

FIVE

Training scholars for the digital era

‘To be a scholar is, often, to be irrelevant,’ writes Nicholas Kristof in his op-ed (opinion editorial) column in the *New York Times* (Kristof, 2014b). ‘Some of the smartest thinkers on problems at home and around the world are university professors, but most of them just don’t matter in today’s great debates.’ Instead, he writes, professors are cloistered ‘like medieval monks’ (Kristof, 2014b).

His comments touched off a firestorm among scholars who are already using digital technologies to engage public audiences beyond the academy, including one who started a hashtag ‘#engagedacademics’ in response to Kristof’s column (Pearson, 2014). Much of the push back from academics involved some variation on the argument that Kristof needed to cast a wider net when looking for examples of academics engaging beyond the academy (Chenoweth, 2014). ‘I gave a talk [on] the history of black education at my church this morning. Not sure if this is the kind of work (@NickKristof wants ;)’ tweeted Blair L. M. Kelly, a professor of history at North Carolina State University. Dozens of other academics made a similar point in more extended formats (Daniels, 2014). ‘There are hundreds of academic political scientists whose research is far from irrelevant and who seek to communicate their insights to the general public via blogs, social media, op-eds, online lectures and so on. They are easier to find than ever before’, responded Erik Voeten, on the *Washington Post* blog *Monkey Cage* (Voeten, 2014).

Part of Kristof’s complaint is that academics spend far too much time publishing ‘gobbledygook ... hidden in obscure journals’ (Kristof, 2014b). Some academics responded that this was an old critique, little more than anti-intellectualism that amounted to a stereotype that ‘all academics write badly’ (Thomson, 2014). Kristof further elaborated his concerns in a follow-up blog post, ‘Bridging

the moat around universities' (Kristof, 2014a). The title is a play on Jill Lepore's description of academia: 'a great, heaping mountain of exquisite knowledge surrounded by a vast moat of dreadful prose' (Lepore, 2013). If only academics could bridge the moat between the university and wider publics by writing more clearly, Kristof urged. Kristof's lament echoes Russell Jacoby's mournful cry about the lack of plain writing a generation earlier in his book *The last intellectuals* (1987). This generation of academics has much more pressure to publish in order to survive in academia, and more than a few people faulted Kristof for not fully appreciating the pressure to publish in traditional academic journals.

'His column and subsequent blog post just seems so out-of-touch with the machine of the academy', writes Syreeta McFadden, an editor at *Union Station Magazine* and adjunct professor of English (McFadden, 2014). She points to the real-life economic interests that drive academics toward publishing, and these are linked to getting hired and promoted in the academy. 'People need jobs, my dude! And publication is a critical motivator and performance metric for the academic seeking tenure at any private or public institution' (McFadden, 2014). McFadden is right, of course, about how the 'machine of the academy' works. Academics are compelled to publish in peer-reviewed scholarly journals (and/or publish books with academic presses) in order to get hired and promoted. We will have more to say about metrics later (in Chapter Six), but for now we want to focus on the way the academy trains scholars, and here, Kristof is a bit closer to the mark.

'A basic challenge is that PhD programs have fostered a culture that glorifies arcane unintelligibility while disdaining impact and audience', Kristof charges about graduate training. The disdain for 'impact and audience' is certainly not the explicit goal of graduate programs, but rather an unintended consequence of them. The path to becoming a PhD is a long and arduous one (Bowen and Rudenstine, 1992), which takes an average of seven-and-a-half years to complete (Hoffer et al, 2006). The focus in designing PhD programs is producing new scholars who can do the work of a professional in their field. While there are wide variations across disciplines and institutions, few programs build a discussion about 'impact and audience' into their curricula for the PhD. The shift to digital scholarship implicitly raises these issues because of the openness and ease of measuring reach built into many tools.

Doctoral training at our institution, the Graduate Center at the City University of New York (CUNY), is somewhat unique in that there are several programs that emphasize the use of digital technology

in research and in teaching. For example, the Interactive Technology and Pedagogy program offers courses in the use of technology in the classroom, leading to an additional certificate for graduate students.¹ The New Media Lab supports graduate students who are using digital media technologies in their doctoral research.² Through this lab, the provost's office has supported awards to students with 'digital dissertations' or dissertations that include a digital component. The CUNY Digital Humanities Initiative provides ongoing programming, workshops, and events designed by and for graduate students,³ where faculty are welcome but not the target audience. Scores of graduate students with skills in digital media technologies have participated in the Macaulay Instructional Technology Fellowship program, where they work closely with faculty to incorporate technology into CUNY classrooms.⁴ It is this kind of training in digital media technologies that contributes to a shift in academic culture, away from a legacy culture that 'glorifies arcane unintelligibility', while opening up scholarship to wider publics. We are fortunate to have so many opportunities for combining digital media technologies with graduate training, and these programs offer a model for other institutions. Without these programs and their collective contributions to the institutional infrastructure, our project would not have been possible. This type of training is still fairly unusual in graduate education, at least in the US, but it is impossible to chart precisely how rare, or prevalent, such programs might be.

