

2018 RETROSPECTIVE

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Irving Washington

DATE

January 24, 2019

MISSION STATEMENT

Inspiring innovation and excellence
among digital journalists
to better serve the public

Acknowledgements

This report was assembled with input and contributions from the entire Online News Association team:

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Executive Director Overview


**Irving
Washington**

ONA Executive
Director

We enter 2019 with a united Board leadership, a collaborative staff, focused strategic direction, healthy finances and once again maintained a reputation as the leading digital journalism organization.

While you'll see many impressive numbers and reason for celebration in this report, our true impact is the strength of our community. We will continue to maintain the focused growth and rapid response that brought ONA to this successful point and to keep listening carefully to our diverse community of journalists, academics and technicians – from digital natives to industry leaders.

In 2018, we continued to impact media professionals worldwide.



"I always have at least one jaw-drop moment at ONA where I learn one 'big' thing that was worth the price of admission all by itself. 2018 did not disappoint, but it came with plenty of smaller jaw-drop moments to cement the trend."

"The amazing combination of level-headedness and optimism that I haven't experienced in the news in a while."

"Positive vibe toward change, openness about discussing issues, access to people who are at the forefront of the evolution of online news."

With our annual programming growing exponentially, we couldn't get by without our amazing team of staff and consultants. We plan to build on these successes in 2019 as we embark on implementing our strategic plan.

In this retrospective, we look back at how we championed our mission to inspire innovation and excellence.

Irving Washington

Table of Contents

PREFACE

Acknowledgements

Executive Director Overview

SECTION 1

Providing Training

ONA18

ONA Insights

Journalism 360 Unconference

ONA Local Leadership Summit

SECTION 2

Building Community

ONA Local

Journalism Mentorship Collaborative

Women's Leadership Accelerator

Journalism 360

Challenge Fund

Student Newsroom and Innovation Lab

Career Center

Resource Center

SECTION 3

Giving Recognition

Online Journalism Awards

Fellowships

PROVIDING TRAINING

01





Annual Conference

Nearly 2,600 news leaders gathered in Austin, Texas, for ONA18, our annual conference focused on sharing best practices and bold ideas, networking and honoring some of the best work in digital journalism.

Our dedicated volunteer Program Team helped shape the conference by reviewing more than 400 session ideas from the community. We offered 85 educational sessions over three days and featured conversations tackled critical issues facing journalism, including:

- Media manipulation, amplification and responsibility
- Media coverage of guns in the U.S.
- The global state of audience engagement metrics
- A masterclass on investigative journalism
- Real talk for getting more women into executive positions
- Tech Trends for Journalists

We also provided opportunities for peer-to-peer learning. Table Talks, our open-forum format, were again rated as one of the leading educational conversations at the conference, second only to the perennially popular Tech Trends talk.



ONA18 Annual Conference

In addition to training, the conference presented a variety of networking events. We hosted an opening night reception, co-sponsored by Facebook and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, at the historic Austin City Limits Live at The Moody Theater. The ONA Austin group also hosted a welcome event at the Austin-American Statesman, complete with a view of the largest urban bat colony in the United States. Other networking opportunities included everything from breakfasts and lunches with sponsor-led programming to professional meetups, drop-in cocktail hours and morning yoga.

