

American University School of Communication

Whitepaper on Backpack Journalism

INTRODUCTION

In the past 20 years, visual journalism has been profoundly changed by technology. The advent of the Internet, the miniaturization and lower price of camera equipment, and a plethora of digital editing and distribution platforms have transformed the ways in which visual reports are made. Journalists who had been part of an assembly line approach to video, each using specific skills to improve the product, are now empowered to work solo: reporting, shooting, editing and doing all final post-production tasks. This method of media production has spawned a number of names including Video Journalism, MoJos (Mobile Journalists) and the term used by American University, “Backpack Journalism.”



Tom Kennedy, author
Photo: Matthew Worden Photography

By launching the Backpack Journalism Project, American University brands this methodology and is now actively at work defining how best to train practitioners. To do it effectively requires a mastery of new technologies, a fusion of roles previously separated in the broadcast environment, and a new workflow that still affords the historic checks and balances that have been used to ensure accuracy, fairness and balance. The method’s effectiveness as a journalistic practice demands that it be developed in a systematic manner shaped by high standards and best practices.

Currently, the backpack method is being used by some newspaper staffs to produce visual journalism for websites, by broadcast operations to offer unique content, and by freelance journalists who recognize its value to tell stories and present evidence and testimony for media and non-media clients. They are being joined by the members of the first true “digital generation,” today’s college students, who embrace the opportunity to use backpack journalism to learn diverse and marketable skills. Students see it as a logical extension of the tools they have grown up using and an appealing career choice that rewards creativity and skill acquisition over years with a single-minded focus in either journalism or video production. Many laid-off journalists who have transitioned into backpack

journalists are also reveling in the creative identities they are able to find outside journalism from companies and institutions that see “subject-driven” visual narratives as an effective way to communicate with key audiences.

This white paper is a first attempt to define backpack journalism, to examine how it is currently practiced, to identify the key issues that encourage its growth and those that block it and to determine how to safeguard its future through quality training. It was written by Tom Kennedy,

former managing editor for multimedia at washingtonpost.com, and president of Tom Kennedy Multimedia in collaboration with Bill Gentile, a photojournalist, independent documentary filmmaker, journalist in residence at American University's School of Communication and Director of the Backpack Journalism Project. Kennedy interviewed nearly two dozen top visual journalists to arrive at the findings presented here.

In launching the Backpack Journalism Project, American University intends to contribute to this movement of digital video storytellers by building on traditional journalistic values, identify best practices, learning from industry leaders and independent pioneers, and developing key standards and guidelines. We invite you to join us in shaping this emerging profession, and mapping new ground for journalism in the 21st century.

DEFINITION

The newest digital tools are the evolutionary result of the moving pictures created by the Lumiere Brothers in 1895. Constant refinement of their idea generated the shoulder-mounted Sony Portapak in the late 1960's which enabled journalists to work independently. Jon Alpert, a pioneer of independent video storytelling whose documentaries have appeared on PBS, NBC and HBO, exemplifies the impact the lone practitioner can have on mainstream broadcast journalism. His work and that of other documentarians and photojournalists who have embraced video tools is generating an appetite for the kinds of stories that can best be captured by the independent filmmakers.



Bill Gentile, Backpack Journalist

Bill Gentile is among the small corps of former photographers who have migrated to video because of the intimate kind of visual storytelling that can be made using small hand-held video cameras. In the late 1990's Bill was working as a photographer for *Newsweek* in Latin America and the Caribbean when he met Michael Rosenblum, a former CBS News cameraman who had established his own video news-gathering operation. Gentile was struck by the power of this new method, mastered the technical transition and began creating video stories around the world for programs such as NOW on PBS, National Geographic and others.

Gentile defines his new approach to mediamaking on his blog, BillGentileBackpackJournalism.Blogspot.com, backpack journalism as “the craft of one properly trained professional using a hand-held digital camera to tell visual stories in a more immediate, more intimate fashion than is achievable using a larger team with a camera person, sound person, correspondent and producer. We do it all and, most importantly, we make the pictures which are the driving force of visual communication... In the field, a backpack journalist shoots, acquires sound, produces, reports, interviews. Once back from the field, he writes the script and narrates where necessary. Depending on the circumstances, he either edits and uploads the piece alone, or sits side-by-side with an editor.”

