

ONLINE NEWS
ASSOCIATION

25th

ANNIVERSARY
2024 RETROSPECTIVE

ABOUT ONA

DRIVING INNOVATION IN DIGITAL JOURNALISM

The Online News Association (ONA) convenes and equips digital innovators and newsroom leaders with the resources they need to drive a sustainable journalism industry. Our programs advance newsrooms' understanding of how digital spaces have changed access to information, deliver practical training and connect changemakers within the industry to each other.

ONA has been guiding digital transitions since its founding in 1999. Our early members were among the few in their organizations who saw the internet's potential to strengthen journalism, at a time when many viewed online news as less credible than print or broadcast. ONA has led the industry to explore emerging opportunities and served as a resources hub for numerous journalists through multiple cycles of significant transformation. These disruptions have included the decline of legacy print outlets, the rise and fall of social media platforms and in more recent years, the emergence of news influencers, a shift to independent creator journalism and the rapid mainstreaming of generative artificial intelligence.

In 2024, as we marked ONA's 25th anniversary, our programming centered a key lesson from this experience: Journalism must actively define and shape technology's role in our field rather than the other way around. From supporting ethical and effective AI implementation to guiding journalists through the implications on their careers, our work created tangible, positive change for individual journalists, their organizations and the communities they serve.

Explore the 2024 highlights in this retrospective and get excited to embark on another year of learning and building solutions together.

If your organization is interested in getting involved in 2025, contact:

HANAA RIFAEY

HEAD OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

hanaa@journalists.org

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AI IN JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

As artificial intelligence reshapes how our society accesses and understands news and information, ONA has been an essential, trusted resource for journalists and newsroom leaders to adapt and embrace the opportunities. The **AI in Journalism Initiative** draws on ONA's 25 years of experience supporting the journalism industry to reflect the best practices necessary to create positive change:

- **Broad understanding and buy-in at all levels and functions**, rather than a single expert or team tasked with “figuring out” emerging technology within an organization
- **Clear benchmarks for excellence**, showcasing ethical and effective uses for AI through case studies, templates and guides to best practices
- **Room to experiment**, in low-risk spaces where members can learn together and bridge training with implementation.

In 2024, the initiative reached **2,792 individual participants** representing **over 1,500 organizations** across our programming.



I'm really grateful that ONA is taking a leadership role on gathering people in newsrooms working on innovation . . . it's good for us all to be connected in this moment.

– AI EXECUTIVE SUMMIT ATTENDEE

Funding for ONA's AI in Journalism Initiative is generously provided by **Microsoft**, the **Patrick J. McGovern Foundation** and **The Joyce Foundation**.



Driving AI literacy across newsrooms, functions and the industry

Core to our strategy with the AI in Journalism Initiative is advancing AI literacy throughout the news industry, in a variety of roles and levels. ONA developed a robust slate of practical training sessions to increase fluency in generative AI technology. Since February 2024, we've hosted **39 practical training sessions** online and in person, reaching more than **1,700 individuals**.

The curriculum takes a clear-eyed view of the ethical and trust issues while also focusing on ways the technology can be used in a practical sense. We've also led three pilot in-person practical training workshops on AI tools and how they work—two at ONA24 in Atlanta in September and one in August in Chicago. Throughout our programming, we encouraged participants to take the recordings, exercises and resources from the sessions back to their organizations and communities.

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

91%

of respondents to an end-of-year survey shared that they are more knowledgeable about AI thanks to ONA

84%

of respondents had applied what they learned through ONA's AI programming in their work

2,553

Views on the session recordings have vastly outperformed recorded content from other programs, garnering 2,553 views across the practical training series.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAID

"It was rare for me to attend an [ONA AI initiative] training and not have a takeaway I could bring back to the newsroom. We have a Slack channel with lots of people interested in AI from across the newsroom, and I'd drop in takeaways, and share notes with various editors who had questions about AI. It was a tool for internal culture change — helping people see the value in the technology."

