Reporting in the “Post-Truth” Era:
Uncovering The Research Behaviors of Journalism Students, Practitioners, and Faculty

Katherine E. Boss, Kristina M. De Voe, Stacy R. Gilbert, Carolina Hernandez, Megan Heuer, April Hines, Jeffrey A. Knapp, Rayla E. Tokarz, Chimene E. Tucker and Kristina E. Williams*

Introduction
American journalism is facing a crisis of public trust. In a 2018 Gallup poll on how much trust and confidence Americans have in the mass media when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately, and fairly, 54% responded “not very much” or “none at all.” This crisis is not unique to this moment. Veteran journalist James Fallows remarked over 20 years ago, “Americans have never been truly fond of their press…[they] believe that the news media have become too arrogant, cynical, scandal-minded, and destructive.” Robinson goes so far as to remark that “popular culture casts journalists as villains.” Indeed, just this year, Tumber and Zelizer, as editors of the academic journal, *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*, devoted an entire issue to challenges facing journalism today, giving pointed attention to (dis)trust in what Lewis would later go on to describe as “an entirely unstable media moment.”

The current news media landscape has been substantially altered by recent technological, economic, and political conditions, forcing the reshaping of roles, routines, and revenue models for news media organizations. In the midst of this reshaping the news media faces a persistent decline in authority and legitimacy, beleaguered by clickbait stories, political spectacle, viral misinformation, and regular attacks, both literal and figurative, on the press and the freedom of the press.

Yet in this increasingly hyper-polarized era—one in which the *Oxford English Dictionary’s* unironic pick for the 2016 word of the year was “post-truth,” an environment in which people’s beliefs are determined more by personal opinions and emotional appeals than verifiable facts—journalism’s role in accurate storytelling, truth-seeking, and fact-checking is vital. Journalists and journalism educators have witnessed the rise and influence of the fact-checker, as well as a renewed interest in fact-checking as a profession and the fact-checking movement

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in general.\textsuperscript{8} Fact-checkers are known to engage in more efficient lateral reading practices for verifying information found online compared to both digital natives and established scholars; they also have greater awareness of online structures, like how search results are organized and presented.\textsuperscript{9}

While acknowledging the burgeoning interest in fact-checking,\textsuperscript{10} Nordenstreng argues that something more foundational and philosophical is needed for the health of the journalism field itself: truth. Truth, according to Nordenstreng, should be a key element of epistemology within the journalism curriculum for undergraduate and graduate students so as to avert tendencies toward a post-truth worldview.\textsuperscript{11} Nordenstreng's call comes on the heels of others advocating for "a new kind of literacy" to navigate today's multifaceted information ecosystem, given that "the ability to gather information, examine multiple perspectives, and then re-evaluate prior beliefs" is "a skill necessary for civic life."\textsuperscript{12} Wineburg, et al.,\textsuperscript{13} who worked to develop materials and assessments for determining students' civic online reasoning, state that an inability to critically evaluate online information is a threat to democracy. In this environment, academic librarians are well positioned as information experts with a bevy of tools to help cultivate the skills that both emerging and expert journalists need for truth-seeking and fact-based reporting. One such tool is the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education.\textsuperscript{14}

The Framework's definition of information literacy has four core components: reflective discovery, understanding of production, use in creating new knowledge, and ethical production. Its corresponding six frames representing threshold concepts permit "enlarged understanding or ways of thinking and practicing within that discipline" as one moves from novice learner to expert.\textsuperscript{15} This paper uses the Framework to shed light on the expert information-seeking behaviors and assumptions of journalism students, educators, and practitioners. More specifically, this paper presents the methodology and preliminary analysis of an interview study examining journalism students', educators', and practitioners' roles as intentional information consumers, users, and creators.

\textbf{Literature Review}

For the purpose of this literature review, the authors reviewed the published contemporary literature in the field of journalism in order to gain insight and understanding of the information-seeking practices of both new learners and experts within the same field. Who are the "experts" and how does one define expertise? What research behaviors are the hallmarks of these experts?

