travel to remote places, I’m always considering ‘What are the possibilities? What are the other possibilities? What are the other media forms that I can bring value to?’ So when I go on a research trip, I sell a magazine story. I also have a documentary company come with me if at all possible. ... I’m able to generate some income from that, and also some publicity for the nonfiction book. So those are all things that I think any modern nonfiction writer is going to want to consider.”

Snow Fall

An exceptional work that does bring together text and imagery is *The New York Times*’s package, “Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek.”⁷ The story, about an avalanche that struck a group of elite skiers on a backcountry slope in the Cascade Mountains—and killed three of them—earned reporter John Branch a Pulitzer Prize in feature writing for “his evocative

⁷ Branch, John. “Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek.” *The New York Times* (2012). Published electronically December 20. <http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2012/snow-fall/>.

narrative about skiers killed in an avalanche and the science that explains such disasters, a project enhanced by its deft integration of multimedia elements.”⁸

“Snow Fall” is a stunning work. Published on *The New York Times’s* Web site, the opening screen features a large animated image of a snow-covered mountain slope, with wisps of snowflakes blowing across the sand-like ripples on the surface. As the reader scrolls down, other multimedia elements pop up, such as links to videos, slide shows, and audio. At strategic points, such as lower down the opening screen where the geography of Tunnel Creek and its environs are described, features such as an animated flyover through the mountains appear, or on another screen where a real-time animation (with sound) of the avalanche appears. On another screen focusing on the skiers’ descents, as the reader scrolls through the description of individual ski routes, the path discussed is illustrated on image of the mountainside. The text moves as the reader scrolls down, the image remains in place, but the ski paths already discussed remain highlighted.

Some of the most effective deployments of multimedia are in the use of the audio from phone calls between emergency dispatchers and the surviving skiers and between emergency dispatchers and the ski patrol office at an adjacent ski area. In one recording, you can hear attempts to resuscitate one of the dead in the background. In another—arguably the most heartbreaking recording in the piece—a member of the ski patrol at an adjacent ski area breaks down and fights for emotional control as she learns from an emergency dispatcher that two of her dear friends—one a co-worker—are dead. The relevant words are in the text, but they do not

⁸ The Pulitzer Prizes. "The 2013 Pulitzer Prize Winners: Feature Writing." The Pulitzer Prizes, <http://www.pulitzer.org/citation/2013-Feature-Writing>.

carry the emotional impact (and in this case, is a correct use of the word “impact”) of the actual recording.⁹

Science fiction writer Dennis Danvers, whose works include *Wilderness*, *The Watch*, *End of Days*, *Circuit of Heaven* and *The Bright Spot* (as Robert Sydney), finds a lot of good opportunities in the world of electronic media, but that it does not have a great effect on how he conceives or executes his work.

“I guess about the only thing, knowing that it’s like to be read on a smaller screen, is that it might prompt me to write shorter paragraphs to give the reader navigational clues,” Danvers said. “It opens up the possibility that if you want to do something, you’ve got more options. I know there’s often interest in hypertext as part of fiction. I can think of one editor in particular who always [says] ‘If you can think of a great idea, I want to see it, but they really don’t end up publishing much. ... At least as yet, I haven’t seen a writer who has found a comfortable way to use that in fiction.’”

It may be that nonfiction offers better opportunities for incorporating multimedia. Valerie Brown, a former musician turned science writer, is somewhat reluctant to dive into digital platforms. But Brown, who refers to blogging as “a pain in the ass,” knows that some of her own work lends itself to multimedia presentation.

Brown was a singer-songwriter on the Portland, Ore., music scene in the late 1960s and early 1970s. She wrote an academic article on what was happening there from 1967-1970—a time when two local bands, Paul Revere & the Raiders and the Kingsmen—were getting plenty of airplay on the nation’s radio stations. A publisher now wants her to do an e-book based on that article.

⁹ Several times in those passages, I had to fight for emotional control myself.

“If we were to do an e-book, it would be really fun,” Brown said. “You could have sound clips—like I made a PowerPoint where I had sound clips of these old raggedy recordings I had found from back in 1967 that some buddy had been keeping in their basement all that time—and little sound bites from people I had interviewed and stuff. That would be something that would be really fun to do in an electronic way. ... You’d get the sensory experience of listening to the thing. You could do illustrations more easily than you can do in print. So, yeah, in that sense, I think it could be really exciting.”

