

A SURVEY OF BASIC NEWS WRITING COURSES
AT SEVEN MIDWESTERN DEPARTMENTS
OF JOURNALISM

by

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**THIS BOOK
CONTAINS
NUMEROUS PAGES
WITH MULTIPLE
PENCIL AND/OR
PEN MARKS
THROUGHOUT THE
TEXT.**

**THIS IS THE BEST
IMAGE AVAILABLE.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Problem

In 1956 Leslie G. Moeller, who was then chairman of the American Council on Education for Journalism accrediting committee, issued a call for more research in journalism education. In a Journalism Quarterly article based on an address he had given the previous year at the annual Association for Education in Journalism (AEJ) convention, Moeller set out 11 high-priority areas of investigation.

At the top of his list were (1) studies of various types of journalism education programs, including the content of each course; (2) investigation of educational philosophies and goals in these programs and courses; (3) exploration of the qualifications and educational and professional backgrounds of faculty members who teach journalism courses, and (4) surveys of teaching methods.¹

A survey of the journalism education literature shows that research encompassing some or all of these things has been done on courses in magazine article writing, introductory survey of the media, science writing, radio and television news and other fields. This writer could find no published studies, however, concerning the basic news writing course, the course in which the beginning journalist gets his first detailed instruction in journalistic writing--and perhaps reporting--techniques.

The paucity of research on this course perhaps may be explained by the ambiguous position it occupies within the journalism education world: it is generally accepted as necessary, but often denigrated as a mere "skills" course in an era dominated by research and teaching in communication theory. | ✓

Theodore Peterson discussed these attitudes in his presidential address at the AEJ convention in 1963. He suggested that journalism curricula "might well be built upon a core of courses in communications rather than on a core of newspaper-journalism courses, as they traditionally have been."² At the same time, however, he cautioned:

If we move in that direction, I hope that we will not shortchange our courses in the techniques of our crafts, the courses that we euphemistically refer to as "professional." Although I have repeatedly said that I think we have far too many such courses, I also think the way to strengthening our programs lies not just in paring away at them; it also lies in upgrading them...

If we are to cut our techniques courses to a bare minimum dealing with fundamental principles, as I think we must, we should be sure that those courses are superbly taught. Unfortunately, there seems to be a growing feeling that techniques courses require the least of our intellectual attention. Our bright young Ph.D.'s, who presumably could bring to those courses new approaches, new insights and new vigor, seem to regard them as a nasty necessity, like administrators and committee assignments, to be tolerated if they cannot be avoided. Most of the young Ph.D.'s I have encountered, at any rate, are eager to teach courses in communications theory and social responsibility of the press; they will suffer techniques courses, if they must.³

While Peterson dealt with techniques courses in general, Robert Knight emphasized the value of the basic news writing course when he described it as "a 'building block' course, one upon which all other writing and reporting courses depend."⁴ Students usually must use the knowledge obtained in this course throughout the rest of their college and professional careers, Knight said. And if the building block course--or foundation--is weak, the student subsequently will fare poorly.

Many critics would agree that admonishments such as Peterson's and descriptions such as Knight's have been disregarded. "The continuing weakness of the schools of journalism is the reluctance of so many of them to teach journalistic writing," wrote Chilton R. Bush in 1969.⁵ Four years earlier, John Tebbel asserted, "The sloppy writing and editing so prevalent today cries for better-trained personnel, who take real pride in their craftsmanship. Unfortunately, many schools and departments are not equipped to supply it."⁶ And in 1971 Gene Burd said, "The declining quality of student writing is partly due to incompetent teachers. The kids consider the dictionary 'establishment.' They are not curious and fail to ask obvious questions. They don't discriminate. They do not respect words as their tools."⁷

Inadequate emphasis on the course and poor teaching may result in weak student and professional performance, but schools and departments of journalism undoubtedly could defend themselves by pleading extenuating circumstances. During the 1970-71 school year 33,106 students were enrolled in journalism departments in the United States. This figure represented a

20 per cent enrollment increase since 1968 and a 190.6 per cent increase since 1960.⁸ Because the basic news writing course is a "building block," a majority of these students probably passed through it. Thus swelling enrollments have combined with tight financial budgets--which often result in short-handed faculties and inadequate facilities and equipment--to place tremendous strains on the basic news writing course.⁹

It would seem to be a logical assumption that innovations must be made in the course if it is to adequately handle large enrollments with too-few instructors and often-inadequate facilities and equipment. As James Schwartz said in his presidential address to the AEJ convention in 1969: "What is needed now is an enthusiasm, an open invitation, for experimentation, innovation and change."¹⁰

However, it is revealing to compare Journalism Quarterly articles written about this type of course by H. E. Birdsong, Jr., in 1927 and Curtis D. MacDougall in 1938 with "A Comparison of Approaches to Teaching News Writing at Four Schools of Journalism," an unpublished master's thesis done in 1969 by Jane E. Clark.¹¹ Clark's thesis apparently is the only comparative study of this type of course which has been done in the last 40 years. As part of her study, Clark acquired information about teaching methods. Birdsong's article described teaching methods for a course of this type as practiced by himself and by 14 other journalism instructors with whom he corresponded.¹² MacDougall's article was based on his teaching methods.¹³ A comparison shows an intense similarity among the methods listed by all three authors. There had been practically no change between 1927 and 1969.

Thus, this mail questionnaire survey of instructors of the basic news writing course at seven universities in Kansas and surrounding states was proposed for several reasons:

- 1) There is a need to determine what approaches to teaching the course are being taken. If old approaches still dominate, this should be documented. If some innovations are being made, the most common--and perhaps most productive--ones may be pinpointed. At any rate, the current status of the course must be determined before any widespread, substantial changes can be expected. Clark's thesis is a valuable contribution in this area. It is the only recent such study this author could find, however.

- 2) By focusing attention upon this course, the study might stimulate

schools and departments of journalism to devote more attention to it. This could lead to reassessment and innovation.

3) By providing information on how the course is taught at various schools, the study might suggest directions to schools or departments which already desire to change their courses.

4) The study could provide useful information about administration, goals and methods to new instructors who are faced with teaching this course for the first time. Speaking from his own experience, the author believes many new faculty members probably suffer acute discomfort--and their students probably suffer bad teaching--because the instructors approach this course with only hazy ideas of what they are doing and how they should do it. There is very little published literature dealing with this course. This study could thus serve as an idea source to new instructors.

Review of the Literature

There is no comprehensive body of literature dealing with the basic news writing course. The most valuable single piece of literature is an unpublished master's thesis done by Jane E. Clark at the University of Missouri in 1969: "A Comparison of Approaches to Teaching News Writing at Four Schools of Journalism." Other articles and unpublished papers take a fragmented approach, each dealing with one or a few aspects of the course.

The Clark Thesis¹⁴

Clark interviewed 17 instructors and administrators in schools and departments of journalism at four universities: the University of Florida, Michigan State University, the University of Missouri and the University of Nebraska. She visited each university and did personal interviews structured loosely by a 100-item question schedule. She recorded the results in a 310-page thesis which is insightful but very impressionistic. It contains only five tables, all of which deal with enrollment figures.

Clark picked her respondents in order to get a comparison between large schools and a relatively small one. The largest journalism enrollment among the subject schools was 1,143 students at Michigan State. The smallest was 459 students at the University of Nebraska.

Clark found that the name of the basic news writing course was different at each school. It was required of all undergraduate majors except at Michigan State, where students in radio, television and film did not take it. The course is open to non-majors at three of the schools. (The status of the Nebraska course on this point was not mentioned).

Academic credits granted for the course ranged from four quarter hours at Florida to two semester hours at Nebraska and Missouri. The course is a junior level one at Missouri, but at the other three schools it is usually taken by sophomores. No mention was made of examinations to waive the course. Only Michigan State was mentioned as a school that required students to pass a typing test to enroll. Michigan State also made provision for students who

fail the test to take remedial instruction through a university non-credit course.

Clark found that the structure and staffing of the course varied with each school.

In the fall of 1968 Florida had 10 lecture sections of 21 to 25 students each, with no laboratory. The sections met for three one-hour sessions a week. They were taught by "five or six" instructors. Student teaching assistants were "rarely" used.

At Michigan State in the fall of 1968 the course had one lecture section for all 134 students. Students met twice a week for one hour of lecture each time. They were divided into seven laboratory sections which met once a week for two hours. The course was taught by one faculty member, who was in charge of lectures and a laboratory, plus an assistant instructor and three graduate students. The latter four were in charge of laboratory sections and had full responsibility for teaching and grading the students in their sections. The faculty member attempted to co-ordinate the course closely with standardized assignments for all sections and a teaching manual for the assistant instructor and teaching assistants.

At Missouri the course had 300 enrolled in fall, 1968. There was one lecture section, which met twice a week for one hour each session. The students were divided into 13 laboratory sections, which met once for two hours each week. The course was staffed by four faculty members, two graduate assistants and 11 undergraduate assistants. One faculty member co-ordinated the course, but had nothing to do with actual instruction or grading. Another faculty member had primary responsibility for lectures. He and the other two instructors each supervised a number of laboratory sections. One teaching assistant for each laboratory section worked under them. Assistants had responsibility for preparing laboratory writing assignments--with faculty guidance--and preliminary evaluation of student papers. They also conferred with the instructors on final grades for students.

At Nebraska the course was divided into six sections of combined lecture and laboratory in the fall of 1968. Each section met once a week for four hours. Three of the sections were filled with students in the news-editorial sequence, two with broadcasting students and one with advertising students. Sections were limited to enrollments of 20 each, but Clark does not specify total enrollment. An unspecified number of student teaching assistants were hired for clerical work, but they played no role

in teaching or grading the course.

The goals envisioned for the course were articulated differently from one instructor to another. Most often mentioned was a desire to instill writing "discipline" in students. To achieve this, most instructors emphasized the mechanics of writing (grammar, spelling, and punctuation) and straight news story writing style and organization.

There was an even split among the schools over teaching information gathering--reporting--skills. At Florida and Michigan State the course is primarily a writing course. Very little emphasis was placed upon reporting skills. At Missouri the course was predominantly one in writing, but reporting received substantial emphasis. At Nebraska the course is a mixture of instruction in writing and reporting.

Teaching methods also varied from instructor to instructor and from school to school, although there was general consensus that the only way to teach a student to write well is through having him write extensively. The most valuable discussion of teaching methods therefore centered around ways of providing material for writing assignments. These methods ranged from prepackaged workbooks and instructor-prepared information sheets to staging mock press conferences and sending students to community or campus speeches and meetings. Obviously, the amount of instruction in reporting techniques varied in accordance with the methods of providing information. Nebraska placed the most emphasis on "live" reporting-writing assignments both in laboratories and outside of them. Missouri's primary "live" assignments involved speech coverage and a semester project story done outside of class, with laboratory assignments mainly based on a workbook and materials prepared and disseminated by instructors. Michigan State relied on a workbook and instructor-prepared materials for laboratory and out-of-class assignments and a few writing assignments during lecture sessions.

Clark found little innovation in instructional methods. None of the instructors used role-playing, programmed instruction, or computer-grading of student writing assignments. Only one had used design and execution of a poll by his class, with writing assignments based on the results. Audio-visual devices were used very little at Nebraska and Florida, and more heavily at Michigan State and Missouri.

Although she is not extremely clear on this point, it appears that assistant professor was the highest academic rank held by any of the 12

persons Clark interviewed who were actively involved with teaching the course during the 1968-69 school year. Their backgrounds and educations varied, of course. Four held Ph.D.'s. Most had spent some time working on newspapers. Clark does not present information on teaching experience for all of her respondents, although it appears that most of the instructors had not been in the profession an extremely long time. Part-time instructors -- who held regular media jobs -- were used at Missouri and Nebraska.

Students' final grades in this course at all four schools were based primarily upon writing assignments. The most common grading method for writing assignments involved writing comments on all papers. Next in popularity were oral comments delivered to the whole section when papers were returned. Personal conferences usually were held only with students who experienced difficulty with the work. Instructors at Missouri evaluated --by reviewing written comments of student assistants--at least 100 papers a week. At Michigan State instructors and assistants, all of whom assign grades, handled 80 to 100 papers per week. Nebraska instructors graded 40 to 60 per week. No exact estimate was given for Florida, but one instructor said he spent seven to eight hours per week grading papers for the course.

Other Literature

Samuel S. Talbert noted that at many schools students cannot take such courses as basic news writing until their junior or senior years. Basing his advice on his experience as a faculty member at the University of Mississippi, Talbert urged journalism educators to consider allowing freshmen to take such courses. Freshmen at Mississippi were allowed to take the beginning skills course--identified as one in "reporting." Talbert said this practice was begun for four reasons: 1) a desire to weed out early in their academic careers would-be majors who lacked talent or interest; 2) a need to prepare students for service on the student newspaper; 3) a desire to capitalize on the enthusiasm of beginning students; and 4) a need to prepare students for summer employment opportunities.¹⁵

The accrediting standards of the American Council on Education for Journalism (ACEJ) do not bar the offering of a basic news writing course

to lower division students, but they at least seem to lend moral support to those schools which require upper division standing for enrollment. The standards advise: "A school of journalism should concentrate its professional courses in the last two years of a four-year program..." The purpose of this standard, according to the ACEJ, is "to permit the student to acquire a basic background in the liberal arts and sciences."¹⁶

The structure and staffing of the basic news writing course, as Clark showed, often varies from one school to another. Within schools, too, variations have been tried over the years.

In 1932 Eric W. Allen, then dean of the University of Oregon's journalism school, described his school's Reporting course as "quite elaborate." Each week students attended two lectures, spent one afternoon covering a regular beat in the community, spent one afternoon or evening covering a special assignment, and had one "study period." Students produced copy for imaginary newspapers--with such names as the Tuesday Tribune--four days a week. These newspapers were carried through the dummy stage, at which point they were compared daily with state newspapers. The course was administered by one instructor.¹⁷

Now Oregon's basic news writing course, labeled Journalistic Writing, is a lecture-laboratory operation. Lectures are team-taught by several faculty members. Writing and other skills are learned in weekly laboratories.¹⁸

A different lecture-laboratory system is used at Stanford University, according to William L. Rivers. Rivers teaches Communication 100, which one recent semester involved lectures and five out-of-class reporting-writing assignments. Students got laboratory instruction through a separate course, Communication 102, overseen by a "lab instructor."¹⁹

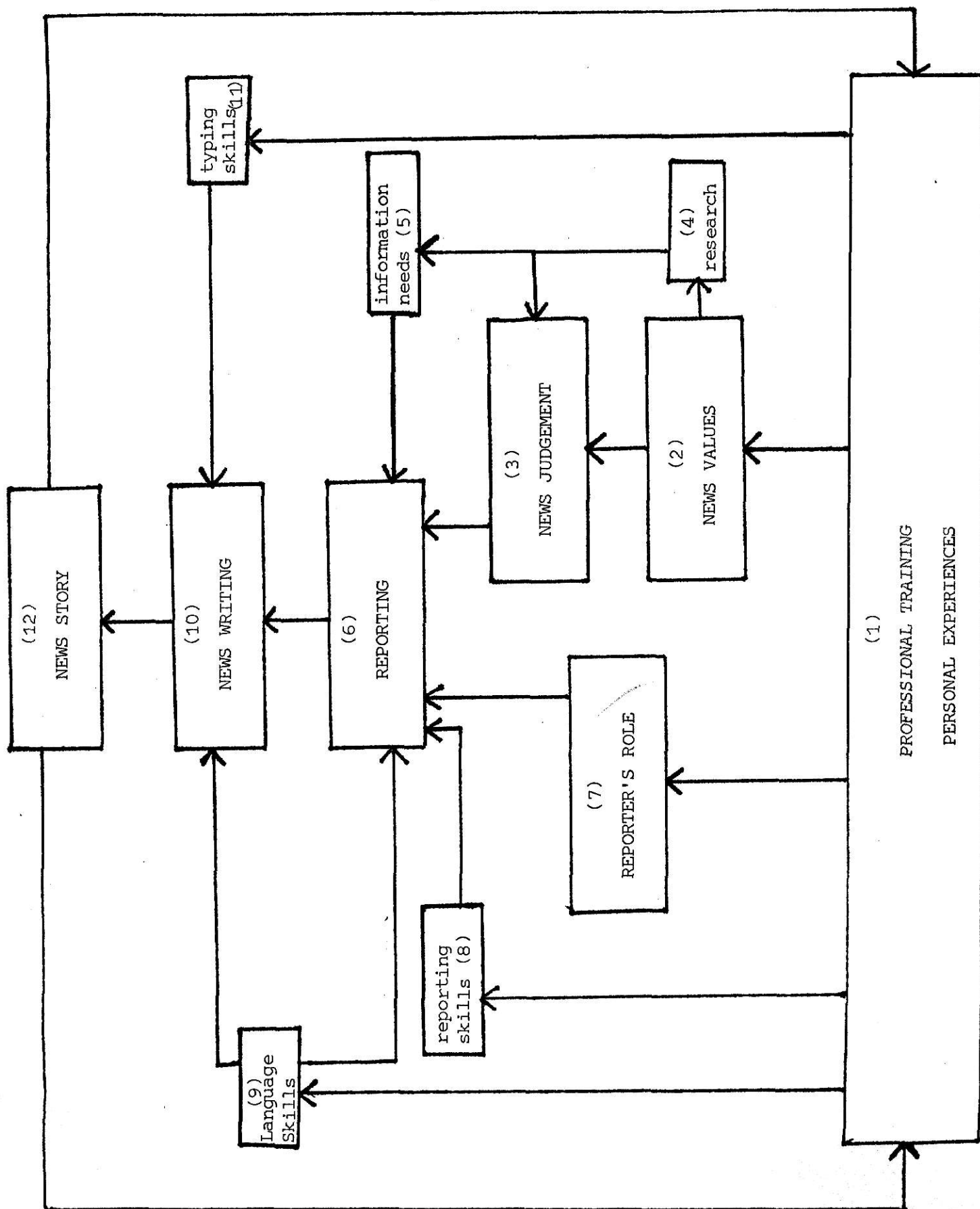
The ACEJ accrediting standards include an important point relating to the structure and staffing of most basic news writing courses: "To insure reasonable class sizes in laboratory performance courses, ACEJ recommends that the student-teacher ratio in such courses not exceed 15-1."²⁰

