

# NORTHEAST OHIO'S LOCAL NEWS AND INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM

Prepared for the Knight Foundation and Cleveland Foundation

By Philip Napoli and Fiona Morgan

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## WHO WE ARE

**Philip Napoli**

Duke public policy professor  
News Measures Research Project  
DeWitt Wallace Center for Media and Democracy  
Studied news ecosystems of 100 U.S. communities

**Fiona Morgan**

Freelance consultant based in Durham, NC  
Former journalist  
Studies local news ecosystems  
Led local news engagement with Free Press

## WHO YOU ARE

Please share with us

- Your name
- Your affiliation
- One thing you'd like to learn today

## WHAT WE'LL COVER TODAY

- Why journalism matters
- What our research found
- Assets and opportunities
- Ideas for next steps
- Your questions and ideas



*movements begin*  
with the telling of untold stories

# THE PLAIN DEALER



[Home](#) > [BREAKING NEWS](#)

April 11, 2018 05:26 PM

# Akron Beacon Journal sold to GateHouse Media

CRAIN'S AKRON BUSINESS



TWEET



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SHARE



EMAIL



PRINT



## NEWSPAPERS FACE REVENUE CHALLENGES

- Facebook and Google account for 70% of local digital advertising spending
- Only 14% of the general public in – nationally and in Northeast Ohio – pays for a local news source directly
- “Trump bump” in newspaper subscriptions at the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today

Figure 8. U.S. foundation funding for local/state news nonprofits by state, 2010-2015



PRESS RELEASE

## NewsMatch Raises \$7.6 Million for Nonprofit News Organizations in 2018

Feb. 12, 2019



# GOVERNING

THE STATES AND LOCALITIES

[FINANCE](#) | [HEALTH](#) | [INFRASTRUCTURE](#) | [MGMT](#) | [WORKFORCE](#) | [POLITICS](#) | [PUBLIC SAFETY](#) | [URBAN](#) | [EDUCATION](#) | [DATA](#)

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## POLITICS & ELECTIONS

### When No News Isn't Good News: What the Decline of Newspapers Means for Government

About one in five Americans now lack regular access to local media coverage. Studies show this is bad for politics, municipal debt – and even the environment.

BY ALAN GREENBLATT | APRIL 24, 2019 AT 4:00 AM



# LAYERS OF LOCAL NEWS

public radio, broadcast and cable news shows and digital news outlets

local TV news, metro daily newspapers and new nonprofit newsrooms

alt-weeklies and local single issue websites

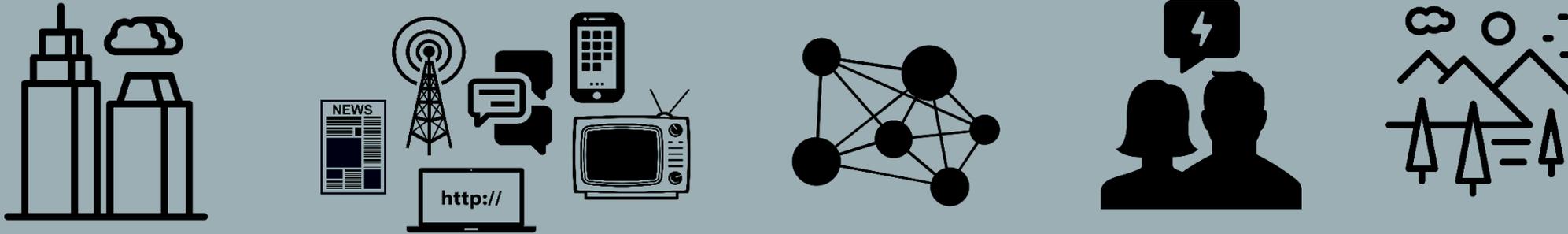
ethnic newspapers, foreign language and community radio

hyperlocal blogs, Facebook pages and community access TV

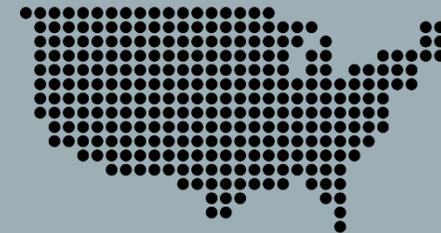
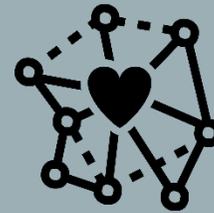
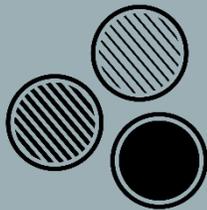
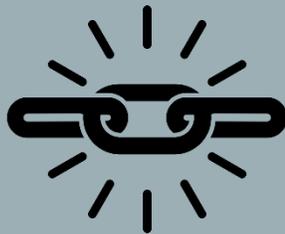
SMS and messaging apps, word of mouth and community bulletin boards



# WHAT IS A NEWS ECOSYSTEM?



News ecosystems are made of up of diverse sources and services that people rely on for news and information. Ecosystems are shaped by the connections that bind them internally and the larger climate externally.