Another print partisan is Kelly McMasters. McMasters, columnist for *Paris Review* and author of *Welcome to Shirley: A Memoir of an Atomic Town*, who with her husband, the artist Mark Milroy, recently opened up a bookshop, Moody Road Studios, in Honesdale, Penn. She loves the sensual experience of holding a traditional book.

“I basically strive to appeal to people’s romance of paper,” McMasters said. “What I’m selling is sort of the experience of what I when I first read *Anna Karenina*, or *Steppenwolf*, or when I left my copy of *Man with the Golden Arm* on the train. You know, it’s sort of the memory of your books, of the reading—of the act of reading—that I think doesn’t go along with a Kindle or anything electronic. So that’s one part.

“I’m also trying to focus on books that can only or should only be read on paper. There’s this beautiful new publisher out of India that’s putting out hand silk-screened books and they’re just works of art. ... Books of poetry, I really feel strongly that you can’t read poetry on e-readers. So I’m very pro-romance.”

Her work on her column for *Paris Review*, “Notes from a Bookshop,” has given her an appreciation for multimedia presentation, however.

“What the editor asked for, along with my essay every month, was lots and lots of pictures,” McMasters said. “And so I thought, okay, I can do that. And then she said, ‘And link everything you can.’ And so I started having a lot of fun with those links, but part of me thought, ‘Well, nobody is actually going to pay attention. Who is actually going to click on those links.’ But it turns out that people do, and they were really enjoying some of the less expected links.”

Nevertheless, the challenges faced by those attempting to combine text, imagery and sound are not insignificant. As impressed as I was by “Snow Fall,” I do not see it as a model to be widely emulated. For one, Branch’s text stands alone and would have made an excellent feature without the added multimedia. For another—speaking as someone who actually creates such multimedia—it is virtually impossible for any one person to have the skills to put such a package together, certainly not in a timeframe that would prevent him from going bankrupt because he has spent so much time on the one project that he’s ignored all other paid work. In the case of “Snow Fall,” 16 others were named as contributing to the graphics, design, photos and videos that made up the piece—and that does not include members of the group caught in the avalanche who also contributed content. Sure, text, images, and sound can be married, but what is more likely to result from most such efforts is a shotgun wedding rather than a compatible and happy union. But I also agree with Baird that writers must keep at least the potential for a decent union foremost on their mind.

Shelf Life

Electronic technology should prolong the market life of nonfiction work. I remember the shock when Barnes & Noble pulled my first book, *Upheaval from the Abyss*, from its shelves—even from stores in the Richmond, Va., area in which I live—after only a few months of visibility. From my limited youthful experience in retail, it is usually easier to sell something if the

customer can get a look at it first. Prior to the Web, such a disappearance from store shelves could bring the commercial death of a print work—whether fiction or nonfiction.

“The direction in print publishing is that it’s got the shelf life of a loaf of bread,” Danvers said. “They can’t clean out a new release from the shelf fast enough. The fact is that online seemingly has an unlimited amount of space to keep things hanging around.”

Danvers added that online publication, by prolonging the shelf life of an writer’s work, may broaden the audience for it.

“More people end up reading your stuff in an online venue than they would in a print magazine,” Danvers said. “Especially when you consider ... anything I published, say, in 2008—I can think of a particular story—it’s still available to readers. If it had been in a print publication, you could find it somewhere, but it would be hard at this point.”

In addition to aiding readers discover new writers, online and electronic platforms offer other benefits to nonfiction writers.

“The way I see it now is that it really opens up the market for all lengths of nonfiction,” King said. “Before, you either wrote a newspaper story, a magazine story—I guess, a journal story—or a book. And now, things that were novella length in nonfiction, there’s a market for that. No matter what the length of your work, there’s now a fluid market, and I think ultimately that’s a good thing. People won’t be puffing up topics that don’t quite fit a book to reach book length. So topics that maybe deserve 120 pages would have fallen between the cracks. Now there’s a place to publish those things and sell them.”

Itchy Fingers and Downcast Fans

While McMasters sells print books in her shop, her book, *Welcome to Shirley*, is available as an e-book—which has its benefits.