As a profession, journalism has a broad understanding and definition that acknowledges theories, methods, and standards.\textsuperscript{16} Even though journalism today takes place in multiple, varied formats, the guidelines and competencies are consistent, including the standards developed as guides of truth, accountability, impartiality, and accuracy.\textsuperscript{17}

In addition to these standards and ethics, information literacy is important to the profession. Is there a difference between the information seeking behaviors of students and journalists? Margy MacMillan's research analyzes student journalists' information seeking behaviors and notes that over time, students strengthen their information seeking skills.\textsuperscript{18} Conversely, the research on faculty and their roles as teachers examines the difficulty encountered in developing future journalists.\textsuperscript{19} Faculty also generally regard undergraduate journalism students as not meeting information literacy standards.\textsuperscript{20} Ultimately, the literature on information seeking behaviors of students summarizes a need for teaching students how to verify and evaluate information.\textsuperscript{21} Besides the research on students' behavior, the research on professional journalists' information seeking behavior evaluates the fact checking and verification of stories and details the behavior. This literature, international in scope, explores fact checking practices and rates their skills.\textsuperscript{22} However, the emphasis on skills and learning the tools of the trade and technology in the literature does not account for how to determine what constitutes an expert at any level. In short, there is little published work on the information-seeking behaviors of journalism students, faculty, and practitioners, and nothing that compares expertise between all levels. This paper seeks to fill that research void.
Methodology
This study interviewed 50 professional journalists, journalism students, and journalism educators. Participants were recruited from a range of educational institutions and news organizations across the United States, including the University of Florida, Pennsylvania State University, New York University, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Dallas Morning News, WFAA television station, and SoCal Public Radio, to name a few. To be included in the study, participants either taught journalism courses at an institution of higher education, worked as a professional journalist, or were enrolled as an undergraduate or graduate student in a journalism program at the time of the interview.

Participants were recruited using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. The researchers utilized their professional contacts at their institutions and reached out to prospective subjects using listservs, personal conversations, or recommendations from within the profession.

Interviews
Researchers conducted 50 semi-structured, in-depth interviews to address the research questions, with one interview discarded due to corruption of the audio file. This approach to data collection allows for interviewees “to express themselves in any way they desire” while providing researchers access to their “thoughts, reflections, motives, experiences, memories, understandings, interpretations and perceptions of the topic under consideration.” This method provides an opportunity for participants to explain information seeking behaviors in their own words while allowing researchers to probe for more specific information. Semi-structured interviews allow for variation within individual responses while establishing a controlled environment for gathering information across multiple participants.

Seven researchers interviewed participants between March and October 2018, with each interview lasting 60-90 minutes. The interviews were composed of fourteen pre-written questions based on the Framework (see Appendix A). If deemed necessary by the researcher, follow-up questions were asked to clarify or elaborate upon an answer provided by the participant. The pre-written questions focused on investigative research, information evaluation, fact-checking, reader engagement, and bias. In four additional pre-written questions, journalism educators were asked about their perceptions of the information discovery and evaluation skills of their students and the resources required for class projects.

Interviews were conducted either in-person or in a secure, online teleconferencing environment, depending on the participant’s location. Audio for each interview was transcribed by a transcription company, which provided researchers with a corpus of texts for analysis. Demographic information was collected using a survey administered by Qualtrics, which interviewees completed either before or after the interview.

Coding and Interrater Reliability
Interviews were analyzed using meaning condensation, followed by content analysis. Meaning condensation requires researchers to compress long passages into briefer statements that capture the main idea. The purpose is “to demonstrate how one deals systematically with data that remain expressed in terms of ordinary language and how rigour and discipline can be applied in data analysis without necessarily transforming the data into quantitative expressions.” This method “can serve to analyze extensive and often complex interview texts by looking for natural meaning units and explicating their main themes.” Meaning condensation removes any irrelevant details of a participant's response such as colloquial mannerisms, filler words, and other conversational quirks. Doing so allows for the identification of significant key phrases within each response, identified as “natural meaning units.” Using the meaning condensation method, researchers read through each transcript, identified
natural meaning units, and recorded each presented instance. Each unit was then condensed by researchers to provide a simple and straightforward line to be coded. Meaning condensation was chosen for its ability to preserve the participant’s natural language while simultaneously producing a corpus of text that lends itself to methodologically sound content analysis.