— SENIOR STRATEGY DIRECTOR FROM A U.S. NATIONAL NEWS ORGANIZATION

"One of the biggest things I gained was learning what the tools are, how people are using them, what are the pros and cons, understanding the language around AI, how people are approaching ethics policies, ways to incorporate it in newsrooms...

I've been able to broaden my own thinking, but I've also been able to bring ideas back to my organization, where there's a lot of hesitation. Folks don't have the time or capacity to dive into these things themselves."

— CHRISTINA BRUNO, SPOTLIGHT PA

Advancing best practices in AI across the industry

We've taken a unique approach to serve as a hub for the industry's foremost thinking around AI through community building, partnerships, recognition and storytelling.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The **AI Innovator Collaborative** brings together journalists actively experimenting with AI to learn from one another. In 2024, **over 280 ONA members** joined monthly gatherings to discuss topics such as business and operational uses, trust and transparency, evaluating tools and career development. The group is steadily growing, while re-engaging a consistent community with each meeting.

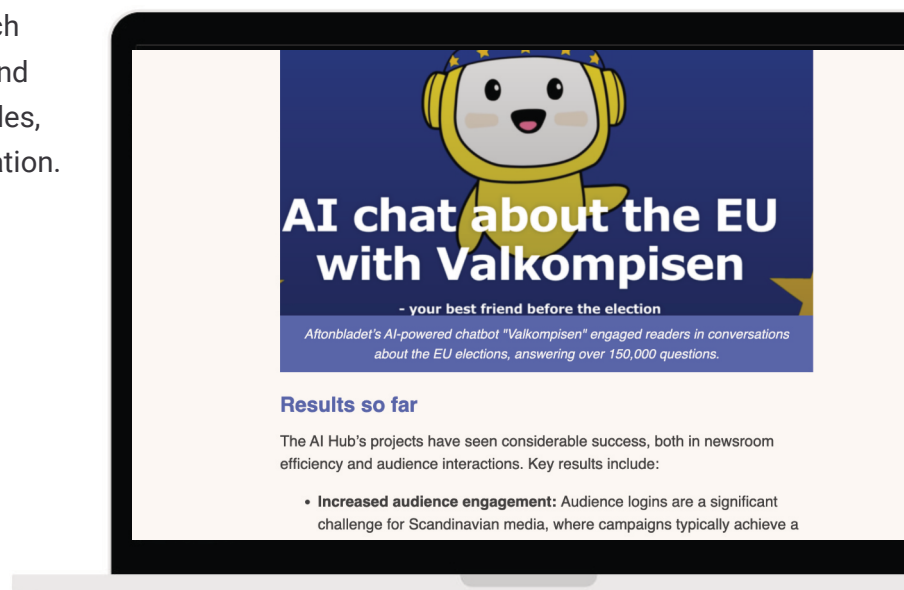
INSIGHTS FOR MANAGERS AND EXECUTIVES

Driving the conversation around AI's impact on newsrooms, ONA led seven thought leadership sessions that considered legal and copyright issues, visual journalism, trust, ethics, research, digital provenance and newsroom readiness. In September, we gathered 120 newsroom leaders for our first **AI Executive Summit**, held during the ONA annual conference, to discuss strategies for operationalizing AI. The summit covered partnerships and business strategies, a research overview on AI's impact on the news industry and blueprints to help leaders identify critical job roles, training needs and practical steps for AI integration.

CASE STUDIES FROM THE NEWSROOM

In collaboration with **Nikita Roy**, ICFJ Fellow, AI futurist and host of Newsroom Robots, we published **10 case studies** highlighting specific ways news organizations are building and using AI tools. In all, **2,026 people** subscribed to the **AI in the Newsroom** email series, with an average open rate of 57%, well above Mailchimp's media and publishing industry benchmark of 34%. To complement the written series, we hosted live sessions with several of the newsrooms to share more about what they built and how, as well as discuss questions from the community. **Over 500 people** attended at least one session in the case study event series.