“Now that I am five years past my hardcover publishing date, my Kindle sales continue and are great,” McMasters said. “I think there is something in the compulsive spontaneity of clicking a button. It’s sort of like with iTunes first came out and I got my first iTunes bill and it was way more than I thought it was because, ‘Oh, it’s just 99 cents.’ I’m just clicking a button and getting instant gratification and not thinking that at the end of the month I’m going to run up a \$50 bill, whereas if it was in front of me and I had to pick up three books and go check out, I might end up putting one back. I think that because of the compulsive—or impulsive—nature of the American consumer, e-books will help us. But it doesn’t necessarily make me as a writer happier.”

Some of the dissatisfaction comes in the interaction with reader. As an author, I can attest to the pleasure of connecting with readers at book signings. I’m not so popular as to require sticky notes with names and suggested inscriptions and several helpers working to move the crowd along. I have few enough fans that I try to personalize what I write in their copy of the book. I like it when fellow authors try to do the same for me.

But the connection can only be made when you have a book to sign.

“I did a book club the other night and at the end of it I’d say six out of the eight women had bought paper copies. So at the end they came up and asked me to sign,” McMasters said. “One woman was asking me to sign her copy and she sort of jokingly looked at her friend who had her Kindle with her and said ‘I’m so glad I go the real thing!’ because I could sign it. And it’s like: a) the idea that you called it the ‘real thing’ was beautiful, even if it’s the same thing; and b) it was totally true. ... People are so excited to come up and meet the writer and have this transfer paper. ‘Here, can you put your name on this?’ It’s now going to hold a memory that you just can’t do with an e-book.”

Leveling Out

Overall, decline in print sales—at least for books—seems to have slowed. For example, the BBC reported this week that sales of print books in the United Kingdom declined just 1 percent overall in 2012—though sales of print books in some genres, such as children’s books, actually increased.¹⁰ When looking at combined print and electronic sales, 2012 was a record year for British publishers.¹¹

The Summing Up

Print is obviously not dead yet, although electronic publishing will take up more of the market over time. How things play out in the long term will depend on economic and generational shifts. I think it is too soon to tell whether or not a younger generation will bring about the demise of print. For example, my two teenage children read quite a bit—but their reading is almost entirely confined to ink on dead trees.

What I expect will happen is that print and electronic sales will kind of equilibrium. Print products will have a smaller market share, electronic products will have a larger market share, but there will be a demand for both. And the choice of where to publish may be driven more by the needs of the project than anything else.

“Story is story, you know. It’s still story. The difference in platform are differences in just understanding the medium and how each medium communicates,” said Christy George, former president of the Society of Environmental Journalists. “In radio it’s sound, so you actually use sound to evoke mood and emotion and sense of place and things like that. In television, it’s images and sound, so you’ve added another dimension and, by adding that dimension, it actually

¹⁰ Cellan-Jones, Rory. "The Book's Not Finished Yet." *BBC News* (2013). Published electronically May 1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-22366415>.

¹¹ BBC News. "Fifty Shades Boosts Uk Book Sales." *BBC News* (2013). Published electronically May 1. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-22358062>.

eliminates the need for a lot of words that you used to use to describe things—so you don't have to. And so it's a different kind of writing, but it ain't rocket science.”

It may not be rocket science, but considerable uncertainty remains as people grapple with the changes that have wreaked havoc in the publishing industry of late. But George thinks we will all get a chance to catch our breaths and figure out how to fit in soon.

“We're all going to have to change,” George said. “Change sucks. But the pace of change, I can't believe it's going to keep going at this level. It's sure has been a tumultuous decade. I just have a feeling that things are going to settle in pretty soon.”

APPENDIX

The Survey Instrument

Future of Long-form Journalism in the Era of the Electronic Platform

Introduction and Goals

My name is Dave Lawrence. I grew up in the newspaper business -- my earliest memories of it were in the era where type was set in lead rather than electrons -- and have worked in it off-and-on for more than 30 years. In that time I have published two books, dozens of magazine articles and book chapters, and hundreds of newspaper articles. I was also a member of that first generation of journalists who put their newspapers' content out on the World Wide Web.

I am now in the Ph.D. program in Media, Art, & Text and Virginia Commonwealth University and am taking a class in Literary Editing and Publishing this semester. In it, we have been exploring the use of electronic platforms.

Of course, we students have to do a project, and mine is motivated by self-interest: How do I (how does anyone) survive as a writer of long-form journalism/narrative nonfiction in an age where photons replace cellulose?

