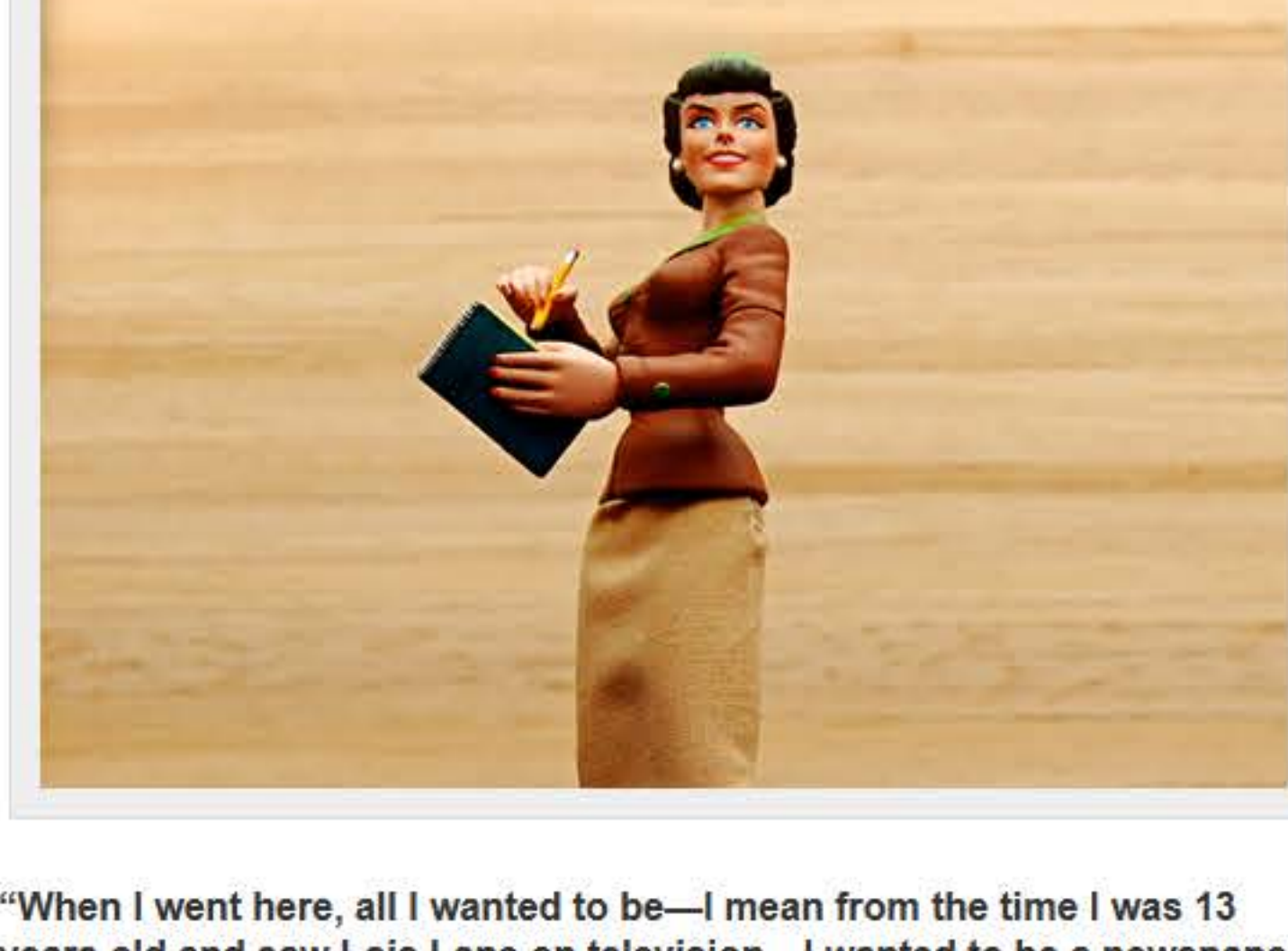


Lois Lane Isn't Dead, She's Reinvented: How Journalists Can Adapt to the Changing News Sphere

by STEPHANIE SCHAEFER on MAY 22, 2013



"When I went here, all I wanted to be—I mean from the time I was 13 years old and saw Lois Lane on television—I wanted to be a newspaper reporter."

This is a quote from Nora Ephron when she received an Alumnae Achievement Award from her alma mater Wellesley College in 2006.

Ephron came to New York City in 1960s to work as a reporter at the *New York Post*. Fifty years later, her dream career now ranks as the very "worst job," according to a recent [survey by CareerCast.com](#) that graded 200 occupations.

So, is the once "glamorous" image of a confident, intelligent woman striving to report the truth defunct? Amy Adams (who plays Lane in the next installment of "Superman") seems to [disagree](#).

Let's not start to plan Lane's funeral just yet...

There's no doubt that with the changing online sphere, reporting has evolved in the past half-century, but there's a fine line between evolution and extinction.

Dinosaurs went extinct—journalism didn't.

I recently had the privilege of attending a breakfast meeting at *The New York Times* where I met Michael Zimbalist, vice president of research & development operations for the company. Zimbalist stated that in 2012, for the first time in NYT history, the amount of money made from **charging for content exceeded advertising**—which goes to show how powerful content creators are today.

But still, there are doubters and nonbelievers, ranging from relatives who wonder why I chose a career path with few jobs [to former reporters](#) who (somewhat justifiably) fled the media industry.