Once the natural meaning units were recorded and condensed, researchers interrogated each unit by connecting them back to the Framework. Researchers assigned two frames to each unit using ACRL’s definitions to inform these choices, not unlike coding in a content analysis methodology. Assigning frames assisted researchers in further organizing units into tangible themes. Researchers also assigned each unit with a skill level of novice, intermediate, or expert. Skill levels were assigned as a first-pass assessment, allowing researchers to exercise their own judgment in unit evaluation. Once coding was complete, researchers reviewed and adjusted all of the skill levels collectively.

Researchers tracked data for each natural meaning unit, assigned frame(s), and skill levels using spreadsheets. For each interview, researchers recorded the participants’ anonymized identification number. Each instance of a natural meaning unit included the unit text, the pre-written question to which it was responding, page number(s) identifying its location in the transcript, any resources referenced by name (i.e. database name, publication), central theme, primary framework, primary framework skill level, secondary framework, secondary framework skill level, and any miscellaneous notes. An example of the spreadsheet is in Appendix B.

To ensure consistent coding and analysis, three norming sessions were held before coding of the full corpus of texts began. This allowed the researchers to discuss, test, and improve upon their methods of extracting natural meaning units and assigning frames. The final norming session found interrater reliability (IRR) among how they applied the Framework to each natural unit. IRR was calculated by randomly selecting two interviews. Each interview transcript was read by a researcher who highlighted the natural units’ text, then six other raters independently coded the natural meaning units with a primary and secondary frame. Agreement was then established using the adjacent agreement method that accounted for adjunct scoring. In this case, if rater #1 indicated Frame A was the primary frame, and raters #2 and #3 coded the same text with Frame A as a secondary frame, this was considered agreement among the three raters. According to Stemler and Tsai, “The rationale for the adjacent percent agreement approach is often a pragmatic one. It is extremely difficult to train independent raters to come to exact agreement, no matter how good one’s scoring rubric. Yet, raters often give scores that are ‘pretty close’ to the same, and we do not want to discard this information.”27 Adjacent agreement is appropriate for this study because the frames are “interconnected core concepts, with flexible options for implementation.”28

The researchers calculated the IRR agreement for the two transcripts using Fleiss’ kappa. The IRR was “substantial” at .645. When using rubrics to assess information literacy skills, Oakleaf 29 recommends using Cohen’s kappa to find IRR because, among many reasons, it accounts for chance agreements between raters. However, Cohen’s kappa is limited to two raters. This paper uses Fleiss’ kappa instead because its equation is similar to Cohen’s kappa, but it accounts for more than two coders.30 The .645 IRR between the coders indicated that the researchers were applying the framework to the natural units in substantially consistent ways, which enabled the team to code the remaining corpus of texts independently. For this initial analysis, the researchers had completed coding for 25 of the 49 transcripts.

Analysis of Expert Journalists’ Information-Seeking Behaviors
Data was gathered and coded for both novice and expert information-seeking behaviors; for these abbreviated findings the analysis focuses mostly on the expert behaviors for each frame.
Authority is Constructed and Contextual

Evaluating the authority, credibility, reliability, and accuracy of information is a crucial and ever-present task in journalists’ work, so it was not surprising that aspects of this frame were some of the most recurring and pervasive themes. Expert journalists assess information in all formats intentionally and critically. They do this through their own direct assessments of the currency, authority, purpose, and accuracy of information, as well as through fact-checking, triangulation, and extemporaneous and self-directed peer-reviews.

In direct assessment of the accuracy and reliability of information, journalists look first to the motives of the source: who or what organization is producing or providing the information, and what is their agenda? Are they partisan? What is their reputation? They also look to the method by which the information is produced: is the methodology transparent? How was the record or information created, and what was and wasn’t included in that process? Then they look to the context of its creation: what factors influenced that process? How thorough and comprehensive is the information; are they seeing the whole picture temporarily, geographically, and demographically?

