

## General Takeaways – May 15, 2020

In 2019, Abby Ivory-Ganja completed a study of collaborative projects and created [this report](#) with her general takeaways. While observing collaborative projects and interviewing students this semester, I came to many of the same conclusions about collaboration that Abby did. The following builds upon her takeaways and confirms many of her findings.

1. Collaborative projects need a project manager.
  - a. The State Government newsroom is successful because of the leadership from its editor, Mark Horvit. When Horvit instructs reporters to collaborate on assignments, the outcome is beneficial for the newsrooms and the reporters.
  - b. Much of the work being done in the State Government Newsroom is daily assignments and reporters said they only collaborated on these when they were asked to do so. Every student has a dedicated platform, but if a radio reporter is also asked to write a text piece for the Missourian they are happy to do so.
  - c. Students typically will not initiate collaboration unless instructed to do so by their editor.
  - d. In order to have collaboration for all daily news assignments, a new position should be created to oversee and coordinate coverage.
2. Think about student structure and schedule
  - a. The Missourian, KOMU and KBIA all have different schedules for newsroom shifts. KBIA and KOMU typically have reporters on a dedicated shift at a specific time of the week, but Missourian reporters often are working on assignments and covering events between class and work. This can make it difficult to collaborate on daily assignments without structure and leadership from the editors.
3. Spending time on training, workflows and expectations upfront paid off.
  - a. Students who were a part of the Public Service Journalism course felt better equipped to report in the State Capitol.
  - b. Many students noted that they felt like they would be able to initiate collaboration if they were more familiar with the workflows and editors in other newsrooms. They also wanted a better onboarding process for the newsrooms they already worked in.
4. Collaborations require a lot of communication. More than you would expect.
  - a. As the editors in charge of collaboration are aware, there are many channels of communication. The newsrooms should choose one communication channel to use universally, such as Slack.
5. But overall, the wide majority of students interviewed across collaborations are glad they participated in the projects and said they would participate again.
  - a. Every student interviewed from the State Government Newsroom said they liked working in the newsroom with reporters from other news outlets and felt that it helped them improve their reporting ability, even if they never worked on a collaborative project together.

- b. Students who did collaborate with reporters from other publications said they thought collaboration made them think about their reporting style in a different way and improved their abilities.

## Breaking News Team memo

Over the course of the semester Elizabeth Frogge led a team of editors from KOMU, the Missourian and KBIA that worked to establish practices for collaborating coverage of daily news. The following highlights the progress made by the group and various ideas for collaboration.

Discussions at the beginning of the semester revolved around how to communicate what stories are being assigned in each newsroom on a daily basis. Fred Anklam, senior editor of the Missourian, and Steve Lambson, news content manager at KOMU, led this communication by calling each other to discuss content, then sending daily emails with daily news in progress and finally adding some editors from the Missourian to a channel in the KOMU Slack to discuss daily news stories. In a larger collaborative committee meeting, the idea of integrating all the newsrooms into one large Slack account was discussed as a solution to streamline communication. Doing so would help all editors and reporters know what is being covered and help coordinate coverage.

A major discussion throughout the semester was about how we want the newsrooms to collaborate: before or after creating a story. When collaborating before a story is created, the reporters would work together on interviews and story development to create one piece that can be used across platforms. When collaborating after a story is written, each publication can take content from another newsroom and edit it for their own use or publish it on their platform. Collaborating before a story is written does more to benefit the reporters by helping them improve their reporting ability and creates a stronger product for both publications in the end. Collaborating after a story is published helps the publications have more content with less work from news staff and students.

The newsrooms made developments in increasing the amount of cross-promotion and post-publication collaboration they did this semester. KOMU began a segment called the "Missourian Minute" in which they used and promoted the centerpiece stories from the Missourian in their morning news show. The Missourian switched its online weather widget from the National Weather Service to KOMU's Live Doppler First Alert Weather. The Missourian also used KBIA's new segment "The Check-In" to find content and story ideas.

In the first half of the semester the Journalism School purchased a camera to set up in the Missourian newsroom to use for live video and recorded interviews. This camera is controlled by KOMU but located in the Missourian. The camera was unable to be used because it was not installed until the week before campus shut down for COVID-19, but it was intended to be used by any news outlet or the Journalism School in general. There is still work being done to get a backdrop for the camera that would cohesively brand every publication. This is one step in the direction of having a central location for all the newsrooms to work out of.

My recommendation to improve coordination of daily news coverage is to create a new position to oversee coverage for all the newsrooms. The State Government reporting beat is

one of the most successful collaborative projects because the editor, Mark Horvit, does not view himself as an editor for any one publication, but more like “air traffic control” for all coverage. For daily news coverage, this position could be a staff hire or a student editor position. This position should make sure that all daily events and breaking news are being covered and have content in the correct multimedia platforms, but not have control over what is actually published.

For daily news coverage, collaboration must be led by the editors rather than the reporters. With the way assignments are currently made, each newsroom has reporters on shift at specific times who are given independent assignments. With more coordination between newsrooms on the front end, daily assignments could be completed by one reporter for multiple newsrooms with separate editing by each newsroom. This would decrease the workload for student reporters and increase the amount of coverage for each publication. With the current workflow, a student reporter for KOMU would not be able to send their text story to the Missourian for editing without instruction to do so from newsroom editors.

## State Government Newsroom Memo

- Have an editor who is not tied to any one publication
  - Mark very explicitly is not an editor for one publication, but his job is to coordinate coverage of the legislature
  - Mark views himself as air traffic control – he does not decide what gets published but makes sure every publication has the content they need
- Find a direct way to coordinate with every publication
  - Mark sends an email to every reporter on his beat and every publications' editors at the beginning of each day. This works for the State Government newsroom, but if every beat did this it could be too many lines of communication
  - Make sure every beat uses the same workflow
  - The Slack/Airtable integration is a potential solution
  - Different publications have different timelines for pitching and submitting stories. Collaborative newsroom editors need to be aware of these workflows.
- Be explicit with students about the expectation to collaborate
  - Most students said they wanted to collaborate more with other reporters but did not know how
  - Most collaboration happened on day-turn stories where two reporters would cover an event and share notes when producing their stories
- Many students liked the hands-off editor approach, but this did not lead to as much collaboration
  - Mark offers what needs to be covered and allows the reporters to be fairly independent
  - Reporters from different multi-media backgrounds think about covering things in their style
- Students believed that just working in the same space as people from different publications/news formats helped improve their reporting ability
  - Different publications have different styles in reporting, writing and producing that rubbed off on all the students
- Potential barriers to collaboration:
  - Newsroom culture – there is a sense of competition between publications
  - Desire for by-lines – students want to build a portfolio and don't want shared work
- Students enjoyed having a class about the subject they are reporting on (Public Service Journalism)