Big Changes In One Year

Expanding Public Information Services

Report on Year 1 of 3, ACT/NCPR Partnership
Funded by the Knight Foundation

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This 3-year project has two goals: to expand and deepen NCPR’s news and information service on all platforms and to develop the next generation of public media/journalism professionals through apprenticeship, employment, mentoring and training with the NCPR news and digital team.

Progress in the First Year:

1. More information, more useful, more accessible, from more sources
   a) Expanded news team
      i. hired more stringers and part-time reporters on the ground in communities across the region
      ii. hired a professional photographer to provide high-caliber visual content for digital platforms, and to train staff and community contributors to create better visual content.
   b) Reconfigured website to make information more accessible and interaction easier.
   c) Increased impact on all digital platforms.

2. The next generation of journalism professionals
   a) NCPR brought in a cadre of 11 apprentices, mostly seniors, from multiple institutions: Clarkson University, SUNY Potsdam and St. Lawrence University.

   One recent graduate from Albany State worked with our news department before taking a permanent position with an Albany-area online news service. Two summer apprentices worked full-time for two months and both of these young people plan to pursue journalism after graduation.

   Other apprentices plan to pursue digital-based media careers or public broadcasting. All are well-positioned to move to work in public media. Each produced stories for broadcast and/or online formats, or created visual content (videos, animations) for digital platforms.

   b) NCPR hired three under-30 part-time reporters/feature-producers. Three young women are now based at different locations in our coverage area: Burlington VT (focusing on Champlain Valley), Watertown (focusing on Jefferson County, Tug Hill and 1000 Islands), and Canton (working on special features, news stories and assisting on longer documentary projects).

      All are working closely with senior editors and news reporters to build reporting skills; one has had two pieces aired by NPR newsmagazines and has been commissioned by This American Life to produce a feature segment.

   c) We are spreading the word across the public media system about developing resources for the next generation—at meetings, conferences, at board and other leadership gatherings, and we are lobbying funding sources to support projects designed to build opportunities and training for the next generation.
3. Other activities and the coming year
We are in the middle of a reconfiguration of news and digital talent. Specifically, one of our new full-time reporters will become the digital news editor charged with building out online news content, bringing online content to all platforms including broadcast, working with our apprentices to cover day-to-day digital news work, and developing new paths for interaction with and content creation by the public that uses NCPR.

Our web manager, who has overseen station’s presence on social media, working with team members to develop FaceBook, tumblr and Twitter effectiveness, will continue to train (monthly digital media/social media skills training now built into station culture) colleagues and apprentices to increase that effectiveness and relevance.

In the coming year, we expect to expand the hours of all three of our next generation part-time reporters/producers, bring 4-8 new apprentices into the shop, and officially offer multi-platform news mentoring to a few young public media people elsewhere in the country.

4. Working toward sustainability
We are developing long-term financial plans to cover cost of key activities after Knight project is completed. Specifically, ACT and NCPR have meetings planned with two other foundations and we are exploring contacts with other foundations interested in our work. NCPR has opened a conversation with CPB about the concept of some annual funding being made available across the public media system for next generation projects. In addition, the station hopes to create a small endowment fund earmarked for new platform development and next generation mentoring.