Best Sports Photo
Division 4: Weekly and daily newspapers
2018 Better Newspaper Contest
By Hunter D’Antuono, Livingston Enterprise

Titled: High Flying Cowboy Boot
Bryce Rooney of Bozeman loses his boot and sock during saddle bronc riding at the Wilsall Rodeo.
## MNA Calendar

### May
10  Deadline to submit articles for May Press Pass newsletter  
24  Deadline to book lodging for 2019 annual convention at group rate  
27  Federal holiday: Memorial Day  
27  MNA office will be closed for Memorial Day holiday  
27  Deadline to register for 2019 MNA annual convention

### June
6   MNA and MNAS Board of Directors Meeting—Big Sky  
7,8  MNA office will be closed for annual convention  
7,8  134th MNA annual convention—Big Sky  
7   MNA Annual Meeting—Big Sky  
7   Montana Newspaper Foundation Banquet—Big Sky  
8   Past Presidents’ Luncheon—Big Sky  
8   2019 MNA Better Newspaper Contest Awards Banquet—Big Sky  
14  Deadline to submit articles for June Press Pass newsletter

### July
1   Deadline to file annual municipal and county sworn statements of circulation  
4   Federal Holiday: Independence Day  
4   MNA office closed for Independence Day holiday  
12  Deadline to submit articles for July Press Pass newsletter

### August
16  Deadline to submit articles for August Press Pass newsletter

### September
2   Federal holiday: Labor Day  
2   MNA office will be closed for Labor Day holiday  
4   National Newspaper Carrier Day  
20  Deadline to submit articles for September Press Pass newsletter

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### THANK YOU RENEWING ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

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**OUR MISSION:**
To advance and sustain the news publishing industry in Montana.

Matt Gibson, Executive Director  |  mgibson@mtnewspapers.com  
Stacy Wirtz, Business Development Director  |  stacy@mtnewspapers.com  
Ryan Stavnes, Member Relations & Client Services  |  member@mtnewspapers.com  
mtnewspapers.com
The citizens of Montana have few champions to call upon when the principles of open government are threatened. Lots of people care about policy, but most of them focus more on the what than the how. When the process itself creates the problem, it falls largely on the Montana Newspaper Association and the Montana Freedom of Information Hotline to take up the cause.

That’s why our lobbyist, John MacDonald, objected during a recent Saturday morning meeting of the state Senate Finance and Claims Committee when they passed a controversial, 81-page bill without any opportunity for public hearing. The committee gave only the barest notice that the bill would come up, and they rammed the legislation through without giving anybody a reasonable chance to understand what it said or comment on it. A good summary of the circumstances was reported by Holly Michels of Lee Enterprises’ state bureau and republished on page 8 of this month’s Press Pass.

MacDonald reminded the committee members of Montanans’ constitutional right to participate in government. But even though he articulated frustrations shared by many at the Capitol, only the newspapers stood as an organized faction against the committee’s actions. The chair cut off comment before the ACLU got a chance to add their objections. MacDonald’s take on the situation appears in Press Pass on page 6.

The bill ultimately failed on the floor of the Senate, and we successfully put the whole Capitol on notice that we will call them out if they short-circuit public process. We’ll take a deeper look at the problem once the legislature winds down and assess our strategic options to deter similar tactics in the future.

As part of that assessment, MacDonald and I will convene a panel at our annual convention June 7 and 8 in Big Sky to thoroughly brief the members and answer your questions about the association’s government affairs work. The panel will be just one of the meaty programs we’ve got planned in Big Sky, which will packed full of great sessions and great social opportunities. And we’ll be returning to the Huntley Hotel for the first time in decades, better to take advantage of Big Sky’s awesome activities, from tours of the 11,000-foot summit to spa treatments to zip lining. To register, fill out the form on page 7 of this month’s Press Pass and send it in, or download the registration form from the MNA website at https://www.mtnewspapers.com/2019convention/. All we do as an association comes together at the convention, and I’m eager to greet all of you there as your new executive director.

To help us with the planning, we’ve set a registration deadline of May 27. Reserve your rooms at the Huntley by May 24 to get the group rate. I’ll look forward to seeing you in Big Sky!

