

Principles for the 21st Century

Kelly McBride and Tom Rosenstiel identified this need in their 2014 book, "The New Ethics of Journalism". They point out, "When anyone can make journalism, it becomes even more important that its production be ethical and that the community be able to recognize and identify when it is and isn't."

Ethics codes for professional journalists in the past century have included variations on four key ideas:

- Seek the truth and report it.
- Minimize harm.
- Be independent.
- Be accountable and socially responsible.

McBride and Rosenstiel proposed a new set of guiding principles for journalists:

- Seek the truth, and report it as fully as possible.
- Be transparent.
- Engage the community as an end rather than as a means.

"Truth is still the greatest value, the first among equals," McBride and Rosenstiel wrote. "Where we once argued for independence, we now advocate transparency. Independence is a part of that principle, and we still believe in its essential value."

Transparency, they write, "demands that the public see how the journalism of the future is produced and calls for an openness that encourages constant conversation between journalists and citizen, newsroom and community."

McBride and Rosenstiel suggested that the traditional ethic of minimizing harm be expanded into a principle of engaging the community. Identifying the challenges ahead, the authors wrote, "Professional journalism must grasp this deeper, more complex idea of community and the ever-expanding range of tools that make it possible. That will require a new mind-set, new work processes and a new rapport."

Arguing that journalism must survive for democracy to survive, they asserted, “If journalism can accomplish this transformation into a service that creates and supports the community, rather than one that creates news products, this could be our best investment in survival.”

That Engaged Journalism movement is well underway. Since the publication of "The New Ethics of Journalism", many news organizations have begun adding engagement editors in their newsrooms, and new journalistic entities have been formed around the concept of community engagement. But progress hasn't come easy, as news organizations continue to question the economic return on investment in engagement efforts, and many journalists question whether engagement undermines the traditional values of their profession. That can change.

Revision #1

Created Fri, Dec 6, 2019 1:21 AM by Jeff

Updated Fri, Dec 6, 2019 1:24 AM by Jeff