Journalists cover a wide range of subjects in their reporting, and recognize that often, their own direct assessments of information are not sufficient, as only an expert in that field could conduct a sufficient critique of the information. In these instances, journalists seek out and perform extemporaneous peer-review. They ask one career expert in a field to comment on the work of another: is this research flawed? Is this report misleading? Have you heard of this work and what is your professional opinion of it? This awareness on the part of journalists that within niche areas of study, professional peers are best able to evaluate information is an important threshold information literacy concept for novice learners.

In many cases, journalists must assess information in unpublished formats, and determine the credibility of the experience of individual stakeholders who had witnessed or been involved in an event. In these instances, verifying a person’s experience through additional evidence is crucial to confirm and authenticate each source’s story. Journalists do this by requesting or uncovering documented evidence such as personal and business records, photos, video and audio recordings, correspondence like emails or text messages, identification cards, transcripts, memos, and so on.

Since journalists are often on short deadlines, these assessments of authority must be made quickly. If a crucial or controversial piece of information cannot be verified and corroborated through multiple sources, then the story will not run (the news organization will “sit on” the story), or the information will not be included.

Information Creation as Process

Journalists rely on many different formats of information in their researching and reporting. Although the phenomenon of “container collapse” has made it more difficult to differentiate between formats, as information published on the web lacks the visual cues of its former analog counterparts, expert journalists are able to navigate and assess information formats for their quality, accuracy, and relevance in a story.

Journalists rely most heavily on information created through a transparent underlying process, so that they can thoroughly evaluate the quality of the information. In countries with strong Freedom of Information (FOI) laws like the United States, expert journalists reference and prioritize public records and reports produced by government agencies. FOI laws dictate, with few exceptions, that all of the records created by a publicly-funded agency must be made freely available to its citizens. This transparency is crucial for journalists, in that it allows them to assess the ways the information was gathered: the time the report was written and by whom, the survey questions that were asked (and not asked), the form that was used to gather the information, and so on. Although public records can be difficult and time consuming to request, journalists take the time, effort, and in some cases the legal action to obtain them. This is because public records also act as a wealth of
new and primary source information. Court records, for instance, which were cited as critical by many experts interviewed in this research, contain the specific details of a case that journalists need to retell the story to the public. Subpoenaed documents filed to a case can reveal information with significant news value that would otherwise remain private. Other public records that were cited as reliable information formats were criminal records, vital records, transcripts of public meetings, company records, and reports both broad and specific in scope: a medical examiner’s report or a police report relating to a specific incident, or an annual report from an agency, such as the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, with statistics and context to describe a larger trend or phenomenon.

A common information-seeking disposition related to this frame and coded as “novice” indicated that although beginning learners had internalized the importance of public records for reporting the news, they could not articulate why. A threshold concept for novice learners in this Frame relates to the ways that credibility of information is very intertwined with the process of its creation, and in particular, the transparency of that process.

Journalists recognize that secondary sources of information must be evaluated more on their final output than on the process of their creation. Scholarly studies are of particular importance to journalists, as their currency and abundance make them a reliable source of newsworthy content. Furthermore, the semi-transparent creation process of scholarly studies allows journalists the opportunity to better critique the quality and validity of the findings, either through direct assessments or extemporaneous peer review. Experts interviewed for this study relied on other news reports as a direct source of information selectively, with attribution, and primarily from organizations that were deemed reputable, such as The New York Times or The Washington Post.

Of all of the formats mentioned, content from blogs, social media, and “random” information from the internet was regarded by expert journalists with the most caution and skepticism. Even so, journalists routinely leverage social media as a tool to gather background information on individuals or establish a timeline of events. The caution around relying on this information relates, again, to its underlying process of creation: anyone can post anything online, which results in a lot of poor quality, inaccurate, misleading, or false information. Journalists mitigate this poor quality by using social media or blog content as a starting point or a lead, and fact-check this information through triangulation and more reliable information formats.

**Information Has Value**

Journalists understand that information has immense value, as both a commodity and a way to educate and empower an informed citizenry. Journalism students, practitioners and educators are frequently confronted with issues of copyright, attribution, accessibility, privacy and inclusion, and must learn to navigate the many layers associated with each.

