

Josh Hatch, The Chronicle of Higher Education

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

Thanks for joining us for It's All Journalism. We're joined today by Joshua Hatch. Josh is the senior editor of data and interactives at the [Chronicle of Higher Education](#). He's also on the board at the [Online News Association](#) and an adjunct professor of journalism at American University here in D.C., where Mike and I met him. Previously at USA Today and the Sunlight Foundation.

Thanks for coming in and joining us.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Thanks for having me.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

And Josh, we have with you Julie O'Donoghue, who's a graduate student at Northwestern. She's actually going to be working at ... where is it you're going to be working in South Africa?

Julia O'Donoghue, graduate student, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern

It's called *Business Day*.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

I worked with her at the *Connection Newspapers* in Northern Virginia.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

Josh, you've been at the *Chronicle of Higher Education* for an entire month now. I know it's new, but what are you doing there? Why did you go there and what exciting things are happening?

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

I'm building a team, as the title suggests, of data interactives, and the idea is to, you know, how can we leverage digital platforms to tell stories and use all the data that's in higher education or data that we want to gather about higher education. I can talk a little about a new project we just launched. And, how can we help more engaging, more interactive stories online that takes advantage of the unique capabilities of browsers and digital platforms and mobile and tablets and touch and all the things that people are doing.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

It's data-vis for students to use as tools or more for higher education like for colleges and universities to use to understand what's happening among students?

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

The Chronicle for Higher Education is a newspaper that covers higher education, so it's for —

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Hence the name.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Hence the name. By that what I mean is in the same way that ESPN covers sports. They're covering everything from the rapid change of technology is bringing to higher education, as it is to everything else, with these massive online classes that you can take, like [Coursera](https://www.coursera.org) and things like that, to changing the feelings in academia about tenure and the role of adjuncts and so on. And so, what we're trying to do is how can we, and I think this is true for all news organizations, how can you use the unique capabilities of these digital platforms to tell these stories in a more engaging and more informative ways. So, it's not so much for students as it is for people in higher education and telling stories that make sense to them.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Why is it so difficult for data to get to people? What's keeping this stuff from getting to people in a recognizable way?

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

In terms of ...

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

That's a big question, Michael.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

It's a big question. I know. A few months ago when I started hearing about big data, it was, "What does that mean? Does that mean all of this stuff that's collected by the government or by like a foundation or whatever about something or other and they're trying to get it out in a way that's relatable to people?" For a journalist, that's something kind of really important. Sometimes in that data there are important stories that need to be told, but the data it itself is not telling the story. It needs to be sort of presented in a way.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Sure, sure. So, you can look at data in a couple of different ways. One is that you'll see big data dumps from government or organizations or what have you or, for that matter, you can open up the sports page and see box scores, and some people will actually engage — or stock pages, for example — will engage with that data. But generally speaking, people are story driven, and so, the key is finding stories in the data to tell.

It's one thing to, for example, say that the stock market did this on a given day or went down 300 points or something, but without context or a story to go with it, a lot of people don't really know what to make of it. And so, taking it away from stocks or from sports and making it about almost anything else, higher education, for example, when you are able to start using data to tell stories that's where you're able to connect with people.

I think that one of the things that's happening is, especially in digital platforms, is that you can make data more relatable. And so, for example, there's a project that we just released this week called the [Adjunct Project](#) ... and it's all about how much adjuncts make and their working conditions, myself include. And so, there are about 3,800 institutions of higher learning, two-year and four-year, public and private, profit, non-profit institutions, and, of course, in each of those, you have the departments, at the School of Communication at AU and journalism at Medill and others, art departments and English departments and history and so on. And so, we're crowdsourcing all this data and we're asking adjuncts to submit how much they make, do they belong to a union, are they getting health benefits, and so on. We have a big database of that. But, where it becomes useful for people is putting that in some kind of context.

So what are some of the questions you might want to ask about it? Well, how much do some adjuncts make? What's the most an adjunct makes? I can tell you we have a submission of \$20,000. That's pretty good. And then we have some that are making like less than \$1,000, and these are like for three-credit classes. That's a pretty broad, you know, spectrum. How much are they making? Do Ivy Leagues pay more or do certain departments pay more or do certain areas pay more? Or, if I'm in the D.C. area and I'm interested in the English department of the dozen or so institutions of higher learning around here, how much do they pay? And so, we can make these comparisons and we can make these relationships and then you're able to start telling stories and answering questions.

