ABSTRACT

CAROLYN CRIST
Teaching Journalists to Cover Poverty: The Where, Why and How
Under the Direction of JOHN GREENMAN

"Sense of place" is the way a person relates to his or her environment. This paper aims to help journalists learn to convey information using local identities to explain poverty in persistently poor locations. Sense of place, historical characteristics, narratives and tradition should be used to cover poverty in a way that will draw in readers. Community members should be able to form accurate ideas about their locale and know how poverty affects it through crime, health, business and education. National statistics, surveys and legislation can be used at a local level to explain poverty trends, and this paper provides specific ideas to incorporate poverty coverage in beats across the newsroom. However, journalists can include several beats in the coverage and shouldn't hesitate to follow other journalists' examples of coverage. The 14 newspapers observed in this study are divided between how they acknowledge and cover poverty, and each must find its own way to correctly cover the issue in its market. The 21 tip sheets were created for the poverty Web site to direct journalists how to generate exemplary stories about poverty in relation to financial services, family, race, education, health, housing and politics. The final section discusses how to market the Web site and make it the most effective and accessible to journalists in the field.

INDEX WORDS: Journalism, Poverty, Thesis, Honors Program, Capstone, The University of Georgia, Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities, Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication, Sense of place, Beat Coverage, Covering Poverty

TEACHING JOURNALISTS TO COVER POVERTY:

THE WHERE, WHY AND HOW

by

CAROLYN CRIST

A Thesis Submitted to the Honors Council of the University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to everyone who has helped me to grasp my fullest during my time at the University of Georgia, within the Grady College of Journalism, Honors Program and The Red & Black. I hope it proves motivational to journalism students who follow me, just as the few previous theses in undergraduate journalism did for me – we can actually do research! This thesis especially goes to the working journalists for whom this project originated. It's our job as professional journalists to know the community around us, so let's cover our beats to the best of our abilities.

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CHAPTER 1
THE INITIAL RESEARCH

Sense of place is how a person relates to his or her environment. Using this, journalists should be able to write stories about poverties in their communities with relevance and proficiency. Once popular in the larger newsroom of the 1990s, the poverty beat usually contained broad coverage – a nebulous idea of writing about the ambitious, the "what the readers need to know" about their communities. With a struggling economy and decreasing newsroom size, the beat has disappeared. However, as the economy affects the entire nation and small towns the most, the importance of covering poverty in even the smallest newsrooms is increasing and journalists need to be able to report how poverty affects all aspects of life in any location. Instead of covering poverty as a "vertical" beat, one that is a large undertaking and seen as a separate duty from covering the common beats of crime, education and politics, this project endeavors to teach journalists how to cover poverty as a "horizontal" beat in conjunction with their own – dedicated specifically to education, financial services, families, health, housing, politics and race. By surveying 14 newspapers in Georgia in areas of persistent poverty and interviewing reporters for 21 examples of excellent reporting on poverty, the project compiles resources for journalists to easily tackle these stories through an informational and educational Web site – Covering Poverty, or www.grady.uga.edu/poverty.

Sense of Place and Journalism

Sense of place is "one of many characteristics displayed by people congruent with local identity … Sense of place is defining oneself in terms of a given piece of land" (Xu). The term's

meaning is common across different fields of study – loci, place attachment or a place's identity. Yan Xu develops an overarching concept of sense of place for the many different uses in academic fields and studies. He suggests perceptions and bonds are formed by four components: "toponymic, related to naming places; narrative, involving personal or group stories or legends; experiential, associated particularly with dependence and survival; and numinous, or spiritual." This suggests that journalists must use stories about experiences and legends that occurred in specific places to create the sacred sense of belonging. Other studies and our survey data suggest the same.

Jennifer Cross, professor in the Department of Sociology at Colorado State University, published a paper on sense of place in November 2001 in which she classified "sense of place" across the disciplines – anthroplogy, environmental psychology, geography, landscape architecture, history and sociology – to mean various ways people engage with their surroundings. She surveyed 90 people in Nevada about their identity and sense of belonging and classified the type of bond in six ways: biographical, being born in and living in a place; spiritual, something felt rather than created; ideological, living according to moral guidelines for human responsibility to place; narrative, learning about a place through stories; commodified, choosing a place based on desirability; and dependent, constrained by lack of choice through economic opportunity or dependency on another person. Through the knowledge of Cross' six types, journalists can better understand how to incorporate historical, familial and material aspects of sense of place into articles about poverty.

Extending the definition and application across another discipline, Oklahoma high school teacher Pauline Hodges explained in July 2004 how she uses sense of place to teach at-risk rural

students. She creates interest in the literature by engaging them in their community through investigating and reporting. The students read books that portray a similar lifestyle to their own and then interview and tell the stories of community members. Likewise, journalists must return to the basics of talking to the readers and consumers on the streets.

Psychologists like Nancy Freehafer say the loss of community in America may be becoming more prevalent. Newspapers must play off this decrease of feeling and establish interest once more. Nancy Freehafer evaluated how sense of place has declined in neighborhoods as more houses are burglarized and fewer children merely play in the streets. She looked at social groups and said all – even increasingly popular Internet groups – have a core sense of community through three factors: "common values, discussion and decision-making about tasks and a common history." David Salvesen of the Urban Land Institute concurs. "In essence, people create places ... In one way or another, people put their stamp on a place. Try to imagine Lancaster, Pennsylvania, without the Amish." To correctly evaluate and explain poverty in small communities, reporters must first understand the community and be able to explain social and economic issues through the common values and a common history.

Informing citizens about poverty is part of maintaining the sense of place. Journalism can establish this sense of place as it informs about poverty. As Jay Rosen, a New York University journalism teacher and author of "What Are Journalists For?," is quoted in a 1992 Columbia Journalism Review article, "So these are problems that we need to see as relating: the loss of readers, the loss of voters; the loss of a sense of place, the declining sense of civic membership; the rising disgust with politics, the decay of public discourse." In some of these small communities, the newspaper may continue the public dialogue, especially about poverty.

Maintaining this sense of place and responsibility could help newspaper profitability also, as long as newspapers are considered a part of this sense of place. Knight-Ridder chairman James Batten said in the same article, "People who say they feel a real sense of connection to the places they live are almost twice as likely to be regular readers of our newspapers as those who say they lack such ties." If newspapers establish the sense of place, they can profit from it as well (Hoyt).

Peggy Prenshaw and Jesse McKee of the University of Mississippi wrote about how to save the sense of place in Mississippi in the 1970s – by covering history and using what the people have in common. They suggested knowing the lives of the locals, just as an artist in Seattle did. "Victor Steinbrueck's naïve sketches of Seattle's Pike Street Market are brutally honest, including telephone poles, winos, prostitutes and 'adult' moviehouses, yet Steinbrueck's Market Sketchbook helped make the people of Seattle aware that the Pike Street Market, for all of its blemishes, was an irreplaceable treasure. The result was the saving of the smelly, dogeared, wonderful market, and the understanding that Seattle was not going to have its genus loci monkeyed with! … Peculiar celebrations, peculiar institutions and particular gathering spots, fall into the same category, of course." And this is what local newspapers are best at covering. Journalists can't forget what newspapers are supposed to do – log the news and give those in the community an awareness of what's happening. Sometimes covering news becomes routine, so journalists can't forget that this needs to be interesting and relevant to the audience by including local people and making them realistic and personable. McKee wrote, "Written and painted representations of farm tenant hovels and other living symbols of poverty may be attractive to readers and art gallery viewers, but those living in them may have distinctly different views. And the views of those inhabitants are most often those presented by newspapers. Such living

conditions represent serious social problems that can never be solved without objective, in-depth looks at the subject."

Mississippi newspapers in this time wrote about federal programs to benefit the poor and preservation of historic areas under zoning laws, which put the political stories in perspective for the reader. The entire visual aspect of the paper should take poverty into account as well. "Taken collectively, photo stories may help create totally new feelings of a sense of place. When combined with word stories, they can through newspapers be a major factor in strengthening or weakening a sense of place" (McKee 122).

"While newspapers can improve living conditions by reporting on problems that need attention, they can also focus on those things that give the South a distinct 'sense of place.' Reporters consistently seek out those things that make the South and its people different. News concerns the reporting of those things which are out of the ordinary, unique and distinctive — things that add reality to stereotyped images. News stories and feature stories, particularly, help keep persons aware of what their neighbors are doing. They can help keep alive those activities which are indigenous to the South" (McKee 123).

Poverty and Journalism

To understand how to cover poverty, journalists should first check how poverty manifests itself as a sense of place in the community. Are people accepted and helped or shunned? Who is affected and how does poverty play a role in political, social and economic aspects of the community?

Poverty is news and has become an increasingly newsworthy item as studies from the Brookings Institution indicate more Americans now live in poverty in suburbs than in cities.

However, Brookings Institution also said poverty in these areas is not being covered well by the press. Edward Colby commented on the study in a December 2006 issue of Columbia Journalism Review, explaining the media could "do more with comparisons of the types of neighborhoods, housing and family structure that are characteristic of urban and suburban poverty." Colby quoted Paul Jargowsky, an associate professor of political economy at UT-Dallas who has written extensively on the concentration of poverty, who said "families might be able to avoid crime and drugs more easily and have their kids attend better schools, but support services for the poor are still mostly centralized. They might feel more isolated and maybe they're not accepted by the members of their community." Part of covering a community through sense of place is knowing the different demographics in the community. As evidenced by the study, poverty may be prevalent in places journalists wouldn't consider. To begin covering poverty, the newsroom should split and observe each sector of the community and how residents relate to other sectors.

The Columbia Journalism Review also covered in January 2001 the overarching coverage of poverty in the news. Trudy Lieberman talked to Cathy Trost of the Casey Journalism Center for Children and Families, who said "no one paper covers poverty in a seamless, energetic way" because it's not something "that newsrooms demand." Lieberman details three exemplary jobs within that year. *The Orange County Register* did a piece on "motel children" about orphaned kids who have to survive in run-down rentals on their own. After the series, Lieberman wrote, "more than 1,000 people responded with letters and phone calls. Says Saari, 'It threatened nobody. It gave them sadness and surprise, rather than fear.' Community residents donated some $200,000, 8,000 toys, and fifty tons of food. The Orange County Board of Supervisors ordered

an audit of services for children living in the motels. A private organization launched a $5 million capital campaign to build transitional housing." Lieberman gives the motel children example to explain that a narrative focus on a trend or a group of people could relate poverty and the group's sense of place in the community. Something along the same lines may exist, although perhaps not as dramatic and significant, in our 14 Georgian newspapers. There may not be orphans living on their own, but what about latchkey kids who may need an afterschool program when parents are away at a second job? Targeting the story of one struggling family is would strike a chord and be a familiar concept to families in a small town.

In the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, a series called "Poverty Among Us" focused on the "idea that the poor are not far off somewhere, but right in the midst of readers' lives," said editor Walker Lundy. Reporters wrote stories about families considered to be involved in the community. The series hits linking poverty and sense of place dead on – stories about well-known community members will help readers to identify. A feature on the effects of a bill or the economy on a "normal" family encourages the concept that this prevalent poverty isn't across town but in their own backyards.

Also included in Lieberman's article was a review of how poverty coverage has changed at *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. In 2001 the paper didn't have a poverty beat, but editors said it was on their minds. Now that it's seven year later, news organizations are continuing to search for a way to cover poverty with relevance. "If I were assigned to the poverty beat, I would be overwhelmed," AJC reporter Jane Hansen told Lieberman. "Where would I start? With health care, nursing homes, crime, the schools?" Hansen hit it right where our survey results indicate – the beat is so large and important that topics for a poverty reporter would fall in separate beats.

Instead, split the coverage of poverty among those lines and among the beats already found in newsrooms. Hansen covered a series about children, focusing on individuals and their daily struggles and targeting how government agencies were failing to do their job to help. Two years earlier the AJC covered the "growing underclass" in Gwinnett County, profiling ten families living in poverty in the midst of the developing affluent area. It examined the cost of poverty to county residents in terms of taxes and social services. Continuing to incorporate people (especially families) by using specific economic influences (taxes) and incorporating local government response can establish sense of place relevance and importance for readers.

The need for poverty coverage at some newspapers is apparent, but how do journalists cover it without making readers numb to the issue? Trista Vincent examined this in the Ryerson Review of Journalism in 1999 by observing the newsroom conversation at *The Toronto Star*, when it had two reporters assigned to cover social policy and six others who wrote about issues pertaining to poverty. Fred Kuntz, the Star's deputy managing editor said, "The best poverty stories are those containing a narrative and offering true, real-life, human drama, as well as the historical context of the issue, quantified facts about the scope of the problem and informed and dispassionate discussion about the causes and possible solutions." This all-encompassing responsibility is tough, but Kuntz thought it was possible. One of the staffers wrote a story in 1994 about three community members who benefited from public housing but also critically analyzed non-profit housing. Once again, establishing sense of place by addressing a local, addressable and historical issue through a personal narrative is key.

A Rationale for Change

In these cases, it seems as though the media investigated and covered poverty significantly through the 90s and up to 2001, so what has changed since then and why has it not changed society dramatically enough? Did coverage actually decrease, rise slightly with the concern following Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans and drop off the radar once more?

Mary Ellen Schoonmaker, an editorial board member at *The Record* in New Jersey, asked *Washington Post* columnist E.J. Dionne Jr., a political writer who covers poverty as well, to suggest ways to return poverty to the front burner at newspapers in a January 2008 Columbia Journalism Review article. She asked him if it was relevant for audiences and if it is even possible to consider covering poverty as a newsworthy item.

