REPORTING FOR THE MEDIA

MEDIA

Sixth Edition

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☆☆☆☆☆

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Preface

Each new edition of this book has contained significant changes. This sixth edition continues that tradition. Its most obvious changes include (1) the addition of three co-authors, (2) two new chapters, (3) an expanded "Introduction for Students" and (4) a shortened title.

The co-authors add breadth, expertise and experience. Together, all four authors have a total of 33 years of full-time media experience and 49 years of full-time teaching experience. Moreover, they continue to work for the media: consulting, freelancing and spending an occasional summer in a newsroom.

This book was a massive undertaking for a single individual. Typically, about a third of each new edition was rewritten, and the work required 18 months, including time to help with the production: proofreading, obtaining illustrations and permissions and completing the Instructor's Manual.

Now each co-author can focus on his or her specific areas of expertise. For example, one of the new co-authors, John Bender, covered local government and politics as a reporter. He has rewritten this edition's chapter on Public Affairs Reporting, adding more introductory information that explains how police, local governments and courts work.

A growing number of schools require all their students, including those in broadcasting, advertising and public relations, to complete a basic or "core" writing course. To serve those students, this edition provides a new chapter on writing for public relations (chapter 15) and a new chapter on writing for the broadcast media (chapter 18). Another of the new co-authors, Lucinda Davenport, wrote these chapters. Because of their inclusion, the book's old title, "Reporting for the Print Media," no longer seemed appropriate. Thus, the word "Print" has been dropped. Similarly, references within each chapter have been broadened to include all the media.

To provide space for the new chapters, the entire book has been tightened, and some duplicate exercises eliminated. In addition, a chapter on statistical material has been combined with chapter 19 (Advanced Reporting).

The four authors have made thousands of other changes, from improving the wording of some sentences to adding new sections in many of the chapters. Some of the most significant changes include:

- For easy reference, journalism's standard copy editing symbols are printed on the inside of the front cover.

- New, up-to-date examples include references to the Unabomber, O. J. Simpson case, the bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City and Lorena and John Bobbitt, for example.

- Chapter 4 (Selecting and Reporting the News) includes a new section on Public/Civic Journalism written by the third of the new co-authors, Paul E. Kostyu.

- Chapter 19 (Advanced Reporting) includes a discussion of computer-assisted reporting (CAR) and several CAR exercises.

- Chapter 20 (Communications Law) has been totally rewritten, emphasizing libel and privacy. The chapter also discusses problems of newsgathering, the protection of confidential sources and the free press/fair trial controversy.

- A new appendix discusses common writing problems.

The book's primary emphasis has not changed, however. "Reporting for the Media" continues to provide both the instructions and exercises needed to help students become better writers.

The book also continues to reflect the belief that students learn to write by writing: that students should be given as much practice as possible and that the practice should be as realistic as possible. Thus, many of the assignments in this book are genuine: actual laws, interviews, speeches, police reports and news releases.

Other Features of Particular Interest to Faculty Members

Answer Keys

After reading the chapters and working on their exercises, some students will want more practice. They can complete the extra exercises marked "Answer Key Provided," then correct their own work. The answers to those exercises appear in Appendix D.

Appendices

"Reporting for the Media" provides five appendices: (A) a city directory, (B) a summary of The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual, (C) rules for forming possessives, (D) answer keys for some exercises and (E) a discussion of common writing problems. Appendix E is new.

Checklists and Other End-of-Chapter Materials

A variety of supplemental teaching materials appears at the end of each chapter. The materials include expanded checklists that review and reinforce each chapter's primary instructions. Other materials vary from chapter to chapter, but typically include (1) lists of readings, (2) discussion questions, (3) suggested projects, (4) newsroom bulletins and (5) ombudsmen's commentaries.

This edition reprints a half-dozen bulletins titled "Write & Wrong" and prepared for the staff of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. The bulletins discuss common errors and provide additional examples of good and bad writing. To teach students more about problems involving ethics and good taste, this book also reprints several columns written by newspapers' writing coaches and ombudsmen (the journalists hired to answer reader complaints).