That's the other thing I would say. Data for data's sake, I think, is not all that valuable. It's where data is a service to you and answers a question. And we engage in this every day. You wake up in the morning and you asked yourself or you look outside, "What's the weather?" That's actually a datapoint, a couple of datapoints. It's sunny and it's 48 degrees.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

So nerdy, I love it.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

I'm going to bring a sweater and a cap. And so, you're getting data that you can then act on. The same is true of adjuncts or the same might be true with knowing the point spread of a game or it might be what stock is tanking or whatever. I think a lot of times data is really a step towards answering a question, solving a problem, that sort of thing.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Just going with the example that you give, if I looked at a website and various comparative salaries of adjuncts, I would start asking myself, "What about other types of questions you could ask?" You could ask, "How does a particular school perform academically compared to other schools?" And try to reach those relationships between salary levels and economics of a particular area. Where does it end, because you can always ask tons of different questions?

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

That's what's great about it. That's what's fun and that's what's hard.

Take, for example, where I used to be, at the [Sunlight Foundation](#). These are the sorts of things that they have to work through all the time. There are a lot of challenges with it. So, one of the questions the Sunlight Foundation is interested in asking or getting people to ask is, "What is the influence that this entity, this person or this company or this lobbyist or what have you, has on the political process?" There's lots of ways that you can have influence. You can give money. You can sit on government advisory boards. Many other things, and, you can be a bundler, whatever. Those are all going to be different databases out there, right? Or different ways of getting into that information. And the challenge is how do you make those databases relate to each other? How can you find a field that all share in common.?

For example, one field might be the name of a company. Unfortunately, that's not as precise as you might think it is, cause some might call it, just to pull a name out of a hat, Exxon. But some might call it Exxon-Mobil or some might call it Exxon Corp., or whatever. So, then you want to start creating IDs. The point is, that you're right, the cool thing is that you can make all these connections and all this context and do really interesting things with that. In reality, it ends up being a lot harder because everybody doesn't share the same sensibilities of organization and anal-retentiveness about IDs and all that stuff. It's a challenge.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

It think the most popular stories online, the big projects that we've seen from *The [New York] Times* and *The Washington Post* and *The L.A. Times* have had these very complex data visualizations and they're great. But obviously, they're time intensive, they take a lot of time to put together. Do you think that reporters are underusing data-vis just be-

cause maybe they don't understand it or because of the time it takes? Or do you think they're underusing it at all?

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Or a lack of resource.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

I don't think they're underusing it. I think that there are lots opportunities for it. Look, you can do everything 10 different ways and you have to pick and choose how you want to spend your resources.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

You could do a video or you could do a data-vis.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Exactly. Let me turn the question around a little bit. I think what you're asking is, "Are there stories that would benefit from a data visualization that don't have that data visualization —"

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

Right, because they would take too long.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

— or there are other missed opportunities?"

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

Exactly.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

And sure, of course there are. But that's not necessarily, I'm not going to wring my hands about it. That happens to everything. I do think that, in journalism, there may be, I think we're getting away from this a bit. There may be a belief that if you can't do it like *The New York Times* does it, maybe you shouldn't do it. *The New York Times* is wonderful and amazing and has super-smart, dedicated, talented people doing great work there, and I'm sure even they feel under-resourced for all the stuff they want to do.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

Probably.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

I know they feel that way. But, they turn out great work. But I'm sure they say no to reporters and editors and say, "We can't do that." That said, there are a tremendous number of free or almost free tools that small mom-and-pop shops can use. There's the [Arlington \(Va.\) Sun Gazette](#) that I think they have one reporter, Scott McCaffrey —

Julia O'Donoghue, graduate student, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern

For sure they have one reporter.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

He's the hardest-working person in journalism as far as I can tell. He writes 50 stories a week. Not that he has extra time, but I'm sure he could just use [Socrata](#) or [Google Fusion Tables](#) or whatever to create simple charts to help explain the Arlington budget or what have you. He doesn't need a team of people to create snowfall for Arlington. There's a broad spectrum and a lot of ability to engage. And the key, I think, is less about the technology and more about what is helping to tell that story and inform people and be clear in that way.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Even the context, I remember, I think you were at the Data Scraping event that we were at from AU and I remember one of the people had presented something where they had created, they'd gotten the data for violent crimes in D.C., and they put it across a map. And then they tried to sort of relate it to, I can't remember what it was, but it was something really kind of, for example, the weather, what the weather model was. "Oh, because it rains so much in Adams Morgan there's greater incidence of crime," So, basically trying to bring in elements that, yeah, they're all there, but cause and effect are not true or necessarily true.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