Instead of listening to the #doubters (or #haters as some like to call them), let's focus on successfully creating content and tailoring this creation to 2013.

The real question isn't if online killed the print (star), but more importantly, how can 21st century journalists adapt to the changing times while also retaining the narrative appetite that fueled great reporters like [Nellie Bly](#) (the real life reporter who Lane was partly based on)?

1. Use Social Media to Craft Your Narrative

As modern journalists, we have to recognize how consumers collect content in this day and age.

With recent breaking news stories, including the Boston Marathon bombings, many people turn to Twitter to acquire instantaneous news, often on their cellphones—I'm sure most of you reading this first heard news of the unfathomable marathon tragedy on social media. Most importantly, attendees of the marathon took to the Web to let their friends and relatives know they were OK.

And today, social media isn't just for Gen-Y audiences but also for older generations. "Mobile devices are the preferred medium by which the young (and not so young) get their news fix. Twitter and Facebook have altered the way news is broken and covered. And so on and so forth," says Chris Cillizza in an article for [The Washington Post](#).

Yet, rapid news outlets like Twitter often blur the line between fact and fiction, causing both skepticism and confusion.

When dealing with hard news stories, accuracy should always trump speed. However, for softer news, it is also important to add "fun" to the mix.

Social media should be a friendly, personable outlet to inform and engage with readers, customers, fans, and followers. [BuzzFeed](#), known for its mix of news through photos and witty captions, successfully accomplishes this engagement.

But just because you may look good in red, doesn't mean you should wear the color to a funeral. When dealing with entertainment vs. news, you don't necessarily have to pick sides, you just have to know when each is appropriate.

Cillizza eloquently makes reference to this idea in his "Defense for Fun Journalism," stating, "To assume that journalists must fit into either a serious or a fun mode is to sell journalists (and people) short. We contain multitudes."

Ultimately, it is important to know yourself, know your publication, and know your audience.

2. Integrate Your Content

NYT's Zimbalist spoke about the transformations the newspaper and website has made to remain on top, one of which includes the integration of content, citing John Branch's "[Snowfall](#)" published to the *New York Times*' website last winter. Branch's storytelling merges narrative, photos, and video clips in a way that makes even the content consumer reading the article on a beachside villa feel as if he were trapped in the avalanche in Tunnel Creek.

As content creators, this is the type of reporting we should strive for: storytelling that so fully ignites a reader's senses, he or she can't help but feel like they've lived through the experience.

Regardless of what form of content we are shaping, whether it be editorial or advertorial, we can all learn from this integrated form.

3. Retain Your Passion for Storytelling

If you're not passionate about your craft, your art will be lackluster.

John Clanton, multimedia producer, shares his fascination with his career choice in his uplifting [article](#) for *Tulsa World*, "It's not about the money to me. It's about discovery. I'm chasing down ideas, exploring the city, meeting new people and trying to connect readers to their lives with that perfect moment."

Clanton goes on to say the art of discovery—which has led him to feed a balloonfish, watch seniors learn to belly dance, and take pictures on the floor of the state Senate—make his job fulfilling and worthwhile.

My colleague Daniel Ford reiterates this passion for writing on his [blog](#): "Words give meaning to my life. An endless, wandering, emotional, and persistent stream of words will forever define me," he says.

I couldn't agree with both Clanton and Ford more. So far, in my short post-graduate career in the journalism field, I've found out how [Olympic gold medals are made](#), spoke to [Shaquille O'Neal](#) about fashion, and received inspiration from a [12-year-old entrepreneur](#)—just to name a few experiences I wouldn't change for a hefty paycheck.

So, with all do respect for CareerCast.com and finance majors across the country, actuarial science may pay the bills, but journalism (even in today's day and age) is still No. 1 on my list—#LoisLaneLives!

[Image: [JD Hancock](#)]

Written by: Stephanie Schaefer

Stephanie writes for JCKonline.com. She loves cupcakes and power-ballad sing-alongs.



Peggy Jo Donahue May 27, 2013 at 11:44 am

AWESOME post, Stephanie. Having been a writer now for more than 30 years, I can safely say it is worth it — even with all the tumbles and turns of the past five years (and, I'm proud to say that my son, Bill Donahue, is also a member of our proud ranks!). Journalism does live and always will. And, I LOVE that you worked in Lois Lane and Nellie Bly!



Nick Stamoulis May 28, 2013 at 3:50 pm

A lot of the employees here at Brick Marketing graduated with degrees focused on Marketing Communications, but yet they spend a large percentage of their time writing articles. Even though they haven't been trained as journalists, they need to put their strong communication skills to good use for creating content. Journalism may be shifting focus from print to screen, but you still need people who have the ability and know-how to research and craft compelling articles, regardless of if they will be printed on paper or published to the web.

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Michael makes videos for a living ... and for fun. What better way to cash in on a life spent primarily staring at a television.



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Kim Caviness, SVP of content at TMG, loves all things design and planning menus for dinner parties, imaginary and real.



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David Murray is editor of ContentWise, an ezine devoted to content marketing, and program chairman of the [Content Marketing Awards](#); he's a widely published journalist, and a longtime observer of communication issues.



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Ernie, a social media journalist at TMG, would live in a coffee shop if he could. You might know him from his popular Tumblr, [ShortFormBlog](#). Yell at him on [Twitter](#) if you want.



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Tracy Richardson is a Marketing Coordinator at McMurry/TMG. She spends way too much time with her chihuahua.



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