Featured teams: iTromsø, Hearst DevHub, Der Spiegel, Zamaneh Media, Radio-Canada, Bayerischer Rundfunk, Aftonbladet, THE CITY, BBC World Service, Times of India



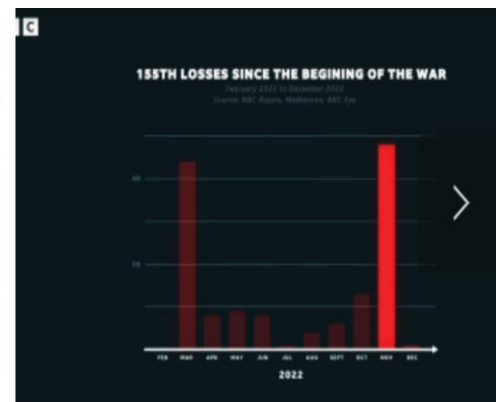
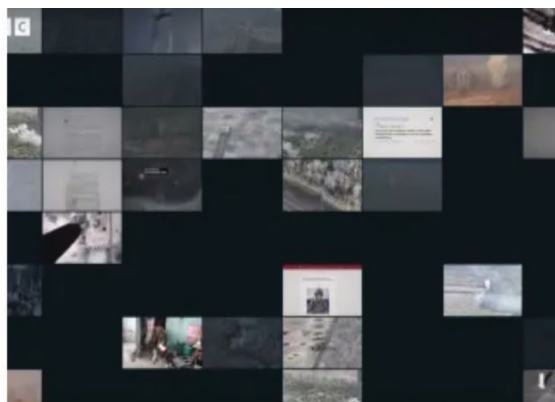
AUDIENCE TRUST AND TRANSPARENCY

ONA partnered with **Trusting News** to develop best practices around transparency and communication on AI use with audiences. Trusting News had a strong framework for communicating with audiences about the work journalists do, but they needed to test how this framework applied to AI use and disclosure.

We recruited from ONA's community to build a cohort of **10 newsrooms** that worked with the experts at Trusting News to test audience communication strategies on AI use. The participating newsrooms collected more than 6,000 audience survey responses measuring attitudes towards different tested messaging around AI use. With the results, Trusting News developed a [toolkit of best practices and resources for newsrooms](#) to use in conversation with their communities about AI use. ONA has hosted three sessions with Trusting News so far, online and in person, to share the findings and resources across the community.

RECOGNIZING AI INNOVATION

The 2024 Online Journalism Awards introduced a new category to recognize [Excellence in AI Innovation](#). The award honors an individual or organization that has implemented AI tools to improve newsroom productivity, accessibility, news gathering and/or audience engagement. Judges selected one winner and two finalists projects from 19 entries. The [winning entry from the BBC](#) used [AI in an open-source investigation](#) of a Russian military unit deployed in Ukraine. The finalists were from **THE CITY**, a project that used ChatGPT to [analyze their own coverage of New York City's neighborhoods](#) to hold themselves accountable to their reporting mission for all New Yorkers, and **YESEO**, a Slack app created by Reynolds Journalism Institute fellow Ryan Restivo to [help newsrooms with headline writing](#).



BUILDING THE FIELD WITH PARTNERSHIPS AND COALITIONS

Programming for the AI in Journalism Initiative highlighted and engaged diverse collaborators throughout the year. They were experts from small local newsrooms, large legacy media institutions, technology companies, foundations, media associations, universities and other organizations looking to amplify digital innovation. Collaborators have included Journalists' Toolbox, Poynter Institute, The Globe and Mail, National Press Photographers Association, Newsroom Robots, The New York Times, Poynter Institute, TulipAI, Reddit, Hacks/Hackers American Journalism Project, Spotlight PA, Hearken and others.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY SAID

“This is a time of upheaval, and this community gives me a sense of which way the wind is blowing. I can’t overstate how important it is to hear about what other smart people are observing, to either reinforce or question what I’m seeing, and know if what I’m doing is in line with best practice.”