"I actually think there's a structural bias in the media against the poor. Newspapers are built to cover the wealthy and the famous much more than they are built to cover the working class or the poor," he said. "There is no part of the newspaper routinely devoted to the coverage of the problems of poor people, or struggling working-class — or even middle-class — people."

In the same Brookings Institution report on suburban poverty in the 2006 Columbia Journalism Review article, Edward Colby speaks with David Shipler, a former *New York Times* reporter and author of "The Working Poor: Invisible in America," about news coverage of poverty. Shipler said, "The run of the news now pretty much ignores poverty because government is not involved in making it an issue by trying to address it, and that means it doesn't get covered. And it's not on the radar scope of most editors … You don't get a lot of breaking news on the subject, so it's hard to get stories into the paper."

The same reaction is common among many professional journalists, who resist change in the way they cover the news. What purpose exactly would covering poverty serve? Why does it matter? Newspapers merely cater to the profitable and the decision-makers, right? Those in poverty don't read newspapers anyway, right? Perhaps, but research has shown that journalism can create the public dialogue that stirs change through those who do not experience poverty.

This is especially true because the upcoming election is returning social issues to the table, and because of this, Dionne said he thinks turning back to poverty coverage is particularly important. For smaller newspapers that can't send reporters to cover exactly what candidates are saying, it's important to explain what policy changes could mean for the small towns.

"Certainly John Edwards has made this a major theme of his campaign, and I think Barack Obama and Hilary Clinton are doing that to a degree — both have given serious poverty speeches. And in Congress, with the s-CHiP debate, for example, the state children's health-insurance program, you're opening up on a national level, day after day after day, a debate about how poor and lower-middle class and middle-class kids get, or do not get, health care. So I think the environment now is more conducive to real coverage of these problems and this issue than it was just two or three years ago."

Dionne explained an effective article he read about a mother who works at Burger King as one of her three part-time jobs to care for her kids, who come to work with her and play behind the counter. Using people to explain poverty and the statistics associated with those stories is probably most effective, he said.

"I think the stories of folks like that are very compelling to readers. I think stories illustrating what these numbers about the lack of health-care coverage mean, or what the

imposition of higher co-pays or insurance costs mean to actual people, are compelling stories. … these abstract issues and explain them in light of people's actual experiences," he said. "Readers who are not poor can relate especially to stories in which they could imagine themselves if their luck ran out, or if they were born into different circumstances. And because many people these days who aren't poor feel under various financial pressures, there are ways to link their situations to the situations of the poor."

Schoonmaker asked Dionne if journalists should worry about stereotypical, emotion and guilt-provoking coverage that could possibly cause readers to become numb to the problem. Dionne explained his confidence in covering poverty effectively.

"In terms of whether this turns people off, there are books that have been best-sellers that call our attention to this. One thinks of the classic, *The Other America* by Michael Harrington, which had an enormous effect in making us pay attention to the poor," he said. "There are Barbara Ehrenreich's books [such as *Nickel and Dimed]* that were very compelling to a lot of people. So I don't think this coverage turns people off, nor does it all have to be downbeat. A lot of stories about the poor are heroic stories of people who despite the odds are trying to do the right thing."

According to a study published by the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, coverage of poverty doesn't seem to cause a biased opinion of the poor. The study found there was no significant difference in the influence of photographs on college students in news stories about poverty. Jae-Hong Kim, a communications doctoral candidate at Penn State, studied the pre- and post-attitudes of Caucasian college students' attitudes toward U.S. welfare policy and perceptions of African Americans in news stories about poverty. There

was not a change in attitude in relation to race, so journalists need not worry as much about stereotypes when covering these necessary news stories.

Schoonmaker asked Dionne if it is possible for journalists to cover poverty without bias and to explain stories accurately but still with human perspective. Dionne said he thought so.

"The best journalists have a kind of empathetic ability, the ability to see the world not just from their own perspective but from somebody else's perspective. At its best, journalism is an interaction between an empathetic view and a critical view, which is: How does the world look from this perspective."

What journalists can't do is fall back on apathy with poverty coverage. The Community Service Society of New York evaluated the decreased coverage of poverty in New York in 2004 and figured coverage was dropped because newspapers were aiming at readers' wants instead of needs, favoring more trivial news. In existing poverty coverage, articles tended to contain stereotypes, which "can lead to the conclusion that there is no need for public investment in poor neighborhoods," or were misleading and incomplete. "Just as damaging has been the media's refusal to look at underlying problems of poverty," they wrote. Poverty is news, and journalists can't forget it in the local newspapers.

How to Do It

Studies have shown that poverty goes hand-in-hand with crime, education, health and other regularly-covered newspaper beats. What needs to be considered is how poverty can be incorporated into these beats rather than be seen as a beat alone.

Education

Grasping the local news nut information is vital. In March 2008 police from Topeka, Kansas were arguing for funding pre-kindergarten because they said high-quality early education programs prevented these children from becoming criminals later. Not only is this a news story, but it can help to explain why less education (and probably a lower salary) is more likely to produce criminals. "The following stories provide an opportunity to address the effects of community poverty on education:"

● Evaluation of free and reduced lunch program

● Annual Yearly Progress. Poor schools often fail to meet AYP goals because performance is down. Articles explaining the meaning behind each facet of the evaluation could shed light on dropout rates, test scores and larger community problems.

● Measure of top-notch teachers. This can be covered in various ways – evaluating how many teaching jobs are open, profiling qualified teachers and interviewing administrators to gauge teaching needs.

Crime

An article in *The Telegraph* of Calcutta, India discusses a sociological survey commented on by local police, saying poverty and crime go hand-in-hand. The Telegraph article quoted police who said poorer residents in the area are tempted to commit crimes for money when exposed to an increasingly affluent culture. The police also linked education, crime and poverty together by saying, "Because of a lack of education, these people are unaware of the consequences of their action." As the point of the story, it's said best through a quote. Journalists

covering poverty don't need to explain the complexities themselves; local officials can explain the situation with authority.

● Statistics. Journalists should scan national crime surveys and studies and apply it on a local level. The Federal Bureau of Investigation Web site offers various annual statistics on hate crimes, violent assaults and thefts in precise cities across the nation. Local police departments probably offer similar numbers as well.

● Location. It may take a bit of analysis and time, but reporters can break down crimes by specific location in the town, locating which streets attract the most crime. Most likely, these streets will be the ones with poverty characteristics.

● Quote sources. Government officials, police and even local psychologists or counselors could be used as sources to explain poverty and crime trends in the area and why this is the case. Census data could quantitatively back up the observations.

Health

CNN published a story in September 2006, quoting doctors and even a former president saying poverty and poor health are intertwined. "New research indicates that it's not just the poor who are getting poorer," wrote reporter Sabriya Rice. She explained "an analysis of poverty rates and health published in the September issue of *The American Journal of Preventive Medicine* found that people living in extreme poverty tend to have more chronic illnesses, more frequent and severe disease complications and make greater demands on the health care system." She also profiled Bill Clinton's Global Initiative – a non-partisan group of world leaders trying to match problem-solving with resources with poverty as one of the issues.

● Health insurance. A coverage of local health insurance policies offered by local companies and accepted by local doctors could be informative for those who are poor. A profile on a family without health coverage would explain the impact.

● Studies. Just as Rice used the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* study, local journalists can watch national trends and apply it to their markets. Local hospitals may be able to offer basic numbers for illnesses, treatments and types of payment methods.

● Local clinics. Profiles on free health care nearby can help those who can't go anywhere else and can inform those who can afford a doctor that some community members need help.

Business

A May 2007 cover story in *Business Week* explored the "the poverty business" in which some U.S. companies exploit the nation's working poor for profits. They begin the story by focusing on a 28-year-old female who lived on food stamps and welfare with her children in Albuquerque.

● Scammers. The two *Business Week* reporters then described how U.S. companies keep the nation's poorest at their lowest. "In recent years, a range of businesses have made financing more readily available to even the riskiest of borrowers. Greater access to credit has put cars, computers, credit cards and even homes within reach for many more of the working poor." Local newspapers can run columns on how to maintain good credit and avoid falling lower.

● Helpers. On the other hand, journalists can also profile the local businesses that help the poor. What is the Chamber of Commerce doing to help citizens? Are business owners aware of all conditions in the community? Profiles on local thrift shops or organizations such as Habitat for Humanity could encourage help from residents.

● Follow the money trail. Taxes, gas prices and other money matters affect all walks of life, but focusing on community members' struggles with food stamps can enlighten some and allow others to relate.

Government

Also in the Calcutta crime story an officer said, "The basic problems of these people need to be addressed first. With the help of NGOs, we plan to give a platform to these people and make them aware of the outcome of their action." This perfectly explains the continued action of the news story, but it also helps to target another angle for poverty stories – what the government is or is not doing to help.

● Legislation. Journalists should follow bills as they are proposed in Congress and explain them on a local level. How would this bill affect the community specifically? On a local level, what is the city council proposing with millage rates or zoning and construction changes?

● Non-profit organizations. Along with profiles on Habitat for Humanity, what are leading organizations in the community doing? Is the main church in town holding a soup kitchen? How can residents help? Other government groups – city hall, the police department – may hold events to benefit the poor as well. For small town newspapers especially, positive events are newsworthy and maintain a sense of pride in community members.

● Holidays. This may not seem relevant to poverty and government, but follow what groups are doing on days granted free from work. It might be interesting to see who is granted vacation time and what different sectors of society do with it. This is not just a focus on the lower end but on the richer side of the community as well.

Lifestyles

Similarly, newspaper journalists can take a lead from magazine writers and consider extended features about poverty and its effects. *The New Internationalist* reports on issues of world poverty and inequality, but a May 2005 issue boasts several articles that could easily be copied in a small town publication.

● Children. This can be taken in many different ways through the education beat, but a feature on what activities and trends are popular for students can reflect the community's lifestyle. Is there a prevalence of gangs? Do children expect to finish school and attend college?

● Families. A look at households in the community say a lot as well. Are many single-parent families? This subject can become touchy, but a focus on people can retain the effective narrative outlook.

● Tips. *The New Internationalist* offered "how to" articles such as "how to live simpler" to encourage people to cut down unnecessary spending. Advice columns on how to create good credit or avoid debt would work well here, too.

Combinations

Although poverty can be covered separately in beats, it doesn't have to be restricted to separate beats to tell a story. Journalists need to consider all sides of the story before forming conclusions, especially when considering a news story with statistics. After a study released in the UK showed skin cancer was more prevalent among the wealthy, newspapers across the area headlined the idea and studied how leisure time at the beach could affect the issue. However, another reporter commented in the internet newspaper, *The Huffington Post*, in June 2007 on what was forgotten. "It is possible that patients from lower socioeconomic groups do not present

for medical care," which would lead to under-reporting of skin cancers. The reporter quoted doctors who explained people in poor neighborhoods are more likely to have their cancers diagnosed late rather than early, which could lead to lower reported numbers and a higher chance of death. This is probably also directly related to health care services and work compensation, by which poorer residents can't afford to miss a day at work to take care of themselves and thus become even sicker. Writing articles, again quoting local professionals, about reporting illnesses, spotlighting a free clinic in the area or noting a brief news story about flu outbreaks could build trust and appreciation within the community for the newspaper.

Keeping everything local is also key. Journalists at small publications can't forget that to incorporate sense of place, they must be a part of that sense of place. Adam Lusekelo, a WPR correspondent, wrote in January 2003 how word-of-mouth news is most important in his area of coverage: Tanzania. Although technology is much more advanced in southern Georgia, a favored mode of passing information is still word-of-mouth gossip. With a mission to report the community's daily news, small-town journalists must get back into the communities to find the stories of compelling interest. For example, in Newnan, Ga., a reporter wrote a crime article last month about a gas station being caught for paying off customers who won when using gambling machines in the store. By only talking to the police, the reporter missed the local owners' story, making the story libelous, in a sense. This is something that shouldn't be ignored in especially small towns. Everyone has a different side of the story, and when it comes to poverty in local newspapers, journalists should focus on the people.

Specific Story Ideas

But how exactly do we do this? Local journalists should apply what other journalists have done in their markets. A good way to start is to pick a focus.

Individuals and their stories

● In Columbia University's graduate journalism school, Jett Stone writes about the "vicious cycle of poverty and health in Greenpoint" by describing the scene, weaving in problems of health care and explaining it through the eyes of an individual. He balanced the focus on individuals by speaking with government officials who defended their positions as well.

● Likewise, Leon Dash explained his method behind his Pulitzer-winning series called "Rosa Lee & Me" about a mother and the intermingled poverty, crime and drug use in one family as seen through her, her children and five of 32 grandchildren's eyes. Dash describes, "I became absorbed by Rosa Lee's story – and deeply troubled. I also realized that the series that followed – on the intergenerational nature of underclass poverty, crime and drug use in one family – would disturb and anger some readers." Although writing about successful people who overcome barriers is important, "these individuals and families are not part of the crisis in urban America. I was interested in writing about the crisis. Every one of us should be alerted to it. I wanted readers to be uncomfortable and alarmed," he said. Although Dash's process of following Rosa Lee for four years and interviewing 40 people for a series is more extensive than what small town journalists can probably devote to a story, the commitment to finding the truth is necessary to portray poverty stories in small communities. Dash said, "People often asked me, 'What is the solution?' There isn't one clear answer – the many problems in families like Rosa Lee's are too intertwined. The third-grade reading levels of Washington's criminals, however, do

offer one clue: They tell us when the criminals stopped learning. There are, after all, very few high school graduates in prison." And this is where journalists could break down poverty problems in their own towns – local education systems, local health institutions and local job opportunities.