This working definition not only describes the significant break with the historic model for broadcast video but also hints at the breadth of skills necessary to be mastered in order to do the craft well. It also reflects why this kind of storytelling appeals to the generation of “digital

natives" now reaching colleges and universities who are accustomed to understanding the world visually. These students bring a comfort and fluency with digital technology that welcomes the backpack model.

Broadcast journalism has never risen to the level of art or documentary photography because up until the last decade it has been a technician's craft

Veteran journalist and high school broadcasting teacher Cyndy Green describes the allure: "The cloak of invisibility is a major asset. Professional gear often affects people and events...they are aware of the camera, the news crew, and may not act as they would without the news present. I've covered events with both consumer and prosumer (professional) gear and could feel the difference...no eyes on me, all eyes on the event or whatever the story was about. Freedom to cover a story as an individual rather than a more formal team." Mark Whitaker, NBC's Washington Bureau Chief agrees. "We have the opportunity to do stories in different ways and sometimes get stories or interview, or levels of candor we couldn't get in the past. It is a lot less intimidating if you show up with a small camera and a microphone and say, 'Can we talk' than if you are showing up with a crew of eight and a satellite truck."

Gentile interprets the success of his recent work in Afghanistan as indicative of the power of the backpack journalism method:

"Last year for NOW on PBS, I was embedded with the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit in Afghanistan's Helmand Province. I spent about three weeks with them and the resulting piece, "Afghanistan: The Forgotten War," was nominated for a national Emmy. I feel the nomination validates the backpack journalism model, particularly considering the other contenders for the award -- 60 Minutes, Frontline, Dateline, 360 With Anderson Cooper -- used the traditional, highly produced team model, while I proposed, shot, produced, reported, wrote and narrated the Afghanistan piece. For logistical as well as very practical reasons on the ground, I don't think that Afghanistan piece could have been generated with a traditional crew -- and certainly not for the same cost that I incurred." (Cooper was awarded the Emmy.)

For practitioners there is a significant difference between stories produced using the backpack method and those now part of many television news broadcasts. Scott Anger, director of video for latimes.com, elaborates:

"Storytelling using this approach (backpack journalism) is rooted in the documentary filmmaking tradition of using visuals to drive the story. It takes time to produce visual stories because they unfold at an uneven pace. The historical problem with conventional broadcast journalism is that it is constrained by time, both in the production - which doesn't allow journalists the time needed to shoot and produce visual stories - and in the broadcast - which is usually pre determined long before the story is reported.

"The power of this kind of storytelling lies in the idea that we are no longer working under these constraints in an online environment. Under the best conditions, we have the time to allow stories to unfold in front of our cameras, conduct the interviews we need to support those events and sit down to edit the final visual story in a journalistically sound and compelling way.

“Broadcast journalism has never risen to the level of art or documentary photography because up until the last decade it has been a technician’s craft. The operators were technicians versed in the engineering of the cameras because of their complexity. Also, traditional broadcast journalism is made by a group of people specialized in their fields such as producers, directors, camera operators, sound people, etc. Some of this had to do with the unions as well but mostly it was because of the difficulty of physically using the equipment to go from reporting in the field to broadcast. As a result, the ‘art’ part of moving picture storytelling was practiced by documentary filmmakers for cinema, which was no more open to the general public than the doors of the Big Three broadcast networks. Broadcast journalism was traditionally more about communicating the news than compelling storytelling. It suited the medium, the owners of the networks, the advertisers and the millions of people who used to tune in to the networks every evening from the late 1940s until now.”

“Years ago, I swore that I'd never work in TV because it never seemed to fit my personal sensibilities of storytelling. Old, traditional broadcast journalism has always felt contrived to me. But with the advent of small cameras and the publishing freedom we now have, video journalism - or backpack journalism - can be an extremely creative, powerful way to produce compelling stories. I think that as we move from the computer screen to the smaller cell phone screen, powerful, well-composed, well shot visual stories will be an increasingly popular way of communicating.”

GROWTH IN VIDEO CONSUMPTION

The initial success of YouTube, the mother lode of online video, has fueled hopes among newspaper executives that video can drive consumers to websites. Their optimism is well-founded. According to ComScore, which generates statistics on web use in the U.S, the amount of time spent watching videos on line climbs each month. Online video viewing “accelerated” in 2009 with “19 percent more people in the U.S. viewing video online for longer periods of time.”