**Matt Gibson is the executive director of the Montana Newspaper Association.**

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**Montana Newspaper Association Press ID cards**

The Montana Newspaper Association provides Press ID cards (credentials) as a no-cost service to our Professional Members.

**To order a Press ID, please contact:** Ryan, Member Relations, at 443-2850 or member@mtnewspapers.com

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3. Electronic IDs are available same day
4. Press IDs expire three years from date of issue/renewal

**When placing an order, please e-mail the following:**

1. Email a current JPEG photo as an attachment and please ID the person in the photo (Beth - red sweater, etc.) if you are requesting multiple passes
2. Include the job title

**Guidelines for picture content**

1. The picture should be a close-up showing your head and shoulders
2. Pay attention to the background and setting…a solid color background works best
3. The Press ID is a photo identification: remove hats, sunglasses and be sure to look straight on
Montana Newspaper Association
134TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

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in big sky
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It is not uncommon for the legislative process to get a little weird in the waning days of the session. As lawmakers scramble to save or revive policy and fund bills and come up with a balanced budget, they often try—and sometimes succeed—in taking shortcuts to the public’s constitutional right to participate. This year, however, the Legislature took that to a whole new low. The Montana Newspaper Association, on two separate occasions in April, objected to efforts by legislators to exclude the public from the process and helped expose legislative rules that even the chair of the Senate Rules Committee acknowledged are deeply flawed.

The first incident involved a joint subcommittee hearing on the evening of Friday, April 5, that was originally scheduled with little notice to discuss a bill that the subcommittee no longer had under its purview. When the MNA and others brought attention to the oddity, the hearing was canceled and pulled from the legislative calendar. But a quorum of the subcommittee met anyway, discussed the bill and directed staff to begin drafting amendments. Attorney Mike Meloy, on behalf of the MNA and the FOI Hotline, sent a letter to Senate and House leaders objecting to the process, demanding an explanation and assurance that it wouldn’t happen again. In a response, legislative leaders said the “hearing” was intended to be nothing more than a work session for committee members and claimed that despite directing staff to work on amendments, the committee members did not take any action.

On Saturday, April 13, an even more egregious violation occurred involving a “companion” bill to House Bill 2. The legislation, described as a simple “placeholder” bill, was only a few sentences long and made an innocuous $100 transfer of funds to a section of House Bill 2. Senate Finance and Claims had held a 27-second hearing on the bill on March 29 but scheduled another hearing for Saturday morning. A half-hour before the scheduled hearing, legislative staff posted an 81-page amendment to the bill; an amendment that attempted to stuff three unrelated policy bills into the placeholder. Rather than a public hearing, the committee began to move directly to executive action on the amendment and bill. I was present and interrupted the committee’s proceedings to object, noting that Article 2 Section 8 of the Montana Constitution required public involvement before a decision is made. The chairman refused, telling me that there would be time for public comment “after” the bill was passed. I objected again, but the committee took executive action without public comment. Only after its decision was made did the chair allow public comment. On behalf of the MNA, I again objected to the process, calling it “backward” and inappropriate. Fellow lobbyist Jon Metropoulos joined in objecting, calling what had occurred “shameful.” It truly was.

As of this writing, we are continuing to see legislators attempt to stuff funding and policy bills into these placeholder “companion” bills. We continue to see this as a violation of several constitutional provisions and are working with the FOI Hotline and others to determine how to address this moving forward. We understand the Legislature has to adopt rules every session, but when those rules conflict with the Constitution and Montana statutes, we need to object and will do so.

While these issues kept us busy for the past few weeks, we are happy to report that we were able to kill or successfully amend to our satisfaction every bill we had concerns about during the session. A lot of this success is due to MNA members, who called their representatives and opined on issues important to Montana newspapers and the public’s right to know.

John MacDonald has represented the Montana Newspaper Association as its primary lobbyist since 2013.
# 134th Annual Convention

## Big News at Big Sky

**Big Sky Resort, Big Sky, Mont., June 7-8**

## Attendee Registration

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Please complete for each attendee - print full name and mark box for events attending. Thank you!

