Sending Out Digital Natives: Using Digital Tools, Andragogy, and Experiential Learning to Support Local Newsrooms

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Abstract
Digital Natives pairs digitally savvy journalism and mass communications college students with local news organizations throughout Georgia to help meet specific digital goals, using research-based innovation, for the future of community journalism. The program, based on the University of Missouri's Potter Ambassadors, allows students to research, teach, and immerse themselves in a newsroom for a short internship-style experience to aid the vital asset that is local news. As a collaboration between the Georgia Press Association and the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia, the first year of the program brought tangible qualitative benefits in terms of reciprocal awareness, digital tools, and teaching/learning progress to both community newsrooms and student journalists.

https://sjmc.txst.edu/innovative-immersive-learning/milab/milabjournal/bright-digital-natives.html

Keywords: journalism, curriculum, digital, journalism education

Introduction

The death of local news — much like the attribution of a similar quote to Mark Twain — has been greatly exaggerated. Of course, community journalism is in peril as news deserts expand, corporate ownership squeezes, and business models fail (Abernathy, 2021). Yet, the vacuum of resources surrounding local newsrooms has also created innovative responses.

Digital Natives, based on the University of Missouri's Potter Ambassadors, is a collaboration between the Georgia Press Association and the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia. It pairs journalism students with local news organizations in order to help those newsrooms meet specific digital goals during a one-week internship-style experience. The students chosen as Digital Natives research both the community and digital solutions to newsroom needs, then teach and assess the progress of local journalists toward those specific goals, all while they are immersed in a community news organization themselves — perhaps for the first time.

As a case study, the Digital Natives program provides a recursive opportunity to support progressive trends in local news — particularly as hyper-local content that is readily available, engaging and trustworthy on digital platforms has great value to audiences (Jenkins, 2020). The Digital Natives program leverages research and emerging technologies to develop an iterative model that aids community journalism, partnering journalism and mass communications students with local newsrooms to create a steady stream of research-driven transformation for news through a coalition of stakeholders that collaborate for sustainable news content innovation.

Digital Natives spent its first year in existence exploring the benefits to both local newsrooms and students — to see if this model could be a small part of

the "solution" for the growth and future of local journalism. Although there are clear limitations, the feedback from both students and news organizations has been overwhelmingly positive; therefore, this service to newsrooms and students, to learn and grow through meaningful experiential learning, will both continue and could be successfully replicated in other states as one small response to a challenging community news ecosystem.

Literature Review

Local journalism has a range of urgent needs — from financial to philosophical to technological. Although we have Pew Research Center (2019) data on troubling audience indicators within community news, and much anecdotal and business model anxiety, there is not a wealth of precise best practice research with specific action steps to "save" local newsrooms (Schiffrin, 2021; Dorroh, 2020). As the journalism industry leans into audience engagement with emerging technologies, combatting disinformation and building trust, and further collaboration and training with digital products, a coalition of partners — including journalism students teaching current journalists — could infuse innovation into community news organizations, in a way that is not financially prohibitive.

News organization needs

As news deserts continue to expand, Pew Center Research (2019) data has shown that community and civic engagement is also rapidly declining. Authentic and meaningful engagement with readers and viewers in a local context is both necessary and a challenge as seen in the 2021 Reuters Digital News Report (Newman, 2021). However, there is immense depth and opportunity in the innovative use of digital platforms, in conjunction with audience engagement and analytics, to reestablish relationships between communities and their news organizations and move local news into its next iteration. Sometimes, newsrooms can get audiences to engage with content with certain news products, but a way to convert those views, clicks, and shares into a loyal relationship that builds and sustainably monetizes a path for community-focused news has not yet been codified (Solvoll & Larsson, 2020).

Part of the pivot to digital technologies brings inherent complications, as trust in news organizations at all levels is low (Pew Research Center, 2019; Newman, 2021). Rebuilding trust and combatting disinformation is part of the strategy of the Trusting News organization, one among several groups looking to build relationships between journalists and audiences that are increasingly transparent. "There's a broad agreement that rebuilding trust in journalism requires finding new ways to connect

with communities – and that requires developing products and approaches that respond to specific community needs" (Pearson, 2021). So, newsrooms are striving to employ new tools as well as new strategies to address these challenges, which can be a heavy lift for small, local staffs (Newman, 2021; Solvoll & Larsson, 2020).

