

The Poynter Institute – A New Story

For nearly 40 years, The Poynter Institute has inspired, educated and led generations of journalists seeking to improve their communities and society. It has changed the lives of countless journalists, and often been an engine of innovation in the industry.

To build on that rich legacy, Poynter now must undergo the same profound transformation as that reshaping the media landscape. Poynter will need to find new ways to reach wider audiences, just as practitioners and educators are experimenting with new means of delivering news and teaching.

We will change how we work, where we work and how we financially support our work. We will move with urgency and an entrepreneurial spirit to meet this challenge.

To lead change, Poynter must think and act like an agent of change. While holding firm to our standards of excellence, we must be as creative and inventive as those who are blazing new paths in journalism.

Poynter can play a unique role in the historic transformation of journalism and democracy across the globe. Poynter should be a bridge for its key constituents, providing those who practice, study and teach journalism with the tools they need to succeed. Through its teaching, reporting and events, Poynter must make a sharp shift, focusing squarely on digital journalism and being a virtual bridge. This means being *the* essential resource to help legacy-oriented practitioners and educators make the transition to digital, and helping those in the digital world with the best practices of journalism.

In doing this, Poynter must become more of an innovator and a thought leader itself, playing a role in shaping the future of news.

A year from now, Poynter will teach in more places, will be more digitally focused and will be more prominent. We will generate more innovative ideas and will benefit from more sources of support. Five

years from now, Poynter will be the world's major, private provider of journalism instruction for media companies, digital startups, universities and those engaged in storytelling. Its name will be synonymous with innovation. It will be teaching more globally. It will have diverse income sources that make it self-sustaining.

This vision statement is the product of scores of conversations with media industry leaders, journalism educators, foundation executives, Poynter trustees and National Advisory Board members. Every Poynter employee participated in brainstorming sessions. Many of the suggestions from those discussions are included here. This plan is intended to chart a course to grow Poynter's position as the international leader in journalism, and to solidify its future.

Who We Are

Poynter should play *the* pivotal role in journalism education during this historic transformation of the media world. Poynter should be the bridge, helping practitioners and educators transform their knowledge through practical training and new thinking. We should help build bridges to the future through thought leadership, conferences we organize and practical research.

Poynter's new mission statement reflects our ambition:

"The Poynter Institute is a global leader in journalism. It is the world's leading instructor, innovator, convener and resource for anyone who aspires to engage and inform citizens in 21st Century democracies."

The Poynter Institute should be to journalism education what Google is to search, what Apple is to mobile and what Netflix is to video streaming. We should be ubiquitous. Put simply, Poynter should be the world leader in instructing those engaged in the craft of journalism, storytelling and teaching.

To do that, Poynter will re-assert itself as a thought leader in journalism innovation. We will be leaders in the knowledge we impart to others.

Poynter will be an incubator for innovation, a place where experimentation and even failure are valued, encouraged and shared for the lessons they teach others.

Poynter will do this while maintaining its core values of advancing truth, trust, credibility and ethics in the craft. We'll do this while continuing to be a staunch advocate for diversity at a time when news audiences are becoming more diverse.

This means that we need a faculty -- both full time and adjunct -- that supports our mission of being a bridge. It also means that we'll need to acquire some of this knowledge from elsewhere, adding digital expertise to the considerable talent we have in the areas of leadership, ethics, reporting, writing, broadcasting and visual journalism.

Poynter.org is the public face of the institute, and it must meet our own ambitions. Poynter's digital content should provide context and understanding for breaking news in our industry. Poynter needs to reinvent its digital content, adding mobile offerings and creating a new daily newsletter. It will add personalities who connect our readers with the institute. Poynter.org will get a design that is more navigable, and accommodates more video. We're bringing new editing and advertising talent on board, and we'll immediately begin the process of a redesign and creating a newsletter.

To advance our goals, the institute will create the "Bridge Lab" channel on Poynter.org. This will be an online laboratory for practical, useful ideas for news executives, journalists and educators navigating the media landscape. It will foster a conversation within the journalism community about what's working – and what isn't. This channel could be an indispensable tool.

As we define what we do, it's important to note what we should stop doing. We should stop pursuing funding for projects that don't fit our mission. We should stop organizing programs and events that don't advance our vision. We should stop owning surplus property that isn't essential to our mission.

Experience Poynter Everywhere

Our new mantra says we must teach people in different ways, extending the “Poynter Experience” to where they work and through multiple platforms. We’ll teach people online, on the phone and in person. We’ll meet them at their place, at Poynter conferences and across the globe. We’ll develop a portfolio of ways to experience Poynter.

Near the top of our letterhead, we should say:

Experience Poynter Everywhere

A Global Leader in Journalism

All of this will change how and where we work. Enrollment in seminars in St. Petersburg has declined in recent years, as newsroom training budgets have withered. That means we need to reach our clients where they are. There’s a robust market for our work. But to be the world’s most influential media school, Poynter will need to pursue teaching from Denver to Doha, from Indianapolis to Istanbul.

Custom teaching and consulting for everyone from media companies to individual journalists will be a significant part of our future. Poynter should build on its recent success in establishing corporate training partnerships with media companies and journalism organizations.

Poynter should develop new lines of teaching by significantly expanding its international work, fulfilling a global demand for journalism training during the digital transformation, especially in emerging democracies.