There are no data, as far as we know, on the number or percentage of doctoral training programs that have digital technology offerings in their curricula. For the most part, the training that students in PhD programs receive in digital media technologies has been sporadic and inconsistent (Brescia and Miller, 2007, p. 180). If you are a graduate student who wants to learn about using digital technologies in your PhD research, at most institutions, there may be little training available. Without such training, graduate students are left to master these skills on their own, while completing an already arduous PhD program in their field.

Scholars who are well beyond the PhD and comfortably in mid-to-late career and want to learn to use digital technologies or craft a message about their research for a general audience have a handful of options. For instance, Anne Trubek, a former academic turned freelance writer and editor, offers online workshops specifically for faculty who want to learn how to pitch and submit pieces to editors at magazines and news organizations.⁵ While not designed specifically for academics, The *OpEd Project*⁶ offers workshops designed to increase the number of women who contribute commentary to mainstream news

outlets. Both the *OpEd Project* and Trubek's workshops charge fees to participants, which for most academics is an out-of-pocket expense and non-reimbursable by their institution. The online platform *The Conversation*⁷ is a collaboration between editors and academics that is designed to curate news analysis and commentary for a general audience and that is also free to read and republish. Begun in Australia, *The Conversation* now has continent- and country-specific versions in Africa, France, the UK, and the US. The backend of the platform uses a content management system (Ruby on Rails) with built-in features designed to help academics trained in specialized language of their discipline write for a broader audience. While learning through the interface is an important innovation, there is no other training for the scholar who wants to write for a general audience at *The Conversation*. For the scholar who wants to take up digital technologies in order to personally reach an audience beyond the academy, training is difficult to come by (Stein and Daniels, 2017).

For Kristof, this is bewildering because '[p]rofessors today have a growing number of tools available to educate the public, from online courses to blogs to social media' (Kristof, 2014b). He implores scholars to use these technologies in order to contribute to the 'great debates' about important social issues (Kristof, 2014b). There is a tension in Kristof's piece between the cloistered scholars publishing in obscure journals and those with tools – from online courses to blogs to social media – available to reach the public that hints at the uneven transition from legacy (focused only toward other scholars) to digital models of scholarship (more outward facing), which we discussed in Chapter Two. Tied to this, and part of the problem that Kristof identifies, is the legacy model of scholarly publishing, which is not geared toward openness (see Chapter Four). But even the ready and willing professors who might want to begin a transition to using digital media tools to reach a wide public audience, or simply learn to craft their research into messages for radio or television interviews, find little help from their own institutions or elsewhere whenever they look for training. Most scholars who begin using digital media technologies are self-taught.

The potential for a wide reach

'... I started the blog in 2007 as a teaching resource for myself and a handful of my friends', says Lisa Wade, a scholar and blogger. Almost a decade later, *Sociological Images*, Wade's blog, garners more than 20,000 readers every day (Wade and Sharp, 2013). Although she initially

assumed that the blog's readers would be others in her field, Wade now reaches a broad, public audience with key insights from sociological research through compelling images. Today, a large percentage of her regular readers, about 80%, she estimates, are not involved in sociology at all, but are general readers (Stein and Daniels, 2017). Wade has extended the reach of her blog through social media like Facebook and Twitter. 'I try to make sure all of my Facebook and Twitter posts encapsulate an idea in themselves so that if ... even if a person doesn't go to the blog, they still are getting a sociological lesson', she says. While the typical scholarly monograph may reach 100 or 200 people, and most journal articles even fewer, Wade reaches tens of thousands, sometimes hundreds of thousands, with a single post to social media. 'I would say that my typical Facebook post reaches 30,000 people. Most of them don't click, but that's still 30,000 people that saw an important sociological idea.' As a scholar, Wade says, 'It's a really interesting environment to be in' (Wade, 2015). Wade recently won an award for her blog from her professional association, and her success in building an audience for her blog also led to a book contract with a trade press (Stein and Daniels, 2017). But not every scholar may want to follow the innovative path that Wade has charted for herself.

