2023 RETROSPECTIVE

CEO AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
LaSharah S. Bunting

ONA’S MISSION
Inspire and support innovation and excellence in digital journalism
Welcome to the Online News Association’s 2023 Retrospective. With LaSharah S. Bunting at the helm as CEO and Executive Director, 2023 was a year of new beginnings for ONA. This retrospective showcases some of the work and people that advanced our mission to inspire and support innovation in digital journalism over the past year. From practical AI resources to leadership and management training, our programs resonated with the evolving needs of the journalism community.

Thanks to our work, women executives found peer support for their career journey and the challenges facing their teams; newsrooms exchanged ideas and set standards for adopting emerging tech; and nearly 200 projects earned global recognition for their impact.

We proudly report 3,257 individuals helped sustain our mission through paid ONA membership in 2023. In Section 7, we also included a list of over 90 partners, sponsors and funders whose trust and investments helped bring this year’s programs to life. They include news publishers, large tech companies, startups, major foundations, research and policy institutes, graduate schools and other groups who recognize the value of connecting with ONA’s global community.

Thank you for being part of ONA in 2023. Explore the highlights here and join us as the mission continues. If your organization is interested in getting involved in 2024, contact Hanaa Rifaey, Head of Strategic Partnerships, at hanaa@journalists.org.
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By the numbers

3,257
People who helped sustain ONA’s mission through a paid annual membership

2,348
People engaging with ONA programs, including cohorts, fellowships and events

32
Countries represented among annual conference attendees

360+
Volunteers who made our work better
Leadership moments

Explore a few notable moments for ONA’s leadership from this past year.

ONA welcomed Kristen Reed, Content Director at TEGNA, as the newest member of the Board of Directors.

ONA members elected Ethar El-Katatney, News Product Strategy Lead for the Americas at Bloomberg, and Ryan Kellett, Vice President, Audience, at Axios Media, to seats on the 2024-25 Board of Directors, along with four incumbents.

ONA board members confirmed the appointment of Lauren Williams, CEO and Co-founder of Capital B. Lauren will serve on the board for two years beginning Jan. 1, 2024, along with Angela Pacienza, Executive Editor at The Globe and Mail, who was appointed for a second term.

ONa named longtime community member and supporter LaSharah Bunting as CEO and Executive Director.

• Hanaa Rifaey joined ONA leadership as Head of Strategic Partnerships, after nearly eight years as a consultant to the team.
• Liz Leith earned a promotion to Head of Finance and Administration.
• Trevor Knoblich moved into the role of Head of Operations and Culture on the new executive team.
• Jessica Strelitz’s transitioned from the team, concluding nearly 11 years of service leading revenue strategy and partnerships.
Training and insights for responsible technology in newsrooms
Enabling effective and responsible use of AI

ONA hosted discussions and trainings for the journalism community all year to make sense of the rapid expansion of AI. A diverse group of experts explored questions around mitigating inequities, staffing decisions, ethical use, misinformation and establishing newsroom policies. We also provided approachable guidance for AI experiments and encouraged ONA members to exchange ideas. For example, the community-curated Practical Newsroom Guide to Artificial Intelligence highlights tips for getting started and examples from local newsrooms like Michigan Radio (WUOM-FM) and El Vocero de Puerto Rico. And the ONA23 Start-Up Alley, where ONA’s annual conference attendees discover some of the most exciting innovations within the past two years, included an AI Tools Showcase to demo smart uses for day-to-day work.

Featured Experts

Joe Amditis
Assistant Director of Products and Events, Center for Cooperative Media

Liz Danzico
Vice President of Design, Microsoft

Andrew Rodriguez Calderón
Computational Journalist, The Marshall Project

Munmun De Choudhury
Associate Professor of Interactive Computing, Georgia Tech

Bryan Erdy
Video Manager, Houston Defender Network

Karen Hao
Independent Journalist

Dalia Hashim
AI and Media Integrity Research and Program Lead, Partnership on AI

Jaya Franklin
Director of Communications, Georgia State University College of Law

Uli Köppen
Head of AI and Automation Lab and Co-Lead of BR Data, Bayerischer Rundfunk

Ernest Kung
AI Product Manager, The Associated Press

Miranda Marcus
Head, BBC News Labs

Matt Masterson
Director of Information Integrity, Microsoft

Niketa Patel
Head of the Executive Program in News Innovation and Leadership, Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY

Apryl Pilolli
Director Of Technology for the Knight x LMA BloomLab, Local Media Association

Nikita Roy
Host, Newsroom Robots

Aimee Rinehart
Senior Product Manager AI Strategy, The Associated Press

Jonathan Soma
Knight Chair of Data Journalism, Columbia University

Hank Sims
Editor and Lead Developer, Lost Coast Outpost

Sisi Wei
Editor-in-Chief, The Markup
Annual Conference

ONA’s annual conference is the go-to gathering for leaders from both the technology and journalism industries. We presented the 2023 Online News Association Conference (ONA23) in two parts: **ONA23: Philadelphia** (Aug. 23-26), as an energizing four days of in-person learning and networking opportunities, followed by the virtual-only **ONA23: Onward** (Sept. 28-29) to hear more discussions on AI and related technology trends.

The conference engaged more than **1,800 attendees representing 32 countries and 44 U.S. states**. They included a mix of digital journalists, technologists, entrepreneurs, educators and other changemakers in digital media with expertise ranging from emerging tech to leadership development.

In Philadelphia, we hosted **150 speakers** who presented at about 90 learning sessions. Women represented 60% of the speaker slate, and people of color represented 40%. We also welcomed **90 sponsors, exhibitors and funders** who helped bring ONA23 to life. These organizations contributed thought-provoking sponsored learning events and numerous opportunities for networking and fun for all attendees.
ONA23 Volunteer Program Committee

Aala Abdullahi, Innovation Editor, Sahan Journal

Allison Shirk, Director of Digital Content and Engagement Strategy, WEHCO Media, Inc.

Cam Rodriguez, Data + Graphics Reporter, Chalkbeat

Donesha Aldridge, Executive Producer of Digital Content, 11Alive

Emily Alfin Johnson, Growth Editor, Network Initiatives, NPR

Graham Watson-Ringo, Senior Director of Client Success, News Revenue Hub

Jeremy Littau, Associate Professor of Journalism and Communication, Lehigh University

Josh Cornfield, New Platforms & Audience Growth, Associated Press

Kat Sheplavy, Senior Director, New Products & Experiences, McClatchy

Myrka Moreno, Audience Engagement Producer, The 19th*

Najja Parker, Newsletter Coach, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Nirma Hasty, Producer, NBC News

Robin Kwong, New Formats Editor, The Wall Street Journal

Shawn Mooring, Head of Philadelphia Programs, The Lenfest Institute for Journalism

Uli Köppen, Head of AI + Automation Lab, Co-Lead of BR Data, Bayerischer Rundfunk
SECTION 2

Building leaders who thrive through change
Women’s Leadership Accelerator

The 2023 Women’s Leadership Accelerator brought together 26 changemakers for a year of robust workshops, one-on-one coaching and meaningful connections with a career-long network of support. The majority of this year’s cohort identify as women of color, and the group represents a range of expertise, from local news and broadcasting to analytics and product design.

“Participating in WLA gave me the much-needed time and space to take a step away from the grind and think about how I want to show up (in my personal and professional lives) and what kind of support/resources/tools I need to do so. It was a gift to be surrounded by a community of other women determined to be one another’s sounding boards for questions ranging from: How do I have this hard conversation with my boss? To... How do I say goodbye to something to open up space for something better?” — Anita Rao, Host and Creator of Embodied, Managing Editor of On-Demand, North Carolina Public Radio WUN

“It’s been a highlight of my career — I feel so lucky to have been on the scheme and the skills I’ve learned will benefit my work and my life beyond that too. The people I’ve met will stay as great contacts and friends — it’s so powerful to connect with a group of like-minded women from around the world, who are so supportive and have similar challenges and goals.” — Louise Ridley, Senior Features Editor, Business, Insider UK
Women’s Leadership Accelerator

“The ONA Women’s Leadership Accelerator program **affirmed for me that I am on the right career trajectory for me.** The experience dovetailed with a period when I was trying to decide if I needed to narrow the scope of my job going forward, and ONA staff and my peers in WLA coached and encouraged me that my multi-faceted role in my newsroom is one I should continue to embrace, rather than feel obligated to pick a lane. — **Lydia Belanger**, Director of Production, Fortune

“The ONA WLA transformed the way I approach my career and **made me analyse what impact I wanted to make on journalism.** Connecting with a group of women at a similar stage in their career has been revolutionary to learn from them and the amazing coaches and mentors we had.”