Earl L. Conn is one of the few journalism educators who has written about the goals of courses such as basic news writing. He developed "a model showing the concepts, cognitions, skills and learning experiences involved in the writing of a news story." (See Plate I.) On the basis of this model, he reached a number of conclusions. First, the reporting ✓

**THIS BOOK
CONTAINS
NUMEROUS PAGES
WITH DIAGRAMS
THAT ARE CROOKED
COMPARED TO THE
REST OF THE
INFORMATION ON
THE PAGE.**

**THIS IS AS
RECEIVED FROM
CUSTOMER.**

PLATE I



process is central to the writing of a news story: "A total of five concepts, skills and understandings impinge on this process. If we are teaching basically news writing at the exclusion of reporting, our students are not understanding the process of writing a news story at all." Second, developing "the concept of the reporter's role" is important: "The student needs to be put into situations where this role is clearly and successfully defined." Third, feedback from the news story to the experience and training of the reporter is important: "The task of the newswriting instructor is nowhere more apparent than at this point in helping the student understand specifically how his stories could be improved, and in doing so, helping the student build a generalized concept of newswriting that will continue to aid him." Thus, Conn contends that instructors should not try to separate the teaching of reporting and the teaching of writing. And he feels instructor evaluation of student work is the pivotal point of a basic news writing course.²¹

Curtis D. MacDougall is one of the pioneers of education in the basic journalism skills. He has taught at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism for more than 30 years, and he is the author of a textbook--Interpretative Reporting--which has been widely used. In 1938 he laid out much of his thinking concerning goals and teaching methods in the basic course in a Journalism Quarterly article.

At that time he was teaching a "reporting" course which was a two-semester sequence. The first semester was largely devoted to "the style and grammar peculiar to news story composition." He advocated establishment of a "pre-reporting" course to deal with this material.²²

"Reporting obviously cannot be taught entirely separate from news writing, but specialized training in handling typical assignments cannot be given effectively until the student has mastered the rudiments of news writing style," he wrote.²³

The term "reporting" implied, he said, the following:

1. What to look for on a given assignment.
2. Where and how to get it.
3. How to write it.²⁴

The "desideratum" for a course like his was "to create as nearly as possible the actual conditions of reportorial work so that the instructor can act as a realistic guide to acquiring the most important attribute the journalism school should give its graduates: the news gatherer's personality and habits of mind and action."²⁵

MacDougall labeled the lecture method "almost worthless in teaching facility in news gathering." Instructors need to "show, not tell, them how to do it."²⁶

He advocated the use of laboratory assignments in the teaching process. He noted that campus newspapers or work with a local daily newspaper were often used "to provide journalistic atmosphere and actual opportunities to report," but he said this "falls short." Beginning students usually receive only routine assignments when they work for newspapers, and many of them have trouble working those assignments into class schedules, he said.²⁷

"The reporting instructor's success depends in large part on his ability to simulate actual news gathering conditions in the class room," MacDougall wrote. To accomplish this simulation, he recommended that instructors indulge in role-playing. Instructors should invent news situations of varying types and then pretend to be each of the news sources involved. Students should gather information by asking questions of each news source and taking notes.²⁸

MacDougall criticized the use of printed fact sheets as the basis for laboratory assignments, because such a method does not require students to question and take notes. "The mimeograph is a lazy and inefficient tool in teaching reporting because it stultifies initiative and creative thinking on the part of both teacher and student," MacDougall said.²⁹

The earliest attempt to catalogue teaching methods in basic journalism skills courses was made by H. E. Birdsong, Jr., in 1927. In an article in The Journalism Bulletin--forerunner to Journalism Quarterly--Birdsong recorded 29 methods under the headings "Exercises, Drills and Tests," "Training in Judging Evidence," and "Inspirational Methods."³⁰ His methods, gathered from his own experience and from correspondence with 14 other journalism educators, ranged from staging fights in class and having students write stories about them to hand setting of type. Birdsong's methods included most of those mentioned by MacDougall.

In 1939 Byron H. Christian suggested that reporting students be assigned to do in-depth projects. He reported that at the University of Washington he had assigned 30 reporting students to prepare a series of articles on unemployment, relief and youth problems in Seattle and King County. He divided the students into three ten-member teams, one for each topic area. The students then went into the community and researched their

stories, wrote them and rewrote them. It took two months to complete the project, but 24 of the stories eventually ran on the editorial page of the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. "This survey once more demonstrated to us the value of the project-conference method over the lecture-quiz system, which to the minds of the majority of this faculty, at least, has been the major curse of much of our present journalism instruction," Christian wrote.³¹

Four years later R. E. Wolseley described how he had experimented with giving reporting students instruction in telephone use. Students telephoned a routine police story to a mythical city room, and the conversation was recorded. Wolseley and a speech professor then critiqued the students' performance in several areas, including delivery, coherence, accuracy, voice clarity, vocabulary, and diction. Wolseley concluded that the experiment was "worth including" in reporting courses. "Students are usually not aware of 'telephone faults.' As a rule they are eager to get rid of such faults, once they know of them," he said.³²

Another early educator, William R. Slaughter, called in 1927 for instructors to "work for intimacy of mental contact" with students. This intimacy could be established by "keeping your own enthusiasm at the enthusing point" and reaching out "tentacles of friendliness and naturalness" to students. At the same time, Slaughter advised, instructors should hold students' respect "through fair, honest, impersonal, but ruthless criticism of their writing."³³

"It is possible to have a sort of esprit de corps in the class. Any group endeavor requires it. Newspapers themselves have always prized it," Slaughter wrote.³⁴ He added, "Criticism is not of the student, ever; it is always of his work. The young men and women are your collaborators; all of you together are in search of skill."³⁵

A similar approach was taken years later by David L. Grey of Stanford University. In a panel discussion at the 1969 AEJ convention, Grey talked of "the psychology of news writing."

"...I think the basic premise here is that writing is a very human experience; it's a behavior," Grey said.

A writer has good habits and bad habits. He can be changed; but he also has things that can't be changed. Basically, we see writing very much as a process--a kind of internal process. We--or at least I--try to work with a student on the basis of: What is the process of writing for me? How can I generate change in myself?³⁶

His method involves extensive written criticism of student papers, rapid return of criticized assignments, and personal conferences. His criticism is often couched in questions, such as: "This is wrong, this is wrong and this is wrong. What do you do about it?" The student then rewrites the paper, which forces him to think and gives the instructor insight into whether the student is trying.³⁷

Grey also advanced a "psychological argument" for laboratory exercises:

We do use laboratory time for controlled exercises, not so much from the standpoint of the teacher controlling the student but for the student to be able to see in a controlled environment how he did compared with others. This seems to work quite well. It enables us to find out maybe why a student made a mistake. Give a speech or a press conference and you can control it. And the student appreciates the chance to get the record thrown back at him and to have a chance to see actually what was presented to him and then how he did with it and how others did with it. All things considered, the laboratory offers one of the greatest opportunities for the "psychology of writing"--if you want to call it that. I'm not sure that we've even begun to scratch the surface, but we do find that mock exercises (situations where you can control the input) help. And help the student--not so much the teacher. They help the student to see what he did wrong and to try to figure it all out.³⁸

By comparing the Clark thesis and Grey's discussion with the articles written 30 years or more ago by Birdsong, MacDougall and Slaughter, one can see an extremely strong resemblance in the teaching methods. The descriptive terminology--"psychology of news writing," and so forth--may differ, but the methods remain much the same.

Such a conclusion was reached by William Lindley in a paper presented at the 1969 AEJ national convention. Referring to "the rather static nature of journalism instruction at the introductory level," he called for changes in teaching methods and goals.³⁹ Lindley pointed out that there is a "circular concept" involved in much instruction at this level. Students learn techniques derived from newsroom practices, and then go to the newsroom to exercise what they have learned. Therefore the practices are not changed, not improved. "...how can we begin instruction in a way that will be relevant to current professional requirements, based on better theory than is circulated to us from the newsroom, and helpful in preparing the student for future innovations?" he asked.⁴⁰

In the past decade or so there has been some experimentation with goals and methods, as recorded in journalism education literature. Most

of the innovations remain in the experimental stage, however.

One of the methods which has attracted much attention is programmed instruction. It has attracted so much attention, in fact, that the Communication Research Center at the University of Florida early in 1972 launched a newsletter entitled CAPRICE (Computer-Assisted and Programmed Instruction in Communications Education). The avowed purpose of the publication is "to communicate with other journalism schools and interested researchers about common experiences in programmed and computer-assisted instruction."⁴¹

In a 1968 article John L. Griffith described programmed instruction:

It might best be explained as a self-instructional system of learning, which utilizes content broken down into very small segments (called frames) and presented in a logical sequence. Each step requires an active response by the student, after which he is given the correct answer. This feedback reinforces the correct response he has made or allows him immediately to correct a mistake.⁴²

Griffith added:

Typical methods of presenting programmed material are teaching machines and specially constructed textbooks. PI may be presented in computer-assisted instruction in which the student may work at a console with an electronic screen and respond to multiple-choice frames. Based on his performance, the computer provides the student with appropriate materials, such as a review in some area.⁴³

As to the results of programmed instruction, Griffith said "a broad view of a relatively large number of research studies tentatively suggests these conclusions:

"1. PI teaches as effectively as conventional instruction, and in many cases greater learning and retention result from PI.

"2. PI requires less time than conventional instruction.

"3. Students generally like PI. However, their attitudes relate directly to their personal performance."⁴⁴

Griffith suggested that programmed instruction could be used to teach such basic news writing course content as news style, news leads, terminology and interviewing techniques. "...in large classes, PI materials might replace the very basic, elementary material to permit the teacher to use class time for dealing with more sophisticated matters," he wrote.⁴⁵

Programmed instruction does have some limitations, Griffith conceded. He said:

A major one is that there are almost no published PI materials in journalism, and considerable time and expense would be required for their development. Another limitation is that not enough is being done about motivation in PI. Boredom may set in after the novelty factor wears off.⁴⁶

William E. Francois has been one of the most prominent researchers in the area of developing programmed instruction for application to news writing. In a 1968 article and a 1971 monograph, Francois described a series of studies at Marshall University and Drake University.⁴⁷ As of 1971 he had conducted studies involving 167 students in six programmed instruction and two "conventional" instruction courses, each of a semester duration.

His program consists basically of four mimeographed sections: writing the lead, writing the complete story, editing and libel. Each section has built-in self-testing devices and a concluding general examination.

On the basis of the seven studies, Francois concluded that students given programmed instruction "consistently performed better than did students taught by conventional methods."⁴⁸

Neale Copple, director of the School of Journalism at the University of Nebraska, thinks programmed instruction may also eventually serve the basic news writing instructor by teaching many of the mechanics of writing. He wrote:

How many of you are tired of teaching spelling and grammar when you would like to be pounding home the importance of thoughtful journalism? I hope that that rhetorical question may find an answer somewhere among the machines. I hope the day may come when we can sit a talented, but poorly backgrounded youngster down in front of a machine that will really help him gain the basic English disciplines we need in our profession.⁴⁹

Although audio-visual aids such as movies, slides, and overhead projectors have become important in many areas of education, they have been slow to gain adoption in journalism. In 1950, Dwight Bentel wrote, "A large percentage of teachers believe instruction can be facilitated by their use." However, he added, "[The] thinking of both administrators and teachers is far ahead of practice." Bentel based his remarks on a survey of schools and departments of journalism in 1949.⁵⁰

Seventeen years after Bentel's article appeared, a Long Island University faculty member, John T. McAlister, wrote that journalism educators "have generally been slow to adopt audio-visual aids."⁵¹

Claiming that "the nation's overwhelmed college faculties need some

mechanical help," McAlister pointed to William J. Roach, head of the Journalism Department at Good Counsel College in White Plains, N.Y., as an example of an instructor who puts audio-visual devices to good use:

Using an overhead projector and a desk-type copier, Professor Roach projects timely samples of good and bad heads and leads from the press, projects students' rough copy and edits it with a grease pencil on the transparency while screening it so that the whole class can participate in each other's editorial problems...⁵²

Some attempts have been made to wed basic instruction in news writing and survey research techniques. "Until journalism instructors teach polling methods to journalism students, it is unlikely that the media will begin to use polling as a creative tool..." wrote J. K. Hvistendahl in 1969.⁵³

Hvistendahl described work in this area which had been undertaken at Iowa State University during the period from 1967 through 1969. Polling projects were incorporated into the basic reporting course during three different semesters. In the first project, personal interviews were used to gather data. The other projects used telephone interviews and mail questionnaires, respectively. Students drafted the questions for the polls, executed the data gathering, and tabulated the results. Then they wrote stories based on the data.

Hvistendahl concluded that polling should be "routinely taught" in schools of Journalism.⁵⁴

Another teaching method which has received some exploration in recent years is role-playing by students.

Paul T. McCalib, in a 1968 Journalism Quarterly article, said role-playing could be used to get students to consider the subtleties of journalistic rights and responsibilities. He described the method:

The "actors" (students) are presented with a critical situation, in which they must behave and make decisions spontaneously, without lengthy pre-discussion. Their only cues to action are provided by their knowledge of the situation and of the other roles, and by the behavior during the actual role-playing of the other participants.⁵⁵

In one such instance, McCalib said, students in a reporting class were presented a mimeograph form laying out the background of a "problem situation" involving identification of news sources. Students were selected to role-play a meeting of a reporter, his editor and four news sources who wanted their names withheld from a story. Six students acted out the meeting in front of the rest of the class. Then the class

discussed the reasoning and motivations of each character. The situation was recast and re-acted, and another discussion was held. Then the instructor revealed the real outcome of the meeting, which was based on a true incident.

"The instructor was convinced that all who participated gained valuable insights--insights they would not have acquired through class discussion alone," McCalib said.⁵⁶

Use of a similar method for different purposes at Carleton University was described by T. Joseph Scanlon. Carleton uses simulated news events done through role-playing by students to teach news gathering and writing skills. Scanlon gave an airplane crash exercise as an example. Three students from the class were told to prepare a spot news incident. They selected the crash. The three then researched the subject of air crashes in order to prepare answers to anticipated questions from reporters. They divided among themselves the roles of all possible news sources including witnesses, officials and relatives of victims. Then the other students were divided into two teams and told to gather information and write stories about the incident. The team members contacted and interviewed news sources, as role-played by their three classmates. ✓

"The real value of such assignments derives from the use of role playing to develop an understanding of human relations and interviewing techniques," Scanlon concluded.⁵⁷

As Conn pointed out in relation to his model of the news writing process, the instructor's evaluation of student writing is crucial to the teaching process. ✓

In his paper on the "psychology of news writing," Grey indicated he and William L. Rivers, his colleague at Stanford, agree with Conn. Grey wrote:

The basic premise in our operating philosophy is extensive feedback. This means extensive written criticism of the student's work. Bill Rivers, in fact, is known as one of the few instructors around who will write 800 words of criticism on a 750-word student paper....in general, we find that students are very appreciative of and responsive to written criticism--extensive written criticism. This isn't just a simple "Good" or "Unclear" type of written comment by the teacher. This is something more specific.⁵⁸

As part of his emphasis on "feedback," Grey said, he strives to return student papers "in a day or two rather than in a week or two." He admitted that he could not "document" the importance of this, but added, "All I can say is that all learning theory indicates that if you make a mistake, you need to be corrected right away."⁵⁹

The desire--or need--to write 800 words of criticism on a 750-word paper and return it within two days creates for basic news writing instructors a large portion of what Clarence O. Schlaver termed the "cumulative workload" in a 1971 Quill article. This workload means journalism faculty members run "the risk of shortchanging our students or our families, or our own careers by spending disproportionate amounts of time on one responsibility or another, or by simply not having enough time to do all the things we are supposed to do," Schlaver wrote.⁶⁰

There have been some attempts to innovate within the grading process.