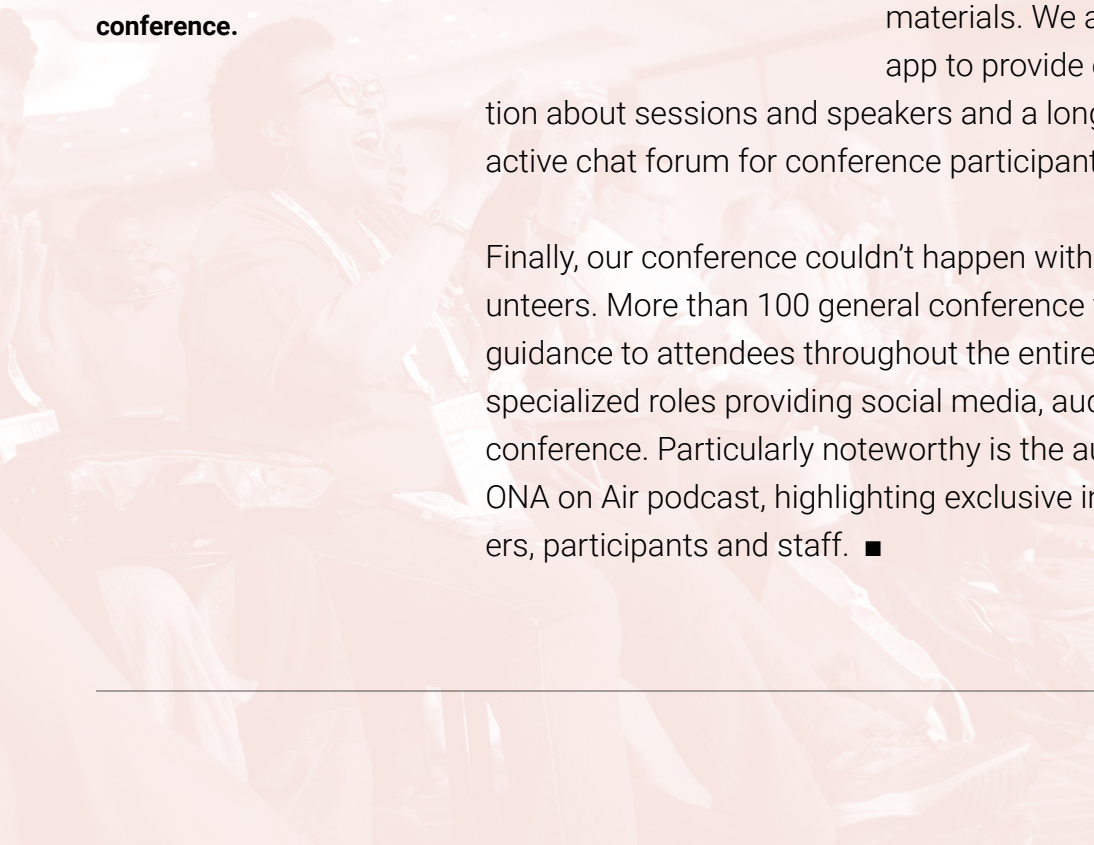


ONA18 volunteers couldn't be missed in their bright orange t-shirts. More than 100 people volunteered for the conference.

We welcomed more than 70 organizations to our Exhibits and Midway spaces in Austin. Midway participants and sponsors led 20 sessions, most of which saw full rooms and lively conversations.

Behind the scenes, we gave a lot of thought into how we tell our community about all these activities and provide an experience that is uniquely ONA. We dramatically revamped our conference design process, bringing a more unified look and feel across web and print materials. We also used the Guidebook mobile app to provide easy access to maps, information about sessions and speakers and a long-requested feature — an interactive chat forum for conference participants.

Finally, our conference couldn't happen without an amazing group of volunteers. More than 100 general conference volunteers offered help and guidance to attendees throughout the entire event. Other volunteers had specialized roles providing social media, audio and video coverage of the conference. Particularly noteworthy is the audio team's introduction of the ONA on Air podcast, highlighting exclusive interviews with ONA18 speakers, participants and staff. ■



ONA Insights



Spring Conference

In 2018, we introduced ONA Insights — a unique event for newsroom leaders offering an intimate networking environment and a deep dive into topical issues.

More than 140 people participated in the event, hosted at The Globe and Mail in Toronto in May.

Insights is an iteration of our traveling international conference previously held in London and Dublin. This year, we focused on the intersection of revenue and audience engagement, an area not often explored at in-person events.

We were pleased to host Britt Aboutaleb, GM for Eater & Curbed, Vox Media, for the opening keynote on editorial voice and growth strategy. Two interrelated tracks with a number of energetic conversations followed that discussion. Daniel Sieberg closed the event with a discussion on the future of blockchain in news. ■



ONA Local Leadership Summit

We hosted 75 community builders for two days of programming at the 2018 ONA Local Summit in Detroit.