What about the scholar who is not interested in reaching a wide audience – why should they bother with training in digital media technologies? The shortest, simplest answer to the question 'Why should I bother?' is: 'You don't have to'. Really, you don't have to be on television if CNN calls. You don't need a Twitter account. Scholars, including those early in their career, are successful academics without using digital media technologies. There are plenty of reasons to argue against the use of these technologies if you want to look for them (although, if you are reading this book, chances are you are looking for reasons to use digital technologies). Some of the most common arguments against engagement embrace the assumption that social media is a waste of time, that it dumbs down research, and that it is a distraction from more meaningful things such as publishing in peer-reviewed journals (Anselmo, 2015). The counter to these arguments exceed the parameters of this book, but scholars who are engaging in the world of ideas through digital media do not find it a waste of time (Stein and Daniels, 2017). Rather, public engagement through digital technology is an important extension of their academic work. There are many reasons why a scholar might *want* to engage with an array of technologies given the changes coming to the academy (Daniels and Feagin, 2011). As we described earlier (Chapter Two), digital media technologies are changing the structure of the habits of being a scholar.

Scholars might want to pursue training in digital media technologies in order to be recognized as an expert in a particular area, to build relationships, to engage with others to conceptualize and develop ideas, and to have an impact beyond a small circle of other experts.

But for scholars who want to reach a wide public audience through digital media technologies and don't know how to use these tools, there are few options available in the way of training that is tailored specifically to academics. Although academia is changing, opportunities for training in the hybrid skills of digital media technologies are still missing at most institutions. To us it seemed imperative to build this kind of training into our project.

Our experiment: MediaCamp workshops

'One month after the MediaCamp workshop, the President of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, died of cancer, and all of a sudden I was besieged by media requests', says Sujatha Fernandes, a scholar who studies the popular culture of Latin America. 'That's really where the workshops came in very handy ... that's really what helped me feel comfortable and confident in the interviews' (Toral, 2014). Fernandes appeared on several cable news shows in the weeks that followed, but she says that none of her PhD training prepared her for this. 'We're taught to teach, we're taught to research, we're taught to write, but we're not usually taught how to talk to the media', says Fernandes (Toral, 2014). It was this gap in her training to be a scholar in the digital era that led Fernandes to attend several MediaCamp workshops.

MediaCamp, a series of workshops designed for academics and led by journalists, was a crucial component in our experiment with reimagining being a scholar in the digital era. MediaCamp was designed to address the general lack of training for faculty and graduate students in media training, both digital media technologies and more traditional media such as appearing on television or writing op-eds. It was also designed to intervene in a widely held belief we had observed among senior faculty that digital media technology was something for graduate students, but not something they could learn. This training in hybrid skills of journalism and digital media technologies was designed to sharpen academics' media skills through high-quality, hands-on, peer-to-peer instruction.

MediaCamp was designed for faculty and graduate students, but open to anyone who wanted to attend. Each workshop usually included a mix of participants, including faculty, graduate students, academic

administrative assistants, non-governmental organization (NGO) workers, and community activists. All the workshops were offered at the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism and, thanks to grant funding from the Ford Foundation, were offered free of charge. The workshops were usually structured as three-hour sessions, with some didactic presentation and then lots of hands-on practice.

During its first year, MediaCamp featured more than 40 sessions, most with 10 to 20 participants (some with more), covering a range of topics including television interview techniques, writing for a general audience, creating a podcast, blogging, using Twitter, and making sense of web analytics. We repeated offerings of all these workshops several times during the calendar year, and we tested the interest in several other workshops, including ones about how to use smart phones in research, data visualization, digital media for research, communication strategy for social justice advocates, and creating image-driven presentations. It was this later set of workshops that were most popular with scholars who wanted training in these hybrid skills.

Being interviewed on camera

Being interviewed on camera is part of being a scholar in the digital era, as Sujatha Fernandes discovered. She received the on-camera MediaCamp training just prior to her MSNBC television appearance mentioned earlier in this chapter. Video shot by broadcast networks goes, almost immediately, to the web and then has a kind of digital permanence (Armstrong, 2006). The *Being Interviewed on Camera* workshop prepared academics to craft a message about their research in succinct, understandable language. Two veteran journalists with on-camera experience partnered to lead the workshop. Susan Farkas, a broadcast executive and journalist with experience at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), NBC News, and the United Nations, teamed with Fred Kaufman, a professor of English and journalism at the College of Staten Island, CUNY and a contributing editor for *Harper's* magazine who has a good deal of experience being on camera himself.