Social and physical communities with a sense of place

● In another successful story about poverty, *Daily News* staff writer Liz Mineo won first place in the New England Press Association category "Coverage of a Racial or Ethnic Issue" for her series "The Brazil Connection" about the legal and illegal stream of immigrants between a community in Brazil and New England. It also focused on the people through the opportunity, pain and desire they expressed to support their families.

● National Public Radio proposed a program to work with radio stations to produce in-depth coverage on community issues of importance. A Flagstaff, Arizona station, KNAU, focused their sense of place project on "Poverty with a View" by exploring the challenge of living in a town with low-paying jobs and a high cost of living. The stories covered legal and undocumented immigrants from Mexico, migrants from California and Native American reservations, the scientific research recruitment challenges, housing trends as seen in Sante Fe, New Mexico, in which local families where priced out of homes, and a focus on the arts community with artists who are successful and others who are starving.

Legislation and its effects

● *Milford Daily News* staff writer Danielle Ameden won first place in the same category for smaller daily newspapers. She wrote about a controversial bylaw Milford approved to inspect overcrowded apartments. She suggested other avenues for articles could include the closing of a

homeless shelter, school failure that blocks children from rising out of poverty, health costs in a community, family structure breakdown and poverty, the lack of transportation and a lack of jobs due to lack of transportation.

Multimedia as a different kind of storytelling

Now how do journalists incorporate sense of place in the face of what Salvesen calls the "several threats to a sense of place, such as our nation's restlessness, the homogenization of the built environment and the emerging digital age?"

Several effective and emotional stories have been portrayed through audio and visual elements online. Likewise, focusing on the people suggests we want them to be involved with the dialogue. Students at Washington-Lee University created the "Poverty-Journalism Interactive" in December 2006 to encourage journalists to comment on recently-published articles and techniques for covering poverty.

Our Results

Of the 14 newspapers surveyed, none included poverty as a sense of place characteristic. Although some editors said poverty should be included as a sixth characteristic, a few actually denied being located in an area of persistent poverty. For the most part, however, editors did name significance in the beats the training program can teach journalists to target with poverty coverage – education and economic factors – by using already the editors' sense of place characteristics – traditions, history, feelings of a small community and shared political and religious demographics. The training program must build on what is already in place. This may be best considered through evaluation of the last question on the survey for each newspaper.

One group of editors said poverty is included in coverage through other beats, which is what the training program will promote. Jason Winders of the *Athens Banner-Herald* said poverty is usually mentioned as part of the "urban feel" discussion. Likewise, Dwain Walden of the *Moultrie Observer* said there was a lot of poverty in the area, and coverage usually falls under "political structure" and "local economy" responses. Within the local economy section, he would include it in industry, retail, housing and poverty levels. Additionally, Peggy King of the *Cordele Dispatch* said she probably should have mentioned poverty because it ties in with the "illiteracy" sense of place factor. King said it is a poverty-stricken area with a high rate of people dependent on the government. These editors acknowledge the community's demographic and give an appearance of trying to cover it in the news. Training should remind reporters at these newspapers to keep demographics on the front burner and incorporate coverage through common knowledge in the community of the problem in business and education stories.

Another group of editors recognized poverty in the area but said it was located more in the surrounding areas. Mark Lastinger of the *Thomasville Times Enterprise* said poverty was a considerable problem. He said although Thomas County was an oasis and surrounding counties were worse, Thomas County is an employer for the outside counties. Per capita income in Thomas County is higher than any southern Georgia county except Lowndes, he said. It seems Lastinger is denying persistent poverty in the hub sector of his market. Additonally, Jim Hendricks of the *Albany Herald* said poverty falls under the "economic challenges" category he named. Dougherty County, for its size, has three strong private schools. Next door, Lee County "siphons off" the higher income residents. He said poverty is related to indigent care, has employer perceptions and is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Also, Jim Healy of the *Statesboro Herald*

said the newspaper is in a smaller community but has less poverty because Georgia State University draws jobs. He said poverty is less prevalent in the town versus the surrounding counties, and poor people are not seen in abject poverty around Statesboro. Healy seems to be unaware of his area's characteristics. In this group, the editors need to be informed that poverty is prevalent in their target market areas and should be covered even more extensively because of the surrounding areas in poverty.

A third group acknowledged poverty in the area and the importance of the coverage. Ken Eysaman of the *Union Recorder* in Milledgeville said given a sixth sense of place characteristic, poverty would have been mentioned. He said there's a lot of rural poverty in the area, not split by race. However, he does not indicate how the paper covers the issue. Kerry Klumpie of the *Brunswick News* indicated the same but did say poverty touches education. "It's a cycle, choosing to stay in poverty if not educated," he said. "Low-paying jobs are because of low skills." Jack Williams of the *Waycross Journal Herald* said the area does have persistent poverty, with 25 percent minority and 52 percent of the workforce lacking a high school diploma. He said the newspaper has not been able to grow as rapidly because many can't read. Reporters must be cognizant of what persistent poverty really means, he said. Along the same vein, Dubose Porter of *The Courier Herald* in Dublin said poverty is "a part of life" that the paper has no choice but to cover. "There's not a lot to explain about the demographics because the reporter will face it on the job," he said. Reporters will learn how poverty affects health, education and other areas while covering city council meetings. "The education beat includes this in test scores and free lunch programs," he said. Porter further explained a loss of 7,000 textile jobs years ago was still affecting the area, and the business reporter would cover the loss and subsequent economic

issues in his beat. But does the business reporter cover an extensive story like this, including poverty in it? With this group, training would have to make sure the newspaper is making an effort to cover poverty. Instead of assuming readers know about the effects of poverty in the area, the newspapers may want to try writing specific features on poverty or using community examples in business stories.

In a final trend group, three editors tended to deny poverty in the area or the need to cover poverty in the news. Flo Rankin of the *Tifton Gazette* said poverty is a separate issue under the "unemployment" sense of place characteristic. One measure of poverty is the number of free lunches, which isn't as high of a number in Tift County, he said. Rankin said Georgia is divided into three tiers of overall economic health and Tift is in the middle. In LaGrange, Andrea Lovejoy of the *LaGrange Daily News* said the standard of living is above the state average, although the coverage area has all the issues associated with small towns in southern communities. Lovejoy should consider covering the poverty in Hogansville and other areas just outside of LaGrange. Additionally, Kay Harris of the *Valdosta Daily Times* spoke about a series the newspaper did on "hidden poverty." She said it's ignored in terms of public policy and because there is a "wealth effect" and pride in the community. "There is an inflated sense about St. Simons Island, that the whole place is like Sea Island," she said. Instead of conforming to the mindset of the community, these editors should take a hard look at research and investigate why their markets are labeled as persistently poor. Training will have to remind the reporters of these newspapers to get out into the community and observe what's happening. Maybe it could be a story idea to contrast perception and reality in the community.

Initial Conclusions

Sense of place is how people in the community relate to their surroundings. To relate to the readers, journalists must use sense of place in their stories through local history, landmarks, emotion and a focus on local people. Poverty is news and should be covered, and journalists must cover it without bias, stereotypes and exaggerated content. This again can be done by focusing on individuals and balancing government response with it. Journalists must cover poverty not as a separate beat but as a horizontal beat through the effects it has on a community's education, health, crime and business beats. Quoting local officials and statistics to help explain the affects can be useful. To get journalists started with story ideas, they should look to other exemplary articles to influence public dialogue and begin change. To expand coverage to the increasingly important and competitive Internet, small town newspapers should find specific stories of families to feature audio and video components online. This training program could create an online discussion forum for reporters and editors from the 14 newspapers to communicate ideas and successes, especially because they hail from similar markets. In specific response to the 14 newspapers, the training program should be tailored in some ways to most effectively help those who do and don't acknowledge or cover poverty.

CHAPTER 2
CREATING THE WEB SITE

After interviewing the editors, publishers and senior managers at the 14 newspapers, we concluded that lack of time, money and interest in specific topic areas are the most significant barriers to training, especially for workshops that pull journalists from newsrooms. A traditional, specialized reporting conference would not work, but interviews suggested that an online approach – with self-directed, easy-to-follow, free tips – could be offered for journalists in any newsroom and any beat. Faculty and staff at the University of Georgia's Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication developed the site, and advice was drawn from journalists and journalism educators across the nation. The site features eight sections on covering poverty in specific beats, 15 tip sheets, links to poverty-oriented Web sites and step-by-step approaches for covering a story. Site developers are soon adding 21 pieces of exemplary journalism work in these beats and instructions on how these stories can be replicated. The site has been marketed through press releases, letters and cards but needs more promotional work. The link is currently a beta site, open for criticism and development, but is quickly on its way to a finished project.

Introduction to Materials

The following 21 pages are replicas of example sheets located on the "Covering Poverty" Web site. The examples break down into sections – for our seven focused beats – with each beat containing examples of how to write "on a shoestring," with multimedia or as a best practice. The examples describe the story, why it "works" as an exemplary piece, how to replicate the work, terms to know for the story, questions to ask during interviews and sources to get started.

Poverty and education – On a shoestring
"State voucher debate renewed in Legislature"
By Jessica Jordan, education reporter for *The Times* of Gainesville, Ga. – 2009

What's the story: A state legislator introduces a bill to give private school vouchers to public schools, which many public educators oppose because it'll take funding from public schools where the money is needed.

Why it works: Jordan breaks the different aspects of the arguments down into subheads and segments, helping to explain all parts of the problem to readers who need it – especially parents.

How to do it: Localize state legislative bills by evaluating the effects on local schools. Pull in data about local SPLOST revenues and interview superintendents, teachers and parents who may or may not take advantage of the voucher.

Terms to know: Free lunch program, school vouchers, special tax revenues for education, standardized testing requirements in public vs. private schools, No Child Left Behind Act

Questions to ask:
How many students receive free and reduce lunch prices in the year?
Which schools don't meet annual yearly progress (AYP) reports? Does poverty affect this?
How would a switch to this program break down funding for public schools? Does it affect SPLOST or other taxes?
What types of students would take advantage of the private school voucher?
How would this type of legislation specifically affect schools in the community?

Sources: Educational magazines, non-profit educational advocacy groups, teachers and parents in the school system, principals and superintendents, Professional Association of Georgia Educators and Georgia Public Policy Foundation (or other similar state groups)

Advice from Jordan:

"In Gainesville City Schools, if I didn't write about poverty, I wouldn't be writing about 70 percent of the kids who get free lunches, which means they fall below poverty line."

"I tend to put explanation in my stories. Many times, I was reporting it and didn't understand it fully to begin with, and I don't think it's bad to put in the details. If I didn't understand, then a majority of my readers may not either. For examples, with the voucher debate, the school of thought is that if the student is not getting education here, why be limited to that schools? But the other side is if the government is going to spend money on these kids regardless of public or private schools, why not spend more in the public school system so that whole tide will rise? In this country, education is the way to lift yourself out of poverty."

Poverty and education - Multimedia
"Law, software fuel new 'digital' divide"
By Alex MacGillis of the *Baltimore Sun* – 2004

Awards:
2004 special recognition for investigative reporting by the Education Writers Association

What's the story: Thanks to federal grants, most schools are well-supplied with computers, but most have differing levels of software availability. Poor schools teach drill by rote methods and use older software, versus richer schools that can afford more expensive upgrades and more advanced teaching methods.

Why it works: MacGillis uses specific schools to show how software deals aren't equal across schools. He writes with a familiar tone that makes it easy to understand yet ties it to a national problem of a new achievement gap in schools.

How to do it: Research what types of federal grants go to schools in your community. More specifically with technology, compare and contrast across the school system resources – computer lab space, hardware, software and instruction time.

Terms to know: Compass Learning labs, No Child Left Behind Act, rote learning

Questions to ask:
How does the No Child Left Behind Act affect such areas as technology in the classroom?
How does technology availability affect students' scores in standardized math and reading scores?
How does funding for technology differ across schools in the community? What is the difference in software offered to these schools?
What technology opportunities and learning labs are offered to students in separate schools – including the differences between elementary, middle and high schools?

Sources: Compass Learning labs, Plato Learning labs, parents, teachers, principals and superintendents, Center for Children and Technology (may be able to find state centers), learning education software companies, test-prep companies (such as Kaplan and Princeton Review), impartial professors of education, testing analysis companies such as Northwest Regional Education Laboratory

Poverty and education – Best practice
"The Dropout Dilemma"
By Carmen Aiken, Hallee Berg, Thea Chroman, Sandhya Dirks, Sarah Gonzalez, Melissa McDonough, Jackie Kennedy and Shira Zucker of Mills College in Oakland, California – 2007

Awards:
2007 second place educational writing in radio by the Education Writers Association

What's the story: Holly Kernan, Mills College lecturer and KALW news director, coordinated the project enabling students to report, write and produce eight original radio stories. The Mills students examined dropout rates at Oakland Aviation School, Emiliano Zapata Street Academy, the Castlemont Community of Small Schools, Oakland High School, Skyline High School, Elmhurst Middle School and the Fremont Federation of Small Schools.

Why it works: Students got on the ground and documented what was happening to students close to their age. Radio listeners sent donations to help graduates who were profiled or to give money to teachers.

How to do it: Take a bigger picture look at "hot button" education topics – dropout and graduation rates, test scores, advanced courses – and evaluate how they're offered, funded and implemented across the school system. List all the stakeholders and ensure you're covering all sides and points of view. Split the stories into parts.

Terms to know: Dropout rates (National Center for Education Statistics), vocational education (Office of Vocational and Adult Education), No Child Left Behind Act

Questions to ask:
How many students graduate from high school in the community?
How do the rates differ among the schools? Does it correlate to poverty?
How does vocational education affect the area?