The summit focused on developing leadership skills and convening conversations on issues that leaders are facing in their communities, such as bridging the digital divide in journalism, building relationships with hard-to-reach communities and engaging youth in our industry.

Building on a similar program for ONA Local organizers in 2017 in New Orleans, this year we added a half day of hands-on workshops focusing on different aspects of community leadership: leading collaborations; women's leadership, with a special focus on small markets and local news organizations; entrepreneurship in local media; and starting local journalism communities. We also opened registration to any interested journalism community builders to extend the leadership training opportunity to our partners in Detroit and beyond.



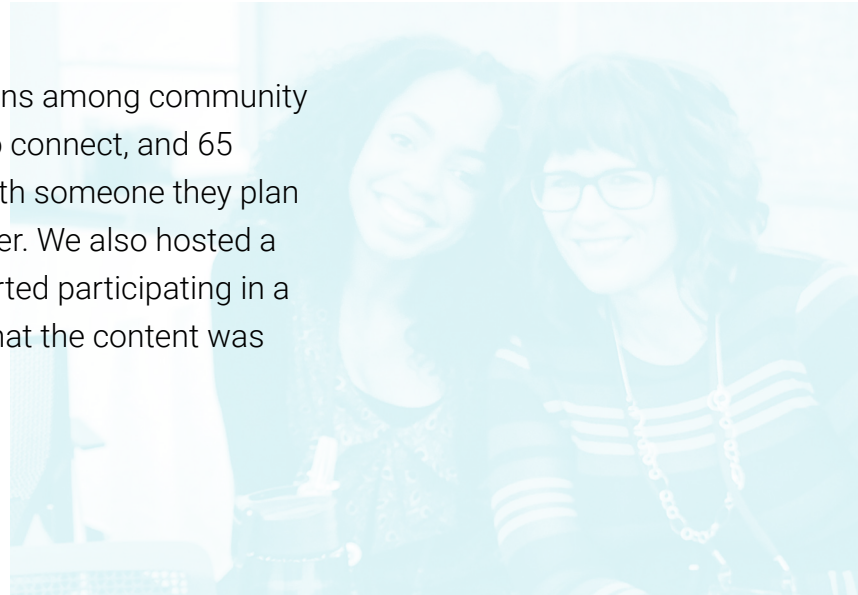
ONA's Meghan Murphy leads a presentation during the Local Leadership Summit in Detroit on June 8, 2018.

The workshop on women's leadership drew lessons from the Women's Leadership Accelerator, and was the first time we hosted

ONA Local Leadership Summit

an extended session on women's leadership outside of the Accelerator cohorts. All respondents to the feedback survey said this was one of the most engaging sessions of the event for them; one called it "one of the best journalism workshops I've ever attended." Participants consistently reported they planned to take the strategies learned in the workshop back to other women in their newsroom.

A key goal of this program is to seed collaborations among community leaders who may not otherwise have a chance to connect, and 65 percent of attendees reported they connected with someone they plan to follow up with and continue to work with further. We also hosted a round of Table Talks, and all attendees who reported participating in a Table Talk said their talk sparked a new idea or that the content was completely new. ■



The 2018 Summit featured a half-day of workshops with a special focus on small markets and local communities.

Journalism 360 Unconference

In July, ONA hosted nearly 200 immersive storytelling experts and enthusiasts for the inaugural Journalism 360 Unconference at the CUNY Graduate School of Journalism in New York City.

It's the first event focused entirely on the intersection of immersive storytelling and newsroom practices, including innovative uses of 360 video and virtual, augmented and mixed reality, and more.

The day featured wide-ranging conversations covering everything from ethics and funding to workflow tips and audience engagement. Participants tackled questions about the technical challenges of a nascent field, such as selecting equipment and identifying resources and partnerships. We also dove into more strategic questions, including how to identify stories that will particularly resonate in an immersive format and how to guide audiences through their first experiences with immersive news experiences, with a particular focus on ensuring that immersive journalism contributes to audience trust and is inclusive of all communities.