Before each workshop, participants were asked to prepare a short statement about their research. Then, organizers solicited volunteers to sit for mock television interviews, with Kaufman role-playing as the worst kind of aggressive interviewer. During the workshop, instructors and participants reviewed the video of the mock interviews recorded earlier in the same day. For the remainder of the workshop, Farkas

and Kaufman shared guidelines for on-camera behavior, staying on message, pivoting back to the message when the interviewer tried to steer the conversation in an unexpected direction, and emphasizing the importance of appearing confident. Farkas and Kaufman encouraged participants to ‘own’ an interview by adjusting and reapplying what they already did well in a college classroom. The on camera workshop was the most expensive workshop to produce, due to the costs of equipment rental and studio time. The practical experience, reassurance, and direction the workshop offered also made it one of the most worthwhile, even for seasoned academic speakers.

The feedback we received about the on camera workshops was mostly very positive and enthusiastic. One participant said: ‘What I loved about this session was the way the instructors used the participants’ own materials as the basis of the discussion’. Another found the workshop provided ‘concrete professional guidance that I would not have had access to otherwise’. One participant enthused: ‘Great initiative – there is such a huge need for workshops like these’ (JustPublics@365, 2014). In general, these fervent responses confirmed our hunch that there was a tremendous unmet need for this kind of training. We also heard negative reactions about this workshop and especially from women academics, including some who had not even taken the workshop. One woman said, ‘Oh, I would never sign up for such a workshop – I am not made for TV!’ Another woman, who did take the workshop, said afterwards: ‘Well they [the instructors] were great but it was just so hard to see myself on camera – I am not ready for TV’.

The reticence we heard almost always from women is, at least in part, about the fact that women are still judged more harshly based on their appearance. This cultural phenomenon gets internalized and heightened through being on camera. It affects whose voices are heard in the public sphere. Some have pointed to the women’s own harsh self-criticism about their appearance on camera as a reason that there are fewer women featured as pundits (Wente, 2014), while others point to supply-side issues with who gets called on for television talk shows (Mundy, 2014). Overall, *Being Interviewed on Camera* offered a useful set of skills for scholars like Sujatha Fernandes, who shortly after her session was appearing on a cable news show talking about her work.

Op-Ed Pitches & Pieces: framing research for public audiences

‘There is nothing important that cannot be made interesting’, notes journalist Ezra Klein (Blattman, 2015). In many ways, the *Op-Ed Pitches & Pieces* workshop was meant to help academics craft their research into interesting prose for a general reader. Deborah Stead, a journalist for 25 years, an editor at the *New York Times*, *BusinessWeek*, and *Oxygen Media*, led most of these workshops, where her first focus was on helping academics to recognize a ‘news peg’ for an op-ed or article. The ‘news peg’ – what makes the story timely or newsworthy right now – is basic for journalists but can seem mystifying for academics. For example, for research about the history of voting rights, the news peg might be a recent election. Understanding how to connect academic research, which may be conducted over many years, to a much shorter news cycle is one of the challenges that scholars face when trying to place their work into a broader conversation in the public sphere.

In each workshop, Stead asked a working editor at a major news outlet to join the workshop for a question and answer session with participants. Stead’s long history of working with major news organizations, and the location of the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism next door to the *New York Times* building, made this possible. Stead used these conversations to guide participants through the process of pitching to a news outlet and, should the piece be accepted, working with a news editor on that piece. This process can be daunting, as it is very different from the one that scholars go through with an editor of an academic journal.

Op-Ed Pitches & Pieces was one of the larger workshops we offered, with attendance that was often close to 30 participants. The professional background of the participants varied and included graduate students, professors at all ranks, and people who identified as working in non-profits or NGOs. The responses from participants were universally glowing, without any of the reservations expressed about the *Being Interviewed on Camera* workshop.

Podcasting

‘We’re in a golden age of podcasting’, observed Kevin Roose (2014). The migration of long-form audio storytelling from radio to digital and downloadable formats began with the introduction of the iPod in 2001 (hence, the name ‘podcasting’). Even though the device has been discontinued, the name has lingered and the genre of podcasts

has become very popular since 2009 or so. Some 46 million people in the US listened to at least one podcast per month, according to one media analysis (Edison Research, 2015).

One of the best of these is *Invisibilia*, which takes academic research and enlivens it through sophisticated storytelling, like the episode about the man who is blind but navigates his way around using echolocation. This form appeals to our ‘love of storytelling and neuroscience’ (Larson, 2015). It also appeals to academics who want to reach wider audiences, and it is why we offered a workshop in podcasting.