James F. Evans and John H. Behrens, agricultural communications instructors at the University of Illinois, tried critiquing student assignments by recorded voice rather than written comment. They experimented with 22 students in an introductory agricultural communications course. On five outside writing assignments half of the group received taped comments, which they listened to in a departmental library near the classroom. The other half received written comments. The groups were reversed for two additional outside writing assignments. The authors found that 82 per cent of all students preferred taped comments, 14 per cent preferred written comments, and 4 per cent had no preference. Half of the students noted that written comments were more convenient than taped ones. "However, they expressed a rather strong feeling that the taped comments were more effective in helping them understand their writing problems and improve their writing," the authors wrote.⁶¹

Evans and Behrens said they discovered that the tape method took as much of their time as did written comments. It was less, tiring, however.

Perhaps the greatest innovations in the grading process--and the overall teaching process--for the basic news writing course have been made at the University of Michigan's Department of Journalism. The department makes extensive use of computer grading of student writing assignments and programmed instruction. The work in this area was described in a pair of articles in 1971 by Michigan faculty members Robert L. Bishop and Marion

Marzolf.

In the fall of 1971, 180 students in six sections of the Writing for Mass Audiences course were to use a computer for most of their writing assignments, Marzolf said. The cost was expected to be \$15 to \$35 per student for the semester.⁶²

Bishop, with the help of other faculty members, began working on the program in 1966. He described the course:

...the computer is tireless when it comes to checking style rules, punctuation, spelling, sentence and paragraph lengths and format. Beyond these routine tasks, it is amazingly flexible at checking for key information, accuracy, and order of presentation.

The computer and the more conventional programmed textbooks used in Ann Arbor are popular with students for good reason. Students spend less time in class, get more personal attention, and can move at their own pace. Fewer grades are assigned, yet the experimental classes do a better job of writing than do conventional classes.

At the heart of the course are three elements: a series of programmed booklets, nine computerized writing exercises, and at least three individual conferences with each student. The booklets are self-instructional guides to basic news writing, news values, condensation, speech reporting, copy editing, symbols, and descriptive writing. They replace most of the usual lectures.

The computerized exercises range from simple rewrite jobs to some real challenges such as reporting the Kennedy-Nixon debate or handling a revenue-sharing proposal made by Nelson Rockefeller. In each case, the student writes his story, types it into the computer, and gets an immediate critique from the machine.⁶³

Essentially the computer works by matching key words and phrases that the teacher says should be in the story, Marzolf said. If it does not find what it is looking for, it is cued to give the comment written for it in advance by the instructor.

The computer does not completely dominate the course. Bishop added:

During the second half of the course, the more difficult computerized assignments and a series of three live stories are graded by the instructor. He also discusses these stories with the individual writer, and these sessions probably are as important as anything in the course.⁶⁴

Marzolf also said Michigan is working in the area of audio-visual instruction. The department is making videotapes and slide shows to substitute for group lectures. Experts in interviewing, libel, survey research, feature writing and the like are brought in to develop 30-to-40-minute shows covering the basics in each area.

When one moves from consideration of teaching methods and grading to consideration of those who use the methods and do the grading--the instructors--one enters a sensitive area. Because here the decades old, but recently named, battle between journalism education's "green eyeshades" and "chi squares" becomes important.

Many educators have stated that the teachers of such courses as basic news writing must be competent newsmen with substantial media experience.

Wrote John Tebbel: "It seems axiomatic that teachers who are going to teach writing and editing and presumably improve the standards of the profession ought to be good writers and editors themselves. Too few are."⁶⁵

In the same 1965 article, Tebbel contended that the growing emphasis on Ph.D. degrees for journalism instructors "has been profoundly destructive." He stated:

The holder of a Ph.D. can be presumed to have had no professional journalism experience; the exceptions are a rarity. He is therefore unqualified to teach anything but mass communications research, which employs the disciplines of sociology and psychology and is unrelated to journalism except that it purports to apply statistical measurements to the media. The rising dominance of such research in the larger schools has meant their increasing divorcement from professional training.⁶⁶

Gene Burd of the University of Minnesota expressed similar thoughts:

J-Schools should not put its [sic] teachers into a squeeze by making the social science racket the main hope for future salary and rank. There is a need to reward teaching and not give reporting classes to TAs, future Ph.D.s (graduate students) and others of low rank. The classroom MUST NOT BE ABANDONED.⁶⁷

After asserting that journalism research should be relevant to press problems, Burd continued:

One way to improve the quality of research would be to improve reporting, and that can be done with more value placed on teaching reporting. Can we leave it to TAs and Ph.D. candidates who seek the reward of a degree? Must reporting be made a penalty for low rank? If downtown press personnel are dragged in to teach, then why have a J-school? What's wrong with freshmen having contact with full professors? The latter might learn something.⁶⁸

In a passage from his 1963 AEJ presidential address cited earlier, Theodore Peterson advanced some related ideas. But he expressed the opinion that Ph.D.'s should teach such courses as basic news writing. "...bright, young Ph.D.'s" presumably could bring "new approaches, new

insights and new vigor" to such courses, he said.

In its accrediting standards, the ACEJ flies a verbal white flag as it treads gingerly through the no man's land between the "green eyeshades" and the "chi squares." The standards say a journalism faculty should bring both "professional experience and advanced academic preparation to its students in the areas in which instruction is offered." The ACEJ adds, "It is further recognized, however, that there are points of little return in long periods of professional service..." But then it says, "ACEJ's increasing emphasis on the student's need for a broad general education should not be interpreted as an abdication of interest in the need to bring experience and insight of the practitioner into the classroom." Without elaborating, the ACEJ's standards also point out that "certain courses are enriched more by professional experience on the part of instructors than are others."⁶⁹

So the matter of who should teach basic news writing remains a matter of contention. But there seems to be agreement that Ph.D.s and high-rank faculty members tend to avoid teaching the course. This latter opinion must be a result of mere conjecture, however, since there have been no published studies of exactly who does teach the course.

II. METHOD

The author is an instructor in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Kansas State University. During the 1971-72 academic year he taught four sections of the Reporting I course, which is the basic journalistic techniques course in the Kansas State curriculum. His interest in this study stems from contact with this course.

The original intent of this study was to survey instructors of basic courses such as the author taught. In his sections of Reporting I at Kansas State, students received instruction in both writing and information-gathering (reporting). In surveying the literature, however, it was discovered that some schools do not offer the course in the form in which it exists at Kansas State. In some schools, the basic journalistic techniques course deals only with writing. Reporting is dealt with in a more advanced class.

To make sure that this study did not obtain information on courses at different levels of the curriculum, therefore, the scope of the study was restricted to the basic news writing course. This was defined as: the beginning course in which students receive detailed instruction in journalistic writing techniques. This definition includes courses which involve instruction in both writing and reporting and courses which are devoted to writing instruction only. It excludes more advanced courses in the curriculum and introductory survey courses in which students may do a modicum of writing. ✓

The author proposed to direct questionnaires to the instructors of basic news writing courses in seven schools and departments of journalism which hold accreditation by the American Council on Education in Journalism. These comprise the total number of accredited schools and departments in what might be termed Kansas and its border states. They include: the University of Missouri, the University of Nebraska, the University of Colorado, Oklahoma State University, the University of Oklahoma, the University of Kansas and Kansas State University.

Cost and time limitations made the relatively small sample necessary. Also, all seven schools are on the semester system, which assured that their courses would be at least somewhat comparable.

This study is in many ways a refinement upon the master's thesis done by Clark at the University of Missouri in 1969. Her thesis was based on personal interviews with instructors and administrators at four universities.

Mainly by using Clark's work as a pilot study, the author constructed a 66-item questionnaire. Forty-seven of the items required forced responses. Eighteen others required respondents to fill in a blank. One invited an open-ended response.

The questionnaire had eight sections:

- 1) Designed basically to elicit information on administration of the course. Included questions on who takes the course, number of academic credits, and an initial question on course structure.

- 2) Sought further information on course structure plus staffing in schools where the course is taught through one or more lecture sections plus many smaller laboratory sections.

- 3) Sought further information on course structure and staffing in schools where the course is taught through methods other than that mentioned above.

- 4) Designed to discover instructional goals of faculty members who teach the course.

- 5) Intended to acquire information on the extent to which instructors use various traditional and innovative teaching methods and devices.

- 6) Directed toward revealing the academic and professional media backgrounds of instructors who teach the course.

- 7) Sought information about methods and amount of time and effort involved in grading student work for the course.

- 8) A final open-ended question concerning possible plans for future changes in the course.

During the first week of March, 1972, letters were sent to the administrators of the schools and departments, with the exception of Kansas State. All of the letters were answered within three weeks. The administrators provided the names of 25 instructors who they said had taught or were teaching the basic news writing course during the 1971-72 academic

year. By adding the two instructors who, in addition to the author, taught the course at Kansas State during the academic year, a sample of 27 was obtained.

During the first week of April, questionnaires were administered in person to the two Kansas State respondents. The author conferred afterward with both respondents and found that they had no major criticisms of the questionnaire. This amounted to a limited pre-test. ✓

Packets were then mailed to the other 25 instructors. Each packet included a cover letter (see Appendix B), a questionnaire, and a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return of the questionnaire.

A code number was placed on each questionnaire. A control sheet containing each respondent's name was set up. Receipt of each returned questionnaire was recorded on the control sheet.

Within two weeks, 21 responses had been received. Follow-up telephone calls were made to the remaining six respondents. Within three weeks of the original mailing 25 responses had been received. One additional response was received in mid-May.

The survey yielded 23 usable responses.¹

By school, the responses in this final sample included: two from Kansas State, five from Kansas, seven from Missouri, four from Nebraska, three from Colorado, one from Oklahoma, and one from Oklahoma State.

III. RESULTS

As was mentioned previously, the questionnaire on which this study was based had eight sections. Each was designed to elicit information on a certain topic or topic area. Data obtained from the questionnaires will therefore be presented in accordance with the sectional arrangement of the questionnaire, except that sections two and three--both of which dealt with structure and staffing--will be discussed at the same time.

Administration

Course name

The basic news writing course goes by many different names. Asked the name of their course, the instructors at the seven departments included in this study responded with a list including: Reporting, Reporting I, Writing for the Media, Introduction to Newsroom Practices, Beginning Writing and Reporting, and News. Two departments use Reporting I.¹

Enrollment Size

Respondents were asked the approximate undergraduate and graduate enrollments at their departments. Averaging the approximations indicates that Missouri had the largest enrollment among the departments in the sample. Missouri had 674 undergraduates. Colorado, with the smallest undergraduate enrollment, had 182. Missouri also had 196 graduate students, while Nebraska has no graduate program.

TABLE 1
ENROLLMENT

Department	Undergraduate	Graduate	Total
Missouri	674 ^a	196 ^a	870
Oklahoma	600	80	680
Nebraska	630 ^a	0	630
Kansas	456 ^a	42 ^a	498
Oklahoma State	405	47	452
Kansas State	296	23	295
Colorado	182 ^a	19 ^a	201

^aObtained by averaging differing approximations by respondents.

None of the departments approach the enrollment size of the largest department in Clark's study--Michigan State University, with 1,143 juniors, seniors and graduate students in 1968-69. But several of them are large enough to be experiencing problems with structuring, staffing and teaching the basic news writing course effectively. In response to a question about the number of sections of the course the department offered during the fall of 1971, a Nebraska instructor made the marginal comment: "God only knows--sections were created as needed..."

Students for whom
course is required

The basic news writing course is a required one for all journalism majors at five of the departments. At Oklahoma State, the course is required for all students but those in the radio-television sequence. Two Kansas instructors said the course is required for all journalism majors. Three said it is not required for students in the advertising sequence. (One Kansas instructor related that the department offers a separate combination editing and writing course for advertising majors.)

Nebraska has an unusual arrangement, under which students in the department's three sequences--news-editorial, radio-television, and advertising--are grouped in separate sections. In a letter to the author, the Nebraska department head wrote:

If students have definitely made up their minds as to journalism sequence we do offer special sections of our beginning course that give emphasis to the chosen sequence. For example, we have sections of the beginning course that are primarily for broadcasting students, advertising students, or news-editorial students. While a good deal of the same kind of writing is taught in each of these sections, there is, I confess, some tendency to specialize even at this point.²

In a later letter, the Nebraska department head said his department was planning to increase this specialization. The specialized sections will be converted into separate courses with different course numbers and different descriptions. Students in the various sequences will be required to take the basic writing course in their area of interest.³

Enrollment of non-majors

All of the seven departments allow non-majors to enroll. But the "yes-no" forced response question "Is course open to students who are not journalism majors?" elicited a number of marginal comments which would seem to indicate that some instructors are unhappy with the influx of non-majors. And some instructors and/or departments attempt to restrict, if not eliminate, non-major enrollment.

One instructor said non-majors are admitted but they "aren't solicited." Another wrote that non-majors are admitted "if room allows." A third wrote that "technically" non-majors may take the course, but: "Pre-enrollment makes it practically impossible for a non-J to get the class." Instructors at two schools noted that, in addition to journalism students, only education, home economics and agriculture students seeking a minor in journalism are admitted. Another instructor said non-majors had to enroll in the course through the extension division.

Waiver examinations

The respondents were asked if their departments allowed undergraduate majors to waive the course by passing an examination covering its content. Undergraduates are not allowed to waive the course at four departments. At Nebraska and Oklahoma students may take a waiver examination, but it is

seldom attempted. Three Kansas instructors said students may waive the course by examination, but two said they may not.

Typing proficiency

Five of the departments do not require students to demonstrate typing proficiency on an examination in order to take the course. Four Kansas instructors said a test is required, but one said it is not. Nebraska requires that students be able to type 30 to 40 words per minute, but each instructor is allowed to devise his own method of measuring proficiency.

Some of the instructors who indicated a typing test is not required seemed to feel that a test is needed. After indicating there is no required test, one instructor wrote: "Unfortunately."

In response to a follow-up question about remedial typing instruction, it was indicated that two departments refer students to classes offered by local public schools and another refers them to typing courses available through another university department. The other departments do not concern themselves with remedial typing instruction.

Class level of students

At Kansas, enrollees are customarily juniors, although one instructor noted that an "increasing number of sophomores" are being admitted and another said sophomores may enroll "by special permission." At Missouri, students below junior level are not admitted.

Oklahoma enrollees are usually freshmen or sophomores. At the other four departments students in the course are customarily sophomores.

Academic credit

The course offers two hours of semester credit at Nebraska and Missouri, although one Missouri instructor noted marginally that students "work as if for 3 hours--we haven't been able to change it." Students who complete the course get three hours of credit at the other five departments.

Structure and Staffing

Structure and faculty staffing

Basic news writing courses examined in this study fell into three structural patterns:

1) Mass lecture and multiple laboratories. All students attend a common lecture, but they are divided into smaller sections meeting at separate times to do reporting and writing exercises in a laboratory. Oklahoma and Oklahoma State used this structure.

2) Mini-mass lectures and multiple laboratories. Students from two or more laboratory sections meet for a common lecture (or lectures), but there is no one large lecture section for all students in the course. Colorado used this structure all year. Missouri used it fall semester.

3) Multiple sections of combined lecture and laboratory. Students enrolled in the course are divided into relatively small sections, which operate independently. Each section has one instructor who handles all lectures and laboratory work. Kansas State, Kansas, and Nebraska used this structure all year. Missouri used it spring semester.

In her 1969 study, Clark found that Michigan State and Missouri had mass lecture-multiple laboratory structures for the course. Nebraska had a combined lecture-laboratory structure.

Clark found that Florida had a structural pattern which is not used by any of the seven schools in the current study: multiple lecture sections with no laboratory. Students at Florida were divided into relatively small sections for lectures. Writing exercises were done outside of class, or in short periods during lecture sessions. Each section had one instructor.

The mini-mass lecture and multiple laboratories pattern did not exist at any of the departments Clark studied.

The meeting schedules for basic news writing courses at the seven departments included in the current study varied considerably.

Among the departments using mass or mini-mass lecture:

1) Oklahoma's lecture sections met once a week for one hour. Laboratories met twice a week for two hours per session.

2) Oklahoma State's lecture sections met twice a week for one hour each session. Laboratories met once a week for three hours.

3) One Colorado instructor said his lecture sections met twice a week for one hour per session. Another said his lecture sections met

once a week for one hour. Laboratories met once a week for three hours.

4) Fall semester, Missouri's lecture sections met once a week for one hour. Laboratories met once a week for three hours.

Among the departments using multiple sections of combined lecture and laboratory:

1) Kansas State's sections met twice a week for two hours and 15 minutes per session.

2) Kansas had a unique system among those using the combined lecture-laboratory structure. Four instructors taught sections which met twice a week for one hour of lecture per session, and once a week for two hours of laboratory. One instructor, however, met his sections twice a week for two hours of lecture and laboratory per session.

3) Nebraska's sections met once a week for four hours.

4) Spring semester, Missouri's sections met twice a week for two hours per session.