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No Payment Required At This Time Total Of All Registration And Events Fees: $ 

Your Organization Name:

## Please Send Convention Registration To:

Ryan Stavnes, member services
Email: member@mtnewspapers.com
or
Montana Newspaper Association
825 Great Northern Blvd, Ste 202
Helena, MT 59601
(406) 443-2850
Registration Deadline: May 27, 2019

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Group Rate: $129 + tax
Group Rate Discount Deadline: May 24, 2019

## Our Mission:
To advance and sustain the news publishing industry in Montana.
As the Montana Legislature nears its final days, some lawmakers are objecting to policies being added into so-called budget companion bills in ways they say skirt public input and even legislators’ awareness of what’s happening.

Companion bills are meant to execute the state budget, but can also be vehicles to pass big policy changes late in the legislative session. Several of the bills were moved Wednesday to what’s called free conference committees, where legislators have wide latitude to make both fiscal and policy changes.

Distributed around the Capitol on Wednesday was a flyer printed on bright pink paper with the headline “Just Trust Us,” followed by the words “Really? Seriously? Do Friends Leverage Friends?”

The flyer listed several companion bills and illustrates the brewing tension over their fate in the last nine or fewer days of the session.

Companion bills start life as placeholders, with nothing more than language to transfer $100 from one fund to another. They’re meant to be amended to accommodate last-minute changes to the budget without re-opening the entire budget bill, House Bill 2. But policy also gets slipped in by amendments that don’t go through the same public hearing process as bills.

Examples of that include doubling the size of a drug interdiction team within the Montana Highway Patrol, adding six full-time positions at a cost of $1.2 million. That’s been added to Senate Bill 352, the lone Senate companion bill.

SB 352 was meant to coordinate the spending in some of the late-moving policy bills with the state budget bill, which legislators would like to avoid having to open up again and change this late in the session.

The state Constitution limits what can be amended into bills to things that fall under the bill title. Because SB 352 has a very broad title, to “generally revise laws related to the state budget,” some lawmakers see it as a sort of legislative Christmas tree where they can keep hanging their ornaments, or ideas and bills they don’t want to see die.

For SB 352 so far, that’s included the $1.2 million drug interdiction team. Other attempts this session have been made to graft major changes in DUI laws onto a companion bill for the judicial branch. Another proposed amendment dropped Wednesday afternoon for a different companion bill would change how drug treatment courts work.

“I think when we go into these free conference committees on something that has such a broad title, I get a little nervous,” said Sen. Dee Brown, a Republican from Thompson Falls, on Wednesday. “I get a little nervous for the taxpayers of Montana because I am concerned they would not be part of the discussion.”

Still, a unanimous Senate voted 50-0 to send SB 352 to a free conference committee. So why not just vote against Senate Bill 352?

Because the bill also includes the appropriations for all the remaining policy bills still working their way through the Legislature. If the companion bill doesn’t pass, those policy bills don’t get funding, essentially killing whatever changes they hoped to accomplish.

Senate Majority Leader Fred Thomas, a Republican from Stevensville, said Wednesday on the Senate floor that in this session there’s been an increased effort to allow for public comment on policies proposed in companion bills. Still, with just nine days left in the legislative session, things can move so quickly it’s hard for people — even lawmakers — to track.

“If there’s something brand-new (in a companion bill) it needs to be aired and have the opportunity of public comment on it at an appropriate time,” Thomas said.

“We’ll cross that bridge when we get to it.”

Sometimes policies put into companion bills have been debated in other legislation that died earlier in the session, but sometimes they’re entirely new proposals unveiled at the last minute.

Several other companion bills tied to segments of state government like the health department or the judicial system are also headed toward free conference committees in coming days.

Elsewhere in the Legislature on Wednesday, the House pushed back votes to move the state budget and the proposal to continue Medicaid expansion toward the finish line.

Legislators said they delayed the Medicaid expansion vote to make sure it followed proper procedure as the bill moved back from the Senate.