Growth in Video Consumption

84.8 percent

of the total U.S. Internet audience viewed online video.

12.2 hrs.

The average online video viewer watched 12.2 hours of video monthly.

128.1 million

viewers watched nearly 12 billion videos on YouTube.com (94.3 videos per viewer).

21.1 videos

The average Hulu.com viewer watched 21.1 videos, totaling 2.1 hours of video per viewer.

4.0 minutes

The duration of the average online video was 4.0 minutes.

Other statistics:

-- In 2009 26% of online video viewing time was spent on YouTube and 22% on the next 24 most popular video viewing sites. Significantly, 52% of online viewing time was spent on sites other than the 25 most popular, which indicates a growing fragmentation in the market.

-- The month over month data shows the average online viewer consumed 187 videos in December 2009, a 95% increase from December 2008. And indicating a growing willingness to watch longer videos online, the duration of the average video viewed online grew from 3.2 to 4.1 minutes.

Another promising statistic is the amount of revenue video advertising generates. Since video ads began being used on newspaper-based websites, they have become the most lucrative forms of advertising available. ComScore notes, “Higher quality video and more seamless integration of video ads are emerging and adding value to the digital advertising market – to the benefit of both advertisers and publishers.”

But there is a disconnect. Even though media companies are eager to tap into this rich vein of viewership, they haven’t been willing (or perhaps able in this economic environment) to shift resources to make that possible. Many managers believe quantity will push consumer demand (as it did for YouTube) and have placed a production burden on individuals and small teams to create more video. Meanwhile video journalists say consumers are in search of quality, not quantity.

“It is all going to boil down to the quality of the finished product; the quality of story choice, the quality of story execution, and the quality of presentation,” says Jim Seida, a senior multimedia producer at MSNBC.com. “The bottom line is people want to watch great material. The technical quality of web-based video keeps getting better all the time and people want the good stuff. As the audience starts to see great examples of video stories on the web, tolerance for lower quality will diminish.” Whitaker echoes his sentiments. “In the first blush of YouTube’s success, many suggested that somehow on the web, YouTube showed people would accept lesser quality. I never bought that argument. As technology gets better and people get better using it, the people get used to seeing better things on the web, people won’t accept crappy-looking video. Our quality is going to drive expectations. People will want better quality.”

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology has made backpack journalism possible. Innovations such as tiny, high-definition video cameras; WIFI-enabled laptops; satellite phones that can transmit digital video files are all necessary tools.

Technology under development may be equally transformative. For example, the new Digital Single Lens Reflex cameras (DSLR) that have the capacity to do both still photographs and video are ready for creative experimentation.

Meanwhile media companies are tinkering with new content models in hopes of finding a product for which audiences will pay. While they are motivated by the need to find revenue to support journalism content creation, the innovations could significantly alter the way videos are produced and consumed. The wider use of mobile devices may push production of more tightly shot and cropped video, “to get people to the scene” than it does for video shown on sweeping wide-screen televisions, explains Peg Achterman, a former video photographer in the Seattle market and now an associate professor of communication at Northwest University. John Poole, a multimedia producer at NPR elaborates. “The more time you spend with any platform or medium, the more you can understand what works in that particular space.” He says part of the creative process is “searching for the specifics that can bring a story to life in a particular medium or on a particular display device.” Mark Whitaker, NBC Washington bureau chief says achieving quality for the big screen, which is harder, results in even better quality for small screens. “Whatever you see on that small screen has to also be projected on that big screen. The good news is that it makes us better. We’ll be more successful producing video for the small screen because we have the discipline to produce high quality for the big screen.”

If we worry solely about holding on to what we have, we are doomed

Another consequence of the last quarter-century's revolution in communication technologies has been the splintering of audience into distinct demographic groups and niche segments. The arrival of the "500 channel" cable universe in the early 1990's was swiftly followed by the explosion of "video-on-demand" (VOD) via the Internet. The web birthed YouTube in 2006, a venue on which 20 hours of video are uploaded every minute of the day. Now consumers can turn to an endless stream of niche-interest videos on any number of devices to provide the information and entertainment that they previously obtained from radio, television and newspapers. Audience consumption time has become the new scarcity.