Sources: Local principals and superintendents, vocational program directors, local legislators, nonprofit educational organizations

Advice from Kernan:

"The best stories are about people doing things and documenting what's happening. Finding interesting sources is key. The biggest and best sources are people who are living it and have a good sense of what's happening."

Poverty and financial services – On a shoestring
"Fresh pain for the uninsured"
By Brian Grow and Robert Berner of *Business Week* – 2008

Awards:
2008 first place excellence in health care journalism for magazines under 1 million circulation by the Association of Healthcare Journalists
2008 first place magazine writing excellence by the Society of Professional Journalists
2008 finalist in magazine writing by the Investigative Reporters and Editors

What's the story: Through the eyes of April Dial, a 23-year-old truck stop waitress, and Alice Diltz, a 68-year-old dental patient, Grow and Berner examine how poverty affects health care services and payments.

Why it works: The reporters use a real example to explain the complexities of health care bills. Because Dial has diabetes and Diltz had to replace two rotting teeth – two circumstances that could affect millions in the U.S. – the story is accessible and applicable to many readers. The first paragraph explains why the story matters and what the journalists found after reporting.

How to do it: This story hinges on the right voices. Build sources in local hospitals and clinics who can help identify possible patients and residents to interview. Localize a national story by linking the personal stories to recent changes or trends in financial and medical services.

Terms to know: Minimum monthly payment (for health care or hospital bills), nonprofit hospitals, finance firms, self-pay patients, deductible, medical-benefit firm, medical-finance field

Questions to ask:
What are the specific details of the customer's situation?
Who are all the stakeholders?
What wide variety of demographics or circumstances can be used for sources?
Where is the money going?
Why do these transactions occur?
How transparent are the companies and how are changes announced?
How are the companies addressing customer complaints?
What are lawmakers doing about it?
Is there an example of this program working well? Find a customer to explain the details.

Sources:
Hospital directors, bank presidents, trade groups, financial managers at hospitals/clinics/medical firms, an unconnected professor

Poverty and financial services – Multimedia
"NOAH housing program"
By Lee Zurik of WWL-TV Channel 4 New Orleans – 2008

Awards:
2008 medal for investigative reporting, the highest honor by the Investigative Reporters and Editors
2008 Peabody Award

What's the story: A multimillion-dollar program run by the nonprofit New Orleans Affordable Homeownership (NOAH) program funneled funds to contractors connected to the one-time head of the agency.

Why it works: Zurik continues to check into the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and how it affects the residents who live there. He uses specific examples to tell the story but also documents to back up the rampant abuse of the program funding. New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin held a news conference and ordered Zurik to stop hurting hurricane recovery and stop looking into the program. Ten days after the conference, NOAH voted to suspend its operations. Five days after that, all of its employees were fired. The head of the agency had quit her job a month before the first WWL report. The U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development and the New Orleans Inspector General made their own investigations.

How to do it: Hurricane Katrina doesn't have to happen in your area to write a similar story. Simply check the Housing and Urban Development federal Web site to track funding in your community. Ask for documents and open records about the financial transactions behind the funding.

Terms to know: Housing and Urban Development (HUD) homes, nonprofit programs (USA.gov)

Questions to ask: What continues to happen in the aftermath of natural disasters?
How are finances being handled by local governmental programs?
Who is being affected?
What questions are still unanswered in my community?
Who in the government and community can explain documents, finances and numbers?

Sources: Housing & Urban Development departments – federal Web site tracks where money is spent in local communities, local officials (mayor) and legislators, open records documents about invoices and payments made to contractors, community activists

Advice from Zurik:
"You have to be in touch with HUD on the federal level. How much money is being sent to your community and where is it going? Work down from there."

Poverty and financial services – Best practice
"North Carolina Voices: Understanding Poverty"
By Connie Walker of University of North Carolina WUNC public radio – 2006

Awards:
2006 Casey Medal for Meritorious Journalism with top honors in the radio category
2006 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia Broadcast News Award

What's the story: A team of reporters looked at different aspects of poverty in their community – race, homelessness, dental care, illness and addiction.

Why it works: The series of stories put real faces and situations to a nebulous idea of "poverty." Readers can relate to explanatory pieces such as "What does it mean to be poor?", "Who is poor?" and "Putting poverty on a budget." The series shows how common stereotypes about poverty and homelessness are false, and those who are struggling could live right next door.

How to do it: Does your community understand "poverty" at its local level? Are there stereotypes that need to be broken? Take a large look at what it means to be poor, and define it by what your audience knows. Evaluate the stakeholders, split the stories into parts and consider doing many different aspects – the faces and history of poverty in your community, how it affects daily life, what the poverty budget looks like locally, how poverty has been affected by local, state and federal programs or laws.

Terms to know: President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty" and any local anti-poverty programs, public opinion polls (Gallup.com), standard of living, living wage, minimum wage, federal poverty level

Questions to ask:
What is the history of poverty in my area?
What are common stereotypes that should be explained?
How does poverty in this area compare to national standards?
How are legislators currently dealing with anti-poverty programs?
What are the links between poverty and the current state of the economy?

Sources: Local faces, professors' definitions of poverty, Center for Law and Social Policy, Heritage Foundation research fellows, local Chamber of Commerce, John Locke Foundation, local Department of Mental Health, local health clinics and homeless shelters

Poverty and families – On a shoestring
"Lower Standards"
By Jeff Kelly Lowenstein of the *Chicago Reporter*, investigating race and poverty in Chicago area – 2006

What's the story: Nursing home care is arguably the worst in Illinois, especially for poor black senior citizens. Lowenstein investigates how elderly family members are treated in nursing homes in Chicago, why they have the lowest federal ratings and why they have more medical malpractice and personal injury lawsuits than elsewhere.

Why it works: Lowenstein uses 60-year-old Luzella Roberts to open up a poignant story about how she was clearly mistreated in a nursing home when a needle was inserted into the wrong arm, despite obvious documentation. He closes with several examples of people who were affected. Readers can see their own situation in these deeply personal tales.

How to do it: Build relationships with doctors and caregivers in nursing homes and elderly care clinics. Visit these places and build sources with patients themselves. Use personal stories to explain national concerns with Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security benefits and regulation of home care operations.

Terms to know: Medicaid and Medicare, malpractice lawsuits, quality of care (Agency for Health care Research and Quality), health inspection results, Social Security Act

Questions to ask:
How many nursing homes have malpractice lawsuits?
How do those numbers compare to area homes and nationwide?
How does this break down demographic-wise in terms of rich or poor nursing homes, black or white patients and black or white practitioners?
What local residents have been affected by poor treatment?

Sources: Legislators, activists, local doctors and nurses, federal Nursing Home Compare, clinics and local nursing care centers, advocacy groups such as Citizens for Better Care, National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform, professors at a local medical school

Poverty and families – Multimedia
"Hall woman struggles to keep home off courthouse steps"
By Ashley Fielding, a staffer reporter at *The Times* in Gainesville, Ga. – 2009

What's the story: A woman sells her furniture – even her bed – to pay her bills and attempt to keep her house from falling into foreclosure.

Why it works: By looking at the downturn in the economy in a different way, Fielding pins down one woman's situation to explain the tension and day-to-day stress for unemployed residents in Gainesville, Ga. At the same time, the story is universal and relatable across the nation.

How to do it: Speak with Department of Labor, Housing and Urban Development, city hall and civic group officials to find a main voice to focus on in the community. Use local residents to evaluate the personal effects of national programs.

Terms to know: Mortgage, foreclosure, "interest only" payments, bankruptcy protection, credit counseling (National Foundation for Credit Counseling), President Barack Obama's Making Home Affordable plan

Questions to ask:
Who, specifically, is being affected by the economic downturn?
What are legislators – local and federal – doing to help this?
Who is falling through the cracks and not getting help, even if legislation is out there to help?
How can this story help other families in the community?

Sources: Local residents, local credit unions, loan companies, courthouse, Consumer Credit Counseling Service (in most major metropolitan areas), National Mortgage Learning Foundation

Poverty and families – Best practice
"26,000 families slip into poverty"
By Dan Chapman and John Perry of *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* – 2009

What's the story: The 2008 Census showed that more families dropped below the poverty line in Atlanta, Ga., up almost 20 percent from the year before.

Why it works: Chapman and Perry explain what this means specifically and how it'll affect the Atlanta area. By relating the statistics to real people, however, readers may actually understand the numbers that are being presented in light of a downtrodden economy. The lead sentence helps explain this entirely: "The recession's victims increasingly look like you and your neighbors."

How to do it: Use Census Bureau data to evaluate changes in your community as related to the poverty line, wages and social welfare programs. Specifically note which demographics are changing the most, and interview local citizens within these areas to put a voice behind the impact implied in statistics.

Terms to know: foreclosure, standard of living, living wage, minimum wage, federal poverty level

Questions to ask:
How have Census statistics changed during the past year? In what demographics? What would have affected that?
How does this compare to unemployment region wide and nationwide?
How has request for aid changed in the community?
How have foreclosure rates been affected?
What changes are non-profits seeing? Who is asking for help now who never has had to do so before?

Sources: Census statistics American Community Survey, local food banks, charity groups and churches, non-profit groups built specifically to help people suffering economically

Poverty and health – On a shoestring
"Providers close doors to poor"
By Marshall Allen of the *Las Vegas Sun* – 2008

Awards:
2008 second place reporting award by the Association of Health Care Journalists

What's the story: Budget cuts in the state's Medicaid program are forcing a major shift in where Nevada's poor can seek health care. Shifting hospitals is causing stress for those searching for cancer and specific bone and spine problems – specifically lower income families.

Why it works: Allen, who is the health care reporter for the Sun, watches his beat closely and saw this story develop. He was able to talk to all sides of the issue to present what's going on and why.

How to do it: Keep track of ongoing community issues. Build relationships with non-profit organizations and activists to determine the different facets of changing policies in community health practices and businesses.

Terms to know: Medicaid and Medicare, prevention and disease maintenance care, charity care, self-pay patients

Questions to ask:
What is changing with health care and hospitals in the community?
How will this affect the health care provided to the community, and which individuals will now be left out?
What are local legislators doing to help?
How are activists or non-profit organizations lending a helping hand?
How is the economy affecting programs such as Medicaid?

Sources: Local patients and customers, hospital officials, activists and non-profit organizations, county commissioners and other elected officials, clinics for low-income patients, the state medical association, state health divisions, state Strategic Health Care Plan, state Legislative Committee on Health, Medicaid and Medicare administrators

Advice from Allen:

"Know your community. Talk to the non-profits. Always check all sides of the story, and use each source as a starting point."

Poverty and health – Multimedia
"Chronic Care, Chronic Costs"
By Sarah Arnquist of the *Fairfield Daily Republic* – 2006

Awards:
2006 second place reporting award by the Association of Health Care Journalists

What's the story: Arnquist examines the costs of homeless people as they cycle through emergency services in June 2006.

Why it works: The three-part series looks at the different stakeholders – a hospital social worker, supportive housing and homeless people themselves – as it affects hospitals and emergency services. All audio slideshows, the packages work together effectively to show a graphic and direct impact on the health care industry.

How to do it: Follow the points of view of several stakeholders involved in the health care aspect of your community – patients, doctors, social workers – and document a "day in the life" type of story to capture the full context. Meet with these people a few times before the interview to build trust and confidence.

Terms to know: Charity care, self-pay patients

Questions to ask:
Who is missing certain aspects of health care in the community?
In a time of economic troubles, who is that hitting even more?
What groups are helping those who are homeless and need medical services but can't pay the bills?
What happens to those who receive medical treatment but can't pay for follow-up appointments, exams, lab work or x-rays?

Sources: Local charities and hospitals, residents and patients who are having problems
* The key in this series is to find the individual voices who can explain their situations.

Poverty and health – Best practice
"TennCare Cuts"
By Julie Rovner, Rebecca Davis and Joe R. Neel of NPR News – 2006

Awards:
2006 reporting award for radio by the Association of Health Care Journalists

What's the story: More than a decade ago, Tennessee launched an experiment in health care to guarantee health insurance to every poor resident. But in 2006 about 200,000 people were cut from the program and more than half a million have limits on their care.

Why it works: The team immediately explains the impact of the changing program, switches to a narrative style by focusing on one family, and then expands to cover state and national questions. Even now in 2009, it's indicative of many questions people have while considering what to do next with health care in the country.

How to do it: Pick a current community issue (such as health care) and research past and present programs implemented to help the problem. Evaluate who is and isn't being affected.

Terms to know: Prescription limits, Medicare and Medicaid, self-pay patients

Questions to ask:
What would health care provisions include in this community?
What kinds of costs are involved?
Who is affected by this?
With the TennCare drop, who now has lost insurance, and what do they do?
How do bureaucratic elements – timing, payments – affect the choices patients must make about medicine and medical services?

Sources: Patients who are affected both ways, hospitals that now have changing policies, legislators in the state who made the new decision, local doctors and pharmacists who must recommend how patients choose which drugs to pay for and which medical services to use

Poverty and housing – On a shoestring
"Discriminatory Housing Lockouts Amid Post-Katrina Rebuilding"
By Jordan Flaherty, editor of *Left Turn Magazine* and
staffer with the Louisiana Justice Institute – 2009

What's the story: Though a nonprofit organization in St. Bernard Parish – a small community just outside of New Orleans – has received top dollars and high endorsements to support rebuilding efforts, the local council passed an ordinance in 2006 to make it illegal for Parish homeowners to rent to anyone not directly related to the renter – thus discriminating against most lower income and African American renters.

Why it works: The reporter talks to locals, council members and activists who are directly involved with the effects of the ordinance. Writing for the New America Media Web site, the news feature hits the target audience.