— **Elaine Okyere**, Assistant Editor, Digital, Sky News
First-Time Managers Training

Moving into a management role can be messy, with plenty of ambiguity to navigate. Many people make the transition without any practical training. In partnership with the Maynard Institute, we launched the First-Time Managers Training to set up for success anyone recently or soon to be promoted to manage staff. This year, 40 budding managers received training on topics such as nurturing an inclusive workplace and understanding the budget process to advocate for direct reports.

Many thanks to the presenters who guided this program:

Martin G. Reynolds, Co-Executive Director – External Affairs and Funding, Maynard Institute

P. Kim Bui, Director of Product and Audience Innovation, The Arizona Republic

Trevor Knoblich, Chief Knowledge Officer, Online News Association

Susan Leath, Consultant

Angilee Shah, CEO and Editor-in-Chief, Charlottesville Tomorrow
Executive Women Leaders Salon

Despite conclusive research that diverse leadership makes organizations more sustainable and resilient, women remain underrepresented in the highest ranks across journalism. This year ONA hosted the Executive Women Leaders Salon for off-the-record conversations on key challenges in the C-suite and to promote peer learning and collaboration.

Salon sessions:

- Setting Organizational Culture
  Intentionally from the Top
  led by Nabiha Syed, CEO, The Markup

- Career Moves in Executive Leadership
  led by Susan Leath

- Building, Retaining and Leading Innovative Teams
  led by Fran Scarlett
SECTION 3
Online Journalism Awards
Online Journalism Awards

The 2023 Online Journalism Awards (OJAs) received 1,594 entries across 23 award categories, a record level of participation in the program. Winners this year included exceptional journalism recognized through two new awards: Topical Reporting: Race, Ethnicity, Gender and Identity and Excellence in Technology Reporting.

The OJAs proudly presented a total of $52,000 to 11 stand-out projects in the categories for science reporting, community-centered journalism, investigative data journalism, climate change reporting and general excellence. The prizes were sponsored by 3M, the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication, the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications, McKinsey Publishing and SmartNews.

ONA also bestowed special awards to five journalists whose work stand out as inspiring examples for their peers and who have created long-lasting impact on the community:

- **Siri Carpenter**, Co-founder and Editor-in-chief of The Open Notebook, honored with the [ONA Community Award](#)
- **Finbarr O'Reilly**, Independent visual journalist and author, honored with the [James Foley Award for Conflict Reporting](#)
- **Jean Friedman-Rudovsky** and **Cassie Haynes**, Co-founders of Resolve Philly, honored with the [Impact Award](#)
- **Digital news pioneer Mandy Jenkins**, posthumously honored with the [Rich Jaroslovsky Founder Award](#).

The community celebrated winners and finalists at the 2023 OJAs banquet and ceremony in Philadelphia, which was hosted by NPR's [Gene Demby](#) and made possible with generous support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.
Online Journalism Awards

More than 200 volunteers make the OJAs possible each year by screening entries, serving on judging panels and supporting the awards ceremony in person. Here’s what a couple of them had to say about the experience:

“Volunteering to judge the OJAs inspires me each year. Diving into entries from newsrooms big and small opens my eyes to courageous, innovative journalism and gives me such hope for our industry. Plus, working with other judges who represent a range of publications is a treat.”
— Rodney Gibbs, Senior Director, Strategy & Innovation, Atlanta Journal-Constitution

“Judging the awards allowed me to lift up out of the day-to-day grind to look at excellence across the industry. It challenged my assumptions and it forced me to think about my own approaches differently.”
— Nation Hahn, Chief of Growth & Founder, EducationNC
SECTION 4

Networks of Support
Idea swaps and networking meetups

We continued to organize virtual and in-person events to connect journalism changemakers who are tackling similar problems. In 2023, these events focused on topics such as implementing AI, accessibility practices in newsrooms, combating misinformation and engagement in broadcasting. We also organized a meetup series for newsletter professionals to swap ideas on growth and revenue strategies, audience engagement and metrics.

“It caught my attention that ONA was concerned about accessibility in the media, because there are few journalism organizations that promote this issue. I have been covering disability issues for many years, and there are few journalists who talk about disability and accessibility, in addition to being few journalists with disabilities. When I read about the virtual workshop on accessibility in the newsletter, I didn’t hesitate to sign up and I was very happy to see that there are more people working in this area. I was happier when I was able to attend ONA23 and witness panels dedicated to these topics.”