You have to be careful about the difference between causation and correlation, right? Because, I mean, we could say that the amount of CO2 in the atmosphere is in inverse proportion to the number of Caribbean pirates there are. However, it does not mean that you have any relationship to each other.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

That you know.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Yeah, exactly. Maybe they sucked up carbon dioxide. That's not to say weather and crime don't necessarily have a relationship to each other. You just have to be careful about saying, "Because I see in the data that these two things appear to have a relationship to each other does not mean that one influences the other in any way." The two things could be the result of some third action, right? Which is the increase steel-hulled, nuclear powered submarines. Who knows? But, the other side of what you're saying, though, is that it does allow you to explore some possible relationships as a start of reporting and then, to engage in other kinds of reporting, talking to police, talking to criminals. "Hey, it looks like you only went out and robbed people when it was sunny out. Is that true."

"Well, yeah. I don't like getting wet."

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

[Washington, D.C. weatherman] Bob Ryan is my accomplice.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Exactly. Data is part of the reporting process. It's not in itself the end.

Julia O'Donoghue, graduate student, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern

I would say, this is a bit of a shameless plug, I work part-time for the [Virginia Public Access Project](#). For people who don't know, they are a non-profit organization that does campaign finance disclosure in Virginia. That model is like, "We're going to do all the heavy lifting in terms of data-vis and sort of maintaining a pretty great database. And you, newspapers around Virginia, you can take what we do for citizens." Most of it's directed at newspapers. "And use what we do for your own content." Which, I think, actually is a pretty effective model.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Absolutely.

Julia O'Donoghue, graduate student, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern

That's my own personal ...

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

No. Absolutely. You never know what people are going to do with the data, and so I do think there is value in making it available as well. Now, having said that, there's a recent

example where a newspaper got some government data and published it all and created a bit of an uproar.

These were the gun permits in New York, I believe. And, it's an interesting case because on the one hand, it is public, although it may not be for longer if some lawmakers get their way. On the other hand, there is a little bit of a, "So, what was your point? What was your story here?" It seemed kind of unnecessarily proactive.

I agree with you. Making public data is important and can be helpful. And the example, Mike, that you gave a moment ago about crime data, every block is based on making available all kinds of civic data, from 911 calls to bulk trash pickup calls to potholes and what have you. It tells you a bit about your neighborhood. If you're going home shopping, for example, and spot that dream house on the corner of Maple and Vine and then you look and see that every Thursday there's a 911 call, you think, "You know, maybe it's not quite as nice as I thought it was." It's a balance.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

One of the main things that we're trying to accomplish with this podcast is to help people do better reporting, is to improve the tools that people have at their disposal. So, as far as data-vis goes, we're diving into this because we haven't had anybody who knows as much as you know. And I know when we were at ONA [Online News Association Conference 2012], we sat in on [Jennifer LeFleur](#), who's at [Pro Publica](#), who's like the queen of data visualization. And she kept coming back to the point of when you start, if you've never done it before, you have to know what you're looking for. And I think that's a real obvious statement, but at the same time, I think that reporters sometimes are like, "Um, I'm just going to try to find the story." And it's too big and then you kind of get, maybe, overwhelmed or whatever it is. What would your tips be as far as, when you want to start a data-vis project, where you start?

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

I sat in on that session as well with Jen. She's great and her history in CAR (computer-assisted reporting) and using data for stories is phenomenal. I think she makes this point which is that when you get data, treat like any other source, like any other interview subject and start asking it questions. That's going to talk back to you, but you start asking questions in the sense of, for example, as I mentioned in the adjunct project, the questions that people are going to have, is, "Who pays the most? Who pays the least? What's the the median?" And so, just beginning to ask questions and see what the data are able to answer is an important start and it gives you some insights.

Another project that we did at *The Chronicle*, and they've done it for years, is the first one I was involved in when I got there, was looking at how much college presidents make, private college presidents. And, when you get that data, again, what are some of the questions that come to mind? "Who makes the most? Who makes the least?" Things like that. One thing you see is that a lot of college presidents make \$0 at private

colleges. Well, that seems odd. And then you realize, "Oh, those are religious institutions and these are priests and they don't get paid. Or at least they don't get paid by institution of higher learning." Or you see, "Gosh, Bob Kerry made the most and he quit. How did that happen?" And then you begin to realize, "Oh, when they leave, they get a golden parachute," and so some of the people at the top of the list are the ones who are walking out the door.