Our podcasting workshops were led by Heidi Knoblauch, a self-taught podcast producer and then a PhD student in medical history. The workshops offered participants both some ideas about the strategies behind podcast development and then hands-on practice in how to create a podcast using Garageband (application software that is standard on all Mac computers). During the workshop, participants used smartphones to record audio. Then, they imported it into their computers and did some basic editing in Garageband. At the end, Knoblauch took participants through the steps required to publish their completed work to iTunes. The feedback we received on these workshops was generally positive but the consensus among participants, even those with some existing digital skills, was that this was a lot to learn in one three-hour session.

Twitter for academics

‘There were 3 million tweets about Ferguson before mass media outlets picked it up’, said Zeynep Tufekci, a scholar at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina, at the October 2015 Ithaca Conference held in New York City.⁸ When her Twitter feed filled August 9, 2014 with tweets about the Ferguson, Missouri police killing of Michael Brown and the protests it immediately prompted, Tufekci shifted, at some point, to Facebook. Instead of finding updates about the police action and protests in Ferguson, her Facebook feed continued to be lined with posts about the ice bucket challenge (this stunt to encourage donations for research on ALS, or motor neurone disease as it is known in the UK, was ubiquitously shared on social media, peaking in July–August 2014).

Tufekci cites Facebook’s ‘tendency toward the positive, toward the “like”’ (there was, at the time, no Facebook ‘dislike’) as a quality that might not lend the platform to social movement communication and critical analysis in the way that Twitter does. Social media platforms

are not created alike, and in this case not curated alike, with Facebook's algorithms suppressing news items in Tufekci's feed that her friends were posting about Ferguson (Tufekci, 2015). But at this time at least, the Twitter hashtag allows users to target access to conversation to a greater degree. Communities assemble themselves on social media platforms for different social and political purposes. Twitter is the platform of choice for social movement activism and, perhaps not coincidentally, for academic exchange.

Our MediaCamp workshop on Twitter was led by Sandeep Junnarkar, an associate professor at the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism and director of the Interactive Journalism Program. Junnarkar's pre-academic professional credits include leadership as the breaking news editor, writer, and web producer when *The New York Times on the Web* went live. Junnarkar began Twitter workshops with a conceptual discussion about why academics might want to bother with Twitter. He emphasized the platform's conversational quality and usefulness to academics for building relationships over its use as a tool to simply broadcast posts about academic work. In the workshop, Junnarkar walked participants through how to set up a profile and then took them through some of the nuances of the platform's particular jargon and capabilities, such as the difference between @ replies and direct messages, how to retweet, create lists, and 'tune' one's Twitter timeline for 'more signal and less noise'.

Blogging

From afar, the success that Lisa Wade has had with her blog *Sociological Images* could seem easy. But launching and maintaining a scholarly blog can be a daunting task. Under the expert guidance, once again, of Sandeep Junnarkar, we offered a series of blogging workshops that introduced scholars to the benefits of blogging, or engaging in non-academic writing for academic and non-academic publics.

Junnarkar guided attendees through the process of establishing a blog, discussed the merits of several free plug-and-play blogging platforms, and then delved more deeply into WordPress.com. He reviewed the nuts and bolts of writing a post, title, and excerpt for each entry, uploading and/or embedding media (photographs and pdfs), hyperlinking to other work, changing design themes, and updating already published posts.

Participants completed the workshop with a branded, personal site on the WordPress platform, and the knowledge that other platforms

such as Tumblr, Weebly, and Wix provide reasonable alternatives. WordPress's extensive assembly of settings and plugins allow easy embedding for video, photos, and audio to expand the blogs' interest and narrative richness. Participants left the workshop with links to Junnarkar's instruction notes. Later, attendees benefited from a *Toolkit*, a pdf eBook that summarized the content of all nine social media workshops (JustPublics@365, 2013b). The blogging workshop tied thematically to the workshops on op-ed writing, by sharing a focus on writing crisply and compellingly – or storytelling – for non-academic audiences.

Analytics and metrics

What good is a blog or a Tweet if nobody reads it, and how do you know when they do? In the *Analytics and Metrics* workshops, Junnarkar explored how Google can be applied to track website traffic. With an eye on site analytics, bloggers can tweak publication schedules, attract readers with well-designed metadata (appropriately chosen keywords), and adapt content to increase discovery and to draw more online visitors who review more content. Twitter analytics, too, are useful to keep an eye on, to better understand when tweets are read the most, by whom, and with what result.