Rep. Nancy Ballance, a Republican from Hamilton who is critical in the crafting of the budget, said Wednesday she wanted to see a resolution on how much revenue the state is expected to collect be firmed up before moving the budget. Ballance said she also wanted companion bills and some lingering legislation — like the Medicaid expansion bill — to be finalized before closing up the state budget.
To cap a career of newsroom success in Missoula, Seattle, Baltimore and St. Louis, Missoulian Editor Kathy Best will become the first director of the new Howard Center for Investigative Journalism at the University of Maryland.

“Kathy Best is a dynamic newsroom leader with a long track record of getting the most out of the journalists she works with,” said Lucy A. Dalglish, dean of the University of Maryland’s Philip Merrill College of Journalism. “She digs into stories that matter to the community and is eager to use what she’s learned to launch the Howard Center and make it a worldwide leader in investigative reporting.”

Best compared the Howard Center’s format to a teaching hospital, where students work with award-winning investigative reporters in collaboration with newsrooms across the nation to publish stories. As director, Best will function much like a newsroom editor, bringing together the data analysis, graphics, photos, video and audio that present a project.

She will work with about 100 students a semester, including both the center’s direct participants and members of the journalism school’s Capitol News Service.

“We’ve shown what a difference that can make in Montana,” Best said on Monday. “This allows me to take what we’ve demonstrated here and apply it coast to coast, across media platforms.”

As executive editor of the Seattle Times, Best led her staff to two breaking-news Pulitzer Prize awards as well as two Online Journalism Awards. During her three years at the Missoulian, she was instrumental in helping reporters earn reporting opportunities through Fulbright scholarships and partnerships with the Society for Environmental Journalists, Solutions Journalism Network and Investigative Reporters and Editors, among others.

“I am incredibly proud of the work the Missoulian has done in the last three years, from explaining why a state so vast and with so many trees has shortages of timber to providing context and perspective around the reasons for and responses to enrollment declines at the University of Montana,” Best said.

“I’m particularly gratified that the Missoulian’s investigation of lax state oversight at private, therapeutic programs for troubled teens has sparked debate in Helena and may prompt reforms to keep vulnerable adolescents safer.”

Missoulian Publisher Jim Strauss said the entire journalism industry would benefit from Best’s talents on the national stage.

“Kathy Best to head investigative news program

By Rob Chaney, Missoulian

April 26, 2019

Kathy Best

College of Journalism.

“Newsrooms have been hollowed out by the loss of print advertising revenue, and digital advertising isn’t making up for it,” Best said. “We would be filling a void at a time when facts matter and deeply reported facts matter even more. That’s huge. That’s what you can’t get anywhere else. That’s what professional journalists do and do really well. I want to make sure they have the tools.”

Best started her reporting career covering the Illinois Legislature and state politics in Springfield and Chicago before joining the St. Louis Post-Dispatch Washington, D.C., Bureau, where she covered the Supreme Court, Congress and presidential politics. She spent a year ruining several perfectly good pairs of shoes investigating problems in the National Flood Insurance Program after an epic flood on the Mississippi River.

Best switched to editing full time in 1996, directing coverage of earthquakes, hurricanes, domestic whale hunts, abuse by priests, National Security Agency boondoggles, riots and other forms of mayhem in Seattle, St. Louis and Baltimore. All the while, she made sure her newsrooms kept a sharp eye on the governments and powerful interests in their backyards, holding people and institutions to account.

As executive editor and managing editor for digital news, she led the Seattle Times staff to two Pulitzer Prizes for coverage of breaking news, including real-time reporting of the manhunt for a gunman who shot four police officers. The staff also won two prestigious Online Journalism Awards under her watch for a project on ocean acidification, and coverage of a devastating mudslide in Oso, Washington, that claimed 43 lives. In covering both breaking news stories, the Times newsroom produced investigative reporting on the run, explaining not only what happened, by why and how.

In June 2016, she and her late husband, investigative reporter and two-time Pulitzer winner Andrew Schneider, headed for the mountains of Montana, where Best became editor of the Missoulian in Missoula and of the Ravalli Republic, in the nearby Bitterroot Valley. When more than a million acres burned during her second summer in the Rocky Mountains, she got a front-row seat to the impact of a hotter, drier climate on the West. She said it also allowed her to return to her first love: community journalism.