Healthy ecosystems are collaborative, diverse, engaged, resilient and sustainable. In an ecosystem, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

THOUGHTS SO FAR?

# RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. News workforce analysis
2. Content analysis
3. Focus groups
4. Interviews

# I. NEWS WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

Analyzed 20 years of Bureau of Labor Statistics Data for Cleveland and Akron. Looked at “Reporters and Correspondents” category.

## **Cleveland**

- 61% decline from peak in 2004
- Controlling for population, 53% decline from peak in 2004

## **Akron**

- 54% decline from the peak in 2004
- Controlling for population, 51% decline from peak in 2004

## 2. CONTENT ANALYSIS

- We analyzed nearly 2,000 individual news stories produced by media outlets located within Cleveland and Akron.
- We measured “quality journalism” according to three criteria:
  1. whether stories were original
  2. whether stories were local
  3. whether stories addressed a critical information need
- Unit of analysis is the individual *community*, no individual media outlets.

## 2. CONTENT ANALYSIS

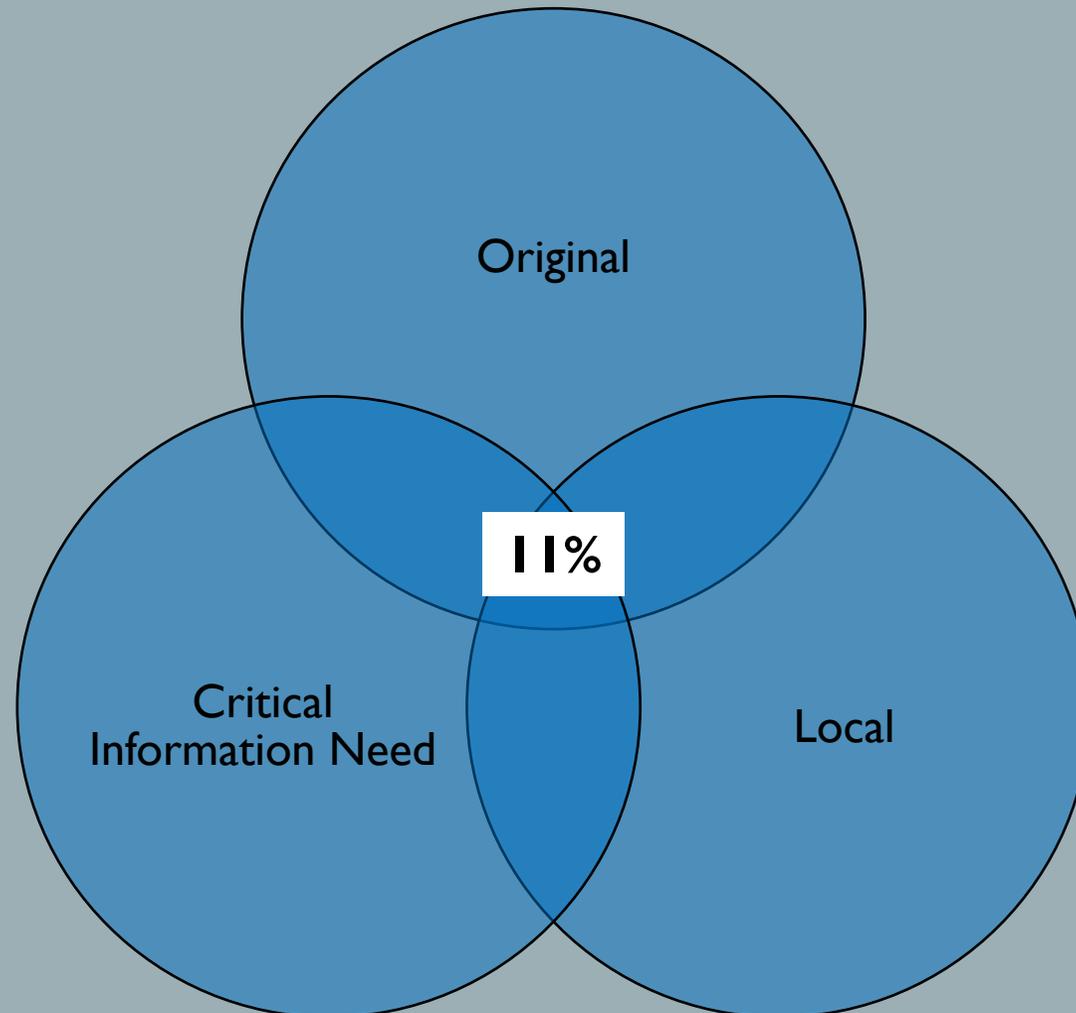
### **Cleveland**

- 64% of news stories are original
- **28% of news stories are local**
- 51% address a critical information need

