



Scientia Education Investment Fund Grants Final Report

28 February 2019

UNSW Global Citizen Publication Project

School of the Arts & Media, FASS

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1. Executive Summary

THE PROJECT

The UNSW Global Citizen Publication Project set out to fill an important pedagogical gap in journalism education at UNSW by creating a Content Managing System (CMS) for an external facing online publication that would serve as a teaching tool, a showcase for student journalism, and a vehicle for collaborations in student journalism with universities and other institutions around Australia, and potentially abroad.

THE CONTEXT

In 2016, SAM-based media staff, Dr Christopher Kremmer, Dr Peter White, and then sessional teacher Kerrie Davies, took part in *UniPollWatch*, a national collaborative effort to engage journalism students from 28 universities in reporting and analysing that year's Federal Elections. At the time, unlike many media schools at Australian universities, UNSW did not have a dedicated publication platform for journalism produced by our media students.

Local and international undergraduate and postgraduate students embraced the opportunities created by our participation in *UniPollWatch*, with some 40 students publishing electorate and candidate profiles, and issue-based stories on the project's national website. In May 2017, the project's contribution to pedagogy was recognised when it received the FASS Dean's Award for Programs that Enhance Learning.

Having seen the civic and educational benefits of university journalism in practice, SAM media staff proposed the creation of a dedicated publishing platform to showcase the work of our journalism students at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Supporting this initiative, HOS Dr Andrew Schultz approved a new hire, *Sydney Morning Herald* tablet edition editor and former foreign correspondent Connie Levett as Digital Editor to begin work on establishing the publication, and eventually lead it as founding editor. Teaching staff, meanwhile, gained AIMS approval for two new courses in Professional Media Practices which, when linked to the new publication, would further advance Work Integrated Learning.

PRIORITIES ADDRESSED

The project addressed a range of broad strategic and specific functional priorities. Broadly speaking, it addressed the UNSW 2025 Strategy priorities A2, B, B2, B3, C1, C2 and D1 and SEIF priorities 1, 2, 3, and 4.

OUTPUTS

In January 2018, following the receipt of a \$50,000 SEIF grant to build the CMS, a project management group was formed, led by Dr Kremmer and advised by co-applicant Dr White and media program conveners, Dr Costello and Dr Chua. The project group, in concert with Ms Levett, began extensive consultations with School & Faculty administration, academic staff, External Relations, legal/copyright advisors and web developers and designers. In June 2019, a contract for the provision of the CMS was signed with the U.S-based *RebelMouse* company, and in August a designer, Jason Jaram was contracted. In January 2019, pre-launch beta testing of the new site began, and in February 2019 the external facing online publication went live online. Equipped with a state-of-the-art CMS, new staff and courses, and an eye-catching web and mobile-friendly design, NEWSWORTHY has begun publishing high quality student journalism produced at UNSW. The publication will officially launch in March 2019.

2. Outcomes and impact

With the School of the Arts & Media providing staff and facilities for the external facing online publication, SEIF funding was sought primarily for the development of new digital infrastructure of fundamental importance to the viability of the project. The bulk of our funding was, therefore, spent on the design and build of a fit-for-purpose Content Management System with specific capabilities for managing copy flows and online publication.

Enabled by SEIF funding, the UNSW Global Citizen Publication Project has, in a timely manner, delivered on the principal outcomes promised in our grant application. We have:

1. Delivered a digital publication platform with web page and mobile landing sites and a sophisticated back-end Content Management System
2. Named the publication—*Newsworthy*—after inviting suggestions from staff and students
3. Established a dedicated publication office based in the Robert Webster building within the School of the Arts & Media
4. Registered the publication's domain name www.newsworthy.org.au
5. Created a full-time position of Digital Editor and appointed the founding editor, Ms Connie Levett
6. Formulated a Charter of Editorial Integrity endorsed by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

7. Received UNSW formal brand exemptions for *Newsworthy*, creating a necessary balance between the publication's distinctive brand and an overt acknowledgement of its relationship with UNSW.
8. Integrated the new publication within two new AIMS approved courses. In Semester 1 2018, MDIA3010 *Professional Media Practices*, was launched with an initial enrolment of 35 undergraduate students. The postgraduate companion course MDIA5011 *Professional Media Practices* launched in the following semester with 17 enrolments.
9. Established a process whereby promising articles written by students as part of their coursework in journalism and related subjects are submitted to the online publication for consideration, editing, legal checks, layout and publication where warranted. These processes have enhanced innovation and Work Integrated Learning in our journalism program, as required by two recent Academic Program Reviews at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels
10. Commenced publication with an initial release of 14 articles written by our students, with a projected publication target of 100 stories per year
11. Commenced our first collaboration with an external partner, the Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia (JEERA). UNSW students and others from universities around Australia will contribute to coverage of the 2019 Federal Election campaign. UNSW student coverage of the electorate of Banks in southwestern Sydney will be co-published by *Newsworthy* and the national election website, *The Junction*.

It is early days, and much work remains to be done, but we can say with certainty that UNSW media students who are commencing their studies in 2019 are entering a learning environment that has been enhanced by the arrival of *Newsworthy*, an online publication dedicated to facilitating their learning of contemporary media practices and disseminating their best work to an international audience.