“Newsrooms have been hollowed out by the loss of print advertising revenue, and digital advertising isn’t making up for it,” Best said. “We would be filling a void at a time when facts matter and deeply reported facts matter even more. That’s huge. That’s what you can’t get anywhere else. That’s what professional journalists do and do really well. I want to make sure they have the tools.”

April 26, 2019
Drone photography flies ahead of regulatory and ethical framework

By Judd Slivka

At some point in the not-so-distant future, you will order something and it will be delivered by drone. It might be delivered to a platform near your house that drones take off and land on. But it will eventually be delivered right to your door by a drone — changing the economics of the so-called “last mile” of delivery. It will also change how property rights are viewed. How much airspace — and how much privacy — are you entitled to?

This is important to us as journalists because it speaks to where we can fly and how we gather our visuals. Is it OK for me to use a drone to get a picture 6 feet off the street, because if I were 6 feet tall and not a compact 5'7”, I could do it without a drone? Can I launch a drone from a public street or a park, fly it to 60 feet above ground level and look into someone’s backyard? How we answer these questions have far-reaching implications for how we do journalism and how we’re perceived as journalists.

There are a bunch of streams that feed into this river of gray areas, but they all come down to a simple precept: When it comes to drones, property rights are privacy rights. The nature of the drone makes it impossible to separate the two.

The 1st problem: U.S. v. Causby

Imagine that you own a chicken farm at the end of a government airport’s runway. Planes come screaming over at less than 90 feet and it just scares the hell out of your chickens. How scared are they? They break their own necks against the side of their coop trying to escape the engines’ howl. You complain and the government tells you that it owns all the air around your house and it can do what it wants with it, the same way the government could claim eminent domain and put a highway in your front yard.

This scenario — loud engines and dead chickens — sets the scene for one of the most consequential and yet vague court decisions for aviation: U.S. v. Causby. The Supreme Court’s 1946 ruling primarily does two things: 1) It defines airspace as the domain of the federal government and 2) it says that private landowners are entitled to the airspace that “immediately envelopes” their property and they can use as much of it as needed. What the case didn’t do was define a clear limit for where your property ends and the National Air Space begins.

Planes crossed Causby’s property at 87 feet. And the federal government has established minimum safe altitudes for manned aircraft at 500 or 1,000 feet, depending on where they are. We can make an argument that 87 feet is a reasonable limit. But what if a house’s roofline is at a modest 35 feet? Is the homeowner still entitled to airspace up to 87 feet or 100 feet or 500 feet? And is transiting a property — which is what happened in Causby — different from hovering?

The 2nd problem: The right to photograph has never been affirmed by the Supreme Court

One of the things we teach journalism students is that they have a right to photograph from a public spot, such as a public street or a sidewalk. There’s a long history of this, dating back to the 1890s when Louis Brandeis and Samuel Warren published their “right to privacy” treatise. Here’s the rub: The Supreme Court has never affirmed that right. Lots of district courts have — but those are merely persuasive decisions for other jurisdictions; they don’t have to be followed nationally.

Brandeis and Warren published their article as a response to rapidly developing technologies and Warren’s “abhorrence” to the loss of social privacy those technologies were bringing. But as Chip Stewart and Jeremy Littau point out in this article, legal notions of privacy and the First Amendment have not kept with the development of technology — especially shooting video.

This is evident when we look at how we use drones in journalism. If a train derails and I fly my drone near the derailment site, but not over the rail- road’s right-of-way, do railroad officials have a right to restrict my filming? Normally we’d say no — you’re not over their property and you’re in what the courts have defined as public property. But in one case in 2018, Union Pacific Railroad bulls pushed Syracuse, New York police to shut down a news photographer’s drone shooting video adjacent to a derailment. In a 2014 incident, Hartford, Connecticut police forced a pilot flying 150 feet over an accident scene to land his drone and argued he was compromising the scene’s integrity. We could argue that the right to photograph in a public place has been well established — and the National Air Space is a public space.