How to do it: Question non-profit groups and activists. Check the Housing and Urban Development federal Web site. Locate major changes in the community, and evaluate through sourcing, trending and documentation whether any could be linked to discriminatory practices.

Terms to know: Fair Housing Act, discriminatory housing

Questions to ask:
What ongoing problems affect the community?
How do non-profit organizations help poverty in the area? Who gives financial support?
What is the history of racial and poverty discrimination in the area?
What are legislators doing to fight or support existing problems?
Why do these conditions continue to exist? Who is fighting them?

Sources: Local activists, politicians, council members, local Fair Housing Action Center, United Way, Salvation Army, nonprofit organizations, human rights organizations such as the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative

Advice from Flaherty:

"The issue of not being able to come back home feels really personal, and I'm aware of it on an everyday basis. Just keep in touch with the community. There's something really to be said about journalism that comes out of a community."

"Be honest with all the folks you're talking to. We all come into interviews with the story we want to write, but be open to developing it based on what you find out."

Poverty and housing – Multimedia
"Dumping Grounds"
By Casey Sanchez of the *Chicago Reporter* – a Web site that investigates race and poverty in the Chicago area – 2006

Awards:
2006 investigative reporting finalist by the Investigative Reporters and Editors

What's the story: Residents of the Harold Ickes Homes believe that the demolition of other public housing developments have brought drugs and disorder to their door steps.

Why it works: Sanchez, through detailed observation and reporting, shows a unique cause and effect relationship. She uses community members to speak for the story and balances it with reports from officials. She takes violent and horrific events and puts them into the context of community and neighborhood concern.

How to do it: Get brave and step outside of your comfort level. Evaluate the "bad" parts of town, especially public housing. What are the trends with crime, drugs and stereotypes? Build relationships with housing managers and agents, and put several voices to the story by speaking with residents with different points of view.

Terms to know: Relocation resources, drug slang – such as "hype" (Office of National Drug Control Policy), eviction process, teardowns, local gang affiliations

Questions to ask:
Where are the "bad" places of town? How did they develop?
Where is crime prevalent or increasing? What explains the trend?
What changes are happening with public housing? Where are those residents moving?

Sources: Local Housing Authority, police authorities, neighborhood watch programs, residents, city crime Web sites such as chicagocrime.org, public housing residence councils, local lawyers, Department of Housing and Urban Development statistics

* For a story like this, the most powerful source is the eye. Observation and detailed accounts of what an area looks like tells a large part of the story.

Poverty and housing – Best practice
"Maine town is riven by housing dispute"
By Abby Goodnough of the *Milbridge Journal* – 2009

What's the story: Though a non-profit organization received a federal grant to build public housing that would help Hispanics in the area, a local Maine petition created a moratorium on building the complex. The group has filed a federal lawsuit.

Why it works: The Maine town – Milbridge – had a reputation for integration, but this looks like discriminatory housing. Looking at local reactions on a federal scale of scope and consequence, this story shows the larger questions of equal protection and poverty at play.

How to do it: Follow non-profits and any federal grants in your community. How are they being implemented – if they're being implemented at all? If not, why is this the case? Many proponents and opponents should be willing to talk.

Terms to know: Fair Housing Act, equal protection clause, halfway homes (National Institute on Chemical Dependency), local zoning ordinances

Questions to ask:
Who are the stakeholders? What are the perspectives of the non-profit and the legislators?
How do various residents see the situation in their town?
How can statistics contribute to a larger scale story that connects to the national level?
How do non-profit organizations approach and spend federal grants?
Where does grant money go in the community – and is it being spent effectively?

Sources: Mano en Mano – local non-profit organizations, town manager, police chief, local activists, residents

Poverty and politics – On a shoestring
"Catholic conservatives, liberals battle over anti-poverty funding"
By Manya Brachear of the *Chicago Tribune* – 2009

What's the story: Brachear looks at the Chicago Catholic Campaign for Human Development and how it's helping the poor. Conservatives are looking to put a halt to any practices that go against beliefs about same-sex marriage and birth control.

Why it works: The reporter looks at both sides fairly, couching the poverty-related issue in a larger religious and political argument.

How to do it: Evaluating poverty in terms of politics can be tough. Profile community group efforts in your area, and compare (in your notes) what the different groups do. Why are some different, and what areas aren't covered? This may identify a political breakdown, or it could give another story idea – parts of poverty in your community that aren't being served.

Terms to know: Partisan agendas, President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty", national collections by churches

Questions to ask:
Who is helping the poor and homeless in the community? Do they have an agenda about why and how they care for the poor?
How are anti-poverty services being handled – morally and financially?
What groups have historically helped others in the community? What politics and loyalties affected the groups in the past?
How are legislators using or helping these groups?

Sources: Local nonprofits and activists, investigate those who are giving care, religious campaigns for human development in the state vs. catholic citizen groups in the state, look at links to immigration advocacy groups, workers' unions or collaboratives, local environmental justice coalitions

Poverty and politics – Multimedia
"Understanding Poverty"
By Ben DeSoto, a documentary and freelance photojournalist in Houston, Texas and former staff member of the *Houston Chronicle* – 1988

Awards:
2007 grant from the Houston Endowment for an exhibit, book and documentary

What's the story: DeSoto, through a series of photo packages, looks at the state of homelessness in Houston – as he found it in institutions and in the streets. The exhibit also looks at local efforts by groups and coalitions to help end homelessness in the town.

Why it works: DeSoto shoots compelling and disturbing photos of what life is really like as a homeless person. He follows two in particular – Ben White and Judy Pruitt – who have struggled with poverty for many years.

How to do it: Sometimes a "day in the life" profile is the most effective, especially through photographs. Single images are powerful, and viewers can study all parts and apply meaning – with our without words. Target two or three key citizens and document their lives, building a relationship and trust until you become invisible in the scene.

Questions to ask:
Where is homelessness prevalent in the community?
What causes the prevalence to be in that area or demographic?
How do these stories break away from stereotypes and put a face to the reality of poverty?
What is a visual way to capture and explain these stories?

Sources: Local charities and non-profit organizations, homeless and poor people in the community, local legislators and elected officials who may help

Poverty and politics – Best practice
"Poverty Peddlers"
By Jason Grotto and Scott Hiaasen of *The Miami Herald* – 2007

Awards:
2007 Harry Chapin Media Award

What's the story: A seven-part series reveals the Miami-Dade Empowerment Trust squandered millions of dollars on pet projects and insider deals while failing to deliver promised jobs.

Why it works: This is the ultimate package, full with detailed and well-reported text, clear photos, video, maps, documents and reactions from readers – all designed and layed out on a separate special standing page of the Web site. Readers called for change.

How to do it: Which organizations in your community fund and handle building projects, development, federal grants and the main projects of the city? Do a "follow the money" series and request any financial documents possible. Throw a large effort into finding the stakeholders, incorporating video, photo, maps, documents and Web design into a tight package.

Terms to know: Poverty money, job investment

Questions to ask:
Where exactly is the money going?
What happens after a celebratory groundbreaking? How are buildings built, and how is money spent?
How do local governments apply and qualify for federal grants? How are they monitored and held accountable?
What areas may be most likely to receive grants – and then abuse them?
How could legislators and other power-playing figures benefit from abusing poverty money?
What did the taxpayers pay?
How are poverty money projects promoted, and do legislators follow through on their word?
How are optimism and the time frame being regarded realistically?

Sources: Local legislators, court records of lawsuits, county documents, internal e-mails, bank records, canceled checks, talk to contractors and developers

Poverty and race – On a shoestring
"Recession Hits Aging Blacks, Hispanics Hardest Says a New Poll"
By Paul Kleyman for New America Media Web site – 2009

What's the story: AARP released a poll saying midlife and older Americans were feeling the impact of the recession, but Kleyman investigated how it specifically hit aging blacks and Hispanics.

Why it works: As Kleyman explained to me, any story about the poll would be fine, but it doesn't explain the exact impact of what's going on. He called several people within AARP before finding someone who could explain some of the detailed statistics and analysis behind the race factor of the poll.

How to do it: Look at poll data related to health care, financial services and the economy in your area. Specifically target the demographics, and ask questions from analyzers and the poll makers. What do these changes mean? Find members of your community who are affected.

Terms to know: Medicare and Medicaid, retirement savings, private pension reform (American Benefits Council), AARP

Questions to ask:
What do statistics and polls really mean?
What are the racial and poverty implications in a poll?
How does the economy affect a specific demographic in the community?

Sources: AARP, legislators, released surveys and documents, statistics and poll analyzers

Advice from Kleyman:

"New reporters need to learn that, especially on deadline, you need to make choices sometimes about how much research you need on a story. When you're starting out, it's important to make that extra call or two. As you get a few years behind you, it gets easier (at least for plodding writers like myself) to know when you've got as much as you need for today. On a beat story like this one, I know that I'll be returning to the subject again within a few months."

"Always build your contact list and look for a way in the side door – even with people you'd think would want to help you in every way. AARP does some good things, but it's a huge institution with a constant flow of PR people who seem to trip over each other. You'll find this in Washington or at Atlanta city hall. It just comes with the territory. So the number one tool for a reporter is always what I call creative patience: Recognize it when you're getting jittery, find polite but firm ways to nudge things along – and always keep lines opened on alternate sources."

Poverty and race – Multimedia
"Reading, Writing and Race: The Face of the Achievement Gap in Schools"
By Anna Bensted, John Davidow, Bob Oakes, Martha Bebinger, Monica Brady, Audie Cornish, Margaret Evans, George Hicks of WBUR 90.9 FM – 2005

Awards:
2005 first place radio reporting by the Education Writers Association

What's the story: The team investigates the gaps in scores on standardized testing – particularly looking at the differences between races.

Why it works: The group targets specific schools for each part of the series, bringing the problem close to home and investigating how each schools – even individual teachers – are attempting to solve the problem in different ways.

How to do it: Standardized testing has always been enveloped in controversy across the country, so take the story local. Look at the differences in test scores across the grades in your area, and evaluate the demographics related to those scores. Most likely, the schools with more funding and in the "richer" parts of town will show higher test scores and demographics with fewer minorities. Ask local educators and test experts why this gap exists and how it is being addressed in local schools.

Terms to know: Achievement gap (Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University), No Child Left Behind, types of tests (SAT, ITBS, state criterion tests – such as CRCT in Georgia), cultural competency (Office of Minority Health)

Questions to ask:
What statistics support the idea of an achievement gap?
How do teachers in the area deal with testing gaps in their classes? Do they adjust curriculum or even treat students differently?
What states are protesting these federal mandates in testing?
What is the history of testing gaps in the community? Is it along racial lines?
How do test scores vary across different schools in the county? Does this align with socioeconomic separations?
How do students – particularly African American and Hispanic students – react to these ideas and pressures?
What is the role of teacher expectations?

Sources: Teachers, students, local school administrators, Harvard University's Achievement Gap Initiative and John F. Kennedy Center, test score gap experts

Poverty and race – Best practice
"Schools and Race series"
By Del Stover, writing for the National School Board Association for the
American School Board Journal – 2007

Awards:
2007 first place writing for special interest publications by the Education Writers Association

What's the story: State legislators passed a bill in Nebraska to allow Omaha to divide the student population into three school districts – which organized them along racial lines. School administrators try to find a way to divide attendance and seek diversity.

Why it works: Civil rights groups in the area are concerned, and we're left asking if we've made any progress in terms of school integration and educational diversity. The story questions the impact of education policy and where it develops.

How to do it: Closely follow state legislation in relation to local education. Who will be affected, and what are state motives for changing policy? How does it correspond with historical handling of education in the state?

Terms to know: White flight, school integration (aftermath of Brown v. Board of Education)

Questions to ask:
What questions have yet to be answered in the community in terms of diversity and poverty?
What are the implications for diversity in new laws – whether intentional or not?
How do legislators explain the logic behind their laws concerning diversity?
Who are the various stakeholders affected by a change in racial and educational policy?
What ties this local story to a national level question of racial tension?

Sources: Civil rights groups, court documents, legislative bills, school board members, students and parents, principals, superintendents

CHAPTER 3
THE FINAL STEPS

Although the "Covering Poverty" Web site is in its beta form, the research team is quickly moving forward with content changes and looking for ways to open up access to the site for journalists across the nation. All the pieces of content to create a self-directed teaching site are completed, posted and available. However, to reach the final stages of the project, a few remaining questions need to be addressed:

- What is the most effective way to display the content?
- How can the navigation be streamlined to make the site attractive, intuitive and truly self-directed?
- What multimedia or graphic elements are necessary to accompany the content for a balanced, complete and accessible learning experience?
- How can the site be marketed effectively and efficiently to a large national audience?
- How do we aggregate and view statistics about site traffic?
- What are the end objectives for this site and what type of evaluation should be used?

Web site Changes

The last steps to actually complete the beta site involve the CSS – style coding – for the content and addition of multimedia to illustrate the superb text located on the site. The necessary changes break down into three categories and time frames: accessibility and navigation coding that can be changed now, aesthetics and CSS design to keep in mind during development, and

interactive multimedia ideas to address in the future. The suggestions are based on expert interviews, books and Web sites and should be considered, but are not necessarily set in stone.

Accessibility: Immediate changes

To use the Web site, readers first need to be able to access it easily. The best way to address this problem is by looking at Web site optimization and analytics counters to address problems. Five sites below outline the problems with the Covering Poverty coding, then four sites offer options for analytic statistics and the last section covers accessibility for visually-impaired users.

