

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

Answered question

11

Skipped question

23

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 crowd-funded 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

Answered question

11

Skipped question

23

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 writers 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

Answered question

11

Skipped question

23

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

Answered question

9

Skipped question

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