RESEARCH AND INTERVIEWING

Chapter 3

“All the News: Writing and Reporting for Convergent Media”

Multimedia Reporting Course
LEARNING HOW TO GATHER NEWS

- Research is helpful in coming up with story ideas
- Research also helps you prepare for interviews
- Conducting interviews is also addressed in this chapter
GOOGLE IT!

- Google and other online search engines make research, such as finding descriptions and definitions, spellings, someone’s background and credentials, quick and easy.

- Going directly to the website of a person, company, agency or organization can be better than just “googling” the name, and the information can be more credible and timely.

- But keep in mind that not all information on the Web is created equal.
  - Who created this information? How credible is the source of this information?
  - What is the purpose of this information? Is it to inform or persuade? Is it based on facts or does it have an obvious bias?
  - How current in the information? Has it been recently posted or updated, or might it be out of date?
  - Cite your online sources: “According to Wikipedia, ….” or “On her Facebook site, Gov. Nikki Haley said…”

If you cite an online source in your own online report (such as on your blog) make a link to the source material.
MORE RESEARCH AND STORY IDEA SOURCES

- Social Media and Blogs- journalists use social media and other people’s blogs to: find story tips; get a sense of what people think; alert them to stories they otherwise might miss

- News Releases- journalists should use these as story ideas that need to be checked out further

- Ideas in Nonlocal Stories- most common way is “localizing” nonlocal stories by asking: “What do local people think about this situation?” or “How does that relate to what’s going on in our area?” or “Is there something like that happening here?”

- Look for Older Story Follow-up/Updating Opportunities- give updates on people/places recovering from disasters/hard times, for example

- Use Databases to Mine Story Ideas- governments agencies, corporations, nonprofits and many other organizations seek to be more transparent, so lots of “newsy” material/data may be online

- Review “10 Great Public Records” sources on pages 44-45
C OF C SOURCES FOR NEWS

- College News Releases [link]
- Experts Guide [link]
- President’s Office [link]
- Board of Trustees [link]
- Public Safety [link]
- C of C Publications [link]
- Community Relations [link]
- Marketing and Communications [link]
- Website Index [link]
- Procurement and Supply Services [link]
PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS

- Get basic information on the topic and/or person - online searches, company profiles, things written about your subject

- Check for related news articles - to give you context, perspective, background

- Find sources who represent a range of views and perspectives - not just “experts” also look for and talk to people who will be affected by an event, decision or announcement

- Then prepare your list of questions
CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

- Have both close-ended and open-ended questions - yes or no close-ended questions are used to confirm facts; open-ended questions are to elicit anecdotes and opinions - anecdotes bring stories to life by offering specifics in place or generalizations, and can add color and descriptions.

- Arrange your questions based on how much time you have to interview your subject.

- A good way to end an interview is with a question like this: “Is there anything else I should know or didn’t ask you that you want to bring out or that people should know?”

- The source may surprise you in answering that question with something new and important that you hadn’t thought of before.
INTERVIEW FORMATS

- Face-to-Face Interviews
  - Pros- the ideal interview format because back-and-forth real time can lead to illuminating moments; you can see subject’s expressions and body language
  - Cons- not always possible to arrange due to schedules, deadlines, travel distances

- Telephone Interviews
  - Pros- best alternative to face-to-face; can hear interviewee’s voice, sense his/her comfort or discomfort
  - Cons- note-taking can lead to awkward silences

- E-mail Interviews
  - Pros- convenience
  - Cons- impersonal, less chance to interact or capture nuances; person responding may not really be the person you seek; easier for subject to be evasive; chance for follow-up may be limited

- Instant Messaging
  - Pros- convenience; like email, hard-to- get people may be more inclined to respond this way
  - Cons- impersonal; may not be actual person texting back

Always let subjects know that interviews/comments may or will be published. And let readers know if the responses came via IM, e-mail, phone. Example: “In a text message, company spokesperson so and so said…”
NOTE TAKING DURING INTERVIEWS

- Face-to-Face Interviews: Many reporters still use the tried-and-true method of taking notes on a notepad, focusing on: major points, good quotes, specific facts (names with verified spellings, dates, places, etc)
- DONT try to write down every word
- It’s OK in an interview to ask someone to slow down or repeat something. Just say you are taking notes and want to make sure everything is accurate
- You can bring a laptop to an interview but be aware that it can set up a virtual wall between the interviewee and you
- You can bring a voice recorder, but make sure your subject is OK with that, and say that it’s only for accurate notes and quotes, and won’t be put online, unless that’s the desire- get permission if so