— Andrea Medina, Founder and Director, Integrados Chile
ONA Career Day

ONA’s virtual Career Day is all about connecting great journalism talent with recruiters for jobs, internships, fellowships and academic programs. More than 500 people representing many facets of digital media attended this year’s event. The day included live and asynchronous networking, learning sessions related to career development and a Resume Drop.

Select recruiters
HBCU Digital Media Fellowship

Four students were selected to participate in the HBCU Digital Media Fellowship. With support from lead mentor Michael Grant, CEO and Founder of Get Current Studio, they have benefited from opportunities to level up their digital skills and network with industry leaders. All fellows received all-access passes to ONA23 and complimentary one-year memberships to ONA.

- Ianna Fenton, Howard University
- Brelan Holston, Fort Valley State University
- Kyla Hubbard, Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University
- Kiana Stevenson, Clark Atlanta University

“Participating in ONA23 with the HBCU Fellowship gave me more clarity on my path for my career and education. It’s because of ONA that I was able to secure my first job post grad and create meaningful friendships with the other HBCU fellows.”

— Ianna Fenton, now Associate Producer for Bay News 9 in Tampa, Florida
2023 MJ Bear Fellowship

Each year the MJ Bear Fellowship identifies and honors exceptional digital journalists under age 30. Fellows get access to ONA’s annual conference, three-year ONA membership, workshops tailored to the group’s projects and career goals and other opportunities to showcase their talents to the journalism community.

- Laura Anaya-Morga, General Assignment Reporter, Long Beach Post
- Ugur Dursun, Audience Engagement Producer, KQED
- Bertin Huynh, Senior Journalist, BBC News
- Maria Mendez, Service and Engagement Reporter, The Texas Tribune
- Blake Stoner, Founder & Chief Reporter, Vngle Grassroots News Agency
- Alice Wilder, Producer, American Public Media Group

The MJ Bear Fellowship is made possible through generous contributions by the MJ Bear Estate, friends of MJ Bear and ONA, MSN International and Microsoft.
Student Newsroom and Innovation Lab

Twelve volunteer mentors collaborated with 19 students in the Student Newsroom and Innovation Lab to produce multimedia coverage of ONA23. Since 2009, the newsroom has provided a unique opportunity for students to get digital media training and build their professional networks during the annual conference. This year’s group was led by Peg Achterman, Associate Professor of Communication & Journalism, at Seattle Pacific University, and Jaya Franklin, Interim Director of Communications, at Georgia State University College of Law.

ONA23 was an incredible opportunity to network and learn more about the industry ... I was able to produce content about the conference and the surrounding area, and the advice of my mentors has helped me tremendously in my career.”
— Noah Lyons, San Diego State University

The student newsroom was a phenomenal experience. It allowed me to get feedback from professionals while working in a newsroom environment. Also, it gave me confidence in myself and the future of journalism to meet other student journalists.”
— Allison Mawn, University of Georgia

The ONA Student Newsroom changed my entire perspective on journalism! I have never been surrounded by so many passionate student journalists, and they pushed me to be the best version of myself. I will be forever grateful that I was able to be part of this amazing opportunity.”
— Aubrey Rhoadarmer, Seattle Pacific University

The ONA23 Student Newsroom and Innovation Lab was generously supported by Microsoft Start and Democracy Forward, the TEGNA Foundation and Canva.
SECTION 5
Fiscal Sponsorship of The Pivot Fund
Supporting The Pivot Fund’s mission

Following transformative investments in Georgia and South Carolina, The Pivot Fund is poised to broaden its grantmaking footprint across the South as well as explore more local news ecosystems in other regions of the U.S.

Under the guidance of Tracie Powell, a longstanding ONA member, the team is gearing up for landscape analysis in the Great Lakes states to inform The Pivot Fund's grantmaking strategy. Just like in Georgia, The Pivot Fund is on a mission to seek out hidden gems, those trustworthy news sources that fly under the radar of conventional philanthropy.

ONA's expertise in financial and grants administration continues to provide essential support to The Pivot Fund's work. ONA has been instrumental in administering funds, helping to produce reports and aiding in creating a solid grantee cohort experience for newsrooms in Georgia and South Carolina.