Optimizing the Web site:

1. Web Site Optimization (http://analyze.websiteoptimization.com/wso) largely evaluates the size of images, scripts and multimedia in order to speed up download time for the site. Most pages were approved as "OK," but the analyzer offers two suggestions to clean up the main HTML and CSS files. The analysis also approved the majority of sizes for images, scripts and multimedia but offered these suggestions:

- TOTAL_OBJECTS - Warning! The total number of objects on this page is 24 which by their number will dominate web page delay. Consider reducing this to a more reasonable number. Above 20 objects per page the overhead from dealing with the actual objects (description time and wait time) accounts for more than 80% of whole page latency. Combine, refine, and optimize your external objects.
- TOTAL_IMAGES - Warning! The total number of images on this page is 20 , consider reducing this to a more reasonable number. Recommend combining, replacing, and optimizing your graphics. Replace graphic rollover menus with CSS rollover menus to speed display and minimize HTTP requests. Consider using CSS sprites to help consolidate decorative images. Use CSS techniques such as colored backgrounds, borders, or spacing instead of graphic techniques to reduce HTTP requests. Replace graphic text headers with CSS text headers to further reduce HTTP requests. Finally, consider optimizing parallel downloads by using different hostnames to reduce object overhead.

2. The Site Solutions Web Site Checker from Creating Online Site Promotion (www.creatingonline.com/site_promotion/website_checker.htm) evaluates download time, file size and keywords for meta-tags, title, description and body. The checker said file size is "good" and approved download time, which is one second or lower for most computers. It suggested the following solutions for keyword problems:

- Meta-tag: "You do not have any Meta-Tag Keywords in your site. These are crucial to your site's search engine positioning."
- Title: "You are not using your keywords within your Title effectively, you are using 0 of your keywords in your Title, when you should use at least 2. You are also using your Title ineffectively. You are only using 16 characters when you can use up to 100."
- Description : "You do not have a Description Meta-Tag in your site. This is important to your sites search engine positioning."
- Body:"You are not using your keywords within the body of your page effectively, you are using 0 of your keywords in the body of your page, when you should use at least 5."

3. The Free Web Submission Web Page Analyzer (www.freewebsubmission.com/web-page-analyzer.html) checks file size, load time, meta tags and keywords. The site defined file size as "good" and load time as acceptable at one second. It noted that no meta tags were located for descriptions, keywords, search engine robots and authors. As seen in the table below, the site also defined load time for the most popular keywords and how often it would be searched.

These keywords should be emphasized on the site for search engine optimization:

Table 1: Popular keywords found on "Covering Poverty" site

Keyword	Times Found	Keyword Density
poverty	4	2.76%
site	3	2.07%
journalists	3	2.07%
take	2	1.38%
journalism	2	1.38%
developed	2	1.38%
web	2	1.38%
Georgia	2	1.38%
covering	2	1.38%
university	2	1.38%
covering poverty	2	1.38%

4. Site Report Card (www.sitereportcard.com) checks links, HTML errors, load time, meta tags, spelling, keywords and link popularity. The "Covering Poverty" Web site received an 8.83 out of 10 overall rating. In the table below, the overall analysis is produced, with improvements suggested in the HTML coding and need for meta tags.

Table 2: Checks by Site Report Card on "Covering Poverty" site

Details	Rating	Summary
Link Check	10/10	Broken links: 0
HTML Check	9/10	HTML Errors: 0, warnings: 10
Load Time Check	10/10	Load Time: 1.37 seconds
Meta Tag Check	4/10	Meta Tag Warnings: 2
Spell Check	10/10	Possible Misspellings: 1
Keyword Check	10/10	Total words: 84

The site also listed link popularity – the number of sites that link to your Web pages from various search engines. Many search engines use link popularity as a factor for determining page rank. The site allows for searches of specific terms, and "covering poverty" appeared at the top for most search engines. For most other searches – even "poverty journalism" – the site does not

appear on the first page, even when the words “Grady College” are included. Many times, the Twitter page for the Web site shows up higher on Web page search results than the actual Web page. The table below indicates link popularity for seven search engines.

Table 3: Overall link popularity for “Covering Poverty” site

	Google	HotBot	AllTheWeb	AltaVista	Lycos	MSN	AOL
Link Popularity	966	0	0	0	0	0	1,520

5. Dr. Watson Version 5 (http://watson.addy.com) analyzes HTML syntax, link validity, download speed, search engine compatibility and link popularity. The “Covering Poverty” Web site received a “good” server response, a “good” download speed of one second, no HTML syntax or style problems and no spelling problems. All links were verified. However, search engine compatibility is poor without any meta tags for site description or site keyword. Page link popularity is at its lowest – Dr. Watson could not find any pages with link to “Covering Poverty.”

Web site Analytics:

1. Gostats.com shows numbers for page views, IP hosts, unique visitors, unique sessions, page views per visitor, sessions per visitor and visitors per IP host. It then graphs all of this information for free. The paid version also includes statistics and graphs on return visitors, bounce and bounce rate.

The table below shows how this type of information is presented.

Table 4: Example of statistics presented by GoStats analytics

	Today	Estimate	Yesterday	7 Days	Week avg	30 Days	12 Months	Total
Page views	49747	68131	43742	349143	49899	1748533	14073495	23856601
IP hosts	11413	15630	9901	86806	12565	426567	1772810	3622348
Unique visitors	12830	17571	11268	97248	14069	480656	3450729	6187660
Unique sessions	22881	31336	19418	154540	21943	780964	5795056	9216729
Page views per visitor	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.6	3.6	3.6	4.1	3.9
Sessions per visitor	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.7	1.5
Visitors per IP host	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.9	1.7

2. GoingUp.com gives the same types of statistics but includes information about referring URLs and search engine traffic to the Web site. It tracks search engine optimization efforts by graphing keyword positions over time and sets custom tracking to follow sales, downloads and subscriber numbers. Other options include recent visitor locations, link monitoring, Google page rank tracking, keyword position tracking, page optimizer tool and keyword density tool.

3. OneStatFree.com is password protected and inserts a tracker code into your site's source code. The site tracks visitor numbers, pageviews, which pages of the site are the most popular, how visitors find the site and where they find it, what kind of browsers are most commonly used and at what time – during the day, week, month and quarter – the visitors are particularly active. This site is more simplistic.

4. Google Analytics is arguably one of the most popular programs that site operators use, both because of the features and the popularity of Google in general. The site uses the Gmail login and then gives a code to embed in source code. Google Analytics automatically alerts you of significant changes in data patterns, defines subsets of your traffic and generates custom

reports and variables. Through program association with AdWords and AdSense, Google shows data on keywords, search queries and which site content generates the most revenue. It also tracks e-mail campaigns, banner ads and offline ads. Other options allow for tracking of mobile Web sites, mobile applications and Web-enabled mobile devices. Most statistics are presented in motion charts, which include user-selected metrics for the x-axis, y-axis, bubble size and bubble color for multi-dimensional analysis.

Google Analytics on "Covering Poverty"

The site creators established an account with Google Analytics already to track usage, but the statistics so far are extremely low. The analytics site features a large number of statistics to track each page, and the main "dashboard" page focuses on the main statistics about visitors. "Covering Poverty" has drawn 73 visits, 43 absolute unique visitors, 858 page views, 11.75 pages per visit and a 47.95 percent bounce rate.

The visits and unique visitors are quite low, but another concerning number is the bounce rate, or the percentage of visitors to a site who "bounce" away to a different site rather than continue on to other pages on the same site. According to Google Analytics specialist Avinash Kaushik, "It is really hard to get a bounce rate under 20%, anything over 35% is cause for concern, 50% is worrying." From this statistic, one goal is to keep readers on the site so they can complete the tutorials. Overall, viewers are spending an average 7 minutes on the site, but it's impossible to determine whether these numbers come from new users or from the site creators testing the sight. The covering education section draws the most visits, and viewers have spent between 11 seconds and 2 minutes on the specific tutorial. Although it is also difficult to

determine whether these times are too low, the bounce rate is very high on these pages – many times even 50 or 100 percent. Viewers don't tend to look around beyond these specific pages.

Knowing more about where viewers come from, what browser they use and how they get to the site helps the site creators to decide how to code for certain browsers and maximize search engine optimization. For traffic sources, 38 visitors (52.05%) found the site through search engines, 31 visitors (42.47%) directly typed in the "Covering Poverty" URL and 4 visitors (5.48%) came from referring Web sites. For the search engines, 20 people found the site through Google, 11 through Yahoo, 6 from Bing and 3 from OneAthens.uga.edu as a referral site. In terms of keywords, 10 people typed in "covering poverty" and two people looked for "a website for journalists who want to improve coverage of poverty on any beat." A few others searched for covering poverty and education sites, but a few visitors searched for other terms and immediately left the site. These users searched for "lack of education and poverty income" and "low income women less likely to receive prenatal care." Of the total users, 39 visitors (53.42%) use Internet Explorer, 19 visitors (26.03%) use Firefox, 10 viewers (13.7%) use Safari, 4 viewers (5.48%) use Chrome and 1 reader (1.37%) uses Netscape. Because coding differentiates by browser, it is important to know that a large number of viewers use Internet Explorer, which tends to have the most problems reading and interpreting complex code. In terms of connection speed, 29 users (39.73%) have DSL, 24 users (32.88%) use T1, 15 viewers (20.55%) have cable Internet, 4 viewers use an unknown connection speed and one viewer uses dialup. Of the 73 visitors, 72 have the capability to support Java programs. Because the majority of users have a high connection speed and enable Java support, the site can definitely employ video and interactive multimedia to engage viewers. As a final note, no viewers used the site on mobile devices. This

option is interesting and possible to consider in future versions of the site. As Google Analytics updates continue, the site creators can further determine how Web site changes and marketing affect usage of the site in many ways.

Visually-impaired accommodation

A last aspect of improving access to the overall Web site is to make it open to absolutely everyone. The World Wide Web Consortium – an international community that develops standards to ensure the long-term growth of the Web – has defined accessibility guidelines for visually-impaired readers. The guidelines (at www.w3.org/TR/WCAG) include details about using high contrast colors, designing a site map for page reader devices used by some visually-impaired users and tags for graphics, audio, video and other time-based media (none of which are on "Covering Poverty" now but should be considered for the future). Because screen readers need to "read" text to impaired users, all graphic work should be supported by an <alt> text tag and use text to describe what is being pictured. In the CSS coding stylesheets, work flow should allow for simple fonts and colors that screen readers can load and manipulate.

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign took on many of the guidelines and created the Functional Accessibility Evaluator (www.fae.cita.uiuc.edu) for Web site creators to test their sites. When "Covering Poverty" is entered into the evaluator, most areas pass the requirements, including the major headings of text equivalents, scripting and HTML standards. The site also passed the subheadings of navigation, form control labels, data tables, access keys, frames, informative images, decorative images, image maps, onclick scripting, onmouseover and onmouseout scripting, text styling at HTML specifications by W3C. However, the site did recommend the following:

● Page needs <h1> element so screen readers know where to go first

● Proper nesting of subheading doesn't work because <h1> element is not present. Without these designations, screen readers can't follow the proper organization.

● Page needs <lang> tag indicator to tell screen readers which language to use

● Use tables only for organizing data. Instead, use CSS for visual layout.

Aesthetics: Changes to keep in mind

No matter how helpful the content is or how often the Web site pops up in the search engine, Internet users won't pay attention to content or return to the site unless it is aesthetically pleasing. The Web site should reflect its mission and draw readers to the information they need.

"The Covering Poverty Web site is a nice, clean Web site, but it doesn't say poverty," said Tom Reeves, a University of Georgia professor emeritus of learning, design and technology. "In terms of look and feel, it's nicely simple and the left side navigation is good, but you need a graphic to draw the eye."

The site needs a slight re-design. The World Wide Web Consortium establishes standards for how Web sites should be produced through HTML, CSS and XML coding. However, no group is currently considered the "expert" or "standard" for the attractive aspects. Professional designers often offer advice, and Web sites such as CSS Zen Garden (www.csszengarden.com) and CSS Elite (www.csselite.com) boast page after page of creative and attractive layouts open for borrowing.

Although no professional guidelines yet exist to define Web site aesthetics for success, the list below includes tips from popular professionals Envious Web Design & Web Hosting, Text Link Brokers, WebGuru and Hoover Web Design.

● Simple design is best. Avoid cluttered photos and texts.

● But also allow the message to come across and use a graphic to anchor the page.

● Use left hand navigation.

● Break up text to make it easier to skim. Long paragraphs should be shorter and broken up to be about 400 to 500 words. Pages with more than 1,000 words should be made into two. Include subheads and captions to make text readable.

● Assure links are easy to find. Can navigators move from one step to the next?

● Appearance of page should reflect content – serious font and colors for a serious subject.

● Use a common font (Arial, Times New Roman) for the site. Some browsers will not be able to load some fonts.

● Use a color palette with the same three colors. These are the most common:

- red, yellow and white
- blue and white
- red, grey and white
- blue, orange and white
- yellow, grey and white

● Avoid dark backgrounds. Use high contrast. Make sure links match the colors.

● Use the appropriate page size for use with all browsers. Most are between (W x H) 600 x 800 pixels.

● Create a simple logo to identify your Web site.

● Create a tag line and use with the header.

● Create an About Us page to describe the Web site and include Contact Us information.

● Check grammar and spelling. The spell/grammar check utility doesn't catch everything. Some of the most common mistakes: its, it's, there, their, they're, your, you're, no one.

When checking the "Covering Poverty" Web site, the most consistent missing components are graphics. With pages and pages of text, even journalists looking for helpful information will turn away in boredom. A few simple graphics could take the pages a long way into entertaining and retaining readers.

The second aspect concerns all use of text – the logo, navigation buttons and body content. Overall, a central graphic should anchor each page. A logo would build a brand name and easily create site unity. The following recommendations are based on the general guidelines that were listed above.