The Unconference model will be a valuable way to continue cultivating the tight-knit immersive journalism community that has developed around Journalism 360 and advance our mission to make immersive news experiences accessible for journalists and media organizations of all kinds. ■



BUILDING COMMUNITY

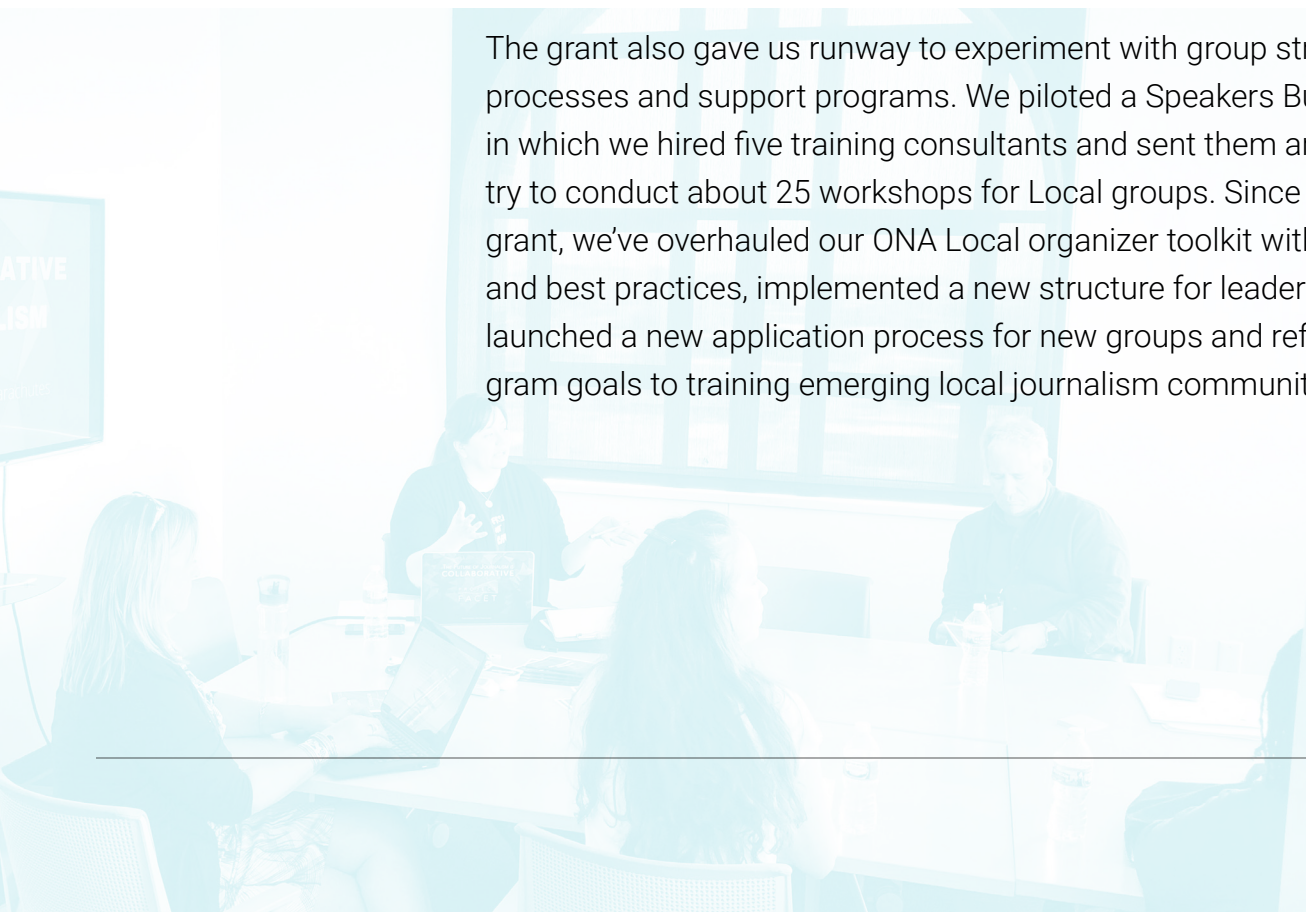


ONA LOCAL

ONA Local is a global network of meetup groups hosting networking and training events for local journalism and technology communities, strengthening connections and sharing resources.