— AI STRATEGY LEADER FOR A NETWORK OF LOCAL NEWS ORGANIZATIONS



The regular cadence of meetings, case studies and communication from ONA has helped bring AI front of mind for me in news cycles that are like drinking from a firehose. It’s a hopeful and effective step back, to refocus on flexing that muscle a bit: skill development, looking forward, innovating.

— AI INNOVATOR COLLABORATIVE MEMBER WORKING IN BROADCAST NEWS

“As usual with ONA, the [AI Initiative] has so many ways for me to connect with other people who do very similar work ... to both be a resource and ask for help.”

— BETH O’MALLEY, DIGITAL PRESENTATION EDITOR, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

“I work with many publishers that are grappling with how to integrate or work with AI. The perspectives gained at the [AI Executive Summit] give me the confidence to speak with some knowledge about the issues.”

— IAN KENNEDY, VP, CUSTOMER SUCCESS, SIMPLEFEED



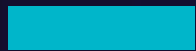
Driving experimentation

ONA’s AI programming inspired and informed interesting experiments in newsrooms of all sizes. Some of our favorite projects include a personalized media sales kit to show clients why their advertising reach is unique; using AI as a research assistant ahead of interviews; answering questions about voting and elections; and supporting video creation to expand local news coverage.

Throughout 2024, ONA hosted a series of highly interactive 45-minute sessions called **Mini Labs** designed to guide attendees in experimenting with AI tools. Mini Labs focused on image generation, research, pitch development, prompt writing, audio and more. For each session, a facilitator designed a brief exercise for attendees to get hands-on experience and talk with the group about the results. **Nearly 1,000 individuals** attended at least one Mini Lab session.

A strategy leader at a large news organization shared: “It reminds me of the early days of digital transformation: Many of us don’t quite know how we should prioritize, what are the best use cases, where to spend our time and where it isn’t worth it. Hearing people who had been experimenting already share their lessons saved us a lot of time and helped us prioritize. It’s as beneficial to hear about failures as successes.”

SESSION RECORDINGS



Clickable to view a recording.



*Represent in-person or non-recorded sessions
and clickable to view a description.*

INTRODUCTORY SESSIONS

**AI Innovator Collaborative:
Kickoff Meeting**
Feb. 13, 2024

Intro to AI Tools Part I
Feb. 28, 2024

Intro to AI Tools Part II
April 24, 2024

Prompt Writing
May 22, 2024

Prompt Writing Mini Lab
June 5, 2024

AI Tools Workshop in Chicago
Aug. 28, 2024

AI Tools Workshop at ONA24
Sept. 21, 2024

DEEPER DIVES

**AI Innovator Collaborative:
Trust and Transparency around AI Use**
April 9, 2024

**AI Innovator Collaborative:
Our Favorite AI Tools**
May 14, 2024

**Ask Nikita Roy
All your Newsroom AI Questions**
June 4, 2024

**AI Innovator Collaborative:
Evaluating AI Tools**
June 11, 2024

AI + Transparency
June 14, 2024

**Research Update:
AI's Impact on Newsrooms**
July 31, 2024

**AI Innovator Collaborative:
Building Your Career in AI**
Aug. 13, 2024

**What Smaller Orgs Can Teach
Everyone About AI and Trust**
Sept. 19, 2024

**In Conversation With Reddit's
Jonathan Flesher, at ONA24**
Sept. 19, 2024

**Trusted Messengers:
Journalism In The Age of Chat Apps**
Sept. 19, 2024

**What Does The Public Think
of How You Will (and Won't) Use AI?**
Sept. 19, 2024

**AI Innovator Collaborative Meetup
at ONA24**
Sept. 19, 2024

**Fighting For What's Real: What's Now
And Next For Digital Provenance**
Sept. 20, 2024

Lessons From the AI Journalism Lab
Sept. 20, 2024

**Designing the Future Newsroom
Workshop: AI in 2030**
Sept. 21, 2024

**AI Innovator Collaborative:
Conference Recaps**
Oct. 8, 2024

**AI, Copyright and Legal
Considerations for Journalists,
Freelancers and News Organizations**
Oct. 10, 2024

**AI Innovator Collaborative:
Local News and AI**
Nov. 12, 2024

AI X VISUAL JOURNALISM

AI and Visual Journalism: Ethics, tech, copyright and more considerations for newsrooms and photojournalists
— May 30, 2024