All that has to come back to, when get data, part of it is you have an idea of what you're looking for but also start asking questions and see what kind of responses you get. See what seems odd. And then, is it odd because the data is wrong? Or is it odd because somebody made a lot of money by quitting and why is that? And then you follow that down.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

And then there's a story.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

And then you have a story. A lot of times its sort of picking at little threads in your sweater until it starts to unravel and then you have something.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

We've had a few guests on who've talked about journalism education and you're an adjunct professor, and maybe with your job at *The Chronicle* you're able to draw an opinion from that as well. What is working? What is not working? What do journalists need to be learning, either graduate or undergraduate that they're not learning now?

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

You've got all the big questions today.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Sorry. Or how well do you think schools are doing in instructing journalists for what the market is right now?

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Those are interesting questions. The last one I don't know that I have a broad enough knowledge to answer. But let me take the first one first. I think there are a couple of things. One is you want to have core competencies in judgment and communication law, ethics, writing, regardless of whether you're writing stories or speaking on air or doing data visualizations, you have to have clear communication skills. I think Amy [Eisman] in your first [podcast](#) talked about that. Those are core things.

Then I think the next level is it's useful to have fairly broad, it doesn't have to be particularly deep, a fairly broad understanding of the different elements, the different media types. What works? What doesn't work? When do they work and why? Sort of across the spectrum. Because, increasingly you're finding that journalists are in these collaborative, multidisciplinary groups or teams or newsrooms, and one person is talking about SQL Queries. If one person is talking about SQL and you think they're talking about the second *Star Wars* film, you've got a problem. Right? If you realize they're talking about a database, OK, you can get somewhere. You may not know how to write a SQL Query, but if you at least know what words he's using or she's using, that helps.

So, having a broad, but not especially deep knowledge of these different disciplines and things, code, what have you, is really useful. And then I think it's really useful to find an area you want to go deep in. Maybe you really want to write and that's fine. There's lots of writing. It's not like writing's gone away. Or, there's plenty of video. There's audio or there's whatever, code, databases or designs. I think these core competencies, a broad understanding of all the disciplines that are involved and I would include in that, and I give you guys credit for having [Steve Buttry](#) and talking about, you know, the business side of things.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism
Entrepreneurship.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

That's part of that. And then, find your area of expertise and really get deep into that. Now, how well are journalism schools doing that? I don't know. I think some are probably doing it well and I think some aren't doing it as well.

Let me add real quick, as I've gotten older, among the things I've realized as well is that part of the value of what you learn in school isn't just what you learn in journalism class. But, it's the other things that you bring to it. So, I think it's really important for journalism students, and this is probably more true of undergraduate than graduate — get the other language skills or take economics classes or really learn geography so when someone talks about the Danube, you don't start thinking about booking a trip to Brazil. It's really useful to have a broad knowledge base.

And then, a lot of things you could go deep in, frankly, the barriers of entry are so low now that you can do a lot of it yourself. As you guys are doing with this podcast.

And the last thing is, I do think that one of the real benefits of journalism schools is building relationships and communities. Again, as you guys are doing.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism
You can get ideas from each other.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

You can get ideas from each other —

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

And guests for our podcast. That's how it works.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

And guests for your podcast and jobs and what have you. There are different reasons you can go different places and why you can go to Lynda.com or Codeacademy or whatever, to learn these skills. And you can go buy a computer for \$1,000 and a camera for whatever. You still need to build those relationships. All these things work together.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

The other thing is, I've been a journalist for a while, but focusing on journalistic issues with my graduate degree and then also with this podcast, I'm starting to sort of think that a journalism degree isn't necessarily a golden ticket to the best job that you're going to get. It's certainly not going to build you into what is the perfect person for whatever job.

It takes a lot of work. It takes a lot of learning a lot of different things and being that sponge that pulls in all types of different experience in order for you to inform your career as a journalist, your writing, your reporting. Reporting. Reporting. Reporting.

I always used to tell that to interns who would come into us, I'd ask them, "Why did you want to become a journalist?" They say, "Oh, I want to write." I was like, "Well, writing is a skill we use. But what we do is report." It's something that people don't always realize. And that requires listening. It requires all other types, empathy, all types of things that aren't always apparent when you start thinking about journalism. So, that's my diatribe.