We envisioned these three workshops – Twitter, blogging, and analytics – as something of a set curriculum. They were designed to introduce academics to social media basics (Twitter), to the increasingly more involved (blogging), and even the advanced and complex (analytics and metrics) elements of social media work, though most attendees did not take the workshops in this sequenced path.

What we learned from training scholars for the digital era

Our experiment with training scholars for the digital era met with both resistance and enthusiasm. When launching MediaCamp, we explained the concept to one senior faculty member, who folded his arms and said, 'I will not be made to learn the internet! I will retire before that happens.' Another equally accomplished scholar at the same institution had a very different response. She signed up for nearly all the digital media workshops, and explained her motivation this way: 'I have younger scholars who come to me and want to collaborate with

tools I don't understand, so I want to be able to work with them'. There were a range of other responses between these two opposing reactions, but among the participants we surveyed, most reported that MediaCamp helped them become more engaged scholars, like Sujatha Fernandes, who was able to confidently respond to media requests after her sessions (JustPublics@365, 2014a).

In general, we found that learning digital media skills could be both intimidating and exhilarating for faculty. Professors often 'fear the awkwardness of relearning their profession' (Shor and Freire, 2003, p. 479). For scholars who long ago established themselves as experts in their fields, the idea of beginning to learn a fresh set of skills can be intimidating or even demeaning (Shor and Freire, 2003, p. 479). While some scholars feel a painful loss of status when they are not the expert, others responded differently. Some scholars relish the prospect being a beginner, of diving into unknown worlds and the playfulness of hacking a new tool. We found it impossible to predict these different affective responses as they emerged from scholars across every discipline and a range of institutions.

We found that the 'guide at the side' pedagogy works best for training scholars in the digital era (King, 1993). The format of each workshop included an instructor and an assistant working with a small group of participants, each at a lab computer or on their own laptop. As each participant followed the instructor's direction, the assistant, and sometimes the instructor, could offer hands-on help when needed. For some participants who were totally new to a digital environment, the learning curve could be steep. Several of our participants took the same workshop several times. Many more scholars wanted to attend workshops, or take them again, but they could not due to their primary work commitments to research and teaching. The January break between semesters proved to be the most popular time for workshops, as teaching commitments were often reduced. Summer was somewhat popular, but not as much as we had hoped. The myth is that faculty have 'summers off', but in fact, the summer months are when faculty who both teach and do research finish many of their writing projects. Academics guard this time very closely. In addition, professors with young children often have increased childcare responsibilities when their children's schools are out for summer. Scheduling at most other times during the long semester was more art than science as we struggled to find times that worked for most faculty and graduate students who juggled many commitments.

With the high demand and difficulty with scheduling in-person sessions, we explored the idea of offering online versions of the

workshops. However, what we found was similar to the lessons learned about the commercial MOOCs (massive open online courses – see Chapter Three). Recorded lectures work best for those who already have a leg up on the material, but they do not work as well for those who need a ‘guide at the side’. What our experiment taught us is that it is difficult to train scholars for the digital era in massive numbers. In digital terms, ‘it does not scale’.

We learned, too, from the generation of scholars who are just beginning their careers, about their concerns regarding the use of digital media technologies. For this younger generation of scholars, the Internet has been part of their lives for as long as they can remember. They are fluent in many digital technologies and they seem to quickly and effortlessly learn new ones. But, like more senior scholars, many early career scholars also struggle to craft the central idea of their research into language that general audiences understand. The deeper concerns about digital technologies are tied to the austerity politics in which they emerge. For instance, Karen Gregory is troubled by the additional labor that digital media requires of faculty at a time when an increasing majority are precariously employed, especially when that labor is publicly performed (Gregory, 2013). Mark Carrigan is alarmed by the acceleration of academic life that he witnesses. He worries that we are losing the benefits of a slower, more contemplative pace that is necessary for cultivating sustained critiques and complex arguments (Carrigan, 2016a). Tressie McMillan Cottom urges that we attend to social inequities, historical and contemporary racism and sexism that makes some scholars more vulnerable than others in forms of knowledge production that traffic in digital attention economies (Cottom, 2015). In conversation with these concerns and many different affective responses from faculty, the MediaCamp workshops addressed unmet needs among both established and emerging scholars for training in digital media technologies.

Community activists, non-profit and NGO staffers also participated in MediaCamp workshops and this did several things. It gave them training they needed and were not getting elsewhere. We learned from participants in the workshops that because they were younger, their supervisors often assumed they ‘knew about the Internet’, so they assigned them the task of running the social media accounts for their organization. Many expressed dismay at this assignment, since they were unfamiliar with digital media beyond their own personal use. Participation by community activists in MediaCamp also fostered and strengthened collaborations with academics; among the participants were members of the East Harlem community who had participated

in the #InQ13 course. Offering MediaCamp, geared to academics but open to all, positioned CUNY as a reliable resource for this kind of training in the city and the region.