Image Creation
June 18, 2024

AI Innovator Collaborative: Visual Journalism and AI
July 9, 2024

Image Creation Mini Lab
July 10, 2024

FakeSpotting: Verifying visuals in the age of generative
July 23, 2024

AI for Video Journalists
Aug. 19, 2024

AI for Video Journalists Mini Lab
Aug. 22, 2024

How Strong Is Your AI Spidey Sense? Skills for Detecting AI in Imagery and Sound
Sept. 20, 2024

Unlocking the AI-Editorial Hybrid Approach to Journalistic Curation
Sept. 20, 2024

AI X NEWS ROLES

AI Innovator Collaborative: Business and Operational Uses for AI
March 12, 2024

AI and Factchecking in an Election Year
March 20, 2024

AI Tools for Research Mini Lab
May 7, 2024

AI and Audience Engagement
May 8, 2024

AI for Grant Writing Mini Lab
July 17, 2024

AI for Audio Journalism
July 24, 2024

AI + Audio Mini Lab
Aug. 15, 2024

AI for Educators
July 29, 2024

AI and Data Journalism
Aug. 8, 2024

AI Readiness for Executives Workshop
Aug. 29, 2024

AI Executive Summit: Operationalizing AI
Sept. 18, 2024

A Journalist's Guide To Using Perplexity For Research
Sept. 18, 2024

Leadership in the Age of AI
Sept. 19, 2024

Beyond Hype & Alarmism: Elevating AI Coverage in the Newsroom
Sept. 19, 2024

Ethical Journalism Across Every Beat in the Era of AI
Sept. 19, 2024

A Journalist's Guide to Ethical Generative AI Use
Sept. 20, 2024

AI For Educators Workshop at ONA24
Sept. 21, 2024

AI Innovator Collaborative: Prioritizing Budget and Vetting Tools
December 10, 2024

CASE STUDIES

Case Study: What we can learn about AI and elections from the world's biggest election
Sept. 5, 2024

Case Study: iTromsø
Sept. 11, 2024

Case Study: Hearst DevHub
Oct. 3, 2024

Case Study: Zamaneh Media
Oct. 9, 2024

Case Study: Enhancing Fact-Checking with AI at Der Spiegel
Nov. 1, 2024

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 2024 Online News Association Conference (ONA24) gathered **over 1,500 leaders in journalism and technology** in Atlanta from Sept. 18-21. Attendees represented an array of roles and expertise, including newsroom roles at organizations ranging from digital websites to local television stations, news product specialists, executive management, educators, entrepreneurs and experts working in journalism support organizations (e.g. foundations, associations, research institutes).

ONA24 programming delivered fresh insights on journalism leadership and emerging technologies, including AI. This year's schedule emphasized practical training, workshops diving into topics that will impact every role in journalism in the next few years and many opportunities to build meaningful connections in person.

Learning sessions

ONA24 offered 51 standard learning sessions that were largely shaped by pitches from community members. Across all sessions, **52% of ONA24 speakers identify as people of color**, well above the 40% marker at ONA23 and 38% at ONA22.

In-depth workshops

We bookended the four-day schedule with longer, focused workshops, including the **AI Executive Summit**, designed to guide leaders through operationalizing AI in newsrooms; a **creator journalism workshop**, to support experienced journalists with an action plan for going solo; a **four-part training for first-time managers**; and a full-day series on journalists' safety, with comprehensive advice from securing communications to building peer support. ONA convened nearly a dozen industry organizations to serve as hosts and collaborate on programming for many of these workshops.