The other thing I was going to say is that we've got a podcast that we're actually going to put up in the next day or so with [Jan Schaffer](#) from J-Lab and one of the things she said was that she's seeing the same or she's expecting the same sort of digital disruption that's occurred in the industry is going to happen to education, educational institutions. That, where you used to go to a college for a four-year degree, you're going to be able to do all of that online. People are attending classes now online. Universities are going to have to change the way they do business in order to better serve their customers, who are the students. What are your thoughts on that?

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

I'm sure it's true. If it saves, as a father of a future college-bound kid, hundreds of thousands of dollars, I can't complain against that. No, seriously, I'm sure it is true and I've taken some of those massive online classes myself. I do think that, again, you guys are

demonstrative of this, that the in-person class, each thing has different set of pros and cons or strengths or weaknesses and values. The value of sitting in class with other students and a teacher isn't necessary the conveyance of knowledge. Right? There are other, more efficient ways to do that. But, at the same time, it does allow you time for you to build relationships, which is, frankly, a lot harder to do when it's faceless, online only. You just can't do it. You can maintain relationships online, but it's really hard to forge them, I think, online. That's my feeling anyway.

There's a great Robert Krulwich series of posts on [Krulwich Wonders](#) from NPR. He's a science writer. He's from ABC News and NPR and PBS. It's a while back and he was talking about a guy who said that, "No technology ever goes away. Every technology persists somewhere." And Krulwich said, "Oh, that's baloney, I can find technologies that have died and don't exist anymore." And you'd come up with one and the guy would say, "No, nope, that one is still being used in this way." And the example I give, and I'll bring this back to education in a moment, is the stone tablet. Right? We think the stone tablet is gone. If anything should be over, it's the stone tablet. And yet, if you walk outside around this building, you're going to see a stone tablet with a year written in it of when the building was erected or —

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

A gravestone.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

— George Washington slept here or whatever. A gravestone.

Julia O'Donoghue, graduate student, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern

We are a block from the [National] Cathedral.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Exactly. Yeah, stone tablets are not in wide circulation, but —

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Ever since *The New York Times* stopped listing the bestselling stone tablets, it's all really fallen off.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Yeah, yeah. All the news that's fit to chisel.

But they still have a place. And so, the point is that, yeah, colleges are going to have to take on the new technologies and deal with that. Some are going to adapt and some

aren't. Some teachers will and some won't. That's what happens, unfortunately. But I don't think face-to-face classroom time is suddenly going to go extinct. It has a value. It's just going to be in different context than it is today or was 20 years ago. So that's what I think is probably going to happen. I don't have a Magic Eight Ball to say, "This is exactly what it'll look like." That's going to be figured out. But for sure, it's going to change.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

And so, Michael and I were in Josh's class, a year ago?

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Yeah. It seems like forever.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

One of the things we learned was the best way to tell a story, that it doesn't have to be data-vis. But I think this is an interesting topic and I want to get thoughts on it because, a lot of legacy media, even the smaller operations, aren't as embracing of the things that they should be. And that's just a fact. They want to be, but they're not. How important is it for students to be able to recognize, even if they can't do it, recognize what the best way to tell a story is and to start to forge that? Not students, journalists.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

The most important part of it is the other way around, which is, when to say, "No, that's the wrong way to do it." Because, you don't want to waste time or resources telling the story the wrong way, that people aren't going to be able to engage with. A quick example would be, if you took a classic, well, actually, I'll tell you, I think I probably used this in the class. You go to Iowa and you turn on the radio and you can listen to corn prices being read off on the radio. Now, that was the most effective way to do it, but once there was a more efficient way to do it, I haven't been to Iowa lately, but I'm guessing that probably doesn't happen as much anymore. For the same reason, you don't get stock pages much in the newspaper anymore. That's a lot of newsprint. It's not bringing you much value. It's telling me what the stock price was 12 hours ago.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

It's changed by now.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Which is almost useless. In fact, it is useless. So, I think it is important to know what media you should use to tell a story so that you don't make a mistake, you don't waste time trying to do something the "wrong way." It's not always one answer. It's not always, "Oh this is a video. Don't bother writing text." Right? Or the other way around. But, if you have a story and you start thinking about it, for example, if you have a really strong,

charismatic character, for example, or it's a really emotional story and there's something really personal about it. I start thinking right away about video, because that's a way that you can make a real deep connection. Right?