In June 2018, we wrapped up a two-and-a-half-year grant with Knight Foundation supporting the expansion and strengthening of the ONA Local program. Since the beginning of the grant period, we added 26 new groups to our previous roster of 50, growing the number of groups by more than 50 percent. We also nearly doubled the number of people who were part of any ONA Local group in our Meetup.com network, growing from about 7,500 to about 14,700 members from the beginning of 2016 through the end of 2018.

The grant also gave us runway to experiment with group structures, launch processes and support programs. We piloted a Speakers Bureau program, in which we hired five training consultants and sent them around the country to conduct about 25 workshops for Local groups. Since ending the grant, we've overhauled our ONA Local organizer toolkit with resources and best practices, implemented a new structure for leadership teams, launched a new application process for new groups and refocused our program goals to training emerging local journalism community leaders. ■





Local Leaders held an office hours event at ONA18 for attendees interested in starting their own groups



At the local leaders summit, attendees broke into groups to discuss strategies for running their groups.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP ACCEL.

The Women's Leadership Accelerator is a year-long, intensive program that supercharges the leadership and management skills of women who are pushing digital innovation.



The latest class of the Women's Leadership Accelerator is joined by ONA staff and facilitators involved in the program during a reception at ONA18.

The 2018 cohort is a diverse group of 25 practitioners working in a variety of digital media roles, newsrooms, beats and organization sizes, as well as freelancers. The cohort included representation throughout the U.S. and five participants from outside the country, and 40 percent of the cohort identified as people of color. The group convened in Los Angeles in February for a weeklong training focused on personal development and individual leadership challenges, and we organized follow-up gatherings for additional workshops, networking and reflection in New York in July and at ONA18 in Austin in September. Over the

course of their participation in the program, the group had received seven promotions, six new jobs, one approved relocation, eight major new project launches, five major grants of funding updates, and more.

For the first time this year, we offered WLA workshops to general attendees at our annual conference. We also received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the 60 women who participated in workshops at the ONA Local Summit in Detroit and at the National Association of Hispanic Journalists conference in Miami. ■

MENTORSHIP COLLABORATIVE

The Collaborative aims to address one of the biggest needs in the journalism industry: professional mentorship providing guidance and leadership skills to diverse, rising talent.

Through this program, we recruited a broad collaborative of 130 participants representing more than 100 organizations committed to enhancing inclusive mentoring opportunities.

We hosted six webinars covering the basics of setting up a mentorship program — from getting leadership buy-in, to handling difficult conversations — and launched a private Slack community for industry leaders invested in mentorship to interact with their peers.

From within that broader collaborative, we did a public call for innovative, inclusive ideas in mentoring, and distributed nearly \$70,000 in micro-grants to support newsroom mentorship programs at 16 organizations. The programs were run by a cohort of 17 Journalism Mentorship Collaborative fellows, who received additional in-person and virtual training from a team of expert coaches.

Participation of both mentors and mentees in the fellows' mentorship programs rose by more than 50 percent during the course of the grant. ■



A fellow in the Journalism Mentorship Collaborative program presents on her newsroom's efforts during ONA19.