Networking Meetups

New this year, we dedicated significant blocks of time on Thursday and Friday for casual networking meetups to connect attendees with similar work roles and interests, and invited community members to pitch topics as part of the conference Suggestion Box process. In all, we organized **22 meetups**, including for climate journalists, local news researchers, founders and entrepreneurs, project managers, newsletter professionals and journalists in the U.S. South.



Startup Alley

The Startup Alley within the **ONA24 Midway** is a unique opportunity for attendees to discover some of the most exciting innovations in products and services for journalism. **Eight startups** were selected to showcase their solutions and connect directly with ONA community members: elvex, Everlit, Featured.com, GlueLetter, The Hyperlocal News Network, InPress and The Institute for Independent Journalists.

ONA24 VOLUNTEER PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The program committee is a volunteer group of news leaders who review committee submissions and design programming for ONA's annual conference. We're grateful for their generous contributions.

Benét Wilson

DIRECTOR, POYNTER/STAND TOGETHER

Beth O'Malley

DIGITAL PRESENTATION EDITOR, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Blake Stoner

FOUNDER AND CHIEF REPORTER, VNGLE GRASSROOTS NEWS AGENCY

Clara Soteras,

DIRECTOR OF SEO AND PRODUCT, EL NACIONAL

Davar Ardalan

FOUNDER, TULIPAI

Elizabeth Wiley

DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL CONTENT, KING 5

Holly Morris

DIGITAL TRAINER, NPR

John Levitt

CO-FOUNDER, ELVEX AI

Joni Deutsch

VICE PRESIDENT, PODCAST MARKETING AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT, THE PODGLOMERATE

Krishan Kuruppu

NEWS DATA ANALYST, BLOOMBERG

Kristen Reed

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Leigh Munsil

EDITOR IN CHIEF, SAN ANTONIO REPORT

Nicole Hernandez

NEWS EDITOR, AUDIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT TEAM, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Patrick Boehler

SELF-EMPLOYED/PRINCIPAL, GAZZETTA

Rodney Gibb

HEAD OF PRODUCT AND AUDIENCE, THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR LOCAL NEWS; AND ONA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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PRODUCER, NBC UNIVERSAL

Stella Payne

JOURNALISM PROFESSOR, KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY

Tracy Maher

DIRECTOR OF TV DIGITAL OPERATIONS, HUBBARD BROADCASTING

Wendy Sawatzky

ASSOCIATE EDITOR DIGITAL NEWS, WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

ONA24 SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

We extend special thanks to the [65 sponsors, exhibitors and funders](#) who helped to bring the annual conference to life. They include news publishers, established and startup technology companies, journalism support groups, major foundations, academic institutions, research institutes and other organizations aligned with the mission to drive innovation in journalism.

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Women's Leadership Accelerator

The 2024 Women's Leadership Accelerator selected 26 journalism changemakers for an intensive leadership training and coaching program. The cohort includes women who have demonstrated a deep understanding of the digital journalism landscape and are actively creating positive change within their organizations and/or the industry at large. Members represent a range of journalism expertise and serve audiences from Omaha, Nebraska, to Beirut, Lebanon and the majority of them identify as women of color.

In addition to training on leadership styles and organizational change, personalized one-on-one coaching sessions, and a collaborative in-person workshop, cohort members also benefit from both organized and informal opportunities to connect with the accelerator's powerful community of alums, speakers and mentors. This year's program engaged over 20 speakers and coaches with wide-ranging expertise across digital media, including **Vera Bergengruen**, National Security Reporter at The Wall Street Journal; **Ashley Alvarado**, President & CEO at Texas Public Radio; **Kaitlyn Jakola**, Editorial Director of Strategy and Operations at the Chicago Sun-Times; **Keiko Morris**, Director of Journalism Recruiting at The New York Times; and **Kendall Trammell**, Director of Distribution & Weekend Programming at CNN.

WHAT COHORT MEMBERS SAID

"WLA was truly life-changing for me. I never thought I'd be accepted into this program and it really came at the right time. I have already recommended the program to several other women and I hope to stay involved in the community for years to come."