If it's, I don't know, an interview, a half-hour or hour interview with somebody who's going to talk and talk and talk about data, journalism, whatever —

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

Hypothetically.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

With you.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Making something up, then you might want to fast forward through, it might be good audio because you can just pop it in your iPod and play it as you're driving in your commute and you can kind of half listen to it and keep your eye on the road. So, I think making those choices is really important, especially in an environment where we are so media saturated. I mean, we have so many options. It must be every couple of months I, sort of, throw my hands and declare media bankruptcy because I'm not going to get through all the New Yorkers and the podcasts and the videos and the iTunes movies and movies in the theater.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

All these people shouting at you.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Yeah, and the interactives I've got to go view, whatever. I just delete it all and start over. But, because there's so much, I think you have to be smart in what you choose and be efficient.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

The reason why I ask is because I feel like, when I was in this class, my whole background is video, rather. So when I think about a story, I always think visually and that's a great thing, but it can be a handicap because I don't approach a story neutrally. I don't think any of us do. You have a print background, you approach it, you know, as you're going to write the thing long form. So I think it's a way for people to consider reinventing their skills or consider, "Yeah, this is what you're going to do for newspaper or this is what you're going to do for your TV station, but you can also do it this way and how would you do it?" And just start thinking differently.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Yeah, that's great and that's a great exercise too. In fact, I remember I was in grade school, I think, and I remember we had some writing exercise where they said, "I want you to write a story and you can't use any one syllable words." Or maybe it was like, "You can't use any words that have the letter 'e' in it." It was something like that. It was some arbitrary restriction, and it forced you to be really creative. And like, "OK, I want to say, 'Smile,' but I can use a word that has 'e' in it, so I'm going to say —"

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Grin.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

"— grin." There you go.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

I like this game.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

You write very differently. And so, I think it's a good exercise to embark on and I could give other examples of that as well.

There was a recent *New Yorker* article, actually, about a guy who is a master pickpocket, and it's a great article. It's a classic, 20,000 word *New Yorker* article. I really enjoyed it. He describes the way this guy, this pickpocket, he is so good that he was able to, Penn Gillette, you know, Penn & Teller? You know, master magician. You'd think he is the last guy this guy could pickpocket, right? Not only did he pickpocket him, he took his pen, removed the cartridge from the pen and put the pen back together and back into his pocket without him knowing.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

What?

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

He was so good that he took a guys tie off of him without the guy knowing. Now, that's a video I want to see. It was a great story and I loved reading it, but that's a video I wanted to see. How's he do that? That's incredible.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

But, it's interesting that it's the story that captivated you. The text is what captivated you. Yeah, you want to see the video, but somebody put it in words. This is just me advocating for words.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

No, no. The point you're making is that it's a great story.

He described how he did it, but I wanted to see it with my eyes. Another New Yorker article a couple of years ago about a guy who was trapped in an elevator, what was it? Like 40 hours.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Right.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

Oh yeah.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Like 40 some hours.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

And then the video surfaced.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Oh my God, and you watch, there was this security camera video of this poor guy trapped in an elevator for 40 some hours.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

And they sped it up in case you want to go see it.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Yeah, we're talking real time.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

It's an Andy Warhol movie.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

And you watch it and you just, Oh my God, your heart just, you break out in sweat just watching this poor guy suffer through this.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

Are those the types of stories that you like to share? Because you're kind of known on social media for sharing interesting stories, at least by me. So there you go.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

I don't think I'm known on social media at all.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

But every time you share something, it's —

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

If I am, it may not be for that.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

There's a component for it, in it that is different. It's interesting. It grabs you. What are these stories you're sharing? Why do you share them?

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

I'm not as good at self-editing as I should be about going to social media, but I'm trying to get a lot better and go on social media only to do that, to share really great stories. And I don't know, maybe it's, I think we have this compulsion to share.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

The thoughtful tweet.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

I think we have this compulsion to share and I don't think everybody is as enthusiastic about my daughter as I am.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

That's for sure.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Yeah, so I've tried to say, "Here's a story I think people will really enjoy." I put that *New Yorker* one in there recently and I can't think of any other ones I can think of at the moment.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

There was a funny, me and social media, I was on Facebook and one of the Social Journalism groups, somebody posted something. It was a little, tiny argument going on about people, how they handled Twitter. Do you read everything you retweet? And, I will confess, I do not read everything that I retweet.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

For shame.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

I'm one of those people.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Can I tell you something? A couple times I will hit retweet on something and then I have this wave of guilt goes over me.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Kim Kardashian, I'll retweet that!