This change in consumption habits spurs the need to repurpose content across platforms to reach as many niche audiences as possible. This intrigues former *Dallas Morning News* video journalist David Leeson. "The benefit of using video as a content-gathering medium is that one can produce an audio story that works as a radio piece or it could be turned into a written piece, worked together with still photos to produce an audio slideshow for the web or be presented as a pure video that could be turned into television, website, or a DVD offering." One can even break a documentary project into a form of installation." Leeson did this with his documentary on war photographers, "At War," which he edited into 49 video podcasts. Similarly, Gentile generated 23 hours of content for the 22-minute Afghanistan piece for NOW. "All 23 hours of that material belong to me. I can re-edit or re-package that material to create a feature-length documentary for independent distribution."

Technological changes have also transformed journalists. A profession that saw only minor change for most of the last century, journalism is now in a constant state of flux. Journalists have learned that keeping abreast of change is the key to continued employment and the industry's future. "If we worry solely about holding on to what we have, we are doomed." cautions Joe Krebs, co-anchor for News4Today in Washington D.C. He says the focus must be on "what is the new next thing we are creating (through) changes in technology and approach and how can we make it as good as it can be."

BEST USE OF BACKPACK JOURNALISM

Almost all broadcast operations and many newspaper websites are using some variation of the backpack journalism method. To do it well, takes a fundamental understanding of the kinds of stories that are best told this way.

NBC's Whitaker cites the work of Richard Engel, NBC News' chief foreign correspondent. "While covering the Iraq invasion and its immediate aftermath, Richard was keeping a personal diary with his own little video camera. When he got back to the States, he took that material and turned it into an hour-long documentary that won all the awards."

Best Uses of Backpack Journalism



CHUCK FADELY

Video Journalist, The Miami Herald

"A piece that has a story structure of beginning-middle-end; the piece that gives new insight, revelations, or resolutions; the piece that tugs at the heartstrings or fires emotions."



SCOTT ANGER

latimes.com

"Visual stories with a character-driven narrative arc, and when the journalist has the time to allow events to play out before the camera. The working method is like observational documentary filmmaking or documentary still photojournalism."



BEN DE LA CRUZ

Senior Video Producer, washingtonpost.com

"On a basic level, video must create in the audience the equivalent of the NPR 'driveway moment', something so compelling that you can't get out of your car because you just have to keep listening."



MICHAEL ROSENBLUM

Veteran video journalist credited with inventing and naming the backpack journalism method

"If you can watch a video story with the sound off and understand it, then it is a successful video story."

Photo Credit (from top): Photo by Patric Farrell.
Photo by Brent Foster. Photo courtesy of Michael Rosenblum.

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What this method cannot do is replace other types of reporting. Backpack journalism should be seen as a refinement of an existing method, not a replacement. Broadcast instructor Green has created a series of questions that can help journalists decide whether using the backpack approach makes sense:

- First, ask yourself why are you using video? Is it because everyone else is? Does it warrant the cost and manpower time? Does it contribute to storytelling and give your community/audience the information they need?
- Second, be selective in choosing your stories.
- Third, break your visual stories into categories (one-day turnaround, longer turn-around) and have a number of each.
- Fourth, have realistic expectations about what backpack journalism stories can and cannot do.
- Fifth, only have staff members who WANT to take this job on do so. Forcing the issue will create animosity and it may spill over into the final product.

Story types clearly dictate the best medium with which to tell them. And there is room for many kinds. This point was demonstrated by [SeattleTimes.com](http://seattletimes.com) producer Tiffany Campbell at the 2009 Online News Association. Campbell showed a video clip of a truck accident shot by a *Times* staff photographer with an inexpensive flip video camera. The video began as he drove directly under a truck teetering on the edge of the overpass above him. His excited voice reflected the sense of danger and the slight camera motion created by filming as he drove, yielded a “cinema verite” effect that seemed to be amateur in execution. Yet it conveyed a kind of authenticity not captured by the more conventional “standup” shot of a reporter a safe distance from the scene.

CHALLENGES

Tips for Effective Backpack Video

- 1 Select visual stories carefully
- 2 Ask whether video adds more impact
- 3 Determine whether you have the time and staff
- 4 Break visual stories into one-day vs. longer turn-around deadlines
- 5 Develop staffers who want the additional work

The amount of time it takes to create and process good video and the additional time required when a journalist works alone is a major source of conflict in many newsrooms.