JOURNALISM 360

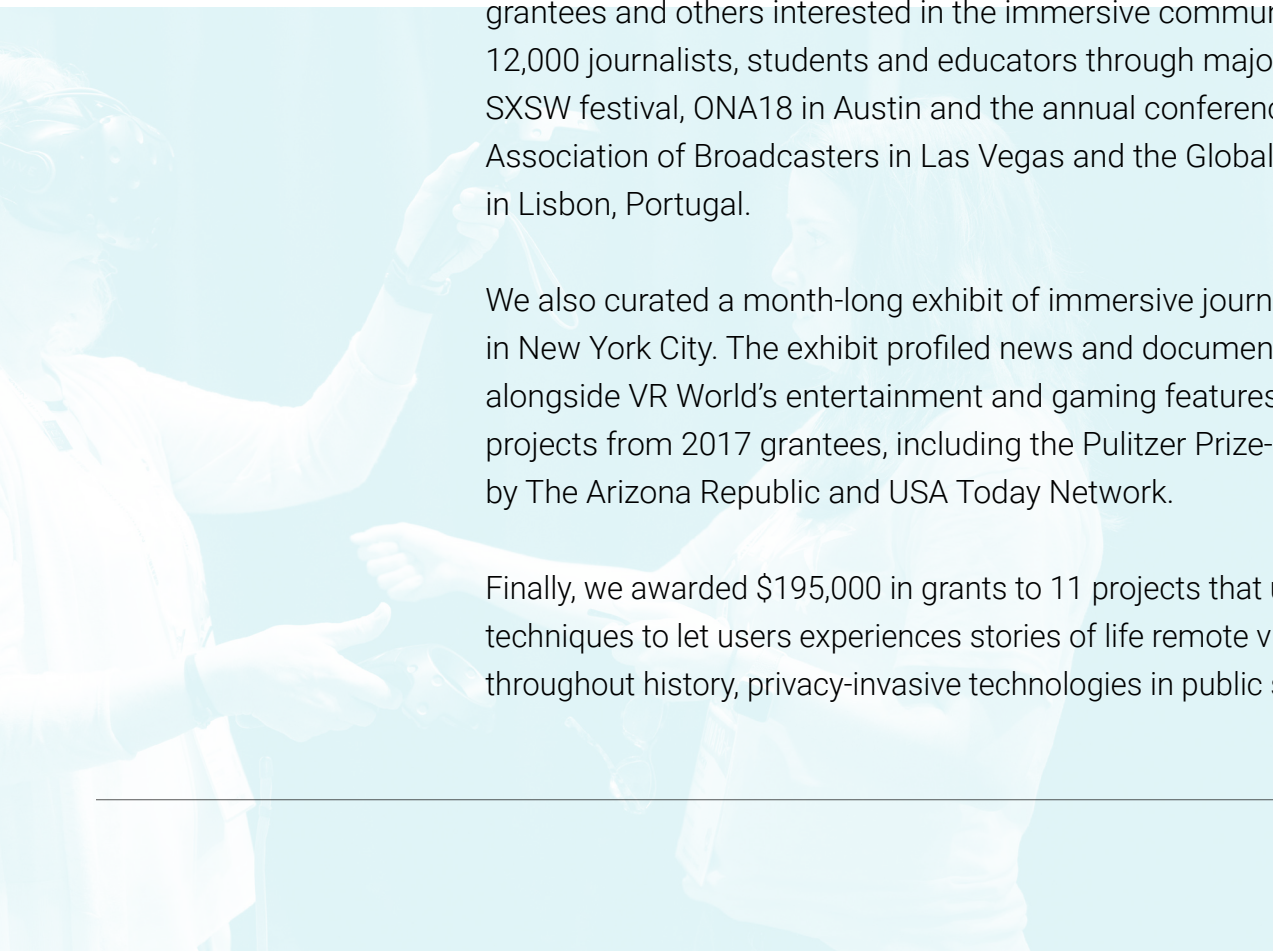
Journalism 360 is a global network of storytellers accelerating the understanding and production of immersive journalism through experimentation with, but not limited to, 360 video, augmented reality, virtual reality and mixed reality.

In its second year, the program continued to grow as an innovative community focused on grantmaking to support pioneering immersive journalism projects and training workshops and demonstrations to introduce new audiences to technology, tools and strategies for virtual journalism.