Oklahoma and Oklahoma State each had one instructor for the course during the 1971-72 academic year. Colorado had three fall semester and two spring semester. Missouri had seven instructors fall semester.

Kansas State used three instructors fall semester and two spring semester. Kansas had five each semester. It appears that Nebraska had seven fall semester and six spring semester. Missouri had six spring semester.

As may be seen in Table 2, total enrollment in the course varied during fall semester, 1971, from 44 at Oklahoma to 344 at Missouri.

Table 3 shows that spring semester the range was from 53 at Oklahoma State to 150 at Missouri.

It is recommended in the ACEJ accrediting standards that "laboratory performance courses" like the basic news writing courses included in this study have laboratory sections in which the student-teacher ratio does not exceed 15 to one. Only three departments were able to meet that guideline fall semester. Only two managed it spring semester.

The transitions through which the Missouri basic news writing course has passed in the last few years are indicative of the problems faced by journalism educators who must structure and staff such a course.

TABLE 2

ENROLLMENTS IN BASIC NEWS WRITING COURSES--FALL, 1971

Department	Structure ^a	Total Enroll. ^b	Number Lecture Sections	Avg. Lecture Enroll.	Number Lab. Sections ^c	Avg. Lab. Enroll.
Oklahoma	M	44	1	44	3	14.7
Oklahoma State	M	55	1	55	3	18.3
Colorado	MM	73.3	2	36.7	5	14.7
Missouri	MM	344	6	57.3	14	24.5
Kansas State	LL	85	5	17	5	17
Kansas	LL	116.7	5	23.3	5	23.3
Nebraska	LL	107	8	13.4	8	13.4

^aKey: M = mass lecture and multiple laboratories; MM = mini-mass lectures and multiple laboratories; LL = combined lecture and laboratory. For purposes of illustration, lecture-laboratory combinations are listed as separate lecture and laboratory.

^bFigures for Colorado, Kansas State, and Kansas are the means of differing approximations by respondents at those schools.

^cAt Colorado, 2 respondents said five sections were offered and 1 respondent said 4 were offered. At Kansas, 2 respondents said 4 sections were offered; 1 said 5; 2 did not complete item. However, 5 instructors taught sections. Also, the department head, who is a basic news writing instructor, said on his questionnaire there were 5 sections.

TABLE 3

ENROLLMENTS IN BASIC NEWS WRITING COURSES--SPRING, 1972

Department	Structure ^a	Total Enroll. ^b	Number Lecture Sections	Avg. Lecture Enroll.	Number Lab. Sections ^c	Avg. Lab. Enroll.
Oklahoma	M	88	1	88	5	17.6
Oklahoma State	M	53	1	53	3	17.7
Colorado	MM	65	2	32.5	5	13.3
Missouri	LL	150	7	21.4	7	21.4
Kansas State	LL	54	3	18	3	18
Kansas	LL	115	5	23	5	23
Nebraska	LL	86	7	12.2	7	12.2

^aKey: M = mass lecture and multiple laboratories; MM = mini-mass lectures and multiple laboratories; LL = combined lecture and laboratory. For purposes of illustration, lecture-laboratory combinations are listed as separate lecture and laboratory.

^bFigures for Colorado and Kansas are the means of differing approximations by respondents at those schools. Figure for Kansas State is based on one response. Other Kansas State respondent did not complete item.

^cAt Colorado, 2 respondents said 5 laboratory sections were offered and 1 respondent said 4 were offered. At Kansas, 2 respondents said 5 sections were offered; 1 said 4; 2 did not complete item. However, 5 instructors taught sections. Also, the department head, who is a basic news writing instructor, said on his questionnaire there were 5 sections.

Clark found in the fall of 1968 that the course had two one-hour mass lectures a week, with students being divided into 13 small sections for two hours of laboratory per week. Subsequently, the class was re-scheduled with one weekly hour of mass lecture and several weekly three-hour sections of laboratory. In the fall of 1971 Missouri went to six mini-mass lecture sections and 14 laboratory sections. Lecture sections met once a week for an hour and laboratory sections met once a week for three hours. In most instances, the lecture sections were made up of students who were assigned to two or more laboratory sections taught by the same instructor who gave the lectures. In the spring of 1972 Missouri structured the course with seven sections of combination lecture-laboratory. Each section met twice a week for two hours per session. Because extremely

large fall enrollments in the course (344 in the fall of 1971 vs. 150 in the spring of 1972) strain the department's classroom facilities, Missouri plans in the immediate future to alternate between mini-mass lectures and multiple laboratories for fall semester and combination lecture-laboratories for spring semester.⁴

The instructor who co-ordinates Missouri's course described the latest structure and staffing experiments and the thinking behind them in a long note at the end of his questionnaire:

Logistics (i.e., having one lab room with typewriters available for this course) is forcing us to return to our three-hour lab, one-hour / mini- / "mass" lecture pattern for the fall semester, when we again will have / 14 / sections. We much prefer the two two-hour lab/lecture pattern, instituted this spring, with each instructor incorporating his "lecture" material into the small lab section. Incidentally, as coordinator of "News" for seven years, I was the one who resisted the change away from the really mass lecture section we used to have, in which all students (300+ in fall, 150+ in spring) would be together for at least a one hour lecture a week--My feelings were that (1) we as a large school had a responsibility to learn how to deal with large groups (That was a vain hope, I'm afraid. Students today are "turned off" by large, impersonal lectures and they find it hard to make the connection between what is said in lecture and what is done in lab--no matter how "stimulating" the individual mass lectures may be), (2) we needed the mass lecture for coordination--so all sections would get the same announcements (logistics), the same directions on such things as our special edition stories for the Columbia Missourian, etc.

My colleagues first convinced me to dispense with one of the two weekly mass lecture hours, going to a three-hour lab; then they (or I) decided to try the 3-and-1 pattern with each instructor responsible, last fall, for the lectures for each of his sections (e.g., If an instructor had 2 labs, he grouped the two labs together for the lecture period). This spring, tired of continual student criticism of mass lectures (even the "mini-mass" lectures of last fall), we shifted to our present, 2-2 pattern. Our students this semester can't imagine what the 3-1 pattern must be like; 75% of them said, in class critiques the last week of lab, that they preferred 2-2 to 3-1, citing (1) the value of our practice work in the first lab, (2) the more personal atmosphere and greater rapport developed in the small section.

In sum, Missouri found that students like the combined lecture and laboratory meeting twice a week because it allows class and instructor a greater chance to build rapport and it eliminates the problem of trying

to apply in laboratory exercises the writing and reporting skills which may have been mentioned in lecture days before. (The reference to "practice work" in the previous passage apparently related to the instructor's own system of giving students "practice" assignments during the first lecture-laboratory period of the week and graded exercises during the second period.)

It is revealing to examine the lecture statistics for Oklahoma and Missouri in Table 3 and the statistics on faculty staffing mentioned on page 31. During spring semester, 1972, Oklahoma had one lecture section with 88 students. Missouri had seven lecture sections (combined with laboratories) with an average of 21.4 students in each. Obviously, it should be easier to communicate meaningfully with 21 persons at a time than it would be with 88 persons at a time. But to establish the more favorable student-instructor ratio, Missouri had to use six instructors to Oklahoma's one in order to handle less than twice as many students.

So it appears that in planning for this course a conflict quickly arises between the need for economy and the desire for effective teaching. As the Missouri course coordinator pointed out, the combination lecture-laboratory arrangement--with continuous periods of lecture and laboratory--would seem to be the most effective for teaching in many regards. But it takes more instructors and more facilities--in other words, more money. So the mass lecture-multiple laboratories and mini-mass lectures-multiple laboratories arrangements can be seen as attempts to establish some sort of tenable middle position which allows--hopefully--for both economy and effective teaching.

Teaching Assistants

As can be seen in Table 4, Missouri was the only department to make heavy use of teaching assistants, and the only one to use undergraduates as assistants. One teaching assistant was assigned to each laboratory section of the course at Missouri.

Instructors at Colorado, Kansas State and Nebraska had no teaching assistants. The other departments each had three or less.

The limited use of teaching assistants among the seven schools in this study may be a matter of economy, but it may also be a matter of

TABLE 4
NUMBER OF TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Department	Number T.A.s Fall			Number T.A.s Spring		
	Graduate	Undergrad.	Total	Graduate	Undergrad.	Total
Oklahoma	1	0	1	2	0	2
Oklahoma State	1	0	1	1	0	1
Colorado	0	0	0	0	0	0
Missouri	3	11	14	1	6	7
Kansas State	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kansas	3	0	3	3	0	3
Nebraska	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	8	11	19	7	6	13

instructors' opinions concerning the competence of assistants.

Of the instructors in this study teaching basic news writing courses which involved teaching assistants, seven rated their performance as "strong" and two as "very strong." Two rated it as "good"--the equivalent of "strong"--due to a questionnaire mistake.⁵ But a Nebraska instructor may have hit close to the opinions of other instructors when he wrote in a marginal comment: "We make a point of not using teaching assistants."

Of course, the competence of teaching assistants may vary in accordance with the types of duties they are assigned. In the questionnaire for this study, respondents who had assistants were asked to look over a list of possible duties and identify which ones their assistants performed. The list included seven items distilled from Clark's interviews and a blank for any additional duties.

Table 5 shows that the instructors who did have teaching assistants used some discretion in assigning their duties. No assistants were allowed to assign grades for individual student papers or for the course. (Clark found that graduate teaching assistants placed in charge of laboratories for Michigan State's mass lecture-multiple laboratory course had total responsibility for the grades of students in their sections.) Only five of

the 11 instructors with assistants conferred with them concerning final grades.

While assistants who did preliminary evaluation of student papers and prepared laboratory assignments might be said to have had considerable responsibility, they were still operating in areas where instructors had ultimate control. Instructors could disregard a preliminary evaluation and reject or modify a proposed laboratory assignment.

TABLE 5
TEACHING ASSISTANTS' DUTIES

Duties	Number of Responses ^a	Percentage
<u>Questionnaire items</u>		
Preliminary evaluation of student papers	11	100.0
Clerical work	9	81.8
Preparing laboratory assignments	6	54.5
Conferring with instructor on student final grades	5	45.6
Preparing lectures	0	00.0
Assuming full responsibility for grading student papers	0	00.0
Assuming full responsibility for assigning student final grades	0	00.0
<u>Added by respondents</u>		
Check attendance	1	9.1
Accumulate special laboratory materials and supplies	1	9.1
Assist students in laboratory work	1	9.1
Hold student conferences	1	9.1
Preparation of audio-visual material for broadcasting segments	1	9.1

^aTotal N = 11.

Instructional Goals

Drawing on literature concerning the basic news writing course--principally the Clark thesis--and his own experience, the author drafted a

list of 11 possible instructional goals for the course. The list, plus a blank for identification by respondents of other goals, was included in the questionnaire sent to instructors. Respondents were asked to rank each goal according to the priority they gave it when they taught the course during the 1971-72 academic year. The forced-response priority levels from which they could choose were high, medium, low and none.

The results may be seen in Table 6.

When the possible goals are ordered according to the number of high-priority rankings they received, it is apparent that most of the basic news writing instructors included in this study are trying to teach both writing and reporting skills.

Twenty-two of the respondents (95.7 percent) give high priority to teaching straight news story writing style and organization. This would indicate that the instructors are practically unanimous in devoting a great deal of class time to teaching their students about such things as the inverted pyramid, brief lead paragraphs and short sentences.

The unadorned straight news story style and organization would seem, then, to be the first building block on which basic news writing courses are constructed. When the instructors were presented with the goal of developing creativity in writing, only two (8.7 percent) said they gave it high priority. Sixteen (69.6 percent) gave it medium priority, and five (21.7 percent) gave it low priority. There were two marginal notes inquiring as to the meaning of "creativity." The item was meant to deal with more creative aspects of news writing, with such things as narrative leads and "New Journalism" type stylistic excursions. Assuming that the respondents and the author were thinking about the same things in considering this goal, the consensus would seem to be that beginning students must learn to walk with straight news style and organization before they can run with creative feature-writing forms.

Reporting skills tend to be heavily emphasized in the basic news writing course. Only one instructor teaches a course which approaches the nearly pure writing course such as Clark found at Michigan State and Florida. Eighteen respondents (78.3 percent) gave high priority to teaching such reporting skills as interviewing, phrasing questions and taking notes. Four (17.4 percent) gave these skills medium priority. One (4.3 percent) gave them low priority.

TABLE b

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

Goal	Priority Ranking ^a							
	High No.	High Percent	Medium No.	Medium Percent	Low No.	Low Percent	None No.	None Percent
<u>Questionnaire items</u>								
Teach straight news story writing style and organization	22	95.7%	1	4.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
Teach reporting skills (interviewing, phrasing questions, taking notes, etc.)	18	78.3%	4	17.4	1	4.3	0	0.0
Develop understanding of what news is	17	73.9%	6	26.1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Teach mechanics of writing (grammar, spelling, punctuation)	15	65.2%	6	26.1	2	8.7	0	0.0
Teach writing fast under deadline pressure	14	60.9%	7	30.4	2	8.7	0	0.0
Teach media style rules	12	52.2%	9	39.1	2	8.7	0	0.0
Develop knowledge and understanding of current events	4	17.4%	11	47.8	7	30.4	1	4.3
Weed out early in their academic careers students who think they want to be journalists but lack ability or interest	3	13.0%	12	52.2	7	30.4	1	4.3

Develop creativity in writing	2	8.7%	16	69.6	5	21.7	0	0.0
Provide a survey of writing techniques for different media	1	4.3%	9	39.1	5	21.7	8	34.8
Recruit journalism majors from other academic fields	1	4.3%	1	4.3	6	26.1	15	65.2
<u>Items added by respondents</u>								
Developing skills of self criticism in reporting techniques	1	4.3%	--	--	--	--	--	--
Instill in student's mind the need for accuracy	1	4.3%	--	--	--	--	--	--
Importance of deadlines, breaking stories	1	4.3%	--	--	--	--	--	--
To teach them to collect, evaluate, interpret, organize and transmit timely, factual information in writing (or does that cover it all?)	1	4.3%	--	--	--	--	--	--
Introduce fundamentals of in-depth reporting	1	4.3%	--	--	--	--	--	--
Introduction to basic communications theory	--	--	1	4.3	--	--	--	--

^aTotal N = 23. Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding off procedures.

Developing in students an understanding of what constitutes news also receives heavy emphasis. Seventeen (73.9 per cent) respondents ranked this as a high priority goal, and the other six (26.1 per cent) gave it medium priority. So beginning students are steeped in news values (such as proximity, consequence, prominence and conflict) and the old Five W's and an H. Instructors seem to agree that one finds it difficult to write a news story if he does not know what news is.

Considerable emphasis is given to the somewhat onerous task of teaching the mechanics of writing--such things as grammar, spelling and punctuation. That so many students could reach the second or third year of college without learning many of the rudiments of writing the English language is a source of consternation and puzzlement to many basic news writing instructors. For example, there is the respondent included in this study who indicated he gave high priority to the mechanics of writing and then wrote in parentheses: "Unfortunately." Fifteen respondents (65.2 per cent) gave high priority to this goal. Six (26.1 per cent) gave it medium priority. Two (8.7 per cent) gave it low priority. The statistics on those who gave this goal less than high priority may be misleading, however. One instructor who ranked it low wrote: "We emphasize these on papers, but don't 'teach' them." It may be that some news writing instructors--extremely few of whom hold degrees in English--feel that attempting to teach the mechanics of writing is a hopeless cause after students have already survived 13 or more years of education without learning them.

Teaching students to write fast under deadline pressure is also perceived as a substantial goal, although the emphasis is not as heavy as one might expect from surveying the literature on this course. Fourteen respondents (60.9 per cent) gave high priority to this goal, and seven (30.4 per cent) gave it medium priority. Two (8.7 per cent) ranked it low in priority. Some instructors may be assuming that students will learn about deadlines in advanced courses. But the moderation in emphasis may be reflective of the changing role of the newspaper--from the purveying of fast-breaking news to the presentation of carefully researched reports and thoughtful analysis--in the face of the challenge of the electronic media. This assumes, of course, that most basic news writing courses have a newspaper emphasis, which would appear to be the case, judging from reactions to a possible instructional goal which will be

discussed later and other indications.

The only other goal which was ranked as high priority by more than half of the respondents was teaching media style rules. Twelve respondents (52.2 per cent) gave style rules high priority, and nine (39.1 per cent) gave them medium priority. Two ranked them low in priority. In her 1969 study, Clark found disagreement among the instructors she interviewed concerning the value of emphasizing style rules. Some instructors pointed out that style rules vary markedly from one newspaper to another, and others said they thought the rules were too complex for beginning students. Clark found that Missouri was one department which placed heavy emphasis on teaching style rules. And that situation is changing now. The Missouri course coordinator, although he gave the goal a high priority ranking, added a marginal note: "Probably too high--we're beginning to de-emphasize this a lot."

Current events tend to receive moderate or less emphasis from basic news writing instructors. Nineteen of the instructors surveyed (82.6 per cent) ranked developing students' knowledge and understanding of current events as being of medium, low or no priority.