“I am a big believer that they (newsroom managers) need to try the method themselves so they understand what it takes to do it well,” says independent producer Sacha. “Without doing that, they won’t understand the effort and time required and they won’t understand how many people are necessary to create a good piece and how long it takes to craft each piece. At Mediastorm, we were producing video pieces at a high level much

like a documentary film. It wasn’t uncommon to have 12 hours of work into every finished minute of video.”

Video not only takes time to create, but the limitations of broadband require video to be encoded and compressed at bit rates that balance quality and delivery speed. This post-production process is a barrier to workflow. “File-based video workflow is time-consuming,” the *Herald’s* Fadely says. “As opposed to television old-school playout, having the need to compress and render web-based video files for delivery takes much more time.”

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Disagreement over how much *more* time it takes a single journalist than a team to produce a story is another chafing point in many newsrooms. “It takes more time for one person to source a story, film it, fact-check, edit and output it than it would if members of a crew were to do the same,” Fadely adds.

For consumers of web video, the greatest challenge is finding it.

On many newspaper websites video is promoted by small, overlooked links, or fails to stand out from the adjacent, highly-produced video advertisements. This play is indicative of a deeper problem. “Many news organizations, newspapers especially, felt industry pressure to jump into video journalism without a comprehensive strategy for management, training, implementation, workflow, support, and monetization,” says Anger of latimes.com. “The general attitude seemed to be that everything would fall into place once journalists were equipped and producing. That

hasn't happened and some newspapers have started to re-think whether video journalism is a good fit within the current structure."

For consumers of web video, the greatest challenge is finding it

Even great video stories must wrestle for good space with news. News developments, even incremental ones, almost always bump documentary-style storytelling off the home page to less visible placement. De la Cruz of the [washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com), puts the challenge this way: "There is a conflict between always fresh vs. replaying the best stuff.

Cable networks make sure people are really seeing their best work by continuously replaying it. It isn't about the visual journalism as much as it is about effective promotion. Most newspaper websites have yet to master this approach. We are really still trying to figure out how to make video findable and searchable on the web so people can find it and see it." Which raises the question, de la Cruz adds, "Why are we working so hard to produce the volume of content demanded by newsroom managers, if we are only going to be showcasing 25% or less of what we produce on a daily basis." In contrast, he cites the reality of NPR or cable news programs which concentrate the majority of resources on six to ten stories each day.

THE FUTURE OF BACKPACK JOURNALISM

The backpack journalism method has great potential, says Anger of latimes.com. "It can be art. It has the visual power of photography with added value of audio information... and another level of creativity...It is the child of documentary non-fiction filmmaking, which is a powerful storytelling medium. Why can't video journalism be at that level?"

Independent producer Sacha sees the method as a key to unlocking new techniques of storytelling; enabling a way to move past the image conventions and story lines that have defined journalistic storytelling in mass media during the last part of the 20th century. "So few are striking out with new visions and finding new ways of telling stories. I'd like to see us not relying on the trite and tired tricks of the past 50 years

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But who will pay for it?

Most journalists say there are few opportunities at existing media companies. But practitioners are finding non-profits, community and government organizations and even corporations are eager clients who view video as a way to connect with niche audiences. Toronto Marketing Consultant Sandra Bekhor says online video could help a company "engage with growth markets in a manner previously monopolized by television... because online video intensifies the online experience without the cost or commercial dimension of television."¹

Former *Dallas Morning News*, photojournalist David Leeson has found steady work producing short documentaries for Southern Methodist University, AARP, NRA, Children's Medical Hospital and even a local car club in Dallas. P.F. Bentley, a former contract photojournalist

¹ Bekhor, Sandra, "Marketing Professional Services With Online Video," Toronto Marketing Blog, <http://torontomarketing.blogspot.com/2009/09/marketing-professional-service-firms.html>

covering politics for *Time* magazine, now shoots documentary videos for corporate clients. “My clients like me because they are getting twice the quality for half the price, compared to conventional use of broadcast crews to make video,” he says. “There is no real money in video journalism presently.”

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Trailblazing videographer Rosenblum tells young people to strike out on their own to form small companies where they can control the production processes and distribution channels and earn revenue from every part of the effort. “Have an idea, make it work, capitalize it, and then sell it,” he says. “There is still more money chasing good ideas than good ideas chasing money.”