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

I didn't read that. Oh my God. What if there is something in there that I ... let me go read that real quick.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

It's kind of branding. You're giving your little stamp of approval on something.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

I do. I've gotten, really, I'm almost always like, "Let me just make sure."

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

You're a much better person than I am, obviously.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

I'm not a better person, I'm just nervous. I'm guilty.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

That you're going to tweet the wrong thing.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

He's on the ONA board. He has to be a little —

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

There you go. I'm glad you mentioned that. ONA, so what's going on with ONA?

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

Michael.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Come on.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

What's going on with ONA?

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

You've got a new board member.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Yeah, we just appointed [Benét Wilson](#) to the board, which we're super-excited to have her join us.

To me, ONA represents the optimism of journalism. That's really exciting. There are plenty of places that represent the pessimism of the industry and ONA is the optimism in the industry, and what we can accomplish, things that are happening that we're excited about that we find amazing that we want to share. We want to help people. A lot of what we're doing is about empowering people in the industry, training people in the industry. So, that's what's happening at ONA.

We're expanding. We've added several staff, people who are just fantastic and are dedicated to, not just ONA, they're really dedicated to the members. I mean, [Jeanne Brooks](#) is one, if I name one, I'm going to have to name them all. But Jeanne Brooks is one who really, I think, takes seriously her role in bringing opportunities to people around the country and beyond and setting up these ONA camps. They went to Montana not too long ago. Or, I think, Minnesota actually was the more recent one.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

I have no idea where I was.

Julia O'Donoghue, graduate student, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern

Because they're the same.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Montana, Minnesota, they're the same. I have no idea where I was.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

Camps.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

So they have camps. What else is happening at ONA? There are more and more local chapters. There are, you know, we have of course the Online Journalism Awards, which is something I ran last year and [Anthony Moor](#), a previous guest, had done with mastery and expertise for years before that.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

They only hire a data guy to do that? Is that what it is?

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

It's not hiring, I assure you.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

You are doing this.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

I think everyone took a step back and I was left taking a step forward. But actually, I really enjoy doing it.

And one of things that we did with OJAs this year was sort of rejigger the categories a little bit and pull back from saying, "Well, here's the best video" or "Here's the best podcast" or "Here's the best data visualization" and more of "Here is the best journalism that takes advantage of whatever you have to use."

Part of the reason we did that is we felt like we're always going to be a year behind. If someone invents the next, new, amazing thing and we don't have an award for it then we don't have a way of recognizing that. And it's really not about who does the best video. It's about who tells the best story, who best informs the public, who's doing the best journalism. And that might be through video or it might be through data or it might be through text. Or it might be, and it usually is, some combination of all those things.

And then we also made a few changes to things like how to size categories, to try to better represent the resources organizations have available to them. In fact, someone came up to me at the end of the last awards and said, "You know, *The New York Times* is amazing, but can we put them in their own category next year?"

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Yeah.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Because they are doing such phenomenal work, but they also do have a lot more resources than many other organizations or they've chosen to put more resources towards it. And I say that without taking anything away from the *Times*. Who doesn't love everything they're doing?

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

Absolutely.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

So, those are changes that we made at ONA. We've gotten really involved in trying to fight more for journalists' rights. (Legal Affairs), which is another committee that I head up, working with the [Sunshine in Government Initiative](#) (SGI). And that's all about really making sure that FOIA is there for journalists when they need it. Fighting against legislation that would have deleterious effects on journalism, such as the Intelligence Reauthorization Bill from just a few weeks ago. SGI pushed incredibly hard to have some of the sections removed that would've penalized journalists in really disturbing ways. So, ONA's done a lot to support them. Those are some of the things that are happening at ONA.

Julia O'Donoghue, graduate student, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern

This is shifting focus a lot, but I'm actually interested in a couple of different things. One is if you're interested in working with data, should we all be going out and trying to learn [Python](#)? What should we be looking at learning?

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

I hope not.

Julia O'Donoghue, graduate student, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern

Right. And the other one is, i'd be interested in hearing, I know you've only been there a month, what challenges there are in terms of public versus private colleges in getting data? Like, what challenges *The Chronicle of Higher Education* faces in terms of trying to get information?