The instructors do not appear to have a heavy commitment to the goal of weeding out students who think they want to be journalists but lack ability or interest. Twelve instructors (52.2 per cent) gave this medium priority. Seven (30.4 per cent) gave it low priority. This comment by one instructor probably sums up the consensus of feeling: "I don't think of it as a priority; it just happens naturally."

If the instructors are not worrying too much about weeding out misfit majors, neither are they trying too hard to recruit new majors. Fifteen respondents (65.2 per cent) said the goal of recruiting majors from other academic fields carries no priority at all. Another six (26.1 per cent) said this goal gets low priority. The dominant mood here may be the result of the already swollen enrollments in journalism departments in general and in this course in particular.

The response to the suggestion that providing a survey of writing techniques for different media might be a goal for the course is one of the indicators that this course tends to be newspaper--or at least print media--oriented. Only one respondent (4.3 per cent) said this goal has high priority, and nine (39.1 per cent) said it holds medium priority.

The one high priority ranking and four of the medium rankings came from Missouri, where the course coordinator indicated that two weeks out of the 16-week semester are devoted to consideration of broadcast media.⁶

Other indications that the course tends to be print-oriented include:

- 1) only four of the 23 instructors gave any indication--in another part of the questionnaire--of substantial broadcast professional experience;
- 2) in the part of the questionnaire just mentioned, none of the five non-Missouri instructors who gave this goal a medium priority noted any substantial broadcast experience;
- 3) Nebraska separates its radio-television majors into their own sections of the course so they may receive instruction in basic news writing for broadcast.

The items added to the list of goals by respondents appear to be of limited overall significance, since each one is peculiar to the respondent who noted it. These additional items are interesting, however. One instructor gives high priority to the fundamentals of in-depth reporting. Another heavily emphasizes the development of self-criticism skills. A third gives medium priority to introducing students to basic communications theory.

The earlier contention, based on a review of individual goals for the course, that most basic news writing courses surveyed in this study are made up of instruction in a mixture of writing and reporting skills would seem to be borne out by responses to a question concerning overall emphasis of the course. These responses are presented in Table 7. Asked if they would consider this course as primarily one in writing, reporting, or a mixture of writing and reporting, 19 respondents (82.6 per cent) said they considered it a mixture.

Three of the respondents who opted for a "mixture" response qualified their choices with marginal comments to the effect that writing was emphasized more than reporting. One instructor probably offered a cogent thought, however, when he noted in the margin: "I refuse to recognize that writing is possible without reporting."

TABLE 7

PRIMARY EMPHASIS OF BASIC NEWS WRITING COURSES

Area of Emphasis	Number Responses	Percentage ^a
Mixture of writing and reporting	19	82.6
Writing	3	13.0
Reporting	1	4.3

^aTotal N = 23. Percentages do not total 100 because of rounding off procedure.

Teaching Methods and Devices

In an attempt to determine how instructors go about teaching basic news writing courses, the author drew from the literature and his own experience 13 teaching methods and devices, which are listed in Table 8. These were classified into two groups: ways of handling writing exercises (presenting the information to students, evaluating stories, using the finished copy), and methods and devices which could be used for other instructional purposes in addition to handling writing exercises. There were nine items in the first group and four in the second. This list was included in each questionnaire, and respondents were asked to rank each method or device according to the extent they used it in teaching the course during the 1971-72 academic year. Their forced-response options on extent of use were heavy, moderate, slight and none.⁷ ✓

It is apparent from Table 8 that each instructor brings several teaching weapons to bear on the basic news writing course. The 13 devices and methods listed received 48 heavy use rankings and 79 moderate use rankings from 23 instructors. That means that the typical instructor uses approximately two methods heavily and three others moderately when he teaches the course.

Computer grading of papers	0	0.0%	0	0.0	0	0.0	23	100.0	0	0.0
<u>For writing assignments or other instructional purposes</u>										
Audio-visual devices (film, slide, overhead projector, tape recorder, opaque projector)	5	21.7%	7	30.4	10	43.5	1	4.3	1	4.3
Gathering, dictating, receiving information by telephone	1	4.3%	6	26.1	10	43.5	6	26.1	0	0.0
Programmed instruction materials (workbooks, tapes, teaching machines)	1	4.3%	2	8.7	9	39.1	11	47.8	0	0.0
Role-playing by students	0	0.0%	2	8.7	12	52.2	9	39.1	0	0.0

^aTotal N = 23.

It also appears that there is not too much agreement as to which are the best--or, unfortunately perhaps, the easiest--to use. This is indicated by the fact that not one of the methods and devices was used heavily by a majority of the instructors. It may be, however, that some instructors feel that it is better to use a combination of several methods and devices in moderation instead of any one or two heavily. At any rate, the failure of any method or device to be used heavily by a majority of instructors surely indicates that no one has yet discovered the best way to teach a basic news writing course (or, if someone has discovered the way, he has not yet informed all of his colleagues of it).

The data contained in the table would also seem to indicate, once again, that reporting skills get considerable emphasis in basic news writing courses at the seven schools in this study. Also, it can be seen that many of the methods and devices which give reporting skills practice also help to reduce the artificiality which can be experienced in a lecture-laboratory course dealing with practical topics. The two methods or devices which got the most heavy use rankings both require students to practice such reporting skills as note-taking and asking questions in order to obtain writing exercise material. Live coverage of community events such as meetings and speeches was used heavily by 10 instructors (43.5 per cent). Nine instructors (39.1 per cent) gave heavy use to interviews with persons other than themselves. The method which tied for third highest in number of heavy use rankings, dictation of facts by the instructor, at least requires students to take notes in order to get information.

Also, the device which would systematically provide writing exercise material in a manner which requires no reporting skills practice--a workbook--is not used at all by 16 instructors (69.6 per cent). Another four (17.4 per cent) used a workbook only slightly.

On the other hand, another device which requires no reporting skills practice--instructor-prepared handouts--is used fairly extensively. Eight instructors (34.8 per cent) said they used this device heavily, and another 12 (52.2 per cent) used it moderately. Although journalism educators like Curtis D. MacDougall have inveighed against the use of handouts because they do not provide reporting skills practice, it is easy enough to understand why they should be popular. Through their use, information

for writing assignments can be distributed without taking up much class time (as opposed to presentation of information through dictation of facts, or mock press conferences, or by several other methods). They do not require out-of-class information-gathering time for students or instructors, as coverage of community events does. They are fairly flexible, in that an instructor can prepare a handout to cover some aspects of the course without being obligated to using "canned" assignments all the time, as he might be if he had students purchase a workbook.

One teaching device which emphasizes reporting skills practice, mock press conferences with famous or important persons, received rather mixed reactions. Four instructors (17.4 per cent) said they used this device heavily, although one of these struck out the words "mock" and "famous or important" in the item. Nine others (39.1 per cent) said they used this device moderately. Ten (43.5 per cent) said they gave it only slight use or none at all.

It would appear from the data that few of the basic news writing courses surveyed have a strong connection with campus or community media. Only the Oklahoma State instructor indicated he gave heavy use to presentation of student work through newspapers, radio stations, or television stations. Three of the seven instructors who ranked this device or method as moderate in use were from Missouri, where students each semester write one in-depth article outside of class for publication in the university-sponsored local newspaper.⁸ Fourteen instructors (60.9 per cent) said they used this method or device slightly or not at all.

Instructional innovation

Perhaps the most important point seen in Table 8 was that there is extremely little instructional innovation going on in the basic news writing course. The four methods or devices which received the most responses indicating heavy or moderate use (coverage of community events, interviews, dictation of facts, and handouts) were all catalogued by such early journalism educators as H. E. Birdsong and Curtis MacDougall in the 1920s and 1930s. It is revealing to extract from Table 8 the results concerning teaching methods and devices which have come about through the infusion of new technologies and social science advances into journalism education in

the last 25 years or so. This has been done in Table 9.

The innovation which received the greatest number of heavy and moderate use rankings was audio-visual devices. Five instructors (21.7 per cent) said they used audio-visual equipment heavily, and seven (30.4 per cent) said they used it moderately. It could be contended that these statistics do not constitute significant usage, especially in light of the fact that adequate audio-visual equipment has existed for so long--at least since the late 1940s--that its use might not even be considered innovational in some educational circles.

Only one instructor (4.3 per cent) said he uses programmed instruction materials heavily, and two (8.7 per cent) said they use such materials moderately. Nine, however, said they used programmed instruction slightly. It would have been interesting to discover exactly what the instructors were doing with programmed instruction. It would seem that journalistic materials in this area are so scarce, and the work involved in devising them from scratch is so difficult and time consuming, that an instructor would have a hard time justifying their "slight" use. If he went to the difficulty of obtaining or constructing them, it would seem that he would use them heavily.

A similar problem presents itself in connection with the results concerning use of results of a poll designed and conducted by the class for writing assignments. One instructor (4.3 per cent) said he used this device heavily. But another one said he used it moderately and three (13.0 per cent) said they used it slightly. One of the drawbacks of this teaching method is that it ties up the class in conducting the poll for a substantial period of time. It would not seem possible to use it moderately or slightly. Perhaps the most significant statistic here, however, is that 17 (73.9 per cent) said they had made no use of the method during the 1971-72 academic year although two of these did note that they had used it in the past.

No instructors said they had used student role-playing heavily. Two (8.7 per cent) said they had used it moderately. Twelve (52.2 per cent) said they had used it slightly, and nine (39.1 per cent) said they had not used it at all.

One of the instructional methods received a unanimous response from the 23 basic news writing instructors: a resounding 100 per cent said they had not used computer grading of papers. Two of the respondents offered

TABLE 9
INNOVATIONAL INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND DEVICES

Method or Device	Extent of Use ^a									
	Heavy		Moderate		Slight		None		No response	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
<u>For writing assignments</u>										
Use of results of a poll designed and conducted by class	1	4.3%	1	4.3	3	13.0	17	73.9	1	4.3
Computer grading of papers	0	0.0%	0	0.0	0	0.0	23	100.0	0	0.0
<u>For writing assignments or other instructional purposes</u>										
Audio-visual devices (film, slide, overhead projector, tape recorder, opaque projector)	5	21.7%	7	30.4	10	43.5	1	4.3	1	4.3
Programmed instruction materials (workbooks, tapes, teaching machines)	1	4.3%	2	8.7	9	39.1	11	47.8	0	0.0
Role-playing by students	0	0.0%	2	8.7	12	52.2	9	39.1	0	0.0

^aTotal N = 23. Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding off procedures.

pithy marginal comments on the very idea of computer grading. Wrote one: "Never!" Wrote the other: "Ha!"

The latter comments bring up the issue of why there is little instructional innovation in the basic news writing course. In the case of computer grading, the reason for no use might well be an instinctive belief--altogether understandable to the author--that such a human activity as writing cannot be effectively taught by a machine. Hopefully the next two sections of this paper will throw light on this instinct and other reasons for the lack of innovation.

Academic and Professional Media Backgrounds of Instructors

Whether by design or by default, the "green eyeshades" apparently dominate the basic news writing course at the seven schools included in this study. The typical basic news writing instructor is 42 years old, has had almost 14 years of professional media experience, has a master's degree, holds the rank of assistant professor or instructor, and has taught for about five and one-half years. The data appear to confirm contentions by Theodore Peterson, Gene Burd and others that young Ph.D.s and high-rank faculty members usually do not teach the course.⁹

As may be seen in Table 10, the instructors ranged in age from 27 to 64, with the majority being in their 40s. The mean age was 42.1 years.

So basic news writing instructors are middle-aged, which is necessitated by the fact that the typical such instructor has logged 13.9 years of experience in mass media related fields. The number of years of experience ranged from 0 to 40, as is shown in Table 11.

TABLE 10
AGE OF INSTRUCTORS

Age in Years ^a	Number of Instructors	Percentage ^b
29 or less	1	4.3
30 to 34	2	8.7
35 to 39	6	26.1
40 to 44	5	21.7
45 to 49	7	30.4
50 to 54	1	4.3
55 to 60	0	0.0
60 or more	1	4.3
Total	23	100.0

^aMean age: 42.1 years

^bPercentages do not total 100 because of rounding off procedures.

TABLE 11
MASS MEDIA EXPERIENCE OF INSTRUCTORS

Years of Experience ^a	Number of Instructors	Percentage ^b
0 ^c	1	4.3
1 to 4	3	13.0
5 to 9	5	21.7
10 to 14	3	13.0
15 to 19	3	13.0
20 to 24	5	21.7
25 to 29	2	8.7
30 or more	1	4.3
Total	23	100.0

^aMean years of experience = 13.9 years.

^bPercentages do not total 100 because of rounding off procedures.

^cThis instructor listed 5 years of high school teaching as her

One questionnaire item was designed to determine in what media fields the instructors got the bulk of their experience. Respondents were given a list of six possible media fields, plus a blank to add others. They were asked to indicate one field which had been their "primary" area of experience. Four of the respondents, however, checked more than one field. As a result, 29 responses were received from the 23 instructors. The responses are shown in Table 12.

TABLE 12
INSTRUCTORS' MEDIA FIELDS OF EXPERIENCE

Media Field	Number of Responses	No. Overlapping Responses ^a
<u>Questionnaire list</u>		
Newspaper news-editorial	20	4
Broadcasting	3	3
Magazine news-editorial	1	0
Public relations	1	0
Advertising	1	1
Photojournalism	0	0
<u>Fields added by respondents</u>		
Wire service	2	2
High school teaching ^b	1	0
Total	29	10

^aThis figure denotes the number of instructors who gave other "primary" fields in addition to this one. In all, 2 gave 2 fields and 2 gave 3.

^bThere is some question as to whether this constitutes a mass media related field. It was decided that it does not. However, the field is included here to make the data complete.

Because four respondents either misinterpreted or chose to ignore the intent of the question, attempts to interpret the data in Table 12 are somewhat confusing. But one thing is certain: the ranks of

instructors are dominated by former newspapermen. Twenty of 23 instructors (86.9 per cent) indicated that they had at least some newspaper experience. All four of the instructors who gave multiple responses included newspapers as one of their fields of experience. If the instructors who gave multiple responses are removed from the sample, the pattern is perhaps more clear: of the remaining 19, 16 (84.2 per cent) gave newspapers as the primary area of experience; one (5.3 per cent) gave magazines; one (5.3 per cent) gave public relations; and one (5.3 per cent) gave high school teaching.

It was discovered that two (8.7 per cent) of the instructors were still active in media-related work as their principal occupations. They and five others--for a total of seven (30.4 per cent) of the sample--are part-time instructors. As may be seen in Table 13, the other five included three graduate students, a person who had no other job and a high school teacher.

TABLE 13

PRINCIPAL OCCUPATIONS OF PART-TIME INSTRUCTORS

Principal Occupation	Number	Percentage of Sample ^a
Graduate student	3	13.0
Newspaper reporter	1	4.3
Television news director	1	4.3
High school teacher	1	4.3
No other job	1	4.3
Total	7	30.4

^aTotal N (100 per cent) equaled 23. Percentages do not total 30.4 because of rounding off procedures.

The three graduate students who taught the course part-time made up 13.0 per cent of the sample. Of these students, two were working on doctorates and one was working on a master's degree.

Table 14 shows that the instructors included in this study had been teaching at the university level an average of 5.6 years. If part-timers

are excluded, the average for the remaining 16 full-time instructors is 6.3 years.

TABLE 14
INSTRUCTORS' UNIVERSITY TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Years of Experience ^a	Number	Percentage ^b
One	1	4.3
Two	3	13.0
Three	4	17.4
Four	2	8.7
Four and one half	1	4.3
Five	4	17.4
Six	2	8.7
Seven	1	4.3
Nine	1	4.3
Ten	1	4.3
Twelve	2	8.7
Fifteen	1	4.3
Total	23	100.0

^a Average experience: 5.6 years.

^b Percentages do not total 100 because of rounding off procedures.

Only six (26.1 per cent) of the instructors in the sample have Ph.D.s. As is noted in Table 15, the majority--12 (52.2 per cent)--have master's degrees. Five (21.7 per cent) have bachelor's degrees. Three respondents received their highest degrees in fields other than journalism and/or mass communication. One holds a Ph.D. in American studies (after receiving his bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism), one has a master's in English, and one has a bachelor's in history and English. Another instructor's only degree was a bachelor's in English and journalism.

TABLE 15
HIGHEST DEGREE HELD BY INSTRUCTORS

Degree	Number	Percentage
Master's	12	52.2
Ph.D.	6	26.1
Bachelor's	5	21.7
Total	23	100.0

Most basic news writing instructors included in this study are low in academic rank, as Table 16 shows. Only four (17.4 per cent) of the 23 respondents hold the rank of associate professor or higher. The majority--including two lecturers, six instructors and four assistant instructors--rank even lower than assistant professor.

TABLE 16
ACADEMIC RANK OF INSTRUCTORS

Rank	Number	Percentage ^a
Professor	1	4.3
Associate professor	3	13.0
Assistant professor	7	30.4
Lecturer	2	8.7
Instructor	6	26.1
Assistant Instructor	4	17.4
Total	23	100.0

^aPercentage does not total 100 because of rounding off procedures.

