

Oops, we broke the article machine

#ONA13, #articlemachine, @AmPress

INSTRUCTIONS

Momentarily you will work in assigned groups. Each group has a hypothetical story scenario. We want you to brainstorm as freely as possible new ways to cover the story, or present your reporting, that opens up coverage—that sees alternative storytelling not as a bell or whistle, but each form having its own different strengths. Appoint a note-taker for each group. One of us will help facilitate and/or keep you on track for time. You'll present your best ideas briefly at the end of the session.

Remember, for this session, you may not use the traditional news story as a solution to storytelling. The article machine is broken.

SCENARIO 1: Emergency

You work on local breaking news at a metropolitan newspaper. A report comes in that shots have been fired in multiple places in the city. There are various reports from citizens on Twitter about shootings at a house that is now on fire, about a carjacking and shooting on the street, and shootings at government building with a veterans hospital next door. As it happens, the vice president is visiting the city that day, and was going to be visiting the government center, and there is speculation on cable television and on social media that this could be a terrorist attack aimed to disrupt the motorcade or even an assassination attempt. After a half hour, there are reports that that a gunman has been killed, but there are conflicting reports on social media about whether there might be another gunman. There now appears to be little evidence that the attack or attacks are related to the vice president's visit. That is one of the few things the police spokesperson will confirm. Indeed, the police and EMS spokespersons are offering far less information than is available in social media, but there are also conflicting accounts on social media. After 45 minutes, there are also are eyewitnesses to the shooting of the one gunman on cable television and on the website and TV broadcast of a local television station.

Curious where to start? Look at the back of this sheet for some questions to think about.

Questions to think about

Consider the challenges of your audience in this scenario:

What's true and what's new: The audience is hearing lots of speculation and misinformation. The news is changing from minute-to-minute and people who dip in and out may not understand what has unfolded over time. Many people are posting social media updates about what they're seeing at different scenes. How can a user piece them together?

Imagine how different groups are affected: Victims, suspects, authorities -- who are the players here? What can each of them bring to the storytelling? What does each need from the storytelling?

Imagine what you create as events are unfolding. Then consider how what you create changes later after the event has concluded.

Some of your storytelling decisions:

How will you prioritize information?

How will you sort what you know, what you don't and what's "out there"?

How will you update and display new information?

How will you / will you correct false information that is not your own?

How do you align what you do with expected consumption habits?

How do you handle corrections during the immediate breaking news event? How do you handle corrections that come about after the immediate event, ones that conflict with what was previously shared?

Story levels: Good stories are more than just facts -- How do you serve all three levels?

How will you deliver the facts about what's happening in this story as it develops?

How will you deliver analysis and sensemaking?

How will you capture the emotional impact and human reaction and tell that story?