When readers enter the home page, most will ignore the stack of text in the center of the page and begin clicking the navigation to the left. The home page should be the most simple and include the bare minimum to reach desired information. A recommended change would turn the navigation tabs into attractive buttons in the center of the page, including a small description under each tab to inform readers.

Under the "Resources" section, another set of directions should guide readers through the top and left navigations to better inform them where to locate information. The top includes tabs for the tutorials, and the left includes tutorials focused on specific beats, but this should be indicated more specifically. Perhaps moving the top navigation links to underneath the box "Tutorial" titles would help. Although the subheads may look repetitive, the move eliminates

confusion. With the current navigation system, readers may miss the idea that the two navigation systems work together and believe the top bottoms only correspond to the "Introductory" section, thus missing how all the top navigation information changes with each tutorial. To avoid unnecessary open space, a graphic at the top of the page could replace the top navigation. It would anchor the page and eliminate confusion about top versus left navigation for users. By using the basics of organization by employing only one side of the screen for navigation, viewers can avoid the awkwardness of choosing. The 21 examples should fall under the subhead of each tutorial example by following a logical site map pattern, thus creating a clear navigational system and layout for users.

After the navigation becomes clear, the next issue includes the grayness of body content. Each page contains a large amount of text, and subtle manipulation will improve readership even before the addition of graphics. Paragraphs should remain short. Although line spacing is single spaced, spacing in between paragraphs should be double spaced to give white space for eyes to rest. All pages contain bulleted or numbered information, which is helpful, but more can be done. All pages can use more subheads, links and page breaks to "chunk" information and make it easier to follow. The numbers are cut off on the "Why you should cover poverty" sections, and most of these pages run too long. Give visual variety by increasing the font size, changing font type or even font color. Take "chunking" to a new level on the "How to measure the opportunity" pages by breaking up the questions into sections, formatting them into tables, changing font size, varying font color within the color scheme and using bold or italicized text. Do the same with the "Step-by-Step Approach" and "Essential Resources" sections to make the pages feel more dynamic and interactive.

Interactivity: Changes for the future

Although immediate changes are needed to achieve the primary goal of drawing an audience, additional suggestions depend on the future goals of the project. To create the objective of a workshop atmosphere, new features for interaction is necessary. This can be approached in a number of ways:

1. <u>One-sided informational additions:</u>

   An easy way to increase interest and help retention of information but still keep effort by the reader and site manager low involves adding photographs, charts and videos to the site. These should illustrate the content currently at hand and can even include instructional advice from the experts. In general, the entire site should include more links – especially from within the site. For example, the 21 examples pages all link to the exemplary stories and defined terms. All sections of "Essential Resources" should use links, and all Web site addresses should be used as hypertext links, not plain text (as seen in Essential Resources for Covering Poverty and Education).

2. <u>One-sided interaction:</u>

   Another way to increase interaction includes additional work from the content generators initially, but heavy interaction relies on user interest. This could include quick step-by-step worksheets to direct journalists through a story idea involving poverty. By combining information from the 21 examples and the "Step by Step Approach" section, the worksheets would provide a more graphic and less daunting way for journalists who have no time to save even more time.

3. Double-sided connection:

   A final approach to improving interaction involves input from both sides of the computer screen and may only be used if the content generators choose to invest more time into the workshop-style of the Web site. A section of the site could be devoted to "questions to the editor" or forum, which may also involve journalists posting questions and answers to each other. To make this section a success, questions must be answered quickly, and there must be an initial "buy in" from users to return to the site to post questions and answers. Another option is to combine this idea with the worksheet idea from the above section and create practice scenarios that are reviewed by an editor. A generated scenario could allow journalists to practice listing sources or locating stakeholders for a poverty story before publication. However, this also requires "buy in" from users and an effort on behalf of the site managers to produce a quick turn around.

Marketing: Selling the Web site

The brilliance of creating an online workshop tutorial versus a physical training program is the ability to return to the experts and resources over and over again. The content and advice is valuable, and the examples are handily compiled. Now the test of success lies in marketing the site and attracting journalists who will use the site again and again. The first draft of the "Covering Poverty" site contained references and resources pertaining to Georgia, and the first journalists contacted to visited the site live and work in Georgia. However, the second version will push a national identity, and marketing pursuits must follow. As journalists find tools helpful, they will send links along to co-workers and peers in the field. The site has been

marketed through press releases, letters and cards but needs much more. Plans are already in the works for social media optimization, but grassroots, word-of-mouth and newsletters are the next rungs on the ladder. The following sections outline ways the project team can proceed with outreach to journalists across the nation.

Permission to be Friends

The best way to market to our readers and to bring them back to our site again and again is to build a relationship with them. This technique is called "permission marketing," and the principles below come from the book "Permission Marketing: Turning Strangers into Friends, and Friends into Customers" by Seth Godin. The most popular form of marketing currently is interruption marketing, including TV commercials, direct mailings and Internet pop-up advertisements, but Godin explains why these don't work, especially online (38):

1. Human beings have a finite amount of attention.
2. Human beings have a finite amount of money.
3. The more products offered, the less money there is to go around.
4. In order to capture more attention and more money, Interruption Marketers must increase spending.
5. But this increase in marketing exposure costs big money.
6. But, as you've see, spending more and more money in order to get bigger returns leads to ever more clutter.
7. Catch-22: The more they spend, the less it works. The less it works, the more they spend.

Godin explains that permission marketing works because it is anticipated, personal and relevant. By using permission marketing, we give opportunities for conversation, feedback and participation. Godin lists five steps to "date your customer" (48).

1. Offer the prospect an incentive to volunteer.
2. Using the attention offered by the prospect, offer a curriculum over time, teaching the consumer about your product or service.
3. Reinforce the incentive to guarantee that the prospect maintains the permission.
4. Offer additional incentives to get even more permission from the consumer.

5. Over time, leverage the permission to change consumer behavior toward profits.

Godin writes that "prospects go through a five-step cycle: strangers, friends, customers, loyal customers and former customers" (63). He also writes that permission marketing works because it is "nontransferable, selfish, a process and not a moment" but also "can be canceled at any time" (131).

To engage these steps, "Covering Poverty" will add options for readers to learn more by visiting Facebook and Twitter pages, joining an e-mail newsletter and offering new story ideas on a regular basis. Story scenarios, a forum and discussions with editors could promote additional incentives to "sell" the content to the user.

The Science of Shopping

To embrace marketing concepts, however, it is also important to look at why humans "buy" in general. The following ideas come from Paco Underhill's book "Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping." In the most traditional sense, Underhill investigates the way consumers shop in stores, but many of the ideas are applicable to the Internet and Web sites as well.

1. How to Read a Sign. In this chapter, Underhill discusses how consumers overlook perfectly-created signs if they are positioned awkwardly, not in the line of sight or "in places they were never intended to go" (73). For users to navigate "Covering Poverty" well, the site needs to have the correct signs. Design must be simple enough to easily shift readers from the home page through the tutorials, explanations and examples without confusion. Reducing text on the homepage and combining the navigation panes should greatly help with the site's signage.

2. Shop Like a Man. Underhill explains the dynamics and psychology behind how men shop in a store – quick and to the point. Although women typically browse, take their time and look for deals, Underhill says, men "seem like loose cannons" and "it's hard to get them to look at anything they hadn't intended to buy" (99). Web sites should often be built with both stereotypical aspects of the sexes in mind. "Covering Poverty" includes all the content, advice and examples needed for browsing, but to capture time-starved attention of journalists – no matter the gender – the site needs quick navigation prompts and easy step-by-step check sheets for access.
3. The Sensual Shopper. Humans have the sense of touch for a reason. "Shoppers want to experience merchandise before buying it," Underhill says, and the same type of idea applies for users to "buy into" Web content (168). Readers need the interactive elements of bulleted and "chunked" text, graphics and multimedia to relate to the information. Unless viewers can employ the senses and can break up page after page of gray text, they will refuse to shop for information about how to cover poverty and return for ideas.
4. Time, Real and Perceived. On any Web site, there are good and bad elements. Some bad elements can be excused, but any that waste time must be eliminated. "Bad times are whenever the customer is made to wait," Underhill writes (189). "Understandably, they don't like it, but as reasonable being, they'll do it – up to a point." The "Covering Poverty" site follows this rule well enough – all optimization analyzers approved of the load time, and all agree that the first page loads in one second with most Internet connection speeds. Underhill adds this idea: "But it's possible to 'bend'

waiting time – to alter how shoppers perceive it. You can even turn bad times into good times." He defines this by interaction, orderliness and diversion – all options that go back to the idea of streamlining the navigation process and adding graphics to tutorials.

Popular Media and Social Media Strategies

The newest catchphrases for successful marketing campaigns currently boast "social media" and "viral looping" – both which include ways to involve the viewer in expanding the marketing process. With the word-of-mouth approach between friends, campaign slogans tend to stick when information is relevant, personal and sought after as a form of permission marketing. For a media Web site that aims to educate journalists, traditional marketing ideas of jingles, slogans and product placement will not work. However, with recognition from sites such as Entrepreneuer.com, Fastcompany.com and Rasmussen.edu for Rasmussen College, the following ideas could be relevant.

1. "Got Milk" slogan. Look for a slogan and image that has the potential for longevity. This slogan is simple and has lasted for decades, pulling in celebrities to pose with milk mustaches. Although "Covering Poverty" is far from drawing celebrity endorsement, the Web site could benefit from a short and catchy slogan – already in use, "Covering Poverty" – but that extends itself with distinctive typeface and graphics to form a logo.

2. Nike swoosh logo. It's simple and has also lasted for decades. Sometimes too many bells and whistles can make the logo less effective. It's visible from a distance and somehow still indicates power, stamina and speed as Nike has built it to represent. The blue wave on the top of the "Covering Poverty" site is confusing and doesn't represent journalism or poverty in a clear

way. Combining the "Covering Poverty" title with a generic but solid graphic device could begin to build a brand for the site, which could be recognizable and marketed to journalists nationally.

3. The Goodyear Blimp as outdoor advertising. Is there anyone who doesn't recognize the blimp when it passes over a stadium? It's OK to communicate with customers in unexpected ways. The "Covering Poverty" site should definitely be featured in places where journalists find their information – journalism educator Web sites, news blogs and more – but where do journalists go frequently when not thinking of the news? These avenues can be used to grab journalists' attention when they're not in the usual mindset of work.

4. Livestrong promotional wristbands. With its signature yellow plastic band, the product is recognizable immediately. The simple wristband is sold as a fundraiser and became a huge hit, selling more than 50 million in a few years. "Covering Poverty" would not produce clothing items or other cheap grab gifts, but an investment in pens, pencils and reporters notebooks with the site's logo, slogan and a few story ideas will certainly grab journalists' attention and remind them where to go for advice.

5. High School Musical's use of social networking to target teens and "tweens." All marketers are looking at social networking tools Facebook and Twitter to reach all audiences, but the made-for-TV movie turned into a teen craze after targeting a specific audience with specific content on its Myspace page, including a contest that allowed fans to show school spirit by uploading videos, changing profile skins and texting votes for their school. Similarly, the "Covering Poverty" Facebook and Twitter pages will soon send story ideas to journalists, but other ideas are possible. The content site itself could feature a membership login – creating a community feel and direct message marketing for the site developer – and allow members to post

and comment on each other's published stories about poverty. This would keep the conversation going among members, allow them to build on experience and help them to network with other journalists interested in the same topics – not just find information they need on a Web site.

Conversational Co-workers

To add to this community of networking users, the "Covering Poverty" Web site can reach out and initially build interest for returning visitors. To hit journalists where they work every day, the site should offer tip sheets, tutorials, step-by-step approaches and newsletters – but should never occur without permission. The first step or form of communication should promote the site itself, pulling journalists to the Web page, where they can enter their e-mail addresses, locations and even beats, thus giving permission for e-mail updates and tailored story ideas. The newsletters should go out on a regular basis and not crowd inboxes but have a distinctive e-mail address and subject title that journalists won't easily overlook as clutter. Unfortunately, the initial approach to this may involve grassroots efforts by hand typing e-mails from databases of journalists in each state.

As the conversation continues, project developers should consider hosting a link and asking for a link on the following Web sites to build partnership and content.

1. OnPoverty.org is the brainchild of journalism majors at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Va., during the past few years. The site, which provides up-to-date news, links to resources and a forum to exchange ideas, is intended for professional journalists who cover issues related to poverty, class and economic justice. The site started in a class on The Journalism of Poverty, and students hope in the future to create a broader American Poverty Journalism Center. The site exhibits several of the interactive qualities desired on the "Covering

Poverty" Web site but does not feature any of the educational or tutorial components. Both would work well in tandem and could provide a good link between two universities and prestigious journalism schools, networked journalists and two groups interested in the idea of helping journalists to cover poverty.

2. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation features a section on its site about reporting poverty (http://www.jrf.org.uk/reporting-poverty) and could be used in connection with the "Covering Poverty" site. The foundation is an endowed charity that funds a large, UK-wide research and development program, which seeks to understand the root causes of social problems, identify ways of overcoming them and show how social needs can be met in practice. Although the overall site is much wider than helping journalists, it is easily accessible through search engines and adequately covers how poverty should be reported by journalists. A partnership with this group could even take information internationally.

3. The Southern Poverty Law Center (www.splcenter.org) has no direct relation to journalism or teaching journalists how to cover poverty, but it is a strong site for law cases and could prove to be a good resource moving forward in terms of generating story ideas for journalists, aggregating poverty stories currently in the news and advising journalists of another professional arm that can help them in their endeavors to cover poverty. This is also a good group to know in case the "Covering Poverty" site encounters legal questions or journalists who have problems due to their courage and tenacity in reporting poverty.