There is at least a degree of relationship between the low rank of many of the respondents and the fact that a number of them are part-time teachers. Three of the four assistant instructors are part-timers. Three

of the six instructors are part-timers. The other part-time teacher is an assistant professor.

Grading Student Work

As Earl L. Conn pointed out in relation to his model of the news writing process, the instructor's evaluation of student writing is crucial to effective teaching in courses such as those considered in this study.¹⁰ Most students are just beginning to learn the rudiments of journalistic writing, and they make many errors for the instructor to correct.

Add to this the fact that enrollments in basic news writing courses are heavy, and it becomes apparent why instructors spend a great deal of time grading student work--and why some journalism academics might try to avoid teaching the course.

As may be seen in Table 17, during fall semester, 1971, the instructors included in this study were grading an average of 53.5 basic news writing papers per week. This took an average of 9.4 out-of-class hours. Instructors were spending about 10.5 minutes grading each paper. One instructor said he spent two-to-three hours per week grading 75 papers. At the opposite end of the spectrum, another instructor said he spent 20 hours per week grading 50 papers.

TABLE 17

PAPERS GRADED AND HOURS SPENT GRADING PER WEEK--
BY INSTRUCTOR--FALL SEMESTER, 1971^a

Papers Graded Per Week	Out-of-Class Hours Spent Grading Per Week
75-150	8-10
100	6
78	6-8
75	14-15
75	10
75	2-3
60-70	8
60	10
55	15
50-60	12-15
50	20
50	12
45	6-7
40	8-10
40	8
36	3-4
35	12
30+	10-12
30	10
30	8 _b
30	--
28	8
25	4
Mean ^c 53.5	9.4

^aTotal N = 23.

^bNo estimate given.

^cWhere ranges were given, midpoint of the range was used in computing the means (e.g., 50 to 60 equals 55). Means computed on the basis of 22 responses, with the respondent who gave no hours-per-week estimate not included, in order to make hours and papers per week figures comparable.

Table 18 shows that during spring semester, 1972, the instructors included in this study were grading an average of 48.7 papers per week. This took an average of 8.5 out-of-class hours per week. Instructors were

spending about 10.4 minutes grading each paper. One instructor said she spent eight hours a week grading 20 papers. At the opposite extreme, another said he spent six-to-seven hours grading 165.

TABLE 18

PAPERS GRADED AND HOURS SPENT GRADING PER WEEK--
BY INSTRUCTOR--SPRING SEMESTER, 1972^a

Papers Graded Per Week	Out-of-Class Hours Spent Grading Per Week
165	6-7
90	20
50-100	4-6
60	14
55	15
50-60	12-15
50	15
50	8
42	4-4.5
40	8
40	4-5
36	8
34	10
30	10
30	3.5
25	4 ^b
25	--
22	2-3
20	8
12	2
Mean ^c 48.7	8.5

^aTotal N = 20. Three of the total sample of 23 were not teaching the course spring semester.

^bNo estimate given. Respondent said he graded "most" papers in class.

^cWhere ranges were given, midpoint of the range was used in computing the mean (e.g., 50 to 60 equals 55). Means computed on the basis of 19 responses, with the respondent who gave no hours-per-week estimate excluded, in order to make hour and papers per week figures comparable.

As was noted earlier, none of the instructors with student teaching assistants gave those assistants full responsibility for grading student papers, but all of them gave assistants the duty of doing preliminary evaluation of papers. That means that these instructors were, as one respondent noted, "checking and refining preliminary grading of assistants" instead of giving detailed examination to each paper. Apparently because of this, there is an appreciable difference in amount of time spent grading between instructors who have teaching assistants and those who do not.

As can be seen in Table 19, during fall semester teachers with assistants were able to grade 14 papers per week more than those without assistants by spending only 0.4 of an hour more. And during spring semester, those with teaching assistants graded 1.4 more papers per week, but did so in four less hours. Of course, the effectiveness of this grading and the number of student assistants' man hours it required were not within the scope of this study. Also, it should be remembered that Missouri accounted for seven of the instructors with teaching assistants fall semester and six of them in the spring.

The belief that grading for the course is primarily a matter of comments written on papers was verified by responses to a second item on the questionnaire related to grading. Respondents were given a list of three grading methods--comments written on papers, oral comments when papers are returned, and personal conferences with students--plus a blank ✓ for specifying other methods. They were asked to identify which methods were a routine part of their grading-evaluation procedure.

All 23 (100 per cent) said written comments were standard procedure. Seventeen said oral comments when papers are returned are routine. Judging from marginal notes, some semantic difficulties apparently were encountered in relation to the personal conferences method. Despite the fact that the item emphasized that routine procedure was the subject of interest, at least two persons checked the personal conference method although they use it only irregularly. One wrote "occasionally" in the margin, and another wrote: "I am available if students request." Disregarding these two responses, 14 instructors said they used this method. But it is uncertain how many others misinterpreted or ignored the intent of the item. One instructor noted marginally that he meets students on a regular basis five times a semester for conferences. Another said he did

TABLE 19

PAPERS GRADED AND HOURS SPENT GRADING:
INSTRUCTORS WITH TEACHING ASSISTANTS
COMPARED WITH INSTRUCTORS WITHOUT
TEACHING ASSISTANTS^a

Item	Fall, 1971		Spring, 1972	
	Papers Graded Per Week	Hours Spent Grading	Papers Graded Per Week	Hours Spent Grading
Instructors with teaching assistants ^b	60.5	9.6	49.4	6.6
Instructors without teaching assistants ^c	46.5	9.2	48.0	10.6

^aFor fall semester, N = 22. For spring semester, N = 19.

^bFall semester, 11 instructors had teaching assistants. Spring semester, 10 instructors had teaching assistants.

^cFall semester, 11 instructors did not have teaching assistants. Spring semester, 9 instructors did not have teaching assistants.

so four times a semester. Instructors who made similar use of the method were the ones who should have listed it as a routine part of their grading-evaluation procedure.

One instructor added a number of items in the blank left for "other" methods. He wrote: "Spelling quiz; punctuation quiz; recitation post-mortem; critique by class, sometimes using overhead projection of students' ledes (sic), especially when two cover the same story and take differing approaches."

In sum, the grading-evaluation places a considerable burden on the basic news writing instructor. During the 1971-72 academic year, the instructors surveyed in this study spent 9.4 hours per week grading papers for the course fall semester and 8.5 hours per week grading papers spring semester. This means that every week they put in more than one full working day grading papers outside of class hours. The instructors were not asked how much out-of-class time was consumed by personal confer-

ences with students, but it is obvious that this potentially could amount to a large block of time. Add to this the fact that most of the instructors--at least the 16 full-time ones--are undoubtedly teaching other courses, and it becomes increasingly apparent how much of a load this course can be.

Planned Changes in the Courses

At the end of the questionnaire for this study, the respondents were invited to discuss any changes they planned to make in the course. Some of the planned changes have already been mentioned. Missouri will alternate between the mini-mass lecture and multiple laboratories structure and the multiple sections of combination lecture-laboratory structure beginning in the fall of 1972. Nebraska plans to break its course up into three separate courses, giving different course numbers and descriptions to the present sections for students in the news-editorial, radio-television and advertising sequences.

Missouri also plans to conduct an experiment in the fall of 1972 which will affect graduate sections of the course. Graduate students who do not have undergraduate degrees in journalism will take a course in which basic news writing and basic editing are taught at the same time. The sections will meet twice a week for three hours of laboratory each session. The basic news writing course co-ordinator wrote: "Our feeling is that there's so much overlap between the two courses that we should try teaching them together, stressing the principles that apply to both while retaining practice in the special skills of each (writing, reporting; copy editing, headline writing; etc.)" The coordinator wrote that he hoped "to see a merger of the undergraduate sections eventually."

Another Missouri instructor wrote that he hoped to supplement each "phase" of the course "with visual aids of some sort, mostly filmed situations" and visual tape recordings. He said he teaches both broadcasting and news-editorial courses, and he has had "great success using news film to show examples of good and bad, then another film to present a situation for students to take notes, question and then write."

A Nebraska instructor also mentioned visual aids in discussing changes. He said he wants "more writing, more live assignments, more

publication for the students, more use of audio-visual aids. But no fundamental change. I just want a hard-nosed, tough course that will prepare them for their academic and professional careers."

A number of other instructors responded to the item, but indicated no definite plans had been made for change in the course.

IV. SUMMARY

This mail questionnaire study dealt with the basic news writing course in seven departments of journalism at universities in Kansas and its border states. The instructors surveyed teach at Kansas State University, the University of Kansas, the University of Missouri, the University of Nebraska, the University of Colorado, Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma.

The basic news writing course goes by various names in these departments, including Reporting, Writing for the Media, Reporting I, Introduction to Newsroom Practices, Beginning Writing and Reporting and News. ✓

Missouri, with approximately 674 undergraduate majors and 196 graduate majors, was the largest department included in the study. Colorado, with approximately 182 undergraduates and 19 graduates, was the smallest. Five of the seven departments had total enrollments of 450 or more.

The basic news writing course is required of all journalism majors at five of the departments, including Nebraska, where specialized sections of the course are established for news-editorial, radio-television and advertising students. At Oklahoma State, all majors except those in the radio-television sequence must take the course. Kansas instructors were almost evenly divided on the question of whether the course is required for all majors, but one instructor noted that there exists in the Kansas department a separate news writing-editing course for advertising majors.

All seven of the departments included in the study allow non-majors to take the basic news writing course, although some measures are taken to restrict non-major enrollment.

It is possible to waive the course by examination at Oklahoma and Nebraska, but students seldom attempt it. Undergraduates may not waive the course at the other five schools.

Students are not required to pass a typing proficiency test to enroll in the course at five of the schools. Nebraska required enrollees to be able to type 30 to 40 words per minute, but details of how proficiency is to be measured are left up to individual instructors. Four Kansas instructors said a test is required. One said it is not.

A number of respondents indicated their departments refer students to local public schools or other departments within the university if they need remedial typing instruction.

Students customarily take the course as juniors at Kansas and Missouri. Oklahoma enrollees usually are freshmen or sophomores. Students in the course are customarily sophomores at the other four departments.

The course offers two hours of semester credit at Nebraska and Missouri. It offers three credit hours at the other five departments.

It is interesting to note that in a number of instances members of the same faculty gave differing responses to questionnaire items concerning the administrative details just discussed. This would seem to indicate that something of an intra-departmental communications gap exists at several of the departments studied.

Basic news writing courses examined in this study fell into three structural patterns:

- 1) Oklahoma and Oklahoma State used a mass lecture and multiple laboratories structure. All students attended a common lecture, but they were divided into smaller sections meeting at separate times to do reporting and writing exercises in a laboratory.

- 2) Colorado and Missouri, during fall semester of 1971, used a mini-mass lecture and multiple laboratories structure. Students from two or more laboratory sections met for a common lecture, but there was no one large lecture section for all students in the course.

- 3) Kansas State, Kansas, Nebraska, and Missouri, during spring semester of 1972, used a structure involving multiple sections of combined lecture and laboratory. Each section had one instructor who handled all lectures and laboratory work.

Considerable divergence existed among the departments surveyed concerning details of scheduling and staffing the course. Frequency and length of class meetings ranged from once a week for four hours at Nebraska to three times a week, twice for one hour and once for three hours, at Oklahoma State. The number of faculty members teaching the

course during the academic year ranged from one at Oklahoma and Oklahoma State to seven at Missouri.

Eleven of the 23 instructors (47.8 per cent) had at least one teaching assistant during the year, although seven of those instructors were at Missouri. Other departments which involved teaching assistants in the course were Oklahoma, Oklahoma State and Kansas. Instructors did not assign too much responsibility to teaching assistants. Most commonly, the assistants' duties were preliminary evaluation of student papers and doing clerical work. Nine instructors rated the performance of their teaching assistants as "good" or "strong," and two rated the performance as "very strong."

In response to a question about the primary thrust of their courses, 19 of the 23 respondents (82.6 per cent) said they offered a mixture of instruction in writing and reporting techniques. One said his was primarily a course in reporting, and three said theirs were primarily writing courses.

When the instructors gave priority rankings to individual instructional goals for the course, it was also evident that instruction in reporting techniques is an integral part of most basic news writing classes. Eighteen respondents (78.3 per cent) gave high priority to teaching such reporting skills as interviewing, phrasing questions and taking notes.

Also perceived as substantial goals for the course were teaching straight news story writing style and organization; developing student understanding of what constitutes news; teaching mechanics of writing (grammar, spelling, punctuation); exposing students to writing under deadline pressure; and teaching media style rules.

The responses to a number of items concerning administration of the course, instructional goals and the professional backgrounds of instructors seemed to indicate that the basic news writing course is oriented toward newspaper, or at least print, journalism.

When the instructors were asked about the extent to which they used 13 teaching methods or devices during the 1971-72 academic year, the results indicated that the three of these most heavily used were ones which serve to give students instruction in both writing and reporting skills and which help to reduce the artificial atmosphere of the course work by providing realistic experience.

Most often used were live coverage of community meetings, speeches and similar events, and interviews with persons other than the instructor. Dictation of facts for writing assignments by the instructor tied for third place in number of heavy use rankings. However, the latter was tied with a method which does not allow reporting skills practice and which aggravates the artificial atmosphere of course work: distribution of facts for writing assignments through instructor-prepared handouts.

The distribution of extent-of-use rankings--no method or device was heavily used by more than 10 instructors--indicates that there is little agreement as to the best methods or devices for teaching course. Also, each instructor uses several methods to varying degrees in teaching the course.

The results concerning teaching methods and devices indicated that there is little instructional innovation going on within the course. There was some substantial use of audio-visual devices, but very few instructors said they gave more than slight use to role-playing by students, programmed instruction, or writing assignments based on the results of a poll designed and conducted by the class. No instructors had used computer grading of papers.

The mean age for the 23 instructors included in this survey was 42.1 years. They had an average of 13.9 years of professional experience. A spate of multiple responses to what was intended as a one-response question confused the matter somewhat, but a heavy majority of the instructors got their experience in the newspaper field. Seven of the instructors held part-time teaching positions. Two of these part-timers were still active in media work, and three were graduate students. The mean number of years of university teaching experience for the instructors was 5.6. Twelve of them had master's degrees, six had Ph.D.s, and five had bachelor's degrees. Nineteen of them (78.3 per cent) held academic ranks of assistant professor or lower. Seven of those in the latter group were part-time instructors.

All of the instructors said comments written on student papers were a routine part of their grading-evaluation procedure. Oral comments when papers are returned are used by 17 of the instructors. Fourteen said they routinely hold personal conferences with students.

Because written comments on papers play such a big part in the

basic news writing course, the instructors are under a heavy grading load. During the fall semester of 1971, the typical instructor each week was spending 9.4 out-of-class hours grading 53.5 papers. Spring semester, he was spending 8.5 hours per week grading 48.7 papers.

Having a teaching assistant allows an instructor to spend less time grading papers, the results indicated. For example, during spring semester of 1972, instructors with teaching assistants spent an average of 6.6 out-of-class hours per week grading 49.4 papers. Instructors without assistants spent 10.6 hours per week grading 48.0 papers.

Of the seven departments included in this study, only Missouri and Nebraska plan major changes in the basic news writing course in the near future.

Because of fluctuating enrollment in the course, Missouri plans to alternate in the immediate future between using a mini-mass lectures and multiple laboratories course structure fall semesters and a combination lecture-laboratory course structure spring semesters. Missouri also plans to begin an experiment in the fall of 1972 with graduate sections of the course. Graduate students who do not have undergraduate journalism degrees will take a course in which basic news writing and basic editing are taught at the same time. If the experiment works well, the course co-ordinator hopes to see a similar step taken with undergraduate sections of the course.

Nebraska plans to divide its basic news writing course into three separate courses. The present specialized sections for students in the news-editorial, radio-television and advertising sequences will be converted into individual courses.

Of course, it cannot be claimed that this study is reflective of basic news writing courses at all departments of journalism in the United States. Because instructors at seven departments in Kansas and the surrounding states made up the sample, the study's applicability is limited to the Midwest.

Conflicting responses from members of the same faculties were received on a number of informational items (e.g., how many sections of the course were offered by the department during the year). Follow-up letters were written to administrators in four departments in an attempt to resolve the conflicts. Replies from two departments were received in time to be incorporated in the study.

In order to restrict the length of the questionnaire, the author

was forced to let several relevant questions go unasked. And some of the questions which were asked apparently were misinterpreted by the respondents, as when one instructor indicated that personal conferences with students were part of his routine grading-evaluation procedure despite the fact that he held such conferences only when students requested them. There was at least one instance in which items in separate sections of the questionnaire which were intended to be identical turned out not to be so. As a result, one group of respondents rated the performance of teaching assistants on a scale of "very good, good, weak, very weak," and the other group used a scale of "very strong, strong, weak, very weak." This resulted from a proof-reading oversight.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The basic news writing course is, as Robert Knight said, a building block.¹ The course serves as part of the foundation to a journalism department's curriculum, because it is here that students learn the skills without which they could not function in advanced courses. Likewise, the course serves as part of the foundation upon which students construct--with their talents--their professional careers.