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Let me take the second question first. Obviously, public institutions are going to be subject to disclosure requirements and FOIA and things that private institutions don't, although if it's a non-profit private institution, they'll file a 990 form and you can go get information that way. Otherwise, you're just asking them and they can say no. It gets a little bit more complicated than that cause all these institutions sort of have their fingers in lots of different nonprofit and private and public pies and so on. But, those are some of the challenges.

The first question, if you're into data, I think there are a number of entry points. I don't know Python and that's probably doesn't serve me well. But, at the same time, I don't think everybody has to have the same skills. The way I talk about this stuff is I often liken it to a baseball team, which is to say that there's these core skills that everybody should have. You should be able to catch a ball. You should be able to throw the ball, run and things like that. But, the specific skills that a pitcher has are different than the skills a catcher has. They're different than a center fielder and the shortstop and I could go on to all nine positions.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Who's one first?

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Certainly, the more you start working in a certain area, the more you're going to start picking up stuff. So, you know, database administration and management and Excel expertise. And actually, I'm overlooking a core one, which is simple math, right? Knowing how to find averages and the differences between a median and a ...

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Mean?

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Mean. What a standard deviation is and stuff like that is important. So, you develop the skills and the strengths that you need to solve the problems and do the tasks that you have at hand. If you sit there thinking, "What if I should learn Python?" And you're sitting there thinking that for a couple of months, go learn it.

Julia O'Donoghue, graduate student, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern
Right.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

If you're like, "The last thing I want to do is have to learn Python," then don't do it. But, you might want to learn SQL.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

The basics.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

There's no shortage of stuff to learn. That's for sure.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

And it feeds in also to the collaborative nature of the newsroom that maybe there's somebody who knows more than, you can always assume that somebody's going to know more than you.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Yeah and it depends on your situation, right? We talked about Scott McCaffrey. He does not have a Python at the *Sun Gazette*.

Julia O'Donoghue, graduate student, Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern
No.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

But at *The New York Times*, you do. So, that may not be what you have to learn, or you have a better opportunity to learn it. So, every situation is going to be different. Depending on what you need, it's going to be different.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

Final question, which we always ask everybody, is how do you feel about the industry, where the industry is going? How do you feel about journalism as a whole?

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

The future of.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

I know, on ONA, everyone seems to be very enthusiastic, which is great. But you can answer it however you want. How do you feel like we're moving forward?

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

I'm optimistic. I think it's great. I think [Jim Roberts](#), who is the new board member of ONA himself, talks about it being a Golden Age of Journalism. I think he's exactly right.

It's a terrible time in the journalism industry, in the business.

But, just on the journalism side, I think it's a terrific time. I think there's more vectors and avenues and opportunities to reach audiences. I think there's better and more exciting ways to tell stories. I think there is a greater thirst for accurate, non-biased information. I think it's a phenomenal time to be a journalist. I think it's the best.

There's business stuff that has to be figured out. And it is and it's hard. Look, I was laid off once. That sucks. I am in no way inured to the pain and the challenges that face the industry and that individuals go through. That's really hard. But from a journalism, 30,000-foot view and its effect on culture and its role in society, I think it's some of the best of times. And once, as some of the business stuff gets worked out and it is, then I think it's only going to get better.

Michael O'Connell, producer, It's All Journalism

Yeah, I keep seeing the people asking the question, "Is journalism dead? Is journalism dying?" I know I don't think it is. I agree with you. I think it's a really exciting time. The accessibility of information, of the speed with which we're getting information, maybe not accurate information all the time, but there are a lot of doors that are opening, I think.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

Making a mistake, I would even challenge the idea of inaccurate information. There's plenty of historical evidence of inaccurate information in the past or the complete lack of information, I would submit that we are in an age where there is more accuracy, coupled with more transparency than ever before. So, I think there's hand wringing and some of it is a little bit overwrought. But, at the same time, I think it's a valid concern. You want to be accurate. You want to be right. That's a key part of it.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

Question your sources, like anything else.

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

The point is, I think we are better at that than we've ever been. I think it's the best of times.

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

All right, Josh thank you for joining us. You can find Josh at *The Chronicle for Higher Education* and on Twitter at —

Joshua Hatch, senior editor, data and interactives, at the Chronicle of Higher Education

@hatchjt

Megan Cloherty, producer, It's All Journalism

@hatchjt Thanks for listening to It's All Journalism and have a good day.