An unintended consequence of our MediaCamp workshops was to highlight the unclear relationship between academic institutions and digital media technologies. Low-paid administrative university staff were regular attendees. These staffers, like many non-profit and NGO workers who attended, signed up for the workshops because they had been assigned the task of administering the social media accounts for their departments, centers, or schools. Yet, they had not generally received training or guidelines about how to use these technologies. They were also usually not being paid extra to take on additional responsibilities. Colleges and universities must develop significant administrative communications infrastructures, including staff hiring and training, to employ digital media technologies effectively. Compensation for additional responsibilities should be of interest to labor unions. The staffers we met were not working with their university publicity officers who, their impression was, were generally not focused on their efforts with social media. Departmental and chief administrators were mostly inattentive to staff efforts with social media. While some may think the use of social media for institutional purposes is ‘free’ or low cost, it actually has significant staffing and training costs. In this way, MediaCamp helped to support our own institution’s (and other institutions’) communication infrastructure needs.

While some fear that scholars will someday be required to use digital media, we did not see evidence of this among the faculty and graduate students who attended the workshops (Carrigan, 2016a). While it was often the case that managing digital media had become a job requirement for non-profit workers and academic administrative assistants, it was not true for faculty or graduate students. The academics, both early career and more senior, who attended our workshops, expressed a strong interest in learning skills that would help them reach a wider audience. This emerging practice of scholars actively creating their own media content through multiple channels to represent themselves and share their work, however, presents a new set of challenges for colleges and universities.

The rising scholarly use of digital media technologies means that faculty are often working as their own press agents and circumventing the gatekeeping and assistance of their university’s press office. One way to view faculty engagement through media – digital and otherwise – is that this labor benefits a college or university. To the extent that an individual faculty member links their online presence to their

institution, every bit of their effort to circulate ideas links to their institution as well. To date, there has been a wide array of institutional responses to faculty engagement, generally ranging from faint praise to laissez-faire concern, to harsh retaliation, and even to termination (Flaherty, 2015; Stein and Daniels, 2017). When scholars come under attack for what they say through social media, from individuals, from institutions, or from individuals who want to force institutions to rescind job offers, this raises new questions about being a scholar in the digital era. We did not include a MediaCamp workshop on how to manage backlash, but future iterations would do well to include a session that offers guidance about what to do if attacked and how to be supportive of public scholars (Grollman, 2015). University press offices are smart to reimagine their work when scholars increasingly act as their own press agents. College and university presidents, provosts, and boards should carefully consider policies for the digital era that support faculty engagement and protect academic freedom.

MediaCamp: critical information literacy for scholars in the digital era

From a library and information science perspective, MediaCamp is a form of ‘information literacy’ or ‘media literacy’ training. Traditional information literacy competency standards, adopted by academic library organizations around the world, have come under sharp criticism from librarians who view them as a tool applied to shape student learning in a manner that does not ultimately serve student interests.

Critics contend that information literacy standards assume that research and analysis are procedural and predominantly neutral (Seale, 2010, p. 222). Such standards reify hierarchies of knowledge production and consumption. When information literacy teaches generic research skills, it reinforces the management and measurement systems of neoliberal institutions (Accardi et al, 2010; Drabinski, 2014). Librarians critical of this approach have made good use of Twitter to raise awareness about their critique of information literacy standards and practices. The #critlib hashtag is popularly used to signal conversation about a shift away from instruction to accomplish positivist ‘outcomes’ of performance and toward attention to the politics, power, and industry of knowledge production.

MediaCamp does not fit a standard information literacy agenda. Designed for the local, immediate needs of faculty and graduate students, MediaCamp shifts information literacy instruction from a

standard-based concern to modes of digital production and engagement with non-academic publics. MediaCamp embraces media literacy goals, supplementing scholars' training in traditional formats with training in the production and use of audio, visual, and social media. The workshops put scholars in dialogue with media and journalism professionals about the mechanisms of media production, and offered training and skills about how to work with the popular press and social media.

One of the latent goals of MediaCamp was to raise the perceived value of interacting with the public for scholars. This kind of training enables scholars to interact publicly, to build professional reputations, to effect change, and to participate in broader arenas without the usual gatekeepers. Such training can equip scholars to become digitally fluent teachers, better able to guide students in a critical understanding of what it means to be a 'prosumer', both a producer and a consumer of knowledge in the digital era (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010).