Even most educators who would like to see journalism curricula built around a core of communications theory and research courses will grant that a strong basic news writing course is a necessity. One such educator, former AEJ President Theodore Peterson, has asserted that such "techniques" courses must be "superbly taught."²

Is the basic news writing course superbly taught? Probably not.

Simply stated, the problem is one of too many students and too little money. The ideal situation would be one in which a department had a series of combination lecture-laboratory sections with no more than 15 students and one instructor for each section. The sections would be small enough for instructor and students to build rapport. If the lecture and laboratory met in a continuous time block, the students would not have the problem of retaining lecture information over a long span of time before applying it in laboratory exercises. The instructor probably would have only 15 to 30 student papers to grade per week and he could devote careful attention to preparing each assignment and grading each paper.

This situation was probably fairly common until a little over a decade ago. But between 1960 and 1970, journalism enrollments shot up 190.6 per cent. Missouri, to pick an extreme example from this study, found itself facing an enrollment of 344 students in its basic news writing course in the fall of 1971. In order to establish the idyllic situation just mentioned, Missouri would have had to provide 23 instructors for 23 sections of the course fall semester, plus the laboratory facilities to serve as meeting sites. Missouri could not do it. And most other sizable departments, faced with similar if less severe enrollment problems, cannot

do it either.

So students are jammed into large lecture sections, where they feel no rapport with the instructor and where they must hear a lecture about news leads on Monday and then wait until Friday to write one. Instructors are forced to teach as many as five laboratory sections, which means they can devote only a minimal amount of time to evaluating each student paper (and it is through such evaluation that most of the teaching in this course takes place).

The question becomes, then, what should be done? The most obvious answer, and the least likely one, is find more money for journalism programs. Since journalism department budgets are not likely to be increased, answers must be sought in other directions. And that is the key to the situation. Answers must be sought. Journalism educators must pay attention to the basic news writing course, to its problems and possible solutions to those problems.

A key aspect of the course which must be given detailed consideration is its structure. Combination lecture-laboratories may constitute the most desirable structure, but if other factors render that structure infeasible, the most effective alternative must be used. Journalism departments should, as Missouri is doing, experiment with the structural options in order to determine which is most suitable for their needs and resources.

Staffing of the course is another important area of consideration. The author believes that this is one of those "certain courses" which the ACEJ says "are enriched more by professional experience on the part of instructors than are others." It is therefore pleasant to note that the typical instructor included in this study had almost 14 years of media experience. But perhaps professional experience is not enough. When he called for superb teaching in the basic techniques courses, Theodore Peterson suggested that bright young Ph.D.'s might help supply it if they were brought into the courses as instructors.³ Gene Burd has advocated bringing in full professors. Certainly the staffing situation as it now stands--17 of the instructors included in this study held master's or bachelor's degrees and 19 had academic rank of assistant professor or less--lends some credence to Burd's inference that teaching the basic news writing course is a punishment inflicted on journalism academics of low status.⁴

This study indicated that the dominant teaching methods in the

basic news writing course are ones which were being used 30 to 40 years ago. Perhaps bringing in young Ph.D.s and high-ranking faculty would invigorate thinking on the course. These persons might be more receptive to innovational ideas which do exist and more productive of new ideas.

Thinking, however, is not the only thing which goes into implementation of innovations. That is why it is impossible to condemn the current instructors for lack of innovation. Perhaps a "green eyeshade" bias makes some of them think that computer grading of papers is impossible and that programmed instruction is some kind of educational theorist's delusion. Others, however, may see the value of these things and the need to try them. To implement changes, however, the latter instructors need planning time, which they don't have, and money, which they don't have. And given their academic rank and status, they probably have little hope of gathering enough intra-departmental clout to get either time or money.

If one proposes that more Ph.D.s and high-ranking faculty members be brought into the basic news writing course, or that current instructors be given more status within departmental hierarchies, or that money be put into the course to finance experimentation, one risks heating up the "green eyeshades" vs. "chi squares" war. Die-hard "chi squares" undoubtedly would assert that reordering departmental priorities in such a manner would cripple communications-oriented curricula. There would not be enough trained personnel or money to maintain the upper-level communications courses. This is a substantial objection. But journalism departments appear to have arrived at a point at which it is mandatory to "place first things first." If enrollments continue to grow and the quality of instruction in the basic news writing course therefore deteriorates, students will be entering upper-level communications courses without proper preparation. They will be unable to profit from the advanced instruction and this will cripple communications-oriented curricula. The building block must be strong, or the whole structure of the curriculum will topple.

It may well be that some priorities would have to be reordered for only a short time. If high-ranking faculty members and young Ph.D.s discovered and perfected innovations, then they could teach others how to use them and return themselves to teaching upper-level courses. And money directed to the course to finance experimentation could be reallocated once the experiments were concluded and the innovations perfected.

However it is done, attempts should be made to use new teaching devices and methods. Research at the University of Michigan has shown that computer grading of papers can lighten the load on basic news writing instructors who must cope with large classes. This writer feels a twinge at the idea of computer grading--writing is such a human activity--but if it works, it should be used. Experiments like those at Michigan are at least in order before instructors flatly reject the whole concept. Programmed instruction is effective for teaching large numbers of students while reducing demands on instructors. Audio-visual devices can be used to communicate meaningfully with students in large classes.

Role-playing by students can be used to give class members subtle insights on issues and techniques. It may be that it is too difficult for beginning students to conduct a poll and write stories based on it, but the idea deserves a try. It is through devices like the latter that journalism education must move away from what William R. Lindley called the "circular concept" of teaching students traditional newsroom methods so they go out and use them in the traditional way, resulting in perpetuation of conservative if not reactionary news media practices and policies.⁵

Thought must be given to the use of student teaching assistants in the basic news writing course. This study indicated that teaching assistants can save instructors time by doing preliminary evaluation of student papers. But teaching assistants must be paid, and there is a question--as demonstrated by the limited-responsibility duties assigned to assistants by instructors in this study--as to how effective assistants are in the teaching process. This writer questions the wisdom of allowing assistants to do even preliminary evaluations. Evaluation of papers is a crucial part of the instruction in this course. Instructors who glance over evaluations done by someone else are not bringing all of their critical--and, thus, instructional--powers to bear on the papers. And in all likelihood the preliminary evaluations are not done with full competence, or the assistants would be instructors and not students. In the ideal situation, an instructor would assume sole responsibility for grading his students' papers. If that is impossible because of class sizes, it seems likely that money which might be spent on teaching assistants could be more effectively put to use in devising and maintaining a system for computer grading in which the instructor would create the writing exercises and program the computer.

Journalism departments should consider a number of administrative steps which might lighten the load on the basic news writing instructor. One such step would be to allow students to waive the course by passing an examination. Judging from the quality of student performance he has seen in his own classes, the writer suspects that few students would qualify for a waiver, but it might be possible to reduce class enrollment slightly through this device. Another such step would be to bar non-majors from the course. Admittedly, there is a pressing need in today's era of the credibility gap to acquaint non-journalists with the workings of the media. But it is difficult to justify the admission of non-majors if the result is that many majors are unable to take the course when they need it because many of the available spots have been taken by non-majors, as the author has seen happen under Kansas State's limited enrollment system. It is even more difficult to justify non-major admission if basic news writing instructors with too many students are teaching poorly because of the overload. Requiring students to demonstrate typing proficiency and arranging instruction for students who type poorly would save instructors from spending time deciphering unintelligible student papers. (This would also save many students from bad grades stemming from misspellings and fact errors caused by typographical mistakes.)

All in all, what the basic news writing course needs is attention. It should not dominate a journalism curriculum, but it is a building block of a curriculum. And as such, it must be strong. If journalism educators will give consideration to the course, will think about its problems, perhaps answers will be found, and the course will be taught in the future--as it should be--superbly. ✓

With only one year of teaching experience, the author cannot claim to be an educational expert. But with the goal in mind of promoting consideration and discussion of the course, he would like to offer--on the basis of his media and teaching experience and his reading and contact with other instructors in connection with this study--the following recommendations:

- 1) Basic news writing courses should be structured with sections of combined lecture and laboratory if at all possible. Lecture and laboratory sessions should meet in a continuous time block, with the emphasis of class meetings being on reporting and writing exercises rather than lecture. ✓

2) If size of enrollment in the course makes a combined lecture-laboratory structure infeasible, mini-mass lectures and multiple laboratories should be used. Mass lectures and multiple laboratories should be used only as a last resort. Sections of lecture with no laboratory are of little value and should not be used.

3) The number of sections for which an instructor is responsible should be kept to an absolute minimum. Section sizes should be small. In line with the ACEJ accrediting standards, one instructor for each 15-student section would be ideal.

4) If possible, instructors should hold personal conferences with students at least twice a semester for the purpose of evaluating work and giving individual instruction.

5) In light of the fact that large sections are apparently unavoidable in some departments, those departments must allocate their resources in such a manner as to develop and use innovational teaching methods and devices which can provide adequate instruction for large classes. These methods and devices include computer grading, programmed instruction and modern audio-visual equipment.

6) Students who are not competent enough to hold faculty status--teaching assistants, in other words--should not be allowed to participate in the teaching process. In particular, they should not be allowed to evaluate student reporting and writing exercises. If teaching assistants are used in the course, their duties should be restricted to those of a clerical nature.

7) Faculty members with Ph.D.s and/or high rank should be imported to teach the course, at least on a temporary basis. If nothing else, this would expose them to the problems involved and stop them from ignoring the course.

8) Instructors should teach both writing and reporting techniques in the basic news writing course, because for a newsman reporting and writing are overlapping stages of one continuous process. ✓

9) To make sure reporting techniques are taught, instructors should use such methods as covering speeches and meetings outside of class, staging press conferences (mock or real), interviewing persons outside of class, and role playing by students and/or instructor. Writing assignment workbooks should not be used unless they are a necessary component of a programmed instruction and/or computer grading package. Printed handouts ✓

with facts for writing assignments should be used sparingly.

10) Instructors should experiment with such teaching devices as writing assignments based on a poll conducted by the class. They should devote more attention to developing creativity in writing styles. Such steps will help students move beyond current journalistic stereotypes about what the media can and should do.

11) Journalism instructors should become a vociferous lobby for better instruction in the mechanics of writing--grammar, spelling, punctuation and so forth--by English teachers in the public schools.

12) Students who are not journalism majors, with the possible exception of education students who want a journalism minor so they can teach in the public schools, should be barred from the course to reduce enrollment overloads.

13) If non-majors are admitted to the course, all should be placed in one section. If necessary, that section could be structured and taught differently than the sections for majors (e.g., if the section is extremely large, fewer laboratory sessions might be scheduled, thus cutting the grading load for the instructor). This would eliminate the problem of majors having difficulty gaining admission to the course because of competition for spots with non-majors, and it might ease the instructor's feeling that he is wasting his time giving detailed instruction to students who will never make use of it.

14) Since broadcasting and advertising students habitually show disinterest and perform poorly in basic news writing courses which have a print news orientation (as most of them do), these students should be segregated into their own sections of such courses. Instruction in those sections should be based on print news media writing and reporting techniques--since they are basic to all forms of journalism--but emphasis should be given to the applicability of those techniques to the interest area of the students. Some special interest instruction should be incorporated.

15) Each department should institute a process whereby capable students may waive the course by examination, in hopes of reducing enrollment at least slightly.

16) Each department should require students to pass a typing examination before they enroll in the course. Formal arrangements should be made with other university departments or the local school system for students to receive remedial typing instruction if they need it. Poorly typed news

copy is bad news copy.

17) A determined effort must be made to insure that all instructors, full-time and part-time, understand departmental policies relevant to the course and the manner in which the course functions throughout the department.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

¹Leslie G. Moeller, "More Research in Education for Journalism," Journalism Quarterly, XXXIII (Winter, 1956), 51.

²Theodore Peterson, "Journalism Education: Some of Its Unresolved Questions" (text of presidential address delivered at the national convention of the Association for Education in Journalism, Lincoln, Neb., August, 1963), p. 13. (Hereinafter referred to as "Unresolved Questions.")

³Ibid., 13-14.

⁴Robert P. Knight, "The 'News' Course: Springboard to Professionalism" (unpublished paper, University of Missouri, 1967), p. 1. (Hereinafter referred to as "The 'News' Course.")

⁵Curtis D. MacDougall, Chilton R. Bush and Edward R. Barrett, "What Educators Think," Quill, LVII (February, 1967), 25.

⁶John Tebbel, "Journalism Education: Myth and Reality," Quill, LIV (January, 1966), 6. (Hereinafter referred to as "Myth and Reality.")

⁷Gene Burd, "Journalism as a Relevant University Offering--Is Reporting Disappearing as the Backbone of J-Schools?" (paper presented as part of a panel discussion at the national convention of the Association for Education in Journalism, Columbia, S. C., August, 1971), p. 5. (Hereinafter referred to as "Is Reporting Disappearing.")

⁸Clarence O. Schlaver, "Too Many Bodies, Too Little Money--J-Deans Worry but Carry On," Quill, LIX (January, 1971), 8. (Hereinafter referred to as "Too Many Bodies.")

⁹Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁰James W. Schwartz, "Experimentation and Innovation in This Age of Reform," Journalism Quarterly, XLVI (Winter, 1969), 4.

¹¹Jane E. Clark, "A Comparison of Approaches to Teaching News Writing at Four School of Journalism" (unpublished master's thesis, University of Missouri, 1969).

¹²H. E. Birdsong, Jr., "Methods of Obtaining Accuracy on the Part of Journalism Students," Journalism Quarterly, Journalism Bulletin, IV (March, 1927), 39-44. (Hereinafter referred to as "Obtaining Accuracy.")

¹³Curtis D. MacDougall, "Streamlining the Reporting Course," Journalism Quarterly, XV (September, 1938), 349-52, 392. (Hereinafter referred to as "Streamlining.")

¹⁴Clark made almost no attempt to quantify her information or present it in table or chart form. The material in the following section was taken from several points in the thesis and combined here.

¹⁵Samuel S. Talbert, "Spreading the Professional Curriculum in Journalism Education," Journalism Educator, XV (Spring, 1960), 40-41, 44.

¹⁶Accredited Programs in Journalism (Columbia, Mo.: American Council on Education for Journalism, 1971), p. 7. (Hereinafter referred to as Accredited Programs in Journalism.)

¹⁷George S. Turnbull, Journalists in the Making (Eugene, Ore.: School of Journalism, University of Oregon, 1965), pp. 60-62.

¹⁸"Syllabus for Journalistic Writing J407" (syllabus for a basic news writing course offered at the University of Oregon in the fall of 1971), pp. 1-5. ✓ J207

¹⁹William L. Rivers, "Communication 100 & 102: A Sort of Syllabus" (syllabus for a basic news writing course offered at Stanford University in the fall of 1971), pp. 1-6.

²⁰Accredited Programs in Journalism, p. 7. It is interesting to note the ambiguity of phrasing in this passage. If interpreted literally, it puts the ACEJ on record as opposed to basic news writing courses which have large lecture sections and smaller laboratory sections. The latter structure is fairly common, however (Clark found that it was used at both Michigan State and Missouri), so the author assumes that the passage is interpreted by the ACEJ as applying only to laboratory sections of courses which have separate lectures and laboratories.

²¹Earl L. Conn, "Tentative Conceptualization of the Newswriting Process," Journalism Quarterly, XLV (Summer, 1968), 344-45. (Hereinafter referred to as "Tentative Conceptualization.") ✓

²²MacDougall, "Streamlining," p. 283.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., p. 284.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Birdsong, "Obtaining Accuracy."

³¹Byron H. Christian, "Using the Project Method for Reporting Students," Journalism Quarterly, XVI (June, 1939), 169-71.

³²R. E. Wolseley, "An Experiment in Training Student Reporters in Telephone Reporting," Journalism Quarterly, XX (September, 1943), 239-40.

³³William R. Slaughter, "Vitalizing Instruction in News Writing," Journalism Quarterly, VIII (March, 1931), 69-70.

³⁴Ibid., p. 70.

³⁵Ibid., p. 72.

³⁶David L. Grey, "Some Thoughts on the Psychology of News Writing" (edited transcript of a panel presentation at the national convention of the Association for Education in Journalism, Berkeley, Calif., August, 1969), p. 1. (Hereinafter referred to as "Psychology.")

³⁷Ibid., p. 4.

³⁸Ibid., p. 3.

³⁹William R. Lindley, "Journalism Education: The Familiar Jungle" (notes for a panel presentation at the national convention of the Association for Education in Journalism, Berkeley, Calif., August, 1969), p. 2. (Hereinafter referred to as "The Familiar Jungle.")

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 6.

⁴¹CAPRICE, I (January, 1972), 1.

⁴²John L. Griffith, "Programmed Instruction--Guides for J-Educators," Journalism Educator, XXIII (Fall, 1968), 44.