At the same time, such transformative change needs to be without great expense for news organizations. The business model of community journalism is far from certain, with varied, patchwork solutions often wielded unevenly to help news organizations survive (Glaser, 2020). Much of this distress, as noted by a Knight Foundation and Gallup (2019) study, comes from an audience who does not want to pay for news or does not fully understand the precarious nature of local news organizations from a financial perspective. Part of the study's conclusion was that "policymakers and advocates of local news should continue to develop innovative public and private approaches that generate broad appeal for supporting local news" (Knight Foundation and Gallup, 2019, p. 31).

Journalism program needs

Since the early days of journalism education as a formalized part of higher education, learning-by-doing has been a favored method of education for the industry (Josephi, 2008). The Missouri Method turned teaching hospital turned test kitchen notions of journalism education have popularized the idea of experiential learning for training student journalists (Reed, 2016). Now, even smaller journalism programs across the United States are pivoting toward a skills-based, interdisciplinary way of teaching the craft (Bright, 2020). These forms of hands-on or "work-integrated learning" are proliferating in nature and scope — from pop-up newsrooms to news organizations based out of universities to the more traditional internships with established newsrooms (Valencia-Forrester, 2020). Regardless, students are being asked to play active roles in working news environments, with the supposition that they will continue to learn on the job.

Meanwhile, the relentless nature of change in the journalism industry due to both digital technologies and cultural/economic forces means constant learning and collaboration. Journalism students are often called upon, in these experiential learning situations or their first years in the newsroom, to both collaborate with and teach their colleagues. Anecdotes of students partnering with news organizations, or news organizations partnering with each other, in order to learn and expand their digital knowledge or products are much more visible (Quackenbush, 2020). Within these collaborations, the concept of andragogy, the philosophy of teaching adults

coined by Malcolm Knowles (1980), is much more functional as disparate from pedagogy; it is different in both method and practice from teaching children. "Unlike pedagogy, andragogy is centered on the idea that the lecturer does not possess all the knowledge and that students are encouraged to participate in the classroom by utilising their own experiences" (Mcgrath, 2009, p. 102). Teaching those who already have knowledge of a subject matter — in this case, the tenets of journalism within a newsroom or larger collaboration — is therefore a useful part of what it means to be professionally acculturated within journalism itself in this moment. One study, among many, illustrates the positive effects of journalism internships for students in "contribut[ing] substantially to students' learning process and professional growth" (Tsymbal, et al., 2020). But, there is a gap in research around how experiential learning or internships benefit the news organizations themselves regarding news content innovation.

Other journalism experiential learning programs

Internships and other work-based learning experiences for journalism and mass communications majors are prolific, but most differ from Digital Natives in several ways. The closest program to this case study is the Potter Ambassadors through the University of Missouri, which was the basis for Digital Natives, thanks to a generous collaboration with its director, Jeanne Abbott. Missouri also has, along with the Reynolds Journalism Institute, opportunities for students to do short-term work in local or community newsrooms that has the purpose of benefiting both parties specifically regarding innovation (Nelson-Pallikkathayil, 2021).

There are other programs that focus on community news and student journalist pairings, particularly with a growing awareness of local news challenges (Abernathy, 2021). These opportunities, like the Instagram Local News Fellowship through the Facebook Journalism Project or reporting grants and internships like the collaboration at the Columbia School of Journalism with the Institute of Nonprofit News and the Scripps Howard Foundation, do target needs in community news as much as student learning (Instagram local news, 2021; Internship and reporting grants, 2021).

Most of these programs, however, differ in their length, scope or purpose for placement from Digital Natives. They tend to be longer, with typically more emphasis on the student learning experience than the local news organization's specific goals, and how they are met or assessed. And, they are not always recursive with the same community newsrooms benefitting from the partnership each year.

Method

Based on the Potter Ambassadors program, Digital Natives begins in the fall with applications for news organizations within the state, using press association, university and other organizational partnerships to spread awareness of the program. The application is a Google form that asks about specific digital or other goals, as well as feasibility of time commitment and enthusiasm for news innovation among the newsroom staff. Students also apply to be Digital Natives, and their application asks for interest in community journalism, digital or other skills with evidence, and any teaching or education-related experiences. (See Appendix A for content from both applications.)

The program is based on a model where students receive a stipend for their work, along with an approximately equal amount in compensation for room and board, travel, and food during the internship week in the community where their newsroom is located. For this first year, half of the cost was deferred due to the remote nature of the program because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of format, however, the newsrooms are not responsible for the expenses. Instead, the student/newsroom pairs were fully funded (stipend-only for 2020) by the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication and the Georgia Press Association in equal part.

Once news organizations and students are selected — eight for each — they are paired based on goals and area of expertise or skills. A short, initial training introduces students to the purposes and timeline for the program. As an element of civic learning and preparation after the initial training, students complete a community audit by researching independently and then consulting with editors/publishers of their news organization about digital goals, demographics, economic outlook, government, local competition and an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

There is then a five-hour training session that prepares students for their Digital Natives experience. During the training, students spend much time thinking through and refining learning goals, assessments and strategies — based on their community audit and feedback — in order to understand goal-setting and how to judge achievement of said goals (see Table 1). Here is where the concept of andragogy, which is teaching adult learners, and the socioemotional nature of possible complications in this type of training/internship environment are introduced, in addition to learning about teaching design and structure. Key aspects of andragogy that are emphasized include: learners as involved in the planning and evaluation of their learning, hands-on experience as the foundation for activities; learning goals and assessments that are relevant to vocational

objectives; and learning that is problem-centered rather than content-oriented (Knowles, 1980).

This training sets the foundation for the development of the weeklong learning plan — again fully researched and devised by students themselves, in collaboration with their newsroom leaders. One or two learning outcomes are set for the newsroom, framed as SMART goals to make sure that the end product of their pairing is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (Nordengren, 2019). Students then develop, in backwards design-style, a specific, articulated assessment(s) to measure the achievement of each learning goal, and then learning activities are created to support and work toward that assessment (McCartney & Tkatchov, 2021). Knowles' (1980) concepts of andragogy are implemented throughout the creation of learning outcomes, assessments, and learning activities to address the needs of the adult learner (see Table 2). Although these students work individually with their newsrooms, there are often collaborative moments between students/newsrooms where best practices are shared for the benefit of each news organization.

Once their weeklong learning plan is complete and refined, students go to the newsroom for a five-day week to implement it, keeping a log of their work and communicating and pivoting as necessary with the director throughout the process. Students in this program carry out projects or activities under the mentorship of both the director and the professional in the news organization that enables the student to build skills and professional competencies in their area of study or develop communication, teamwork, work ethic, or other workplace skills. Digital Natives often include hands-on work, such as starting an email newsletter, interacting in Facebook groups, telling stories through web-based interactives or creating an example social media strategy in order to provide exemplars within the weeklong plan.

Students and the director meet and communicate throughout the process of the week, particularly at the halfway point in order to reflect and retool any areas that need adjustment. Then, students complete an end-of-program report that summarizes their progress and reflects upon future opportunities with the news organization. All told, the students spend approximately 60 hours working within the program. At the end, a Google form (Appendix A) goes out to both the students and the newsroom asking for specific feedback on the program, the individuals involved, and constructive criticism on how to improve.

Ideally, relationships with newsrooms will be long-term, allowing new students to return each year to build off of the previous students' work, so each Digital Native's independent work and progress is thoroughly documented and retained to build upon during the next cycle of experiences. All content — from the audits to learning plans/goals to reports and feedback forms — are stored for the next group of Digital Natives to use as a foundation for working with that same newsroom (or a similar newsroom) for the next year.

Results and Discussion
Findings for news organizations

In this first year of the program, the types of digital concepts, skills, and technologies that the students set as learning goals in collaboration with the newsrooms, and then taught and assessed for competency, varied widely, depending on the needs of each news organization.

The newsroom leaders and participants noted that the students they worked with were well-prepared and professional — teaching in a way and at a level that worked for them, which was likely the application of the andragogy and backwards design concepts, focusing on problem-oriented activities and involving the learner throughout the process. One journalist said the student he worked with "was very helpful in describing how to get started on live streaming (which was part of our request). She made it very easy for the technically-challenged to follow." Another noted the student was "well prepared and was adept at explaining the different tools and ideas she presented."

More specifically, the feedback from the news organizations noted that small tools and changes were very beneficial for them and their purposes — for processes in the newsroom, financial concerns, and for building trust and connections between the newsroom and its audience. One editor said the program provided "opportunities to connect further with our readers and potential market growth," and another wrote that their student "presented several resources we can and will use to make our social media presence be more impactful. She also presented a plan and ideas for when we should be posting and the types of posts we are making to draw in a larger audience." Another newsroom leader noted that these specific tools will drive decisions to better serve readers on various platforms: "Graphics for one. Datawrapper and Canva have been excellent resources. So, too, Google Analytics. This renewed look at Analytics will help us."

There was also a theme of gratitude for the direct address of concerns and areas of growth for each specific newsroom by each Digital Native — which was a direct link to the andragogy concepts: "We requested information on how to do specific things technically, and she provided that well," one organization said.

Table 1. Learning Goals and Assessments for News Organizations

Learning Goal(s)	Assessment
By the end of the week, journalists in this newsroom will be able to add to their business model, so they are able to record events, meetings, games, etc., and make it accessible online.	Journalists in this newsroom will create and present a plan for what materials they need for making video coverage of events available online.
By the end of the week, the team will be able to schedule out digital content (social media, e-newsletter, etc.) using Constant Contact. They will learn strategies for keeping timing consistent but content varied. Finally, the team will decide on concrete ways to streamline the website landing page to simplify messaging.	Journalists in this newsroom will create a schedule and template for digital content/e-newsletter and have a clear list of improvements for the website landing page.
By the end of the week, the editor will be able to: integrate data visualization into the newsroom and his weekly workflow, learn how to utilize Google Analytics at a basic level so that the newsroom can publish content at times where reach is maximized, and use a YouTube channel to post multimedia content such as podcasts, audio stories, etc.	The editor will create visually appealing graphics using Datawrapper that reach a higher number of people from previous posts, as judged by a Google Analytics report. The editor will also create a YouTube Channel in order to have a digital space to post multimedia work.
By the end of the week, journalists in this newsroom will be able to schedule Facebook and Instagram posts using a scheduling software (Hootsuite) and craft engaging social posts for Facebook and Instagram.	Journalists will create three social posts for Facebook and three for Instagram that show improved audience engagement from previous posts, as well as fill out a short social media scheduling calendar.
By the end of the week, journalists in this newsroom will be able to regularly post content to their social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) and track the analytics through the online platform Hootsuite.	Journalists will create social media goals for each week and a weeklong plan for how to meet them.
By the end of the week, journalists in this newsroom will be able to use Facebook efficiently to push newspaper's content, as well as learn how to effectively use Datawrapper to make infographics.	Journalists will create a post on Facebook to boost a story's readership and create a relevant infographic for that story that helps that reach.
By the end of the week, journalists will have specific tools to increase web traffic to the advertisers and incorporate video usage into social media.	Journalists will create graphics using Canva and know how to post on Instagram, Instagram stories, and starting Facebook Live videos, as well as how to launch campaigns to gain followers.
By the end of the week, journalists will be able to utilize Facebook analytics and Hootsuite to find the best time of day to post to grow its following and increase page views. They will also be able to use the Linkin.bio tool to improve Instagram traffic to the website and improve Twitter overall.	Journalists will create new Twitter posts, set up a Linkin.bio on Instagram, and use Hootsuite to schedule a set of posts at the time of day that will bring in the most engagement, especially for Facebook.

Table 2. Select Digital Products/Learning Activities Created by Digital Natives

Created a video tutorial on different infographic software that journalists can use to create visually appealing graphics and data visualizations in reporting.
Developed a 10 best practices and tips guide specifically designed for the news organization to use when posting on Facebook and Instagram.
Made an editable weekly social media posting schedule for the newsroom to use as a guide when scheduling out posts via Buffer each week.
Created the graphic and gave the idea to start a "good news" segment, where readers are encouraged to send in positive news to be featured.
Showed how to use Hootsuite to schedule content across all platforms.
Created a screen-recording video tutorial on how to use Facebook for news and how to use Canva to create graphics.
Created a refreshed template for weekly e-newsletter through Constant Contact.
Demonstrated how to livestream on YouTube through a screen-recording tutorial over Zoom.

Findings for students

Students' participation in a local news environment showed them much about the challenges of community journalism. "The most challenging part for me was how busy my editor was. He was the main writer/editor for [redacted]. He was also running another newspaper, covering for someone who has been sick for months." Beyond staffing, which was a concern for many newsrooms, a lack of technological knowledge underscored why many of these publications were not already pushing into the digital sphere. "I helped the [redacted] to realize some problems they needed to fix (they didn't know they had a complete paywall and noticed that their articles didn't create social media cards anymore)." Also, the daily grind of a local newsroom was apparent to many students, who were asked often for a fresh set of ideas — or eyes. "My contact said she often struggles to come up with new ideas …, so I hope these brainstorms will be helpful to her in the future."

One of the more unexpected but repeated findings from the student post-surveys was the knowledge gained about teaching — particularly teaching learners with experience. "Through Digital Natives I was able to learn how to create a lesson plan about what I've learned so far ... It really boosted my confidence in knowing that I'm capable of doing this in the future. I also felt a sense of responsibility and commitment to making sure my newsroom learned something new that would at least help them achieve their digital goal." In fact, one student actually conceptualized themselves as a teacher when the week was over, which is an interesting identity application through the program: "The ability to teach. I learned this week that I'm more of an effective teacher than I thought!"

A theme of independence and professional acculturation also emerged from the student post-surveys. "The strongest aspects were being able to do research on my own to help this newspaper. It allowed me to learn some new practices for digital media and video, while specializing that information to a small newspaper," wrote one student. Others noted that internships often allowed only low-stakes tasks or activities, and Digital Natives essentially put the student in the leadership position, which led to more effort and accountability. "The newsroom looked completely to me on how the week was going to work which was a little overwhelming, especially with the fear of taking too much time away from their work day."

Findings for program

Nearly all of the students expressed that they didn't achieve nearly as much as they would have liked during the course of the weeklong experience. Part of this struggle began with the original goal setting, from either the news organization and/or the student's perspective, with a strong desire to achieve and do much to help. One student in the post-survey noted: "I had to get used to the idea that I couldn't make huge changes and decisions, but rather make small contributions that will lead to huge changes." This points to the need for recursive relationships as key to making continued progress with these newsrooms.

Half of the news organizations, in their post-survey, noted the desire for clear communication on the part of the program regarding how much time would be involved to engage in the learning the Digital Natives planned. One newsroom leader said that "the only problematic issue was on our end … finding time to convey what we needed," and another wrote, "staff and time management. We are a small newsroom with limited resources." As noted earlier, the desire for digital transformation on the part of both the news organization and the student was consistently higher than time would allow, and setting even more narrow expectations and goals may help with this.

However, repeated across both the news organization and student post-surveys was a strong theme of tangible, contextual achievement, which resonates in this student's comment: "I think I successfully developed tools that [redacted] can use whenever it needs a refresher or wants to train others about posting on their Facebook and Instagram. My video/PPTs provided analysis and tips for posting and really evaluated their current social media and how they can make changes to improve their social media and why it's important to do so."

Limitations

For the 2020-2021 program, due to COVID-19, the weeklong experience was done remotely. There were challenges with communication due to this model, and the program plans to be in-person for 2021-2022 because of this limitation. Frankly, it seems that the remote version of a program like this should only be used if it were the only feasible option for news organizations and/or students. There was often a disconnect in understanding and execution of content/assessments when the program was remote. For instance, for a few of the student/newsroom pairs, there was no communication for one or more days during the week in January. This was problematic for both parties; the students felt anxious and a bit abandoned after much preparation, and the newsroom leaders often expressed guilt or were worried about falling behind as they balanced the daily news cycle with the program. Also, only a few months of contact and one week of hands-on collaboration between local newsrooms and student journalists was a limitation, felt more deeply when only

online participation was possible. Whenever a program is temporary, there are gaps left behind in the ability to consistently execute even the best intentions, particularly with the depth of challenges that community news is facing. Both parties noted a lack of immersion compared to what they would have preferred. The hope is that both in-person weeklong visits and repeated visits as the program continues will help to provide accountability and consistency, as well as realism, to the goals and their achievement.

There is also the notion that digital tools cannot be a panacea for all that ills community journalism. Both newsrooms and students can see technologies like social media platforms as cure-alls too easily, and research points to not only the temporal nature of news innovation trends but also how limited they can be in actual effectiveness when it comes to both representation and the financial bottom line. "… knowing how technology affects what journalists can do and how that's received is more important than knowing how to 'do' the technology. And it's equally important to understand what the technologies, and the thinking behind them, does – especially to people and communities in information deserts or who are targets of disinformation" (Pearson, 2021). Often, students expressed being overwhelmed with trying to help community newsrooms when there were many areas of need, particularly within strained financial situations. Some newsroom leaders questioned (rightfully so) how free content on digital products would help them stabilize their bottom line. These larger philosophical discussions about building brand loyalty were challenging for all parties. So, continued emphasis on the research and philosophy behind digital products, and not just the pushing of new buttons, is vital for sustained and meaningful impact through this program. Readings and discussions about this larger context will be added to the training next year — particularly research about how digital innovation can help local news stay alive without sacrificing all that is behind a paywall or drives vital subscription revenue.

Future research

The qualitative data gained for this case study was done using Google forms asking the questions found on the applications and post-program surveys in Appendix A. This type of program, though, is ripe for additional research.

On a foundational level, analytics for any digital product created or enhanced by a Digital Native could be tracked quantitatively throughout the year to see if the strategies or technologies correlate with a trend in audience engagement, audience growth, or another desired metric — particularly a financial one for community news organizations. Did live-streaming high school sports correlate with subscription growth? Of course, these analytics would be paired with surveys of new subscribers to ascertain why they decided to pay for local news.

The impact of the Digital Native-led learning activities and achievement of the specific goals could be gauged quantitatively using Likert scales from the perspective of news organizations. How comfortable do newsroom leaders feel about this new technology or strategy? How likely are they to continue its use in the newsroom? How much has this learning changed their strategy or reach for their audience? Answers to these questions could affect how local newsrooms are supported and trained in their innovation efforts.

Longitudinal quantitative and/or qualitative research could answer questions about the feasibility of digital innovation in these local newsrooms. As Digital Natives return to a community over a period of years, tracking what methods are successful versus those that are abandoned — and why — would be fruitful through in-depth interviews. It could also give a more precise sense of how audiences are interacting with the digital news trends within smaller communities and markets.

It might be interesting to pursue a comparative analysis for students who are involved in both Digital Natives and more traditional internship programs where they report or create content versus the teaching and learning that happens in this program. What students gain (or miss out on) through each type of experience may prove instructive for the types of internship or experiential learning options students could or should pursue depending on their interest and level.

Conclusion

Digital Natives has the distinct purpose of pairing journalism and mass communication students with local news organizations to help those newsrooms meet specific digital goals. The program also provides an experience for students that includes thorough research, short-term immersion in a community news organization, and an introduction to andragogy and curriculum design.

From this pilot year, it was clear that narrow goals, thorough preparation, and on-site experiences should all be favored moving forward. Also, expectations on the part of both the students and the news organizations should be explicit regarding time, investment, and outcomes. The current funding model, as a partnership between the College and the state press association, was renewed for another year based on a successful pilot, but growth is ultimately the goal, particularly with the local news need in the state. We are thrilled that the generous gift of a donor will nearly double our student/news organization pairs to 15 for 2021-2022 for the next few

years. We are also exploring collaborations with experiential learning and the extension program at UGA, which could provide valuable program and relational support to Digital Natives. Ultimately, the vision is to build a coalition of partners from the journalism, academic, and nonprofit sectors to back local journalism innovation and provide opportunities for students to work first-hand in community newsrooms without being a financial burden on the newsrooms themselves.