Forward thinking: training to be relevant

Being a scholar in the digital era means being concerned with the world beyond the academy and openly engaging with it. Kristof's damning assessment with which this chapter began – 'to be a scholar is, often, to be irrelevant' (Kristof, 2014b) – is half true but speaks to a legacy model of scholarship geared toward a cloistered existence. For that to change, for scholars to become more engaged in and through digital media, they will have to be able to acquire those skills. Currently, there are very few options for scholars who want this kind of training.

Our experiment with MediaCamp at the Graduate Center, CUNY, was designed to offer such training through intra-institutional collaboration between the main PhD-granting arm of the university, the Graduate School of Journalism, and the Graduate Center's research library. The MediaCamp collaboration was successful for the institution, and it also fostered many scholars at our institution and throughout the region to be engaged with wider publics. MediaCamp provided a bridge between university and community partners, and the no-fee structure contributed to the mission of CUNY to not only train our faculty, but also to educate the 'children of the whole people' of New York.

Forward thinking academic institutions will soon realize that they have a vested interest in the use of digital media by faculty and staff. For administrative use of social media, colleges and universities must

recognize that the expert use of digital media is a set of skills that takes time to acquire and should be fairly compensated. The people who lead colleges and universities should recognize that each time a scholar invests time in engaging beyond the academy while flying the flag of their institution, they are contributing to the collective good of the institution, to the community it serves, and to the larger public good.

More broadly, having scholars more engaged in the public sphere is crucial for a vibrant democracy. Colleges and universities can be vibrant contributors to a collective intellectual life and to material progress on our most pressing social, civic, economic, and moral problems, but to do this, scholars across disciplines and institutions must become more engaged (Boyer, 1996, p. 18). Digital media technologies provide a tremendous opportunity for the scholarship of engagement. Innovative colleges and universities will find ways to either offer training in digital media technologies directly, as we did, or support it indirectly through reimbursement for continuing education costs.

The need for training will not be solved by generational turnover in the faculty. The pressing issues of today will not wait for a new generation. Given the shrinking pool of tenured or tenurable faculty in permanent positions, and the growing number of adjunct faculty in temporary positions, a generational turnover may happen, but it will be a long time coming. Precariously employed faculty are also engaged scholar-activists, and forward-thinking institutions will find ways to address their concerns or risk damage to their brand, and more seriously to their service to the community. Finally, this problem will not solve itself without intervention. Even faculty who have grown up with the Internet often do not know how to use it in scholarly work. The need for training in digital media technologies in colleges and universities persists even as younger scholars join the academy.

Scholarly societies and associations, too, have a vested interest in their members becoming engaged scholars. When Annette Lareau became president of the American Sociological Association (ASA) in 2014, she wanted to use her time as the leader of this important scholarly society to get sociologists more engaged beyond the academy, as Lisa Wade has done through her blog, *Sociological Images*. In her year as president, Lareau developed multiple strategies for achieving her goal, including the formation of a Task Force for Engaged Sociologists. As part of the task force, Lareau invited our MediaCamp to the annual meeting of the association to help train scholars in digital media technologies and in crafting their research for sharing with a wide public audience. There, we held a day-long pre-conference series of workshops that closely followed the models we had implemented

at our own institution. What Lareau recognized is that the ASA as a whole would benefit if more scholars talked about their work to wider publics. Forward-thinking scholarly societies and associations may follow Lareau's lead and begin to view training in digital media technologies as a benefit they could provide for members in exchange for association dues and conference fees.

Engagement with a wider public is not rewarded in the academy, for the most part. It is not, as Syreeta McFadden put it in her critique of Kristof's remarks, 'how the machine of the academy works' (McFadden, 2014). That machine relies on publication in peer-reviewed journals and scholarly monographs as the primary metrics for assessing academic performance. It is to metrics that we turn next. These, too, are changing in the digital era.

Notes

- ¹ See www.gc.cuny.edu/Page-Elements/Academics-Research-Centers-Initiatives/Certificate-Programs/Interactive-Technology-and-Pedagogy
- ² See <http://newmedialab.cuny.edu/>
- ³ See <http://cunydh.commons.gc.cuny.edu/>
- ⁴ See <http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios/itfprogram/>
- ⁵ See <https://thethinkingwriter.wordpress.com/how-to-pitch-submit/>
- ⁶ See www.theopedproject.org
- ⁷ See www.theconversation.com
- ⁸ See www.ithaka.org/conference