⁴³Ibid., p. 45.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 45-46.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 46.

⁴⁷William E. Francois, "Programmed Instruction of News Writing Skills," Journalism Quarterly, XLV (Winter, 1968), 735-38.

_____. "Evaluating Programmed News-Writing Instruction," Journalism Monographs, No. 21 (November, 1971), 1-27. (Hereinafter referred to as "Evaluating.")

⁴⁸Francois, "Evaluating," p. 27.

⁴⁹Neale Copple, "Immediacy and Candor Mean Richer Teaching Experiences," Journalism Educator, XXIII (Spring, 1968), 4.

⁵⁰Dwight Bentel, "Use of Audio-Visual Aids in Journalism Education," Journalism Quarterly, XXVII (Winter, 1950), 62-67.

⁵¹John T. McAlister, "Machines as Educational Aids," Journalism Educator, XXII (Summer, 1967), 8.

⁵²Ibid., p. 9.

⁵³J. K. Hvistendahl, "Teaching Opinion Polling in Basic Reporting Classes," Journalism Quarterly, XLVI (Winter, 1969), 823.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 825.

⁵⁵Paul T. McCalib, "Role-Playing Can Provide 'Real' Experiences in Journalism Classes," Journalism Quarterly, XLV (Summer, 1968), 341.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 342.

⁵⁷T. Joseph Scanlon, "Role Playing Applied to Reporting Classes," Journalism Educator, XXIII (Spring, 1968), 28-29.

⁵⁸Grey, "Psychology," p. 2.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Schlaver, "Too Many Bodies," p. 9.

⁶¹James F. Evans and John H. Behrens, "Grading by Recording--An Idea for Journalism Teachers," Journalism Educator, XXI (Spring, 1966), 53-56.

⁶²Marion Marzolf, "Patient Computer Relieves Writing Instructor's Tedium," Journalism Educator, XXVI (Fall, 1971), 2.

⁶³Robert L. Bishop, "Learning to Write--From a Computer," Quill, LIX (May, 1971), 22.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁶⁵Tebbel, "Myth and Reality," p. 6.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 6-7.

⁶⁷Burd, "Is Reporting Disappearing," p. 4.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶⁹Accredited Programs in Journalism, p. 7.

Chapter II

¹Two questionnaires were returned uncompleted. One of the instructors said she taught a specialized section of the course to which a general questionnaire about news writing did not apply. The other said he did not teach a basic news writing course. One instructor did not return his questionnaire, and said in a telephone conversation that he occasionally visited classes to lecture on photography, but he did not teach the basic news writing course. One questionnaire was judged unusable because it was only partially completed by a part-time instructor who taught a very small section set up to handle enrollment overflow from other sections one semester.

One completed questionnaire was received from an instructor who was not part of the original sample. He said another instructor--to whom the questionnaire had been sent--had turned the questionnaire over to him because he was teaching the basic news writing course and had done so for four years. This response was included in the tabulations.

Because the tabulations showed that conflicting responses had been given by members of the same department on some issues which appeared to the author to be matters of department-wide policy, follow-up letters seeking clarification were sent to administrators at four departments. Replies were received from two of them in time for inclusion in this study.

Chapter III

¹Six of the journalism education bodies included in this study are "schools" of journalism and/or mass communication. One is a "department." For the sake of convenience and avoiding semantic difficulties (since "school" is often taken to mean "university"), all of these entities will be referred to as "departments" in the following pages.

²Letter to the author from Neale Copple, March 9, 1972.

³Letter to the author from Neale Copple, May 24, 1972.

⁴Letter to the author from Robert P. Knight, May 26, 1972.

⁵The questionnaire for this study included separate sections on structure and staffing to be completed by instructors who taught courses with mass or mini-mass lectures and instructors who taught combination lecture-laboratory or lecture only courses. Due to a proof-reading oversight, the teaching assistant rating scales included in the sections were worded differently. One scale was "very good, good, weak, very weak." Two instructors gave responses on this scale. The other scale was "very strong, strong, weak, very weak." Nine instructors gave responses on this scale.

⁶Letter to the author from Robert P. Knight, May 20, 1972.

⁷On five items one or more instructors failed to respond. It is a temptation to assume that non-response means the instructor does not use this method but misunderstood the manner in which he was supposed to record that fact, especially since four of the non-responses came from one instructor. This would be a hazardous assumption, however, so Table 8-- and this discussion--include non-responses in a separate category from the four extent of use rankings.

⁸Clark gives a detailed description of the preparation of these "special edition" stories. The course co-ordinator also mentioned them on his questionnaire.

⁹Peterson, "Unresolved Questions," pp. 13-14. Burd, "Is Reporting Disappearing," p. 5.

¹⁰Conn, "Tentative Conceptualization," pp. 344-45.

Chapter V

¹Knight, "The 'News' Course," p. 1.

²Peterson, "Unresolved Questions," pp. 13-14.

³Ibid.

⁴Burd, "Is Reporting Disappearing," p. 5.

⁵Lindley, "The Familiar Jungle," p. 6.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

This questionnaire has been designed to secure information about many aspects--including administration, structure, staffing, and goals--of the basic news writing course. The questionnaire is intended for instructors of the beginning course which involves detailed instruction in journalistic writing. At different schools it often has different names--such as Reporting I, News Writing, News Writing and Reporting, or Writing for Mass Communication. First, we would like to know the name of the course which you teach. Unless otherwise noted, all the rest of the questions will relate to your course.

1. Name of the course at your university is _____.
2. Total enrollment within your school or department is:
_____ Graduates _____ Undergraduates
(approximate) (approximate)
3. Is course required of all journalism majors?
_____ Yes (GO TO Q. 5) _____ No
↓
4. Course is required for which sequences? (CHECK APPROPRIATE ANSWERS)
_____ News-editorial _____ Magazine _____ Advertising
_____ Radio-TV _____ Photojournalism _____ Public Relations
_____ Other (specify) _____.
5. Is course open to students who are not journalism majors?
_____ Yes _____ No
6. How many academic credits do students get for course? _____
(academic credits)
7. Students customarily take this course as (CHECK ONE):
_____ Freshmen _____ Sophomores _____ Juniors _____ Seniors
8. Is it possible for undergraduate journalism majors to waive course by passing an examination?
_____ Yes _____ No
9. Are students required to pass a typing test to enroll in course?
_____ Yes _____ No (GO TO Q. 11)
↓
10. Does the department arrange for students who fail the typing test to receive remedial typing instruction?
_____ Yes _____ No
11. Which of the following best describes course's structure? (CHECK ONE)
_____ One lecture section for all students plus multiple laboratory sections
(GO TO SECTION 2, Q. 1)
_____ Multiple sections of combined lecture and laboratory (GO TO SECTION 3, Q. 1)
_____ Multiple lecture sections, with no laboratory (GO TO SECTION 3, Q. 1)
_____ Other (specify) _____

(GO TO SECTION 2, Q. 1)

Section 2

1. In the following chart, we are interested in two things: (A) the number of sections and students you have taught this year; (B) the number of sections your school or department has offered and the approximate total for all those sections.

	FALL TERM, 1971		SPRING TERM, 1972	
	No. sections	Enrollment	No. sections	Enrollment
A. You have taught:				
Lecture	_____	_____	_____	_____
Laboratory	_____	_____	_____	_____
B. Department has offered:				
Lecture	_____	_____	_____	_____
Laboratory	_____	_____	_____	_____

2. Your lecture sections meet _____, for _____.
(times a week) (hours per session)
3. Your laboratory sections meet _____, for _____.
(times a week) (hours per session)
4. You would describe your role in this course as: (CHECK ONE)
 _____ Lecturer _____ Both Lecture & Laboratory Instructor
 _____ Laboratory instructor _____ Co-ordinator only
 _____ Other (specify) _____
5. Involved in this course have been the following number of:
 Graduate teaching assistants: _____ (fall, 1971) _____ (spring, 1972)
 Undergraduate teaching assistants: _____ (fall, 1971) _____ (spring, 1972)
6. Teaching assistants are assigned to (CHECK ONE)
 _____ Assist one instructor with out-of-class work
 _____ Teach laboratories
 _____ Other (specify) _____
7. Teaching assistants' duties include (CHECK APPROPRIATE ANSWERS.)
 _____ Clerical work
 _____ Preparing lectures
 _____ Preparing laboratory assignments
 _____ Preliminary evaluation of student papers
 _____ Assuming full responsibility for grading of student papers
 _____ Conferring with instructor on student final grades
 _____ Assuming full responsibility for assigning student final grades
 _____ Other (specify) _____
8. You have found that in connection with this course the performance of teaching assistants usually has been (CHECK ONE)
 _____ Very good _____ Good _____ Weak _____ Very Weak

ILLEGIBLE

**THE FOLLOWING
DOCUMENT (S) IS
ILLEGIBLE DUE
TO THE
PRINTING ON
THE ORIGINAL
BEING CUT OFF**

ILLEGIBLE

Section 3

1. In the following chart, we are interested in two things: (A) the number of sections and students you have taught this year; (B) the number of sections your school or department has offered this year and the approximate total enrollment for those sections.

	FALL TERM, 1972		SPRING TERM, 1972	
	No. sections	Enrollment	No. sections	Enrollment
A. You have taught:				
Lecture	_____	_____	_____	_____
Laboratory	_____	_____	_____	_____
B. Department has offered:				
Lecture	_____	_____	_____	_____
Laboratory	_____	_____	_____	_____

2. Your section(s) meets _____, for _____.
(times a week) (hours per session)
3. You devote an average of _____ hours of each class to lecture and _____ hours to laboratory work.
4. In connection with this course, you have had the following number of:
Graduate teaching assistants: _____ (fall, 1971) _____ (spring, 1972)
Undergraduate teaching assistants: _____ (fall, 1971) _____ (spring, 1972)
5. Teaching assistants' duties include: (CHECK APPROPRIATE ANSWERS)
☐ Clerical work
☐ Preparing lectures
☐ Preparing laboratory assignments
☐ Preliminary evaluation of student papers
☐ Assuming full responsibility for grading student papers
☐ Conferring with instructor on student final grades
☐ Assuming full responsibility for assigning student final grades
☐ Other (specify) _____
6. You have found that in connection with this course the performance of teaching assistants usually has been: (CHECK ONE)
☐ Very strong ☐ Strong ☐ Weak ☐ Very weak

Section 4

1. Below are listed several possible goals for a basic news writing course such as you have taught this year. Please check the word which most closely describes the level of priority you have given each goal in your course.

	PRIORITY			
	High	Medium	Low	None
Teach mechanics of writing (grammar, spelling, punctuation)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Teach straight news story writing style and organization	_____	_____	_____	_____
Develop creativity in writing	_____	_____	_____	_____
Provide a survey of writing techniques for different media	_____	_____	_____	_____

(CONTINUED)

Section 4 cont.

	PRIORITY			
	High	Medium	Low	None
Teach media style rules	_____	_____	_____	_____
Teach writing fast under deadline pressure	_____	_____	_____	_____
Teach reporting skills (interviewing, phrasing questions, taking notes, etc.)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Develop understanding of what news is	_____	_____	_____	_____
Develop knowledge and understanding of current events	_____	_____	_____	_____
Weed out early in their academic careers students who think they want to be journalists but lack ability or interest	_____	_____	_____	_____
Recruit journalism majors from other academic fields	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other (specify) _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

2. You would describe this course as primarily one in: (CHECK ONE)
 _____ Writing _____ Reporting _____ A mixture of writing and reporting

Section 5

1. Below are listed several teaching methods and devices. Please check opposite each item under the word which most closely describes the extent to which you have used the device or method in teaching your course this year.

	EXTENT OF USE			
	Heavy	Moderate	Slight	None
A. For writing assignments:				
A workbook	_____	_____	_____	_____
Instructor-prepared handouts	_____	_____	_____	_____
Dictation of facts by instructor	_____	_____	_____	_____
Mock press conferences with famous or important persons from outside the journalism faculty	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interviews with persons other than instructor	_____	_____	_____	_____
Community sources (live coverage of meetings, speeches, etc. OUTSIDE of class)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Use of results of a poll designed and conducted by class	_____	_____	_____	_____

Section 5 cont.

	EXTENT OF USE			
	Heavy	Moderate	Slight	None
Computer grading of papers	_____	_____	_____	_____
Presentation of student work in campus or community media (Newspaper, radio, TV)	_____	_____	_____	_____
B. For writing assignments or other instructional purposes				
Role-Playing by students	_____	_____	_____	_____
Programmed instruction materials (workbooks, tapes, teaching machines)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Audio-visual devices (film, slide, overhead projector, tape recorder, opaque projector)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Gathering, dictating, receiving information by telephone	_____	_____	_____	_____

Section 6

- How long have you taught at the university level? _____
- Your academic rank is: (CHECK ONE)

_____ Assistant instructor	_____ Associate professor
_____ Instructor	_____ Professor
_____ Assistant professor	_____ Other (specify) _____
- Your highest academic degree is (CHECK ONE)

_____ Bachelor's	_____ Ph.D.
_____ Master's	_____ Other (specify) _____

If degree is in a field other than journalism and mass communication, please identify _____
- What is your total number of years of professional experience in mass media related fields? _____
- Your professional experience has been primarily in connection with (CHECK ONE)

_____ Newspaper news-editorial	_____ Public relations
_____ Magazine news-editorial	_____ Broadcasting
_____ Advertising	_____ Photojournalism
	_____ Other (specify) _____
- How old are you? _____
- Your position as an instructor is: (CHECK ONE)

_____ Part-time	_____ Full-time (GO TO SECTION 7, Q. 1)
-----------------	---
- What is your principal occupation? _____

Section 7

1. During fall semester, 1971, (if applicable) you were grading approximately _____ papers per week for this course. (Including all sections of lecture, laboratory, and lecture-laboratory which you taught.)
2. This took you an average of _____ out-of-class hours per week.
3. During spring semester, 1972, (if applicable) you are grading approximately _____ papers per week for this course, (Including all sections of lecture, laboratory, and lecture-laboratory which you are teaching.)
4. This takes you an average of _____ out-of-class hours per week.
5. Which of the following are a ROUTINE part of your grading-evaluation procedure for news writing assignments by MOST students? (CHECK APPROPRIATE ANSWERS)

_____ Comments written on papers

_____ Oral comments when papers are returned

_____ Personal conferences with students

_____ Other (specify) _____

Section 8

1. Are any changes in this course planned in the immediate future?

_____ Yes

_____ No

2. Please describe any planned changes. _____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP IN THIS SURVEY

APPENDIX B

Cover Letter

April 7, 1972

Dear _____:

As a faculty member in the Journalism Department at Kansas State University, I have taught sections of the basic news writing course for the past year. I understand that you teach a similar course at the _____. I am completing work on a master's degree while teaching, and I felt that research on the basic news writing course for my thesis could be extremely useful. As part of this research, I am sending you the enclosed questionnaire. Would you please fill it out and return it in the enclosed envelope?

I feel--and perhaps you agree--that questions of how and why and by whom basic news writing is taught do not receive sufficient attention from journalism educators. Hopefully, this study will supply some facts upon which discussion of the course can be based.

Questionnaires are being sent to instructors at seven schools and departments of journalism in Kansas and surrounding states. The sample is small, so your help is urgently needed.

A heavy majority of the questions offer multiple-choice answers. On most of the others, you merely have to fill in a blank.

The questionnaire may appear lengthy (and as a colleague I know how little time you have for such things as questionnaires!), but please bear with me. I think all of the questions are relevant if this subject is to receive the type of study it deserves.

Individual names and responses will not be identified in reporting the results.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance with this project.

Yours truly,

David D. Jordan
Instructor

A SURVEY OF BASIC NEWS WRITING COURSES
AT SEVEN MIDWESTERN DEPARTMENTS
OF JOURNALISM

by

DAVID D. JORDAN

B. S., University of Oregon, 1966

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to focus attention on the basic news writing course, the first university course in which future journalists receive detailed writing instruction. The thesis is based on a mail questionnaire survey of 23 instructors who teach basic news writing at Kansas State University, the University of Kansas, the University of Missouri, the University of Nebraska, the University of Colorado, Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma.

Major sections of the thesis deal with administration of the course; structure and staffing; teaching methods used by instructors; academic and professional media backgrounds of instructors; methods and amount of time and effort involved in grading student work; and prospects for change in the course.

The major findings of the study included: (1) The seven courses included in the survey fell into three structural patterns--mass lectures and multiple laboratories; mini-mass lectures and multiple laboratories; and multiple sections of combined lecture and laboratory. (2) Generally, instructors are trying to teach both writing skills and reporting techniques. (3) The teaching methods being used are the same ones used 30 to 40 years ago, and instructional innovation is needed. (4) A composite "typical" instructor is 42 years old, has almost 14 years of professional media experience and holds a master's degree and the academic rank of assistant professor or lower. (5) Course instructors spend the equivalent of approximately one working day a week grading student work.

The study concludes with a set of 17 recommendations on steps to be taken to insure a high quality of instruction in basic news writing courses.