I seek responses from industry professionals likewise grappling with the future of narrative nonfiction/long-form journalism.

The final report will be published, either in a professional publication or on my personal blog, <http://abyss.davidmlawrence.com>.

Q1. I understand that the survey is: 1) a component of a journalistic research project; and 2) that my responses are "on the record" and may be used in published reports of the results.

Yes	100.0%	32
No	0.0%	0
Skipped		2

Q2. What effect will the rise of alternate platforms (e-readers, etc.) have on the market for long-form journalism/narrative nonfiction? (11 responses)

Long-form journalism will be easier to publish, but readers will not read as much in print.

4/19/2013 8:42 PM

Unclear. There's potential for writers to have greater access to publishing platforms, but they're likely to make less money. And that won't help grow writing, so therefore, eventually, the public will lose out.

4/16/2013 8:18 PM

E-readers definitely will impact books-in-print especially since there will be a need to conduct quick web searches of unfamiliar words/ideas/sources and quite possibly elevate the degree of scholarship expected by writers in general. In the past, if you wanted to check up on a reference or a quoted source you had to a) rely on the reputation of the publisher (University of Chicago, MIT, Columbia University Press) b) reputation of the writer via NPR or other book review or interview and so forth and c) the reliability of the referenced information supporting the authors claims, observations and conclusions. In the past you had to make a few phone calls and a possible day at the library to verify this info if in fact you cared enough about the subject matter. Now, it is all conveniently accessible at the touch of a fingertip.

4/13/2013 9:19 PM

I can only hope that this will create a bigger market for long-form journalism. I think the success or failure of the New York Times' new e-book program will be a good indicator of what the long-term market will look like. I also think that these alternative platforms will force writer journalists to think with a "web first" mentality and spend time producing interactive charts, photos, maps, and video of their interviews, as these are now integral aspects to any story. I think writer journalists of the past only considered what words they were going to create--and now they must almost think like an editor or even a broadcast journalist. What are the "assets" that can be added to this story and make it more interactive for the user? The Times' "Snow Fall: The Avalanche at Tunnel Creek" was a great example of what I believe the future of long-form digital journalism will be. It's no longer just about the writing, even if the writing is beautiful and the reporting is stellar.

4/11/2013 12:44 AM

Afraid younger editors won't have been exposed to it. So they won't understand how much work goes into narrative nonfiction. Because I'm older, still prefer reading long articles on paper.

4/10/2013 9:30 PM

I really don't know. Hope it helps long-form journalism.

4/10/2013 10:37 AM

Improved distribution, longer tails for longer stories.

4/9/2013 4:28 PM

Shorter attention spans but wider range of audience. Also, readers will likely expect and desire flashier presentations and more visuals. The words are no longer enough.

4/9/2013 2:32 PM

I think it expands the opportunity for long-form writing, tremendously. We just have to get through the pain of the transformation first.

4/9/2013 2:03 PM

I think there are now outlets for long-form journalism and more readers because of how accessible online content is. Social media also helps to pass around interesting articles.

4/9/2013 1:57 PM

I think people are still interested in long-form journalism but I also think the speed and ease of publication & distribution will put pressure on authors to work more rapidly, thus increasing the risk of shallow and/or inaccurate reporting.

4/9/2013 1:30 PM

<i>Answered question</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Skipped question</i>	<i>23</i>

Q3. What effect will these changes have on the journalist/nonfiction author? (11 responses)

Less money in royalties

4/19/2013 8:42 PM

Unclear. There's potential for writers to have greater access to publishing platforms, but they're likely to make less money. And that won't help grow writing.

4/16/2013 8:18 PM

The author will undergo greater scrutiny for facts, figures and synthesis of information drawn from his or her research and field visits. People who care enough about a specific event or story to read a lengthy article will check and double check the information provided AND it is easier to do so today.

4/13/2013 9:19 PM

I think the author will have to become something of a jack of all trades--someone who is at least fairly competent in photography and videography as well as writing. A story with an eye-catching thumbnail attached to it will invariably get more clicks than a story with a ho-hum thumbnail. That's just the world we live in these days.

4/11/2013 12:44 AM

Possibly discourage them from taking time to try those kinds of stories.

4/10/2013 9:30 PM

Hopefully, it will give more opportunities, but still unsure. The pay in online writing is horrible compared to print.

4/10/2013 10:37 AM

Less money up front, more on the back end.