Flexibility

"Reporting for the Media" is flexible. Teachers can assign its chapters in almost any order. Moreover, there are enough exercises so that faculty members can assign their favorites, then assign extra exercises for students who need more help in an area. Some teachers use the book for two semesters: for their schools' basic and advanced reporting classes. There are enough exercises for both terms.

Faculty members who prefer the book's traditional emphasis on the print media can assign the new chapters (writing for public relations and broadcasting) as optional readings. Both chapters appear toward the end of the book.

Hundreds of Examples

"Reporting for the Media" contains hundreds of examples, some written by students and some by professionals. While introducing a new topic or discussing an error, this book typically shows students two or three examples then shows students how they can avoid or correct the error.

Some examples have been written by prize-winning professionals, and students can use their stories as models. An example from The Milwaukee Journal shows students how an entire story can be written in chronological order. Similarly, many journalists consider Jim Nicholson of the Philadelphia Daily News the nation's best obituary writer, and he is quoted extensively in chapter 12 (Writing Obituaries).

Realistic and Often Genuine Exercises

This book contains a multitude of exercises, and teachers can select the ones most appropriate for their students. Many are real. Exercises in chapter 9 (Interviews and Polls) contain verbatim accounts of actual interviews conducted especially for this book. Chapter 14 (Speeches and Meetings) includes President Bill Clinton's address at a memorial service for victims of the Oklahoma City bombing. Other exercises, although fictionalized, involve topics recently in the news.

To add to the realism, many of the exercises contain ethical problems: four-letter words, sexist comments, the names of rape victims, bloody details and other material that many editors would be reluctant to publish. Students completing those exercises will have to deal with the problems, and their decisions are likely to provoke lively discussions.

Instructor's Manual

The authors provide a detailed Instructor's Manual: about 120 pages of ideas, recommendations, answers and quizzes. The manual's introductory sections discuss accuracy, grades and suggested policies and assignments. Those sections are followed by sample course outlines and lists of the exercises that contain ethical dilemmas and sexist remarks. Other lists tell you which exercises can be localized: which mention your city, state or school. Later sections provide answers for many of the exercises. There are also tests covering style, vocabulary, attribution and spelling, as well as true/false questions for most chapters. (If you would like your city or school mentioned in an exercise in the next edition, contact any of the authors.)

Computer Software

Faculty members with access to Macintosh computers can use this book with "MediaWriter: Computerized Lessons in News Reporting," also written by Fred Fedler and co-written by Lucinda Davenport of Michigan State University. The software, sold separately or with the textbook, provides 32 interactive exercises for the students in reporting classes. The first exercise emphasizes the fundamentals of news writing: spelling, style, accuracy and objectivity. Other exercises teach students how to write more clearly and concisely, with practice in writing leads and complete news stories. All exercises are designed to test student judgment and ethics.

Practical Approach

Like previous editions, this sixth is concrete, not abstract or theoretical. Its tone is both practical and realistic. Its language is readable: clear, concise, simple and direct. Because of the book's realism, students will encounter the types of problems and assignments they are likely to find when they graduate and begin work at entry-level jobs with the media.

Pro Challenge

Several exercises in the chapters about leads and the body of news stories are subtitled "Pro Challenge." Professionals have completed the exercises so students assigned the same exercises can compare their work to that of the professionals.

A Single Volume

By combining everything students need in a single volume, "Reporting for the Media" provides a convenient package at a reasonable price. Like earlier editions, this sixth edition includes both the instructions and examples that students need to learn to write more effectively. It also includes a multitude of exercises and a summary of The Associated Press Stylebook. Thus, students do not have to buy a separate style manual or workbook.

A Note of Thanks

The Authors

Fred Fedler received his bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, then worked as a newspaper reporter in Dubuque and Davenport, Iowa, and as a copy editor in Sacramento, Calif. He received his master's degree from the University of Kentucky and doctorate from the University of Minnesota. Since 1971, Fedler has taught at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, and heads the School of Communication's News/Editorial Division. He regularly conducts research in the field of journalism but also continues to freelance for popular publications. Fedler's other books include "Introduction to the Mass Media" and "Media Hoaxes." In addition, Fedler serves on numerous committees concerned with journalism education. Because of his book about hoaxes, you may hear Fedler on radio or see him on television. When a new hoax appears in the news, he is sometimes asked to serve as a guest commentator.