Expert reporters always “source” any information they did not witness firsthand, and credit the thoughts, ideas and contributions of others. They provide persistent links to information within digital formats whenever possible to provide transparency and allow their readers to dive deeper.

These journalists understand that quality information is not always easily accessible, searchable, or affordable and paywalls can seriously limit their ability to both consume and disseminate content. Yet, they believe strongly that quality journalism is highly valuable and worthy of financial support from their communities.

Journalists also understand the importance of including and representing diverse voices and varying perspectives in their work, and the impression that conveys about whose stories are worth telling. They realize that audiences are skeptical of biased or politically leaning publications, and provide fact-checked research and trustworthy sources to back up every claim.
The principles of copyright and fair use are highly respected, as expert journalists pay careful attention to usage rights for images, videos, graphics and text. Reporters must also grapple with ethical issues surrounding privacy as they make decisions about when to publish names or sensitive information that could harm or put their sources at risk, yet provide the public with essential information they have a right to know.

Research as Inquiry

Questioning is the foundation of research for reporting, and that questioning is an iterative process as a story develops. Journalists use secondary research to understand the topic broadly and to gain context in order to ask better, more specific questions, particularly for composing interview questions. Different threads often emerge in following a story, and reporters need to follow those threads and dig for answers. Iterative questioning is also a part of the process of ascertaining the credibility of documents and interview subjects.

Given that the publication cycle is quick, journalists scope the amount of research needed by considering the nature of the topic, the type of writing to be delivered, and the turnaround time for the story. Typically, more research is gathered than what eventually appears in the final piece because there is a need to verify the truth of a story but the amount that can be printed is limited. Hot button issues may require more extensive research as insurance as to the veracity of the reporting so that the story could be considered defensible. The final process of synthesis is determining which pieces of information from research will be included in the final story.

Reporters are looking to report a story that has not been told already in the media, so monitoring other news coverage is important in determining a gap in press coverage. Story ideas can come from monitoring various types of information like court documents, press releases, public hearings, and council meetings. Reporters have also leveraged technologies in new ways like monitoring social media and using search engine alerts. Reporters and editors must also determine what information could be considered newsworthy.

Questioning, scoping research, discovering story ideas, and determining what stories are newsworthy can be a collaborative process between reporters, editors, and other newsroom staff.

Scholarship as Conversation

Journalists understand that truth is constructed from many different, nuanced perspectives of an event or an issue. The same story can be told from many different angles, and journalists check others’ work to see how a story idea can add to the conversation around a piece of news. The kinds of perspectives that are valued can change over time. There is a vested interest by those in power to influence stories told in the media, and determining which voices are heard in the news and including the perspectives of those without power is an ethical responsibility. Reporters consider the community they serve in matching the perspectives in a story to the demographics of the area. Expert journalists understand that personal bias can influence the perspectives that are sought; therefore, reporters attempt to check personal bias by engaging with different kinds of people, by using technology like social media, and by working with an editor and other newsroom staff. Journalists must also decide how to represent socially destructive perspectives like hate speech when reporting, balancing that with censorship. As one interviewee states, “It's important that reporters don't just know how to do journalism, they should know why we do journalism and its effects, potential effects on society.”

Reporters engage with readers, experts, and other reporters in participatory environments like social media. They understand that experts in a field may disagree on their interpretations of what is true, necessitating the practice of finding multiple experts and cross-referencing their understandings. Understanding scholarly conventions of publishing in order to use scholarship as one source type may be required for some stories, and some reporters monitor related scholarship for a beat. Secondary sources and others’ reporting is cited.
Searching as Strategic Exploration

Expert journalists are very aware that information seeking and gathering is a process of trial and error that depends on a variety of sources and search techniques. For them it's not about any one resource or method, but about having multiple tools and strategies in their toolbox.

For example, reporters rely heavily on public records and government documents, content that requires a thorough understanding of which institutions and agencies produce what information, and how that information is organized and accessed. They realize that not all content is available electronically, and are able to seamlessly go back and forth between secondhand sources online, and first-hand sources in person. This includes knowing which information is collected, and legally available to the public, but must be retrieved through freedom of information (FOI) requests.