4/9/2013 4:28 PM

I'm not convinced this will change anything for the way an author chooses her topics or reports or writes, actually. Strong writing is still strong writing. But we will have to become proficient in

"extras" to offer and complement our pieces. So, photos or interviews procured during the reporting or visual representations of information, etc. Treats for the reader.

4/9/2013 2:32 PM

At first, it means fewer jobs. At the end, it means more freedom (at least I hope so). We just need to bring other parts of society (like health care) along with us.

4/9/2013 2:03 PM

While there's more appetite for long-form journalism, no one wants to pay for it. So there's a real bifurcation. On the one hand are well-established, experienced journalists who can still eke a living. On the other are novices who will work for a pittance, supported by their parents. Mid-career journalists are struggling. I'm not sure what that will do for the future of long-form journalism as more journalists are leaving the profession. I'm interested in the success (or failure) of crowdfunded journalism projects. Also, more foundations are stepping in to support journalists, so a journalist isn't simply counting on a newspaper or magazine to pay for a project.

4/9/2013 1:57 PM

For authors, the problem is less with the technology than with the dissolution of intellectual property rights for content providers over the last 30 years or so. We should enact something like the European/British model which gives content providers an inalienable right to profits from their work. There is some encouraging evidence that self-publishing, where the author retains something like 75% of profits, could become legitimized. However, the vast flood of e-writing demands some kind of gatekeeping and curation, so it's possible that online reviewers, bloggers, etc. will be an important influence on authors' success in the digital marketplace. Forecast: payola.

4/9/2013 1:30 PM

<i>Answered question</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Skipped question</i>	<i>23</i>

Q4. How can the journalist/nonfiction author better tailor magazine pitches, book proposals, etc. and articles/books for success in this changing market? (11 responses)

Incorporate multi-media

4/19/2013 8:42 PM

Writers now have to do PR about their own work - do their own book tours & market their own articles, etc... Those who do will succeed, those who find it distasteful, will do less well.

4/16/2013 8:18 PM

Possibly self publish through a blog format -- not necessarily a blog but in today's digital world it is absolutely necessary for the writer to have his or her web site that acts as a central library or source from which subsequent articles and videos can be referenced to other e-zines and documentary type of portals related to the writer's work. It seems almost 'difficult' to call this 'publishing' when a writer would have their work distributed to ink and paper but some of this work may in fact never see ink or paper and yet be highly influential in the social media today.

4/13/2013 9:19 PM

I think these pitches will eventually have to be written with a "web first" mentality. What video/interactive features/photography will go along with the piece?

4/11/2013 12:44 AM

Important to look at recent studies of what readers read most. I'm not sure. But must be some stats. Wouldn't give up on long form just yet, either.

4/10/2013 9:30 PM

Make it as service-y as possible and actionable. People are looking for good information fast, except in the case of long form journalism. That is something I think it still in its infancy online so I can't really attest to it.

4/10/2013 10:37 AM

Come up with ideas people will pay 99 cents to read.

4/9/2013 4:28 PM

Offer web "extras" such as an experience different enough to warrant purchasing (or at least looking at) different versions of the project. Offer free samples or additional materials on the author website. Have a presence and following.

4/9/2013 2:32 PM

You need a much deeper engagement with the reader, the audience, whatever you want to call the person who will read what you write.

4/9/2013 2:03 PM

One article, seven sales. Journalists who write in the long format need to think about how they'll market and remarket the same piece for different platforms and audiences.

4/9/2013 1:57 PM

I have no idea. Short sentences. Short paragraphs.

4/9/2013 1:30 PM

<i>Answered question</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Skipped question</i>	<i>23</i>

Q5. How can other those interested in other publishing jobs (editing, production, etc.) better prepare themselves for entry into and survival in this changing market? (11 responses)

Learn how to do electronic text editing, website editing, desktop publishing, electronic production, etc., etc.

4/19/2013 8:42 PM

As traditional publishing dwindles, the need for editing jobs will dwindle, too. But I expect a rise in self-publishing e-book authors seeking out editors on their own. Production - not sure how much that will change in quantity, but the content of jobs will shift from machines to pixels.

4/16/2013 8:18 PM

People within this 'industry' should familiarize themselves with getting the skills needed to make the transition to an e-reader type of format -- web design, photoshop, ect... There will always be 'books' but I forsee a printing press that is 'on demand' rather than mass distribution through magazines and bib box book stores. A person could have the desire to own a 'hard copy' and go on line, purchase it, have it printed and bound and shipped that very day.