These are both incidents that have happened over public property. What if we have to transit private property to get to a story? What if, while shooting news video of an accident on a state highway, I can also see into the yards of the people that I shoot?

Is there a right to shoot video from the air? Yes. But it’s imperfect for our purposes, because the cases that allow it deal with whether or not law enforcement agencies need warrants to take photographs from the air; they are Fourth Amendment cases, not First Amendment ones. We can make those decisions work, but we need to heat them and bend them a little bit. This leads us to…

The 3rd problem: The FAA doesn’t care about the First Amendment, but does care about its airspace. Except that it hasn’t stepped in to defend airspace for drone users. Municipalities are filling the vacuum.

There’s a lot of bad stories about drones doing creepy, pervy things. Like when a drone appeared outside of “Dirty Jobs” host Mike Rowe’s house. Or drones hovering over someone’s teenage daughter’s pool party. Or drones appearing outside of someone’s house to watch them disrobe.

Politicians listen to their constituents — and their constituents are freaked out, those concerns amplified by the media hype that drones will become our next robotic overlords. Where is a person’s castle? Why, it’s their home. A person is entitled to privacy in their home. But what about around their home? And how much of the air around their home? And what is a person’s right to defend airspace?

There’s a number of drones that have been fired on while they fly over private property. In one case in Kentucky, the FAA declined to get involved and a judge said, “If the FAA isn’t involved, it must not be a federal case” and dismissed it. In another case that happened during the fall of 2018, someone brought a drone down with a shotgun. The pilot reported it to the FAA, which kicked it to the FBI, which declined to bring charges. So the right to defend airspace exists because of a lack of regulatory willpower to keep it from happening.

Municipalities are passing their own laws — which usually conflict with the supremacy clause of the Constitution, which says federal laws win when local and federal laws conflict. Newton, Massachusetts tried to pass a law barring drones from flying over city limits. A federal court struck it down because the law conflicted with Causby. Thornton, Colorado tried to pass an ordinance in December that would have made it illegal to operate a drone from any city-owned public space; the city council has tabled the motion. The Uniform Law Commission — a hybrid public-private law group that creates model legislation for states to use — has proposed making any drone flight under 200 feet a trespass violation and any photograph or video of the property without the owner’s consent a trespass, as well.

Why are they doing this? Because the FAA has issued press releases asserting its right to control airspace but has chosen not to when the rubber meets the road and it could intervene in a lawsuit to send a message.

And that’s ultimately the problem for drone journalism. Terrestrial photography has well-established laws and ethics and guidelines. Aerial journalism wants to have those — the National Press Photographers Association has developed some — but media photography with drones is a unique animal. The old laws about being able to shoot what’s in plain sight don’t hold up when everything can be in plain sight from 100 feet or 400 feet. The laws that do cover it require stretching. The federal agency involved in regulating the airspace seems reluctant to do so. And the laws are vague, a decade behind and often being written by people who only understand hype and fear.

The press goes where the action is, where the conflict is, where the agitated people are. So that becomes the real worry. There is no bright line about what we should and shouldn’t do, just behaviors that we can imply from the laws around it. And that’s goes for the drone hatin’, privacy-at-all-costs folks, too.

With no clear rules, and no enforcement of the few rules that exist, we are living in the Wild West. And that benefits no one.

Judd Slivka is Reynolds Journalism Institute’s first director of aerial journalism. He is also an assistant professor of convergence journalism at the Missouri School of Journalism.
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Readers cite balance, honesty as keys to trusting their news sources

By Joy Mayer

Fundamentally, news consumers trust journalism they find to be balanced, in-depth, honest and reputable.

Those qualities appeared over and over in an analysis of 81 in-depth interviews our newsroom partners conducted with members of their communities. And when asked directly about what defines quality journalism, they were at the top of the list.

A bit of background

In an earlier phase of our project, we recruited journalists to sit down one on one with their own news consumers to talk about trust. The newsrooms first published a questionnaire designed to help them find users to talk to across a spectrum of age, gender, race, political leanings and overall likelihood to trust the news. Those questionnaires produced a lot of interesting information, which you can read about here.

Our partner journalists then attempted to interview four people from across their diverse responses. They used our interview guide as the basis for the conversation and collectively sat down with 81 news consumers for about an hour each.