"This was such a joy-filled experience for me. I came away feeling empowered, listened to and more adept at navigating my media career."



Being part of this community is something I'll never take for granted. It inspired, motivated, and taught me valuable lessons that I'll carry with me for a long time. Most importantly, I've built meaningful connections with other powerful women, and I'm thankful for a space where I can ask any question and receive thoughtful, kind advice. I was accepted into this program during a time when uncertainty ruled my mind but now I feel stronger and back on my feet.



2024 COHORT

Andrea Waner

DIRECTOR OF ENGAGEMENT, ASSOCIATION OF HEALTH CARE JOURNALISTS

Anna Kook

FIELD PRODUCER & HOST, AJ+

Annie Connell-Bryan

SUPERVISING PLANNING EDITOR, POLITICO

Casey Silvestri

HEAD OF DIGITAL + SOCIAL VIDEO, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ciara Lee

AUDIENCE MANAGER, NEBRASKA JOURNALISM TRUST

Desirée García

DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL CONTENT, EFE NEWS AGENCY

Farah Miller

STRATEGY AND OPERATIONS DEPUTY, CULTURE AND LIFESTYLE, THE NEW YORK TIMES

Fernanda Braune Brackenrich

US EDITOR, AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT, FINANCIAL TIMES

Gaby Brenes

TRAINING AND MEDIA DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN, INSTITUTE FOR WAR AND PEACE REPORTING

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KNIGHT FELLOW, AI JOURNALISM LAB PROGRAM
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PRODUCER, EARLY CHILDHOOD, LAIST

Stephanie Serrano

AUDIO DOCUMENTARIAN AND STORY EDITOR

Zia Thompson

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT EDITOR, BLOOMBERG



Digital Women Leaders

Digital Women Leaders (DWL), the popular one-on-one mentorship resource created by journalism consultant Katie Hawkins-Gaar in 2018, is now part of ONA. With over 150 leaders volunteering their expertise, DWL makes mentorship more accessible for women and non-gender binary people working in journalism. People looking for support can find mentors by journalism expertise and career-related topics, from audience engagement strategies to transitioning into leadership positions.



ONLINE JOURNALISM AWARDS

The Online Journalism Awards (OJAs) have set the standards for excellence and innovation in digital journalism for 25 years. The 2024 awards received **1,280 entries** and celebrated standout projects in climate reporting, community engagement, visual storytelling, partnerships and collaborations, AI innovation (new this year) and 18 other categories.

Winners in six of the categories received a total of \$57,000 in prize money, thanks to generous support from award sponsors The University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications, 3M, the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication's Agora Journalism Center, McKinsey Publishing, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and SmartNews.

Community members gathered for a celebratory luncheon and ceremony, hosted by CNN anchor and correspondent **Amara Walker**, on Friday, Sept. 20, in Atlanta. The ceremony included special honors for the 2024 recipients of the ONA Community Award, the Impact Award and the James Foley Award for Conflict Reporting. These awards look beyond individual journalism projects to recognize individuals or small groups who have contributed long-lasting impact to the industry and serve as exceptional examples and inspiration for their peers.

Benét J. Wilson

Veteran aviation, travel and finance journalist and former ONA board member, honored with the [ONA Community Award](#).

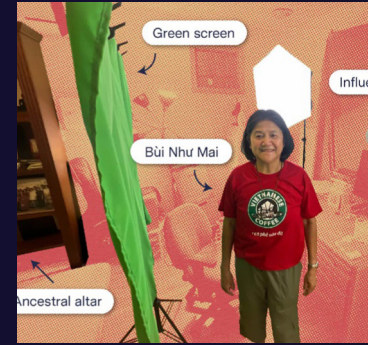
Sarah Alvarez

Founder and Editor-in-Chief of Outlier Media, and Candice Fortman, John S. Knight Journalism Fellow at Stanford University and former Executive Director of Outlier Media, jointly honored with the [Impact Award](#).