Evaluation

To produce the most effective final product and Web site possible, evaluation is necessary and breaks down into two categories. Formative evaluation, used during the middle of

project building, can help the user decide if the project is proceeding as planned. Changes can be made – the Web site can be updated or re-designed – to help with functionality and effectiveness of the product. Summative evaluation, used at the end of project building and completion, can help the user to investigate the project as a whole and the reliability of all the components. Because a Web site is never fully complete, both methods of evaluation can be used for "Covering Poverty" to determine success.

Objectives

The original research questions formulated when the hypothesis formed and content would be presented in a tangible workshop are listed below. The same questions can apply to the Web site format, and evaluation will determine the effectiveness of our content thus far.

1. How a training program can implant a rationale to increase news coverage of poverty among journalists who work in "persistently poor" Georgia counties;

2. How a training program can provide these journalists with expertise, story ideas and sources to make their news coverage of poverty authoritative, contextualized and undistorted;

3. How a training program can be framed to overcome barriers to training and how it will be used.

To evaluate most journalist training programs, a paper survey is administered at the conclusion of the workshop. However, responses beyond page clicks, hits and Web analytics are hard to define on a Web site. The exact evaluation approach has not yet been determined, and multiple methods may be employed, but any chosen approach must take into account the difficulty with enforcing feedback on the Internet and obtaining accurate numbers.

Initial Evaluation

In July 2009, Grady College graduate student Matt Orenstein conducted an initial evaluation of the "Covering Poverty" tutorials by using pre- and post-training content analysis, interviews and questionnaires. He generally evaluated the pilot program as "coherent and accessible tutorials" but said it was "clear that there are some issues with the tone and content of the tutorials" (2). Orenstein ran the pilot test through reporters and editors and concluded that though there was "good reason to cover poverty," there was a "disconnect between reporters and educators" who created the tutorials because they do "not quite understand the pressures felt by deadline journalists" (3). The journalists liked pages linking to sources and "factoids" and even wanted pages with more suggestions of sources. Orenstein noted that "getting the modules in front of the reporters was only the first step," but the problem with evaluation is checking "if the reporters will actually use the training materials" (4). In terms of creating an effective and enjoyable teaching experience, Orenstein finally decided it "can be hard to determine if the trainees are using the materials appropriately and if they are spending enough time on the modules" (6). The project team is aware of these issues and must now consider more concrete ways of tackling these exact questions.

To consider more specific critiques, Jason Winders, executive editor of the Athens Banner-Herald, offered suggestions in an e-mail. The crux of his critique hinged on "the fact the tutorial doesn't seem to know if it wants to be a lecture or training. And I can tell you I'm not interested in lectures." Winders suggested that multiple authors, academic speak and lecture-heavy sections be edited into a similar format and presentation to make the resources friendlier to journalists in the field. His tagline for advice: "Talk with the reporters, not at them." Winders

specifically critiqued the introduction and seven tutorials and only approved four to suggest to his reporters. Sections of his notes are included below.

1. Introduction to covering poverty in Georgia

Would you encourage reporters in your newsroom to use this? Yes.

Strengths: No comments.

Weaknesses: We need to define the face of poverty … Let me see if I recognize that person. Does it match the picture in my community?

2. Covering poverty and education

Would you encourage reporters in your newsroom to use this? No.

Strengths: Strong resource guide.

Weaknesses: A number of the points seem sweeping, general and even a bit lazy … Some interesting points, but otherwise an extremely cluttered section, occasionally nothing more than a confusing mash of stats … Real people need to be played up more.

3. Covering poverty and financial services

Would you encourage reporters in your newsroom to use this? Yes.

Strengths: Strong information and presentation throughout.

Weaknesses: Although not an issue for the hardcore poverty numbers, credit cards seem to contribute to keeping folks at (or at least near) the poverty line. Discussion on this topic might help.

4. Covering poverty and families

Would you encourage reports in your newsroom to use this? No.

Strengths: No comments.

Weaknesses: Too much basic journalism lecture, not enough about the actual topic. All over the place.

5. Covering poverty and health

Would you encourage reports in your newsroom to use this? Yes.

Strengths: Perfect in presentation, approach and tone. Best of the bunch by far.

Weaknesses: Presenting 46 questions might be a tad much. How about presenting them in groups, sections?

6. Covering poverty and housing

Would you encourage reports in your newsroom to use this? Yes.

Strengths: Best use of the format. Like the way the author walks through the questions with his own answers. Makes it more training, less lecture. This section strikes the necessary balance for professionals to get something out of this training system.

Weaknesses: No comments.

7. Covering poverty and race

Would you encourage reports in your newsroom to use this? No.

Strengths: No comments.

Weaknesses: Completely brushes off and not the least bit useful. This might be the biggest facing out community (generation-to-generation transfer of poverty among out black population) … Readers will question this section more than any other. Race, always the third-rail of the poverty, needs to be discussed head on. Worst section by far. And that's a shame.

8. Covering poverty and politics

Would you encourage reports in your newsroom to use this? No.

Strengths: Solid.

Weaknesses: Least memorable section. Doesn't mean it's unimportant or uninformative, maybe just uninspired. Forgets how reporters cover politics. We are afforded lots and lots of face time with candidates running for office. Tailor some of the tutorial for face-to-face questions to pose to candidates either in interviews or during endorsement interviews. Don't just cover politics, cover the politicians as well.

Winders' comments provide the most valuable feedback on the Web site. Real journalists and real editors need to explain what they want and what they need. These comments were taken seriously from the pilot test, and many of the tutorials were changed and edited before being placed on the "Covering Poverty" site. Some of the comments still apply, however, especially with streamlining and editing the tutorials for easy navigation and comprehension. The most

effective but most timing consuming form of evaluation is to survey specific journalists and editors. The project team must consider evaluation options in the next steps of improving the Web site.

Approaches

During the final research process, multiple evaluation approaches and ideas have come to the table. In this section, five professors in the University of Georgia's College of Education explain their experiences with educational programming, evaluation, assessment and instructional design.

● Tom Reeves, professor emeritus of learning, design and technology who still uses an office in the school, teaches classes online through open source site Moodle. He sees the value in having "access anywhere, any time" for a world in which the "future of work is international and conducted through Skype." Reeves enjoys the immediacy of answering students' questions and the value and ability to include national and international input from varied class demographics. For one class, in which students learn to generate design-based research, Reeves employs the idea of "learning through authentic task" or learning by doing. He uses a survey to conduct e-learning evaluations, and the classroom setting is conducive for this type of evaluation.

● Steve Cramer, senior academic professional associate for the Department of Educational Psychology and Instructional Technology and associate director of the Georgia Center for Assessment, provides research consultation, data analysis support and assistance in interpreting statistical analysis for faculty. He advised that any evaluation project have a "clear understanding of the goals" and not mere milestones to be achieved through statistics. "Objectives aren't to serve a certain number of people by a Web site – that's a plan. Objectives

represent the outcome of how people's lives will be different because of what you did." Like assigning grades, a measurable rubric is needed to determine success. Through the "Covering Poverty" Web site, what specifically should journalists know before and after they visit the site? Because it varies widely by previous experience, time spent on the site and comprehension, this is difficult to measure. However, a quiz at the end of each tutorial may help to reinforce the main points and highlight any areas that are continuously passed or failed by the visiting journalists.

● Allan Cohen, a professor and director of Test Scoring and Reporting, focuses on educational measurement, item response theory, test development and applied statistics. Cohen emphasized the need for interaction and animation and the ability to perform the task at hand before taking it into the "real world." He described a project in the University of Georgia's Veterinary Medicine School in which students use computers to learn how mechanisms transfer in and out of blood vessels before even touching an animal. "The outcomes of the tests tell us how they're learning, and the professors can focus on whether they got it or which parts they got," he said. For the "Covering Poverty" Web site, specific scenarios could allow journalists to type and submit brief statements about how to approach a story or find sources. These exercises could appear in the tutorials or after the tutorials for those who are interested in a more workshop-immersive experience. Cohen also recommended focus groups for a more definite and concrete response group – bring in publishers, editors and advertising executives from our original 14 newspapers and ask them evaluate the site according to their needs. This method allows the evaluator to "make sure they go through the whole site" and ask questions about specific content featured on the site, Cohen said.

● Lloyd Rieber, a professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and Instructional Technology and program coordinator for Instructional Design and Development, is interested in visualization, cognitive psychology and constructivist orientations to instructional design. He described one project he works on to help K-12 students learn by interactively working with computers. “I’m trying to encourage schools to use technology more creatively,” he said. “I’m interested in game design, and we use homemade PowerPoint games to teach each other. I ask them, ‘So you just learned that concept. How would you teach it to next year’s class with a PowerPoint?’ Then they build one, which gets them thinking and designing.” With the idea that teachers must understand concepts more thoroughly in order to teach, “Covering Poverty” can use that premise to teach journalists. Allow them to experience the tutorials and then give their suggestions to upcoming learners. How can we teach journalists to teach journalists how to cover poverty? It sounds like the next research project.

● Deborah Bandalos, a professor of research evaluation measurement and statistics, deals more in numbers than evaluations, but she still had valuable advice. “The advertising should speak for itself, especially in a field in which professionals pass along resources,” she said. “I would think journalists would use it and pass it along if it’s credible, valid and useful. The key is getting it into their hands.” She said that those invested in the area would be “more likely to fill out a survey if they liked the program or if they didn’t like it” and didn’t see a problem with including a survey at the end of modules or tutorials. She did recommend building specific interest in the site, tracking repeat visitors by using newsletters and a community forum, and provoking intrigue by creating relevant and attractive advertising.

Final Conclusion

After two years of research, development and implementation, the "Covering Poverty" Web site is now ready to teach journalists how to cover poverty in their horizontal beats across the newsroom. Armed with ideas for the future, the project team can generate more versions of the site with design changes, interactive multimedia content, social networking and a full-on marketing blast. With many of these suggestions in place, the success of the Web site – in connection to other Web sites and resources – will help journalists to learn how to cover their communities better.

APPENDIX A
SENSE OF PLACE SURVEY

You are the editor of the [NEWSPAPER NAME]. You've just hired a new reporter, who is unfamiliar with the [COUNTY NAME] market. The reporter asks you for five facts about the market that, when taken together, convey a sense of place. What five facts would you share?

1. List the first fact.
2. List the second fact.
3. List the third fact.
4. List the fourth fact.
5. List the fifth fact.

(If the editor DID NOT list persistent poverty as one of the five facts, ask question 6. If the editor DID list persistent poverty as one of the five facts, ask question 7.

6. I noticed you did not list persistent poverty in [COUNTY NAME] as one of the five facts that, when taken together, convey a sense of place. Please tell me why not.

7. I noticed you listed persistent poverty in [COUNTY NAME] as one fo the five facts that, when taken together, convey a sense of place. Please tell me why.

APPENDIX B
BARRIERS TO TRAINING SURVEY

1. In the past year have you or your staff attended any professional development or training programs? (Yes or No)

2. Thinking about issues that face your coverage area, name up to three in which you would like your news staff to have more background, training and expertise.
    a. First issue:
    b. Second issue:
    c. Third issue:

3. How would you support news staff attendance at training on these subjects?
    a. Time Off
    b. Travel Expenses
    c. Registration Fees
    d. Other, please specify:

4. What support do you currently offer for mid-career training of news employees?
    a. Time Off
    b. Travel Expenses
    c. Registration Fees
    d. Other, please specify:

5. What are your most frequent sources for training for your news employees?
    a. Georgia Press Association
    b. National Membership Association
    c. Southern Newspaper Publishers Association Traveling Campus
    d. American Press Institute
    e. On-site training by your newspaper, parent group or vendor
    f. Other, please specify:

6. Approximately how much do you or your company typically pay for professional development/training per program?
    a. under $100
    b. $101-$350
    c. $351-$600
    d. $601-$750
    e. More than $750

7. What is the maximum number of consecutive days you are able to allow a news staff member to be away from the office for training?

8. How do you choose which programs to attend? Please rank the following items from 1 through 4, with 1 as most important and 4 as least important
    a. Price
    b. Location
    c. Topic
    d. Sponsoring Organization

9. With more time and money, how would you like to improve your staff's skill levels?

APPENDIX C
VALUE OF CUSTOMERS SURVEY

1. What is your current role at the newspaper?
    a. Publisher
    b. General manager
    c. Editor
    d. Advertising director
    e. Finance director
    f. Human resources director
    g. Information technology director
    h. Other, please specify:

2. For each potential reader profiled below, please rate their value to the newspaper. (Check one box in each row)

	Extremely valuable	Somewhat valuable	Neither valuable or unvaluable	Somewhat unvaluable	Extremely unvaluable
A part-time shelf stocker at a discount department store					
A frequently unemployed service worker who relies on public assistance as the main source of income					
A seasonally employed laborer in a retail garden center					
A full-time typist in an insurance agent's office					
A drywall installer who works full-time for a home builder					
An entry-level nursing assistant at an assisted living facility					
A licensed real estate agent who works for a local broker					

	Extremely valuable	Somewhat valuable	Neither valuable or unvaluable	Somewhat unvaluable	Extremely unvaluable
A respiratory therapist at a local community hospital					
An assistant branch manager at a local bank					
The owner of a local welding services company					
A lawyer in a local firm who has just been named a partner					
A civil engineer who is part owner of a local survey firm					
The executive vice president of a large, privately owned company					
A cardiovascular surgeon who is chief of surgery at a regional medical center					
A CPA-level accounting firm partner who is married to an assistant professor of English					

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