John R. Bender is an assistant professor in the College of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Bender worked for six years as a reporter at the Pittsburg Morning Sun in southeast Kansas, covering local government and politics. He became the paper's assignment editor, news editor, then managing editor. During his term as managing editor, the Morning Sun won awards for farm coverage, photography and editorial writing. Bender has taught at the college or university level for 10 years. He was a journalism instructor at Culver-Stockton College in Canton, Mo., for five years and joined the faculty at the University of Nebraska in 1990. His teaching and research areas include news reporting and writing, communication law, media history and controls of information. As an undergraduate, Bender majored in sociology at Westminster College in Fulton, Mo. He holds a master's degree in journalism from the University of Kansas and a doctorate in journalism from the University of Missouri at Columbia.

Lucinda Davenport is an associate professor in the School of Journalism at Michigan State University and also serves as the school's assistant director. As an undergraduate at Baylor University, Davenport double majored in journalism and radio/TV/film (today called "telecommunications"). She received a master's degree in journalism from the University of Iowa and a doctorate in mass media from Ohio University, where she was named "Outstanding Doctoral Student." Davenport has taught and worked in several areas, including public relations and newspaper and broadcast reporting. At Michigan State, she teaches, conducts professional workshops and publishes research in the areas of media ethics and computer-assisted reporting. She has developed interactive software and recently completed a multi-media CD-ROM for newswriting and reporting classes.

Paul E. Kostyu is an associate professor in the Department of Journalism at Ohio Wesleyan University. He graduated with a bachelor's degree in English and biology from Heidelberg College in 1973 and began his journalism career with the Tiffin (Ohio) Advertiser-Tribune. While working as a reporter, photographer and area editor, Kostyu completed a master's degree in popular culture at Bowling Green State University. In 1978, he joined the Greensboro Daily News (later the News & Record) as a bureau reporter. In 1981, Kostyu received a Rotary International Foundation Journalism Award that allowed him to study in Bangor, Wales, for a year. He returned to Greensboro as a layout editor and was named chief of the paper's largest bureau. In 1985, Kostyu became editor of the faculty/staff newspaper at Bowling Green State University, beginning his doctoral work at the same time. He began teaching full-time in 1986. He teaches in a variety of areas, including reporting and writing, media law and journalism history. Kostyu recently spent a summer helping The Ann Arbor (Mich.) News establish a computer-assisted reporting program.

Finally, dozens of students and teachers have written to us, telling us what they like and dislike about this book and suggesting new features. We have adopted many of their ideas, and we would like to hear from you. If you have a suggestion or comment, please write to any of us:

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INTRODUCTION

This is an exciting time for people entering the field of journalism, a time of challenge and change. Students majoring in journalism will enjoy unprecedented opportunities. Many will work for traditional media: for newspapers, radio and television stations, and advertising and public relations agencies. But others will find new opportunities, perhaps with cable, telephone or computer companies—or with conglomerates that run several of the companies.

Information is traveling at the speed of light, and the new information superhighway is forcing companies into new partnerships and mergers. The companies are investing billions of dollars in entertainment and information systems that will transform everyone's life, but especially the lives of journalists.

The stakes are enormous. There are 92 million households in the United States, and virtually all of them have a television set and telephone. Daily newspapers and cable television reach about 60 percent of the nation's households, and about 27 percent have personal computers. The companies that control those systems will control a huge new market. Americans already spend $12 billion a year on video rentals and $70 billion on catalog shopping, for example, and the information superhighway may take over both industries, along with countless others.

There will be hundreds of new television channels, with most catering to more specialized interests. At the same time, more and more programming—news and entertainment—will be delivered on demand from giant computer disks, so viewers may be able to watch any movie, weather report or college class at any time.

To strengthen their position, traditional rivals are merging. They want to control two major elements: (1) the means of transmitting digitized signals into homes, and (2) the system's programming or content. Time Warner, an entertainment and publishing giant, has formed an alliance with a telephone company. Microsoft is working with NBC on a cable and Internet news service. Through a merger, Disney gained control of the ABC television network. By acquiring broadcast and cable properties, Disney obtained a distribution system for its movies and television programs.