Loay Ayyoub

Freelance Palestinian photojournalist from Gaza, honored with the [James Foley Award for Conflict Reporting](#).





ADVANCING JOURNALISM CAREERS

HBCU Digital Media Fellowship

Six journalism students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities were selected to receive hands-on training and mentorship as part of the HBCU Digital Media Fellowship at ONA24, led by **Michael Grant**.



- **Asia Alexander**, Journalism Major, Howard University
- **Alyssa Cooper**, Broadcast Journalism Major, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University
- **Kylar Gray**, English Major, Spelman College
- **Mikekel Robinson**, M.A. Professional Communication & Digital Media, Texas Southern University
- **Sydney Rencher**, a Professional Communication and Digital Media Major at Texas Southern University
- **Zora Thomas**, Mass Communication Major, Xavier University of Louisiana

Fellows received conference passes to join the ONA community in person Atlanta during ONA24. Each one also received a complimentary one-year membership to ONA to access free or discounted training and resources to support their careers.



Practical guidance for aspiring creator journalists

Recognizing the valuable role solo practitioners play in the media ecosystem, ONA hosted a deep-dive workshop in Atlanta for experienced, mid-career journalists considering striking out on their own on Substack, YouTube or other online platforms. The Going Solo: Creator Journalism Workshop guided attendees towards a clear action plan to become independent creators with insights from four experts who have been there:

Ryan Kellett, 2025 Nieman-Berkman Fellow for Journalism Innovation at Harvard University, who previously led audience engagement for Axios and The Washington Post

Liz Kelly Nelson, who led audio as well as revenue and operations strategies at Vox before transitioning to consulting as a Journalism Audience, Business and Content Strategist and launching the Project C, a newsletter about and for creator journalists

Caitlin Dewey, freelance journalist and writer of the newsletter Links I would GChat You If We Were Friends, who worked over a decade as a reporter for The Buffalo News and The Washington Post

Blair Hickman, former content and audience engagement leader for newsrooms like Vox, The Marshall Project and ProPublica, and now offering consulting and strategic advisory services through Ida Media.

Building on this experience, our facilitators launched an expanded, six-week version tailored to journalists looking to launch a newsletter business. The online workshop includes weekly 90-minute sessions that cover areas such as audience building, revenue streams and ethics.

Career advice sessions

Professional development opportunities during ONA's annual conference included small-group, career advice sessions aimed at early- and mid-career professionals. In all, **17 industry leaders volunteered their time** to meet with 99 attendees.

ONA Career Center

Newsroom employers, fellowship directors and graduate school programs count on ONA's [Career Center](#) throughout the year to discover journalism talent and build standout teams. Frequent recruiters this year included The Seattle Times, Arizona State University, Oregon Public Broadcasting, States Newsroom and ProPublica.

Training for first-time managers

For the second year, the annual conference offered an add-on workshop for mid-career professionals moving into their first management role. Hosted in collaboration with the Maynard Institute for Journalism Education, the workshop guided participants through common challenges, including managing difficult conversations and building power and influence.

Thanks to the inspiring presenters who guided this year's group:

- **Evelyn Hsu**, Co-Executive Director Maynard Institute
- **Jean Marie Brown**, Associate Professor of Professional Practice, Texas Christian University
- **Kim Bui**, Consultant
- **Felecia Henderson**, Director of Cultural Competency, Maynard Institute
- **Martin Reynolds**, Co-Executive Director Maynard Institute

Support for mid-career professionals

Mid-career professionals deserve tailored support for the particular layers of politics, stakeholders and responsibilities they need to navigate when they hit a career funk. During ONA24 in Atlanta, we brought in experts from Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY to facilitate the **Find Your Mid-Career Groove** workshop. **Marie Gilot**, J+ Executive Director, and **Kyle Plantz**, Senior Program Manager, guided attendees through frameworks and tools to find their North Star and stand out amongst their leaders, peers and direct reports.



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