Journalists who exhibit expert research behaviors frequently turn to subscription databases such as Lexis-Nexis, paid for by their newsrooms or academic institutions. They value these resources, not just for the specialized content they offer such as historical newspapers and academic research, but for the cataloging and metadata that allows for easier access and retrieval. Expert reporters think carefully about their keywords and search strings, and leverage advanced search tools and techniques—even within Google and various social media sites.

Expert journalists engage in a search process that can take them from their laptop, to the courthouse, to a library archive all in the same day—and they are prepared and well positioned to do so.

Discussion and Future Research

Journalists are information professionals operating in a rapidly changing, high-pressure environment. Their decisions related to information literacy are made in a very public way that opens them up to scrutiny and criticism, especially when reporting at the national level. For these reasons, expert journalists develop robust and intentional processes for formulating, gathering, evaluating, citing, and synthesizing information in their stories. The 50 semi-structured interviews conducted in this study (25 of which were coded and analyzed for this preliminary analysis) revealed many insights into the disciplinary-specific expert and novice information-seeking behaviors of journalists.

The initial findings revealed a range of tensions and frustrations in translating the Framework from a holistic document to a disciplinary-specific one, in particular to a practitioner-based field such as journalism. These tensions arose from several contextual factors, the first being that journalistic endeavors mostly exist within a profit model. This affects almost every aspect of their work, from story selection to the frequency with which they link out to other stories and sources, to the relationship with the community that they write for.

The publication cycle for journalists is also much shorter than that of scholars, and due to these time constraints, the concepts of “Research as inquiry” and “Scholarship as conversation” manifested in very different ways than that of traditional academic scholarship. Whereas scholars develop a specific area of expertise over time, journalists are constantly covering new topics. They need to learn a lot about an issue quickly, and then move on to the next story idea. In this way, much of the work in creating hard news stories leans more toward synthesis of information sources rather than knowledge creation. Conversely, investigative journalism such as long-form articles, podcasts, documentaries, books, or data journalism stories, involves a great deal of original reporting, information gathering, and research. These works are more likely to be an act of knowledge creation rather than just synthesis.

The power dynamics of the media also affect journalists’ work, in particular as it can be seen through the “Authority is constructed and contextual” frame. A myriad of powerful outside entities in the form of governments, businesses, organizations, and people, seek to manipulate the media to represent themselves or the issues important to them in a certain light. These entities can spend a lot of time and money promoting their narrative,
and journalists need to weigh and assess these power dynamics carefully. In this way, journalists must spend a lot of time and effort evaluating information sources by the agendas they seek to advance.

Finally, the Framework tends to assume that “information” comes in a published or documented format, in particular for the “Information has value,” and “Information creation as process” frames. Journalists, however, are gathering, evaluating, and synthesizing primary-source information obtained through in-person interviews, or statements made by stakeholders at an event. This requires journalists to apply concepts of information literacy in fundamentally different ways. As this relates to “Scholarship as a conversation,” for instance, the “conversation” for journalists is far more open than the relatively closed world of scholarship and academia. For journalists, the conversation includes potentially everyone: the public, government officials, scholars, career experts, a neighbor, a coworker, a person at a scene.

While this analysis focuses primarily on expert information-seeking behaviors, the authors plan to publish a full analysis of all 49 transcripts, including in-depth descriptions of novice information-seeking behaviors. This more robust analysis will also examine the data in relation to the demographic information that was collected for age, race, sex, and years of journalistic experience. This more robust analysis of the data will be used as the basis of a journalism-specific companion document to the Framework.
Appendix A. Interview Questions

Interview questions for journalists, educators, and students

1. Briefly describe the steps of your process, from story idea/assignment to submission (Broad opener, try to limit the answer to a few minutes)

2. How does research inform your stories? (Broad opener, probing questions: You talked about ________. Can you give me an example of that? You mentioned ___________, can you talk more about that? Can you describe it in detail?)

3. Journalists incorporate many different information sources in their stories, including first-hand information gathered from interviews, and background research gathered from secondary sources like books, articles, and websites. When you are considering using a piece of background research in a story, how do you assess the credibility of this information? (Probing questions: You talked about ___________. Can you give me an example of that? You mentioned ___________, can you talk more about that? Can you describe it in detail?)