Students enrolled in the new courses linked to *Newsworthy* put into practice skills in data analytics, in promoting stories via social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter and Instagram, and in data visualisation. Through involvement in the course, several students gained part-time or casual employment with *The Guardian Australia* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Others have recently been successful in winning places in the ABC internship program.

Precedents elsewhere provide further confidence in the direction we have taken. The University of Melbourne's Faculty of Arts reported in 2013 that a similar initiative "transformed our teaching program, attracted widespread attention in the industry, served as a showcase for our research, broke news and led to several of our students being offered paid work".

http://arts.unimelb.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1759968/REVIEW2013.pdf

We expect to see a gradual improvement in the following key indicators of success in UNSW's undergraduate and postgraduate media degree programs:

- Improved graduate employment outcomes generated by mentoring students in assembling an impressive portfolio of their own published journalism and showcasing their publications online.
- Increasing visibility of UNSW students in national student journalism awards, including the Walkley and Ossie Awards.
- Improved transitions from internships into employment as students come better prepared with work-ready skills acquired by participating in technical production and editorial processes at *Newsworthy*, a real-world yet supportive newsroom led by an experienced industry professional in a university environment
- Improved graduate impact in the workplace arising from their exposure at *Newsworthy* to contemporary news media content distribution technologies that bring audiences and stories together
- Enhanced student engagement with the great issues of our time, including UNSW's 'Grand Challenges' and 2025 Strategy arising from their engagement with journalism as both a professional activity and civic responsibility
- Increased and more productive student participation in collaborative projects in the public interest, whether via co-publications involving *Newsworthy* and news media organisations, including the ABC, Fairfax Media and the Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia.

Newsworthy is already contributing to the achievement of UNSW's 2025 strategic priorities, in particular including:

A2: Educational Excellence - The UNSW Scientia Educational Experience

B: Social Engagement

B2: Leading the debate on Grand Challenges

B3: Knowledge exchange for social progress and economic prosperity

C: Global Impact

C1: UNSW model of internationally engaged education

C2: Partnerships that facilitate our strategy

Newsworthy is also well placed to shine a light on UNSW's current Grand Challenges of Inequality, Living with 21st Century Technology and Rapid Urbanisation. Its first batch of publications dealt with the ongoing challenges of refugees (Augury, M. 'Thank God we stopped the boats' 4 Feb 2019; Mukherjee, R & Mabin, S. 'Songbird of Manus still trapped in the tropics' 11 Feb 2019); a just society (Taouk, J. 'Sarina's pledge: 'I'll be praying for Aleppo' 11 Feb 2019; Mukherjee, R & Sajed, N. 'The good fight: A change agent who rejected 'hard-wired bias' 23 Jan 2019) sustainability (Muller, S. 'Coming full cycle: Trash to treasure' 6 Feb 2019); migrants (Wei, W. 'How to escape alienation in a city that doesn't speak your language' 11 February 2019)

SAM journalism teaching staff have embraced the challenge of combining a traditional focus on techniques, processes, values and ethics with the current dynamics of digital journalism education embodied in *Newsworthy*. In doing so, they are improving our teaching in line with the SEIF Priorities including:

1. Allow UNSW to significantly increase the efficiency of a course or program - In addition to her editing role, the Digital Editor spends time in postgraduate and undergraduate classroom in support of academic tutors
2. Allow UNSW to expand offerings to new students - Two year courses in undergraduate and postgraduate journalism programs
3. Incorporate an element of research integrated learning or work integrated learning - *Newsworthy's* lead role in coverage of the 2019 Federal elections in collaboration with JERAA.
4. Demonstrate the effectiveness of innovative technologies in achieving educational outcomes - Student use of the new CMS to upload and edit their stories.

3. Evaluation of project outcomes

Our task did not involve undertaking a scholarly study, nor were we funded to evaluate the efficacy of implementing the project. Our task was simply to find and choose qualified web developers and designers to build the CMS.

To do this we identified two different models commonly used to approach this task. Firstly, the 'Build Operate Own' model, and secondly, the subscription model. Two developers were selected from each category. Build-Own-Operate models were represented by Akqire and Code Brewery. Subscription models by AAP Publish and *Rebel Mouse*.

The project group conducted extensive evaluations of the affordances and demerits of these four options and agreed that the Subscription model was best suited to our needs. B-O-O option tended to be offered by small business operators which, the group felt were riskier than larger, more established companies.

- In July 2018, concerns were raised about the quality of the *RebelMouse* graphic design. The project group decided that a fresh, contemporary “look” was of such importance as to justify hiring our own designer to solve the problem, incurring additional charges by *RebelMouse* to incorporate the new design to the front-end of the CMS.
- In order to ensure we got design right, the project group decided to draw in perspectives from UNSW staff with design expertise. Design changes and fine-tuning of other aspects of the CMS continued into November 2018. However, the slower path ultimately produced an excellent result - Newsworthy
- In late November 2018, the project group convened for what would be its final meeting and decided that, given the looming summer break, beta testing of the website should continue into January with Newsworthy’s formal launch to be held early in Term 1, 2019
- In February 2019, with beta testing completed, the site went live online to a warm response from students and stakeholders.