Since the start of the fiscal relationship, The Pivot Fund has raised more than $4 million to advance investments in independent, nonpartisan community news outlets led by Black, Indigenous and other journalists of color. The Pivot Fund is in the final stages of securing its 501(c)(3) status, and ONA is excited to extend this fruitful partnership into 2024.
SECTION

In memoriam
In memoriam

ONA lost two visionary community members this year. These leaders played key roles in ONA’s history and growth and supported countless community members in navigating career opportunities amid rapid changes in technology.

**Doug Feaver**  
*(1939-2023)*
ONA co-founder and past president, who brought credibility to ONA in the early years and helped guide The Washington Post’s digital transformation

**Mandy Jenkins**  
*(1980-2023)*
Digital media trailblazer and past ONA board president, who shaped several flagship programs in ONA’s second decade and mentored hundreds of journalists
Acknowledgements
Partners and supporters

Ford Foundation
Democracy Now
Dow Jones Foundation
John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Inasmuch Foundation
Microsoft
Google News Initiative

AFP
AllSides
American Press Institute
American University School of Communication
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Associated Press
Ballard Spahr, LLP
Better Government Association
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JournDAO
Joyce Foundation
Knight-Wallace Fellowships at the University of Michigan
Legitimate
Letterhead
LWC Studios
 McClatchy
Muck Rack
N2 Media Holdings
National Press Club Journalism Institute
NBCUniversal
News Revenue Hub
NewsBreak
NewzDash
OpenOrigins
Outpost
Pew Research Center
Philadelphia Association of Black Journalists
Philadelphia Inquirer
PRConnect
Reddit
Report for America
Reuters
Reynolds Journalism Institute

Rolli LLC
Scripps Journalism Journey / E.W. Scripps Company
Sinclair Broadcast Group
SmartNews
SnapStream
SocialFlow by Piano
Spectrum News
Stacker
Stand Together Communications
Study Hall / OutVoice
Stylebot
Syracuse University, Newhouse School of Public
Communications
Tagboard
Tansa Systems LLC
TEGNA
TEGNA Foundation
Temple University, Klein College of Media and
Communication
The Associated Press
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution
The Carter Center
The Carpenter Family Charitable Fund
The Diversity Pledge Institute
The E.W. Scripps Company
The Janssen Pharmaceutical Companies of Johnson
& Johnson
The Lenfest Institute for Journalism
The Marshall Project
The New York Times
The Tiffany Shackelford Foundation
The Wall Street Journal
The Washington Post
Trisolute NewsDashboard
University of Florida College of Journalism and
Communications
University of Maryland Philip Merrill College of Journalism
University of Oregon School of Journalism and
Communication
USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism
Viafoura
WHYY
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
WordPress VIP
YESEO
YouTube
Staff and Consultants

**Staff**
LaSharah S. Bunting, CEO and Executive Director
Trevor Knoblich, Chief Knowledge Officer
Jessica Strelitz, Chief Strategic Partnerships Officer
Lauren Anderson, Events and Membership Manager
Carrie Blazina, Communications Manager
Bill Brady, Strategic Partnerships Coordinator
Liz Leith, Director of Finance and Administration
Diana López, Program Coordinator
Meghan Murphy, Director of Programs
Kelsey Proud, Learning Director
Karolle Rabarison, Director of Communications
Hollie Schultz, Director of Awards and Community Resources

**Consultants**
Stephanie Backus
ONA23 Volunteer Coordinator
Julia DiLaura
Development
Brian Duff
ONA23 Learning Consultant
Bridget Gallagher
Development
Tran Ha
Women’s Leadership Accelerator
Hanaa Rifaey
Partnerships Consultant
Leah Rush
Registration and Operations
Alison Schary
General Counsel
Cornershop Creative
Web Consultant
Manami Kano
Development
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Graham Watson-Ringo
Senior Director of Member Strategy, News Revenue Hub

Elana Zak
Head of Newsletters, POLITICO
Get Involved
Join us in 2024

WEEKLY UPDATES

Subscribe to the ONA Weekly newsletter to stay updated about the latest opportunities and resources from ONA.

PARTNERSHIPS

If you are interested in exploring partnerships and other ways to invest in ONA’s programs and events, contact Head of Strategic Partnerships Hanaa Rifaey at hanaa@journalists.org

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

ONA membership connects you with the leading thinkers and doers in the media industry, plus discounted or complimentary access to training, conferences and practical resources. Become a member to help sustain our mission to inspire and support innovation in digital journalism.