4. With the rapid change in technology, have you encountered any challenges to evaluating resources? (Probing questions: Describe some of the challenges you have in evaluation online sources specifically)

5. Have you faced ethical decisions or dilemmas in the use of information in your writing or reporting? (If yes, probing questions: Tell me about a time, can you describe this in detail?)

6. When do you source or cite your information in a published story or assignment? (Probing questions: can you give examples of when and how you source your information? What does that look like? You mentioned ________, can you talk a little more about that? Can you describe an example of that?)

7. How do you find background information on a person, organization, company, etc? How do you background a person, company, or organization? (can you give examples of a time when you needed background information on a person/company/org, where do you look for this? You mentioned ___________, can you talk more about that? Can you describe it in detail?)

8. Describe your process, or the steps you take, when you fact-check, or verify, the truth of your information or sources? (Probing questions, Can you give an example of a time when you had to verify information—how did you go about that? Are there any specific tools that you use? )

9. Information comes in many formats. What secondary sources of information are essential for a journalist and why? How do you determine what secondary sources you are going to use? (Probing questions: Can you give examples of secondary sources you’ve used to verify information? How did you determine this to be the appropriate format?)

10. How do you determine what you want to investigate for a story? How do you find story ideas?

11. How do you know when you’ve gathered enough information to publish or run with a story? (Probing questions: You talked about ________. Can you give me an example of that? You mentioned ___________, can you talk more about that? Can you describe it in detail?)

12. How do you minimize bias in your information-gathering process for stories? How do you challenge your own assumptions, preconceptions, and beliefs in your information gathering? (Probing questions: how do you determine which viewpoints to include in a story?)

13. How do you engage with your readers? Does audience feedback/input have a role in shaping your stories?

14. Is there anything that you would like to add that we have not covered?
Extra questions for journalism educators:
15. As a journalism educator how would you describe your students’ ability to find information to develop a story for a class assignment?
16. As a journalism educator, how would you describe your students’ ability to evaluate information to develop a story?
17. For your course assignments what resources do you require your students to use in their stories or assignments?
18. Is there anything else you would like to add about your students’ use of information in reporting?
## Appendix B. Coding Spreadsheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee #</th>
<th>Natural Meaning Unit</th>
<th>Interviewer’s question that the &quot;natural meaning unit&quot; response referenced</th>
<th>Natural Unit Page #</th>
<th>Resources by Name</th>
<th>Central Theme (~4-20 words)</th>
<th>Primary Framework</th>
<th>Primary Framework Skill Level</th>
<th>(optional) Secondary Framework</th>
<th>(optional) Secondary Framework Skill Level</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Copy and paste the exact text from transcript in this column. For the purposes of our study, the scope of a &quot;natural unit&quot; will be a concept with the surrounding context (several sentences or a paragraph of text).</td>
<td>Select the question asked by the interviewer from the list. If the interviewer asked a question not included on the list, select &quot;other&quot;</td>
<td>add page numbers</td>
<td>Names of search engines, databases, websites, institutions, or organization</td>
<td>Summarize the theme of the natural unit as simply as possible, in your own words</td>
<td>Select the most relevant framework from the drop-down menu</td>
<td>Select a skill level: Novice, Intermediate, Expert</td>
<td>Select the second most relevant framework from the drop-down menu</td>
<td>Select a skill level: Novice, Intermediate, Expert</td>
<td>Use this column liberally, as it will help with our analysis! Record your own observation about your coding here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook, Twitter... I used Instagram a lot for this story, too, even though I don’t have an Instagram and don’t really know how to use Instagram that well – which I should. I really should, just because... I mean, I don’t need more social media in my life, but it’s becoming more and more of a professional requirement it seems like.</td>
<td>Q7 How do you find background information on a person organization or company (Searching is strategic)</td>
<td>Facebook, Twitter, Instagram</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Uses social media, which seems to be a professional requirement now</td>
<td>Searching as Strategic Exploration</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Information Creation as a Process</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Bibliography