Older media are adjusting to the competition, a never-ending process. Existing media have already adjusted to a myriad of new competitors. The newspaper, radio and magazine industries adjusted to the introduction of television. The television industry adjusted to the introduction of cable, and the movie industry adjusted to the introduction of VCRs and video rentals. Moreover, many of the older media profit from their new rivals. Television producers earn more when cable systems rebroadcast their programs. Hollywood studios earn more when people buy or rent videos of their movies.

Newspapers are experimenting with a multitude of new ventures, including news delivery by radio, television, cable and fax. Some newspapers encourage readers to call and listen to personal ads, sports scores, and movie and restaurant reviews. Readers in other cities can request faxes of recent restaurant reviews. Readers with computers can also converse with newspaper staffs, enjoying two-way conversations with reporters and editors.

The potential is enormous. In the past, a newspaper's size was limited by its publication costs. As a result, a typical newspaper printed only 10 percent of the information it received each day, discarding the other 90 percent. In a few years, that 90 percent may become available online. Readers will be able to turn on a computer (or perhaps a television screen that functions like

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a computer) and move to a menu with labels such as "Local News," "National News," "Business," "Sports" and "Entertainment." Readers will be able to select any box and browse through it, perhaps to obtain more in-depth information about a story in that day's paper. Or, readers may request the full text of a speech, more photographs or more comics. Other readers may request minor stories that larger dailies have never had the space to report: the time of church services, bus and airline schedules, the hours of shopping malls, or a daily list of crimes committed in their neighborhood.

Readers interested in a specialized topic, such as birds, swimming, dancing or mathematics, may program their computers so they automatically display more stories about the topics. If they want, those readers will also be able to print every story.

Some experts predict that, eventually, newspapers will no longer need printing presses and carriers. Rather, people will receive an electronic paper: "a digitized blend of text, graphics, color photos, sound and full-motion video dancing across a book-sized portable computer." The computer will be wireless, so you will be able to take it anywhere. That may not happen in our lifetimes. Even when it does, some readers may prefer their traditional daily.

In many cities, you can already receive portions of your local daily online. Increasingly, dailies are also creating message boards and sponsoring daily chat rooms about topics that range from politics to dating.

One of the most innovative organizations, the Chicago Tribune Co., established ChicagoLand TV, a 24-hour cable news channel that reaches 90 percent of the homes with cable in the Chicago metropolitan area. The newspaper's staff helps gather and present news on the channel, using mini television studios set up in Tribune newsrooms. More than 140 of the Tribune's staffers appeared on ChicagoLand TV during its first year, reaching more people with their stories.

Tribune readers with computers and modems can use Chicago Online, another new service, to obtain electronic versions of the Tribune's stories and classified advertisements. Or, readers can send messages to the Tribune's staff.

The Chicago Tribune Co. also owns more than a dozen television stations; produces news and entertainment programs for those stations; owns six radio stations; and bought a large stake in America Online, the fastest growing of the major online services.

The fields of advertising and public relations are also changing. Practitioners in both fields can use the information superhighway to communicate directly with the public. Because their messages are no longer filtered through reporters and editors, the practitioners retain total control over the messages' content. But like journalists, the practitioners must learn new skills.

Changes in the media are changing Americans' lives. More and more Americans are studying, shopping and working at home, a trend certain to continue. With E-mail, it is also becoming easier for Americans to communicate with one another. Homes may eventually be equipped with video phones, so callers will be able to both see and talk to one another. Or, families may transmit videos directly to a relative's home.

Merchants envision a burgeoning market. While sitting in your living room, you will be able to stroll through your favorite mall, decide what stores to enter, inspect their merchandise and request more information about items you like. Then, you will be able to order the items, charging them to a credit card.

But important questions remain unanswered. The most important is how companies will profit from the information superhighway. Many, afraid of being left behind, are experimenting with the system, but earn little or no money from it. For example: people rarely pay anything when they look at a newspaper online. Newspapers cover some costs by establishing 900 numbers, so readers are charged for calls that request a sports score or that answer a personal ad. Or, newspapers may receive a fee each time someone uses their system to buy an airline ticket or to reserve a hotel room. But to earn a significant profit, the field's pioneers will have to learn how they can use the system to deliver content so valuable that millions of people will be willing to pay for it.

Other important questions include: