Telling the Truth and Nothing But

National Summit to fight PLAGIARISM & FABRICATION
Committee members

• **Steve Buttry**, director of community engagement and social media for Digital First Media and Journal Register Co., ONA representative
• **Maria Cianci**, a managing editor at Yahoo!
• **William G. Connolly**, retired in 2001 as a senior editor of The New York Times
• **Mike Farrell**, associate professor in the School of Journalism and Telecommunications at the University of Kentucky
• **Pam Fine**, Knight Chair for News, Leadership and Community, a professor of journalism at the University of Kansas, ASNE board member.
• **Steve Fox**, University of Massachusetts at Amherst journalism faculty
• **Henry Fuhrmann**, an assistant managing editor at The Los Angeles Times
• **Bob Heisse**, is executive editor of The State Journal-Register in Springfield, Ill., regional editor for GateHouse Media in Illinois, immediate past president of the Associated Press Media Editors
• **Margaret Holt**, standards editor at The Chicago Tribune
• **Jan Leach**, associate professor in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Kent State University
• **Norman P. Lewis**, assistant professor of journalism at the University of Florida
• **Teresa Schmedding**, deputy managing editor/digital operations of the Daily Herald Media Group in suburban Chicago, president of the American Copy Editors Society
• **Nancy A. Sharkey**, professor of practice in the School of Journalism at the University of Arizona
• **Travis Siebrass**, the assistant news editor/digital at the Daily Herald Media Group in suburban Chicago
• **Craig Silverman**, an adjunct faculty member at the Poynter Institute, an award-winning journalist and the founder/editor of Regret the Error
• **Jim Slusher**, assistant managing editor for opinion, the Daily Herald Media Group in suburban Chicago
• **Dylan Smith**, the editor and publisher of TucsonSentinel.com, chairman of the board of the Local Independent Online News Publishers
• **Patrick Smith**, an online editor at The Omaha World-Herald in Nebraska
• **Nicole Stockdale**, the assistant editorial page editor for The Dallas Morning News and editor of the Sunday opinion section, Points
• **David Swartzlander**, assistant professor of journalism and the Journalism Department chairman at Doane College in Nebraska, president of the College Media Advisors
• **Amy Tardif**, station manager and news director at WGCU FM in Southwest Florida, RTDNA representative
• **Fara Warner**, editorial director, business, technology and entertainment group, at AOL
• **Mark Willis**, journalist with Sirius-XM Satellite Radio, RTDNA representative
• **Stacey Woelfel**, associate professor at the University of Missouri School of Journalism and the news director for KOMU-TV
• **Kent Zelas**, a blog editor with the AOL Huffington Post Media Group
The findings

Bill Connolly, New York Times (retired)
Henry Fuhrmann, Los Angeles Times
Bob Heisse, State Journal-Register, APME
Nancy Sharkey, University of Arizona
Norm Lewis, University of Florida
State of media

Nicole Stockdale, Dallas Morning News
Stephen Buttry, Digital First Media, ONA
Jim Slusher, Daily Herald Media Group
Stacey Woelfel, KOMU-TV/University of Missouri
Journalism leaders

Hugo Balta, NAHJ
Paul Cheung, AAJA
Stephen Buttry, ONA
David Cuillier, SPJ
Mark Horvit, IRE
Dylan Smith, LION
Amy Tardif, RTDNA
Pam Fine, ASNE
The book

Download the book free at

www.rjionline.org/newsbooks
Thank you

To all the journalism organizations and journalists who donated their time and intellect to this project.

To the Reynolds Journalism Institute for publishing the ebook.

To the Ethics & Excellence Journalism Foundation for generously underwriting the cost of this summit.
About the Project

William Connolly, chair
Retired senior editor
New York Times
Plagiarism Research

Norm Lewis, Ph.D.
University of Florida
1. Plagiarism and fabrication are discrete issues.

**Plagiarism**
Nonfiction; copying sans attribution

**Fabrication**
Fiction; making up people, facts
2. Fabrication is inexcusable.

Stephen Glass
3. Plagiarism is a serious mistake but rarely our field’s worst offense.

“We believe plagiarism is among journalism’s most serious professional breaches, if not the single most grave thing.”

Editor of a major metro daily, 2005
4. How often plagiarism actually occurs is yet to be researched.
5. Plagiarism cases that become public are relatively rare.
Plagiarism by full-timers at daily, professional U.S. news organization, 1997 to 2012
Plagiarism by full-timers at daily, professional U.S. news organization, 1997 to 2012
6. Extensive, repeated plagiarism is relatively rare.
7. Most plagiarism occurs because of inadequate methods or unclear rules.

Mitch Albom  Nina Totenberg  Charlie LeDuff
Inadequate method: Note mixing

Steve Erlanger
8. Plagiarism occurs in part because the rules are unclear.
(a) When does info. become public domain?

At Hurricane Katrina shelter:

“And so many of the people in the arena here, you know, were underprivileged anyway, so this -- this is working very well for them.”

Former First Lady
Barbara Bush

Source: NRP Marketplace Sept. 5, 2005
(b) Should we attribute a press release?
(b) Should we attribute a press release?

Source: Author’s national survey of journalists, 2011
(c) What if we’re under pressure to produce?

Respondents were significantly more likely to forgo attribution

Source: Author’s national survey of journalists, 2011
Defining the Problem

Henry Fuhrmann
Assistant managing editor
Los Angeles Times
Defining the Problem

- A philosophy, not a formula
- The question of intent
- The realm of ideas
- Why we care: audiences, creators, industry
Defining the Problem

The solution: Attribution
Defining the Problem

Fabrication: Acts of deception

Stephen Glass

Janet Cooke
Defining the Problem

Broadcasting: A call to action
Defining the Problem

Print: More to be done
Defining the Problem

Online: The wild, wild Web
Building Barriers

Bob Heisse
Executive editor
State Journal-Register, Springfield, Ill.
Building Barriers

Who plagiarizes or fabricates?
- Amateur writer or blogger vs. pro
- Inexperienced or student vs. veteran
- Small newsrooms vs. larger newsrooms
- No clear findings
Building Barriers

Newsroom policies today

- Often clear about why plagiarism is wrong and a serious transgression
- Rarely outline prevention steps or policies on sourcing and attribution
- Nor do they spell out how the news organization will deal with an incident or discipline an offender
Characteristics of a strong policy:

- Be clear that offenses will be dealt with
- Share policy widely and confront incidents with openness
- Conduct random spot-checks of reporters' sources
- Specify discipline: Plagiarism judged by severity; fabrication always dismissal
- Treat everyone equally
Building Barriers

Steps for news organizations:

- Encourage video or audio of interviews
- Require reporters to discuss unnamed sources with at least one editor
- Make digital reporters link to material that will confirm sources’ identities
- Editors should challenge and check digital material
Responding to Lapses

Nancy A. Sharkey
Professor
University of Arizona