4/13/2013 9:19 PM

They should continually educate themselves on all software that is needed for digital publishing: PhotoShop, html, video editing software, etc. They also need to keep up with social media. That is incredibly important.

4/11/2013 12:44 AM

Don't get hung up on latest tech. Readers want stories. Try to find best way to present them

4/10/2013 9:30 PM

Find another career. Just kidding. I think it's very tough but always have a solid back up plan or another job to support you until you get enough clips and experience to do it full time. I think it's harder now than it was 20 years ago when I started.

4/10/2013 10:37 AM

Improve multimedia skills, work on building marketing networks.

4/9/2013 4:28 PM

Think about the work holistically. How does a longform piece exist and excite both in the writing and the visual presentation? How can we appeal to multiple senses (sight and sound as well as heart and mind)?

4/9/2013 2:32 PM

Learn all the tricks of the trade, or at least understand them.

4/9/2013 2:03 PM

There is more opportunity in branded content. I've migrated that way as that's where the well-paying assignments are.

4/9/2013 1:57 PM

Be conversant with graphic design, coding, ftp, video and audio linking, etc.

4/9/2013 1:30 PM

Answered question

11

Skipped question

23

Q6. Is there anything else you would like to say about the effect of electronic publishing platforms on the future of long-form journalism? (9 responses)

Journalists may not like electronic publishing platforms, but can't fight them.

4/19/2013 8:42 PM

I know at least one well-respected agent who has dropped her traditional publishing model altogether and now only takes pitches for e-books. She is banking on e-books becoming the gold standard, with a corresponding rise in the need for quality editing, agenting and production.

4/16/2013 8:18 PM

I think it is very exciting. I discovered that if I want to carry my notes, articles related to research and my own coursework I can send it to Amazon and have it uploaded to my Kindle. that is a very powerful tool to have. Think about it. Hundreds of books, thousands of scholarly articles and my own work in process all loaded onto a slender tablet or accessible at any PC wherever may travel. It's unbelievable. I thought the future would be 'flying cars and meals in pill form' but this is way more significant than that. there is an enormous possibilities for greater scholarship and social justice.

4/13/2013 9:19 PM

No.

4/11/2013 12:44 AM

A few weeks ago, I read a CJR "Second Read" on Susan Sheehan's "Is There No Place on Earth for Me?" Reminded me how much I admired writers like her as a young journalist...and how I tried to write as well. Fortunately, I can still get paper editions of NY Times and Washington Post. I like reading narrative nonfiction much better on paper.

4/10/2013 9:30 PM

It might provide opportunities for long-form journalism with e-books, but right now that is not the case. Everything is shorter.

4/10/2013 10:37 AM

I would hope this wouldn't change the writing process of long-form journalism, but rather simply the final revision and production process. More outlets can only be positive and a fresh approach to the work is also healthy. A rising tide lifts all boats!

4/9/2013 2:32 PM

Personally, I feel like I'm reading more long-form journalism than ever because I'm alerted to pieces on my FB and Twitter feeds. But I'm not paying for them. So I'm guilty of squeezing journalists too.

4/9/2013 1:57 PM

Nah.

4/9/2013 1:30 PM

<i>Answered question</i>	9
<i>Skipped question</i>	25

Q7. How many years have you worked in the journalism/publishing industry?

Less than 5 years	0.0%	0
6-10 years	20.0%	2
11-15 years	30.0%	3
16-20 years	20.0%	2
21-25 years	10.0%	1
26-30 years	0.0%	0
More than 30 years	20.0%	2
<i>Answered question</i>		<i>10</i>
<i>Skipped question</i>		<i>24</i>

Q8. In what capacities have you worked in the journalism/publishing industry? (Choose all that apply)

Writer/Reporter	100.0%	10
Photographer/Videographer	50.0%	5
Editor	60.0%	6
Television or Radio Producer	10.0%	1
Web Designer or Producer	20.0%	2
Publisher	0.0%	0
Agent	0.0%	0
<i>Answered question</i>		<i>10</i>
<i>Skipped question</i>		<i>24</i>

Q9. May I contact you for follow-up questions?

Yes	63.6%	7
No	36.4%	4
Skipped		23