### **Akron**

- 54% of news stories are original
- **16% of news stories are local**
- **38% of news stories address a critical information need**
- Significantly fewer stories per 10,000 residents than national average across all three categories

## 2. CONTENT ANALYSIS



**SURPRISED?**

## 3. FOCUS GROUPS

- 6 focus groups (3 in Akron, 3 in Cleveland) conducted January 2019. Total of 67 people participated (32 in Akron, 35 in Cleveland).
- Meetings were held at libraries and community centers and lasted 90 minutes to 2 hours.
- Participants were recruited through foundation partner organizations and were paid a stipend for their time.
- Participants asked to talk about issues facing their community and how they stay informed

## INTERPERSONAL NETWORKS ARE CENTRAL

With so much information coming from so many different places, “you rely more on your substantial contacts.”

“Word-of-mouth is very strong.”

“Our community connector, she gets a lot of information ... she likes doing it. It’s much easier for me to work with her to [share information]. Getting the word out can’t always be done by social media.”

“Shirley is Google!”

## LACK OF SUBSTANTIVE, USEFUL NEWS/INFORMATION

“You can’t really depend on the papers or the news. They don’t put everything in there like they’re supposed to do.”

“I can find out where the trash is or an event over here. But what's really, really happening policy-wise coming from city hall, coming from my school board and that sort of thing? People are not really getting good quality information.”

## DISTRUST

“I don’t know what to believe anymore.”

“I don’t want my children getting their facts from the news.”

“Our needs are not discussed in large media.”

# NEGATIVITY

“When I was a kid, I remember asking my mother, ‘If nothing bad happened, does the news still come on?’”

“[News] makes you feel depressed about your community.”

## BASIC NEEDS > TRADITIONAL NEWS

“A lot of people in this area are in what I call survival mode. They’re stuck in that mode, and I don’t care what you present to them.”

“How do we aid and assist families that are not making ends meet? How can we help them get food? How we make sure they staying warm? You know what I mean? How can we help them bills? I mean *that's* news. [News] ain't these folks who stand around repeating the same things, ‘Shutdown, shutdown,’ and counting days.”

## NEED FOR SOLUTIONS

“There has to be a balance, and news is really unbalanced right now.”

“If you don’t tell stories of the possibilities of Hough, that it’s a community that’s coming back . . . we’re going to lose metropolitan areas. The rot is going to spread.”

## JOURNALISTS DISCONNECTED FROM COMMUNITY

“If you send somebody who doesn't know the community out to gather the news, they're going to miss things that are critical or important [because they] don't have sources in that community.”

Reporters should “spend a day, a whole day, at somewhere like a community center and see what goes on and the people we serve ... if you're writing about a community, I think you should spend time in the community.”

## LACK OF DIVERSITY / REPRESENTATION ACUTE IN CLEVELAND

“When they have their morning meeting at five o'clock to determine what the news is going to be, there are no black people sitting at that table. There is no Hispanic sitting at that table. We might be lucky if it's a white woman.”

“There are black journalists in this community right now with 30, 40, 50 years of experience, and they are not news directors.”

## AKRON NEGLECTED BY CLEVELAND MEDIA

- Less TV coverage of Akron since local TV news station shut down
- Cleveland media do not cover Akron unless “someone gets shot or a house burns down.”

DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR?

## 4. INTERVIEWS

- Interviews with 22 people, about half in Akron and half in Cleveland, between January and April.
- Participants included journalists and former journalists, other community stakeholders.

## NEWS NEEDS GRASSROOTS CONNECTIONS TO HAVE IMPACT

“You can write some really great public service journalism, and if it’s not being consumed by the people who need that information, what’s the point?”

## JOURNALISTS FEEL DISCONNECTED FROM COMMUNITY

Ten years ago, “I wrote stories with impact, meaning, substance. I put the world in context for people and held up a mirror so they could recognize themselves, but showed them new things too. We don’t do that [now]. It’s disheartening.”

“Every day we have a picture of someone in an orange jump suit in the paper and it’s just sickening.”

## NEED FOR MEDIA LITERACY / TRAINING

“Let’s train people what a news story is and what it takes to get it. Let’s train people to value what a difference good information can make in their lives. Let’s train people how to sort through the crap and find the kernels that will make a difference in our community.”

“We’ve got to allow communities to cover themselves. They know the information they need and want ... I’m talking about true community-based journalism.”