What we learned in those interviews helped us get inside the heads of news consumers, and as a result we created the set of strategies we’ve been testing.

We’re thrilled to now add to our body of knowledge a more formal analysis of those interviews. Rob Jones, a PhD student at the Missouri School of Journalism, looked for themes in the responses. This was an important step because the questions were open-ended. When we asked, for example, what the subjects think about journalists’ efforts to fact-check claims made by public figures, we didn’t offer a rating scale or multiple choice options. We just listened. The themes that emerged were things like whether the fact-check was useful, whether journalists were qualified to conduct it and whether fact-checkers kept the public interest in mind.

Jones then did a deep content analysis of what we learned around each of the themes that emerged. Download his full report here.

Describing trustworthy journalism

Overall, when asked to describe what separates good journalism from bad, here is what interview subjects valued:

- Balance (77.8%)
- Honesty (31.9%)
- Depth (46.9%)
- Reader agency (23.5)
- Professionalism and reputation (22.2%)
- Simplicity (12.3%)
- Relevance (6.2%).

Participants were not given a list of qualities to choose from. These numbers reflect what they came up with on their own. It’s fair to say that most or all participants want their journalism to be honest, for example. But 52% of them mentioned honesty when asked to describe good journalism.

The same qualities were listed when asked what news outlets could do to regain trust once it’s lost. Here’s more on some of these key themes.

Balance

This concept is at the top of users’ wish list for quality journalism. Many people use it to mean that journalism should reflect a diversity of opinions. Others speak more specifically about how journalists should keep their own opinions out of their work. And some say they cultivate their own balanced news diet by consuming journalism from multiple sources.

Honesty

News consumers don’t want to be misled. They want clear attribution, good labeling of content and honesty around conflicts of interest on the part of journalists and sources. They also don’t like headlines and story details to be exaggerated or sensationalized.

Depth

People who mentioned depth said they value journalism that provides context for a story and goes beyond the basics. They want journalism to go beyond the basic facts to help users understand where they fit into a bigger picture.

Reader agency

News consumers want to make up their own minds. They don’t want to feel like they’re being told what to do. They also value information that empowers them to better live their lives and helps them make decisions.

Professionalism and reputation

Some news consumers pay a lot of attention to whether a news product feels like it’s high quality (such as being well written, free from error and well sourced). Some also care about the reputation of a news organization or feel loyalty to brands they’ve long followed.

Other highlights

Fact-checking: More users said they find fact-checking in general useful than not useful, though one-fifth of them said they question the integrity of the fact-checkers.

Labeling types of content: It can sometimes be tough for news consumers to tell when something is straight news and when it represents an opinion. Participants said this was most likely to be confusing on TV.

Transparency: There is an appetite for journalism to be transparent among more than half of the participants. When asked what they wanted to see, people talked most about wanting to understand how news is selected and learn more about individual journalists.

Dive into the results

Download the full interview analysis on the Reynolds Journalism Institute website.

Previous research on transparency

In February, we published research done with the Center for Media Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin. It found that adding a box explaining a story’s process can improve a user’s perceptions of a news organization. Research participants were readers of two newsroom partners, USA TODAY and the Tennessean. They viewed either a news article with a box or without and then were asked a series of questions about the news organization.

According to the study, “people who viewed a news article with the box perceived the news organization as significantly more reliable, compared to people who saw the same story without the box.”

In addition, the research participants who viewed an article with the box rated the news organization significantly higher on 11 of the 12 attributes of trust. These attributes include being more transparent, informative, accurate, fair, credible, unbiased, and reputable. Read that full report here.

This article was excerpted from the original work of Trusting News. (To get one quick, actionable tip for earning trust in your inbox each week, subscribe to the Trust Tips newsletter.)

Trusting News, staffed by Joy Mayer and Lynn Walsh, is designed to demystify the issue of trust in journalism. We research how people decide what news is credible, then turn that knowledge into actionable strategies for journalists. We’re funded by the Reynolds Journalism Institute, the American Press Institute, Democracy Fund and the Knight Foundation.