In time, some journalists say, media companies will figure out a workable revenue model and provide a home for video storytelling produced through the backpack journalism method. “There is great strength in existing news brands,” Time’s Duff says. “As long as we can maintain the integrity of what we do, at some point we will figure out how we can get the revenues and make money again.”

THE ROLE OF THE BACKPACK JOURNALISM PROJECT

Most backpack journalists start as reporters or photographers and are skilled at using either words or visuals to tell a story. Backpack journalism requires that they know how to do both.

De la Cruz of washingtonpost.com came to video storytelling with a background as a writer and musician. He had a feel for video editing “because music teaches a lot about rhythm, but the thing I was missing was a good sense of visuals.” He had to learn how to “to catch emotions, gestures, use color and light - all that stuff - so that the camera is more than just a recording device.” Critical to his growth was the learning environment at washingtonpost.com. “It was very organic as we figured out what worked for video storytelling, flowing from newspaper concepts.”

De la Cruz was lucky. So are the journalists at KGTV10News in San Diego. There Joe Little provides two weeks of one-on-one training just to introduce key concepts. “The first week is solid shooting; the second week is all editing.” The rest of the skills and concepts are learned by rubbing elbows with colleagues in the newsroom.

But for most people who want to learn how to tell stories visually, no such newsroom exists.

There is still more money chasing good ideas than good ideas chasing money

The Backpack Journalism Project at American University has been established to meet the compelling need for a systematic approach to training this method. The breath of technological fluency, the mastering of storytelling techniques, and understanding standards and ethics that guide practitioners demand a structured process. In conjunction with the university, Gentile offers Backpack Journalism Workshops, four-day intensive shooting, editing and critiquing sessions. The university’s program is expanding to include advanced courses on shooting, interviewing, producing, writing, sound, narrating and editing to culminate in a Backpack Journalism Certificate.

American University recognizes the value and potential of backpack journalism and wants to nurture its growth. Guided by the school’s mission to “act on our values through social responsibility and service” AU seeks to create a community of backpack journalists who will

learn from experts and industry pioneers, help shape standards of ethics and quality and become the next generation of leaders in this emerging profession.

FURTHER QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Some of the fundamental questions that American University will have to consider as it continues to shape the Backpack Journalism Project include:

1. Can mainstream media companies persuade fragmenting audiences that some version of mass media is still valuable enough for civic engagement worth paying for?
2. What strategic roles can visual storytelling play in existing media companies?
3. What technological developments will make it easier for backpack journalism to reach wider audiences and pay for its creation?
4. One of the great stumbling blocks to viewing video on the web is finding it. Have any websites found a way to promote both breaking news and visual storytelling?
5. Will an appetite for quality video drive consumers to demand better storytelling on media websites?

APPENDIX A - INTERVIEWEES

- Peg Achterman, Assistant Professor of Communication, Northwest University
- Scott Anger, Director of Video, The Los Angeles Times
- P.F. Bentley, Independent Documentary Filmmaker and Photojournalist, Hawaii
- Ben de la Cruz, Senior Video Journalist, The Washington Post
- Craig Duff, Director of Multimedia, Time.com
- Chuck Fadely, Visual Journalist, The Miami Herald
- Travis Fox, Independent Video Journalist, New York City
- Bill Gentile, Journalist-in-Residence, American University
- Angela Grant, Multimedia Journalist for InstantNewsWestU.com, Houston, TX
- Cyndy Green, Independent Video Journalist and English and broadcasting teacher, Ronald E. McNair High School, Stockton, CA
- David Dunkley Gyimah, Artist-in-Residence, South Bank Centre and Publisher, Viewmagazine.tv
- Joe Krebs, Co-Anchor, News4Today and News4Midday, WRC-TV, Washington D.C.
- David Leeson, former *Dallas Morning News* photojournalist, now independent videographer
- Joe Little, “One-Man-Band” Reporter, KGTV10News, San Diego, CA
- Colin Mulvany, Multimedia Producer, Spokane Spokesman-Review
- John Poole, Video Producer, National Public Radio (NPR)
- Michael Rosenblum, CEO, Rosenblumtv
- Bob Sacha, Independent Multimedia Producer, New York
- Jim Seida, Senior Multimedia Producer, MSNBC.com
- Mark Whitaker, Washington Bureau Chief, NBC News