Although there are still limitations as well as edges to smooth with communication and structure, Digital Natives was successful in reaching its dual goals for the growth and future of local newsrooms and students. The expectation that news organizations would tangibly benefit, while students would gain the knowledge and experience from doing the important work of journalism in towns across the state, was met. As the program continues to send students to the same newsrooms as well as additional sites in the coming years, the hope is to create not only a sense of where students can plug into community journalism for the benefit of audiences but also fortify, even in a small way, local news and its challenging quest to connect with audiences and pivot to digital.

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Appendix A

Application Questions

News organizations — all short-answer format:
- Name, title and contact information of staff member applying for Grady Digital Natives program
- Name and location of news organization
- What are the top three digital priorities you would like the Grady Digital Natives program student to address in your newsroom?
- How would you describe the receptiveness of your staff to digital innovation and change in the newsroom?
- To what extent will your newsroom staff be available to work with their Digital Native during the week in early January 2021?

Students — short-answer and multiple-choice format:
- Name, major (+minors/certificates), and anticipated graduation date
- Hometown
- Why are you interested in becoming part of Grady Digital Natives and helping a Georgia news organization achieve digital goals?
- What types of digital expertise do you think you could bring to a Georgia news organization? (Check any that apply.)
    o general social media campaigns or strategies
    o website design or development
    o email newsletter creation
    o digital interactives (web-based graphics)
    o video storytelling (YouTube, social or interactive)
    o app development
    o website or social media analytics
    o creating digital and social graphics/basic animations
    o mobile journalism
    o SEO and digital headline writing
    o Trusting News and transparency techniques
    o audience engagement
    o using Facebook (Messenger, posts, groups, stories, etc.) for journalism
    o using Twitter (threads, hashtags, trending, Tweetdeck) for journalism
    o using Instagram (posts, stories, IGTV, content) for journalism
    o using YouTube (videos, channel development, playlists, growing subscribers) for journalism
    o using Snapchat/TikTok for journalism
    o 360 or interactive photo storytelling (slideshows, etc.)
    o locator or interactive map creation
    o infographics and data visualizations
    o digital media verification and fact-checking tools and processes
    o audio journalism (podcasts, inline audio, embedding audio in images, etc.)
    o augmented and/or virtual reality journalism
    o combatting misinformation and disinformation
    o building relationships between community/community leaders and news organization
    o Other:
- Provide a link to one piece of digital media you've created. (Social content, web article, email newsletter, app content, analytics report, etc.)

- List the name and email of one professional journalist or faculty member who can reference your digital news knowledge.
- What concerns do you have about being part of this program?
- What do you hope to gain from the experience of spending a week with a Georgia newsroom?

Post-Program Google Form Surveys
After the end-of-program reports, both news organizations and students completed Google forms for feedback on the program.

News organizations were asked:
- How would you rate the overall effectiveness of this program at helping your newsroom achieve your digital goal(s)?
- What aspects of the program were problematic or challenging for your news organization?
- What were the strongest aspects of Digital Natives for your newsroom?
- Would you be interested in doing the weeklong program again in January 2022?
- Evaluate the preparedness of the student who worked with your newsroom.
- Evaluate the interactions the Digital Native student had with the journalists in your newsroom.
- What do you think could have been done better by the Digital Native student during the weeklong program?
- What did the Digital Native student do well during the program?

Students were asked:
- How would you rate the overall effectiveness of this program at helping you and your newsroom achieve the digital goal(s) you planned to accomplish?
- What aspects of the program were problematic or challenging for you?
- What were the strongest aspects of Digital Natives for you?
- What is one thing you would change about the program (or something the program should do differently) next time Digital Natives happens?
- Did you think the $1,000 stipend was appropriate for the amount of work you put into the program?
- Evaluate the receptiveness to digital innovation you found among members of your news organization.
- Evaluate the quality and frequency of communication with your news organization.
- What is one thing you think YOU could have done better to serve your news organization during the weeklong program?
- What do you think you succeeded in accomplishing for and with this newsroom during this program?
- Please upload 1-2 examples of news products that you created or helped your newsroom create during the program. Note: These can be screenshots.