## NEED FOR REGIONAL COVERAGE

“Northeast Ohio is all just silos.”

“You’ve got all these tiny little towns, and each one has a fire chief.”

“Every time a city develops, a suburb gets hurt. But we only cheerlead for the new development, not recognizing that, because we have no new people, their property values are going to plunge.”

## IN CLEVELAND, FRUSTRATION WITH CLOSED GOVERNMENT

“This is a very top-down community. The people who need to know are the ones who know, and they guard everything closely.”

“There’s this weird power struggle over data that has a lot of people who want to be advocates afraid to speak out about things in the way they’d like to.”

IN AKRON, SENSE OF CIVIC PRIDE

“We are unapologetically pro-Akron.”

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN  
FOR NONPROFITS  
AND LOCAL FUNDERS?

# COMMUNITY INFORMATION ASSETS

- Human connectors – the Shirleys and the Jackies
- Community development organizations
- Civic technologists
- Placemaking efforts and civic arts
- Public libraries
- Underemployed Black journalists + underserved Black audience
- Refugee and immigrant community organizations



# The Intersection

Are Detroit residents better off today?



**Bridge**



**Detroit  
Public TV**



**Chalkbeat**

**DETROIT**

Education news. In context.

**The Detroit Journalism Cooperative** is a partnership of five media outlets reporting on the city's future after bankruptcy with stories that have never been told before—on-air, online and in the community.



Tostada Magazine



Detour Detroit & Tech Town



Arise Detroit & Michigan Chronicle



Detroit Equity Action Lab (DEAL)



WDET & City Bureau



Outlier Media



MSU & Grandmont/Rosedale Development Corp.



DPTV, CDAD & the Tuxedo Project



The Detroit Free Press & Michigan Community Resources



Riverwise & James and Grace Lee Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership

JOIN US!

Saturday, July 21

IDEATION WORKSHOP  
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

COMMUNITY FORUM  
3 - 4:30 p.m.

CO  
MEDIA  
PROJECT





The future of journalism and the solutions to social challenges have roots in the same places—community, collaboration, and authentic storytelling."

**JEAN FRIEDMAN  
RUDOVSKY +  
CASSIE HAYNES**

*Agenda-Setting  
Newsmakers*



**Philadelphia**

**NEW PHILLY  
POWER**

# HOW WE GOT HERE

Examining the economic reality of Philadelphia

## Loss of earning power

Deindustrialization hit Philadelphia particularly hard from the 1950s to 1990s



For example, USX Bucks County steel plant employed 10,000 people in 1974, but only 850 when the factory closed in 1991.

## Criminal justice policies

Philadelphia has the **highest incarceration rate** in the country. Many individuals and families in Philadelphia incur **criminal justice debt**, or debt related to bail, booking, release, public defender fees or restitution fines.



**26%**  
poverty rate

**48%** of  
Philadelphians  
struggle to  
make ends  
meet



## Discriminatory housing practices

For 30 years, until 1986, the Federal Housing Authority **refused to support loans** for Black people.

Many neighborhoods were labeled "dangerous" and **remain hyper-segregated today**, devoid of investment ever since.



## Access to education

City public schools have been underfunded since the **19th century**

State education funding was frozen from **1992 to 2007**

Pa. schools rely more on **property taxes**, but the tax pool is shallow

Learn and read more about Philadelphia's economic reality at [www.brokeinphilly.org](http://www.brokeinphilly.org)

@BrokeInPhilly

**Resolve**  
Philadelphia

Source: Shared Prosperity Philadelphia, The Pew Charitable Trusts

**BROKE  
IN PHILLY**

# POSSIBILITIES

- Train “community connectors” in tools of journalism.
- Bridge reporting on topics like lead poisoning with community outreach to reach people most affected.
- Build up civic technology and civic arts communities with emphasis on local news and information.
- Support media entrepreneurs of color through training and direct support.
- Bring community members who are developing solutions to community problems together with journalists.

YOUR IDEAS...

# CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- **Whatever your primary issue of concern, your second issue should be media**
- Healthy local news and information ecosystems contribute to:
  - Accountability for those in power
  - Civic engagement
  - Informed decision-making
  - Governmental transparency
  - Public health
  - Political participation and representation

# CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- **You are already investing** in local news and information through your program work. How might you build on that?
  - Education
  - Civic engagement
  - Youth leadership development
  - Environmental justice
  - Census 2020
  - Election 2020

# CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

- **Solutions aren't coming from policymakers**
- National funders are supporting and catalyzing local philanthropic engagement on news and information
  - Knight Foundation
  - Democracy Fund
  - American Journalism Project

YOUR QUESTIONS AND IDEAS

THANK YOU!

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