Global expansion could come via in-person seminars abroad, bringing more international participants to St. Pete and through our NewsU online platform. This growth also could be accomplished by creating more internationally tailored, foreign language programs on NewsU, our highly successful interactive platform. We’ve already begun discussions about the possibility of a Spanish language NewsU.

Poynter has had success in recent weeks with new teaching initiatives in India and Turkey. We should seek other opportunities with international news companies, associations and communications

schools. In addition, Poynter should work with the State Department and other international media organizations engaged in journalism training. Meetings are being scheduled with those contacts this summer.

At the same time, Poynter should explore creating proficiency certificate programs for professional journalists, including ones in copy editing and digital multi-media production.

Poynter also must find new ways to train and coach individual journalists. Toward that end, Poynter is now considering a subscriber model for individual journalists, ranging from those who simply want a few NewsU courses to those who are seeking one-on-one coaching from our faculty.

Teaching the Teachers

The Poynter Institute and academe are natural partners. We both work to spread knowledge and understanding through teaching and research that benefit journalism and societies. And, we can learn from each other to achieve our mutual goals. Poynter will initiate steps to work even more closely with the academic journalism community.

Poynter should pursue a “Teaching the Teachers” strategy, in which our own faculty, university professors and high school teachers learn from each other. At colleges and in high schools, full-time professors, adjuncts and teachers are attempting to keep pace with the change in the industry and online opportunities, just as practitioners are. Poynter will play an essential role in bridging knowledge between the professional and academic worlds.

Poynter could provide instruction to teachers in person, in online group seminars and in largely self-directed courses. Poynter could partner with a university in this effort. And, Poynter could create a marketplace for official certificates for those who complete the courses.

Poynter also could become a much bigger teaching resource in classrooms for students, too. We’ll explore creating partnerships with universities for online and video instruction that could be used in

classes to help teach the basics of writing, reporting, editing, producing, photojournalism and digital storytelling.

Supporting Our Work

While thinking differently about our teaching is a key part of creating a solid foundation for the institute, it can't be our only strategy. We need to broaden the base of support for Poynter's vital work.

We'll maximize the revenue potential of our digital offerings, through advertising on Poynter.org, a rejuvenated employment channel, a sponsored newsletter, video ads and mobile initiatives.

The fundraising efforts of the Poynter Foundation are critical to the future of the institute. After more than a year of building the infrastructure for the Poynter Foundation, it's time to accelerate fundraising efforts to support our mission.

The foundation recently completed an organized, structured plan for giving from our closest individual and corporate friends, with specific income goals. Once in place, this should provide the framework for a consistent, annual revenue stream.

Our efforts will not end there. The foundation should organize a series of fundraising events, including a major, annual gala in Florida with a notable keynote speaker. The first of these annual events is being planned for this fall.

In addition to fundraising, Poynter should make the most of property that it owns. Poynter should keep assets that fit its core mission of being the world's leading media center. It should explore divesting assets that aren't essential to that core mission.

The Poynter Institute building on Third Street South is essential. It's part of the Poynter Experience, a facility that inspires lofty ideals and excellence by its history and architectural magnificence.

This doesn't mean that Poynter needs to be the sole occupant. Poynter should welcome tenants, especially ones with similar missions, to

occupy the south wing and make use of our classrooms. Doing so would add both revenue and another element of vitality.

The institute building, however, represents only two of the eight acres that Poynter owns in downtown St. Pete. We should continue exploring the possibility of selling excess land that Poynter doesn't need to support its central mission.

For the same reason, Poynter should consider selling an office building that it owns in Seminole.

Raising Our Profile

Raising Poynter's global profile will enhance our influence and credibility in the journalism community. And, growing our influence is essential to expanding audience and revenue.

Nothing will raise our visibility faster with a wide audience than overhauling our digital content. This is an effective and quick way for us to make Poynter an essential part of people's daily lives, and to create a tightly bonded community of interest.

Poynter should become a ubiquitous presence on national news programs about the media.

Poynter should pursue the creation of a sponsored speaker series. This would bring high-profile newsmakers to Poynter-organized events, raising our visibility and influence in our geographic and journalistic communities. The foundation is beginning the process of seeking this funding.

Poynter should launch a series of master classes, both in person and online, with high-profile media leaders who could speak on everything from leadership to investigative reporting to digital storytelling.

Poynter also must be relevant by creating timely, topical seminars off news events. We should seize opportunities to help train journalists on

stories of huge importance, from health care to income inequality to the Keystone XL Pipeline.

Summary

As it has throughout its illustrious history, The Poynter Institute needs to adapt, change and innovate. It has a superb faculty and one of the most respected brand names in the media industry. Still, it needs to embrace this challenge with the entrepreneurship of a start-up.

We should move boldly and confidently, and with a profound sense of urgency. In times of historic change, the losers are those who don't transform. Just ask BlackBerry. At the same time, we shouldn't act rashly or out of a sense of fear.

Poynter should be a bridge. We should tailor our curriculum, our digital offerings, our seminars, our convenes and our speakers to helping executives, journalists, educators and others navigate this media transformation. Poynter is uniquely positioned for this role. This is essential to making Poynter useful and relevant in the day-to-day lives of the journalists who serve democracy.

At the same time, the media industry looks to Poynter for leadership. Poynter should become a laboratory for journalism innovation, and foster the conversation about its future.

This is an invigorating, exciting time in journalism, an era that is redefining how people consume news and spreading democracy to all corners of the globe. This is Poynter's time. This is our mission.