This year, ONA focused resources on supporting in-person interaction with grantees and others interested in the immersive community. We reached 12,000 journalists, students and educators through major training events at SXSW festival, ONA18 in Austin and the annual conferences of the National Association of Broadcasters in Las Vegas and the Global Editors Network in Lisbon, Portugal.

We also curated a month-long exhibit of immersive journalism at VR World in New York City. The exhibit profiled news and documentary content alongside VR World's entertainment and gaming features and showcased projects from 2017 grantees, including the Pulitzer Prize-winning "The Wall" by The Arizona Republic and USA Today Network.

Finally, we awarded \$195,000 in grants to 11 projects that use immersive techniques to let users experience stories of life in remote villages, racial terror throughout history, privacy-invasive technologies in public spaces and more. ■





Robert Hernandez (center), head of the Journalism project at the University of Southern California, screens "The Deported" VR project for attendees.



The festival at ONA18 featured several stations where attendees could experience immersive projects first-hand.

STUDENT NEWSROOM

The Student Newsroom immerses undergraduate and graduate college students in a digital media environment by providing hands-on experience during the three-day Online News Association Conference & Awards Banquet with guidance from experienced mentors.

In 2018, the newsroom brought 20 bright aspiring journalists to the conference. Michelle Johnson, a professor at the University of Oregon, and Katia Hetter, a senior writer at CNN, once again led the team of mentors. Students produced over 50 articles, which in addition to the Newsroom website are also featured in the ONA resource center.



The Google News Initiative returned as the sponsor of the newsroom, providing student airfare and accommodations. Students also received a training on Google tools, some of which they experimented with during the conference.

Gannett/USA TODAY Network offered a new opportunity for students to connect with an additional professional career advisor, while CNN and Instagram conducted a joint training and provided breakfast. ■

The latest class of the Women's Leadership Accelerator is joined by ONA staff and facilitators involved in the program during a reception at ONA18.

Sponsored by
Google
News Initiative

CHALLENGE FUND

The Challenge Fund for Innovation in Journalism Education provides micro-grants to universities and local news partnerships to explore hypotheses about new ways to deliver news to their communities.

Since 2013, the program has awarded \$1,585,000 in micro-grants to 46 recipients as part of our goal to tip the momentum in journalism schools toward innovation, collaboration and experimentation.

Grantees have published extensively with professional media partners, won awards and recognition from numerous local and national journalism organizations, established news partnerships that sustained beyond the initial micro-grant collaboration and produced investigations that have had tangible impact in their communities.

During 2018, we reviewed proposals for local news experiments for the fourth round of Challenge Fund grants. Submissions focused on four themes: community engagement and civic participation, technology, diversity and building trust. Of 36 applications from 33 schools, 12 had never applied before, 17 applied for the first time since the first two cycles in 2014/2015, and four had applied in the third cycle in 2017. Projects by the 2018 winners include experiments in community data journalism, covering the U.S.–Mexico border and delivering news in rural indigenous communities. ■



Zita Arocha, University of Texas at El Paso, and Dana Coester, West Virginia University, participated in a panel at ONA18 to talk about their innovative efforts in journalism education.

CAREER CENTER

ONA's online job board, open to the entire digital journalism community, offers access to hundreds of career opportunities — plus, tools to help recruiters target relevant candidates. In, 2018, the center listed opportunities from 132 employers and earned nearly 68,000 unique page views. ■

RESOURCE CENTER

In September 2018, we launched the beta version of the ONA resources center on journalists.org, with the support of Alley. The new feature breathes new life into years of terrific ONA conference discussions and presentations and offers ONA members and the broader community a chance to hone their practice, learn new skills and educate themselves on industry issues on demand and at their own pace.

As of January 2019, the platform features over 300 resources from ONA conferences. These include session video, audio, presentations, articles, social media, and speaker profiles. ■

GIVING RECOGNITION

Online Journalism Awards
Fellowships

03

Online Journalism Awards
2018

Explanatory Reporting, Medium
Dirty Gold, Clean Cash
Jay Weaver, Nicholas Nehamas, Jim Wythe
Kyra Gurney, Aaron Albright, Pedro Portal,
Jose Iglesias and Noel Gonzalez, Miami Herald

Online News Association

Online Journalism Awards
2018

Excellence in Audio
Medium
Prosecutor Nismis Done
Interceptions Mapped in Playlists
S.A. LA NACION

Online News Association

ONLINE JOURNALISM AWARDS



ONA honored more than 35 individuals, projects and organizations with awards during our Online Journalism Awards Banquet and Ceremony (OJAs). We had more than 1,100 entries competing for awards, with submissions from around the world.

We made several changes to the awards program this year, including consolidating the Planned News and Topical categories and incorporating them into the Explanatory and Feature categories, respectively. We introduced a new category honoring Excellence in Collaboration and Partnerships, in recognition of an expanding trend in journalism. We also added a category for General Excellence in Online Journalism for Micro Newsrooms — those with 15 or fewer employees — to better recognize the outstanding work produced by small teams. Additionally, special recognition was given to three individuals for outstanding contributions to the field of journalism.

- Photojournalist Nicole Tung was presented with the James Foley Award for Conflict Reporting.
- Our inaugural Community Award, focused on transformational contributions in journalism, was presented to OpenNews Director Erika Owens.
- In recognition of her long-standing dedication to the ONA community, Jane McDonnell was given with the Rich Jaroslovsky Founder Award.

The awards ceremony and banquet were held on the final night of ONA18 in Austin, Texas. Host and Executive Producer of The 21st, Niala Boodhoo, was host for the event. ■



Rosental Alves, Knight Chair in Journalism at the University of Texas at Austin, presents the Knight Award for Public Service.



Jeff Kofman, CEO and Founder of Trint, accepts the award for Technical Innovation in the Service of Digital Journalism.

FELLOWSHIPS

We invest in the future of digital journalism through our annual fellowship programs. In 2018, 12 journalists received fellowship recognition from ONA for their innovative work.

MJ Bear Fellowship

In honor of much-loved ONA founding member MJ Bear, this annual fellowship goes to three stand-out journalists under age 30 who are working on innovative digital journalism projects.

- Anand Katakam, Manager for Data Products, Scroll.in
- Tania Karas, Foreign Correspondent and Editor, Independent
- Vignesh Ramachandran, Web Producer, ProPublica Illinois



2018 MJ Bear Fellows
Vignesh Ramachandran,
Tania Karas and Anand
Katakam at ONA18.

PROGRAMS: FELLOWSHIPS

HBCU Digital Media Fellowship

This fellowship selects up to five students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities to attend our three-day annual conference, receiving hands-on reporting experience in the Student Newsroom and Innovation Lab, as well as mentorship.

- Daja Henry, Senior, Media, Journalism and Film Communications, Howard University
- Kyla Wright, Senior, Journalism, Hampton University
- Leah Proctor-Ford, Senior, U.S. History, Spelman College
- Shayla Simmons, Senior, Mass Communications, Tennessee State University
- Xavier McKnight, Senior, Mass Communications, Savannah State University



2018 HBCU Fellows Shayla Simmons, Daja Henry, Kyla Wright, Leah Proctor-Ford and Xavier McKnight at ONA18.

CNN Diversity Fellowship

The CNN Diversity Fellowship recognizes digital journalists from diverse backgrounds with experience reporting for mobile and social platforms. Selected fellows receive an all-expenses-paid trip to our annual conference to participate in one-on-one networking and mentoring events.

- Maureen Chowdhury, Video Producer, McClatchy
- Nicholas Perez, Podcast/Digital Reporter, Daily Journal
- Sangeeta Singh-Kurtz, Journalist, Quartz
- Tyler Tynes, Staff Writer, SB Nation ■



2018 CNN Diversity Fellow Nicholas Perez, Maureen Chowdhury and Tyler Tynes at ONA18. (Not pictured: Sangeeta Singh-Kurtz)

