

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Meg Heckman

JVN Hey, hey curious people, I'm Jonathan Van Ness, and welcome back to Getting Curious. Or maybe it's your first time here, so welcome. I don't know if you know this about me, but I grew up in a family that owned, TV stations, radio stations and newspapers. My mom worked at a newspaper, so I spent, like, a lot of my formative years running around like an advertising or a newsroom classifieds. Like, I was just all up. I learned how to rollerblade in the printing press of my family's newsroom when I was like, six. Like I had many a sleepover at the newspaper. I loved it, but in my lifetime, local newspapers have completely vanished. If you would have told me when I was a little kid that my family wouldn't be involved in the newspaper now, I would have said that you were cray cray. And, I think in 2019 or as 2020, 2018 or 2020, my family ultimately did sell the company. And, you know, some of my family still works in it. Some of them don't. It's very clear that the local media landscape has changed. And to talk about that, we're bringing in journalist and professor Meg Heckman, and we're asking what happened to local newspapers and make sure to stick around to the end of the episode. We'll reflect on what we learned and what we're curious about now. Meg Heckman is a journalist, author, and educator focused on building a news ecosystem that is robust, diverse, and equipped to serve all segments of society. She worked for more than a decade as a local news reporter and editor, and is now an associate professor at Northeastern University's School of Journalism and Media Innovation. Meg, what a bio. How are you? And welcome to getting here.

MEG HECKMAN Yes I'm great. Thank you so much for having me and for caring so much about local news and making space for this conversation.

JVN So make we're at a pivotal time in our nation's history for understanding information, understanding the world around us. And we've covered misinformation and disinformation a lot on the podcast. And I think that collectively, we're all incredibly concerned about where we are. And, and so many of us are really procuring our news from social media, whether that's TikTok X, you know, even next door, like citizen app, like all of those types of things. We're really it's turned into like vigilante journalism where, like, I feel like a lot of people aren't journalists. And so what are we facing in the ecosystem of news and journalism in the United States specifically today?

MEG HECKMAN Yeah. So I think you stated a lot of the, factors that are at work right now. A lot has changed in the news media ecosystem in the last 50 years. Some of it's good, some of it's not. And I think that's really important to remember as we have this conversation, we're going to talk a lot about that. Real challenges that the news industry, particularly local news faces and the real challenges that our democracy faces, in part because of that. But I also don't want you or anyone else listening to this to lose hope or feel powerless and like there's nothing that we can do. Because the truth is, there are big problems, but a lot of small solutions, and we can all play a role in turning things around this year and beyond.

JVN I think about like local news as kind of three main segments. There is radio, there's TV, and then there's print like and maybe there's like maybe there's more, but they're all very unique. And when I think about, radio, I think like, you know, you're NPR's when I think about

print, I think like your local newspapers. And when I think about TV, I think about, like, your local TV stations. So what what are those three industries kind of up against right now? And, yeah. What are those three industries up against right now at the local level?

MEG HECKMAN Yeah. So I think that's a pretty good snapshot of quote unquote legacy news. So legacy means pre-digital. So like you said. Newspapers and magazines were a huge part of the information that most Americans consumed. For most of the 20th century, that started to drop off a little bit with the rise of radio and television. And then in the 1990s, we started to see the rise of digital publishing, first on the web. Then we saw the social web and social media apps, smartphones, all of that. And now I'm such a reporter, like, you can take the reporter out of the newsroom, but you cannot take the reporting out of the person. I did some research before I hopped on here, and according to the Pew Research Center, about 90% of U.S. adults get their news now from smartphones and other digital devices. About a third go to TV and then a much smaller number go to radio and print. But that's a little misleading, because if you think about where a lot of high quality digital news is coming from, it often originates in legacy print or broadcast news organizations. So, for instance, the local newspaper that I worked at for about a decade is the Concord, New Hampshire Monitor, locally owned, part of a, small family chain in in New England. It's New Hampshire's capital city paper. I loved it. It is still going today. It's still locally owned. And the people in charge of it are trying to make smart decisions about how they're reaching audiences digitally. So I still subscribe to the print paper. I get it every morning. It's a highlight. Total nostalgia for me. But I read most of that journalism on my phone or through their email newsletters, so I'm reading it digitally, but it's being produced by a local news organization. Same with public radio and also to a certain extent, to TV. So there's a lot of, you know, we use the metaphor of an ecosystem to talk about news and information, and it really fits because things are kind of interacting and ebbing and flowing, and one piece feeds off the other.

JVN What is the history of the news in America? It feels like news is, but where have we evolved from?

MEG HECKMAN Yeah. So, the roots of modern journalism go all the way back to colonial times. You know, there were printing presses and early newspapers and pamphlets produced in the colonies. And, if everyone remembers their American history pamphlets and the right to publish freely without censorship was a big part of of the Revolutionary War, pamphlets were used to rally support for the Revolutionary War and American independence. And then really, the next major evolution in print media happened during the mid 1830s. And this was kind of this cool moment in time when literacy rates started to rise and newspapers got a lot cheaper. So all of a sudden you had kind of broader access to printed information. And that's when newspapers really started to become mass media. Wasn't always the best journalism, or even journalism or even what we would call journalism by modern standards. There was a lot of salaciousness, a lot of newspaper wars, a lot of Partizan media. But it was really, basically during that time, newspapers got cheaper and more common and easier to find and easier to read and easier to access.

JVN And what was the and what was the economy like? What's the economy of like newspaper media, just so that people know? Because I think people need to understand like the money.

MEG HECKMAN Yeah. So I think that's a really good question. And I think it's really easy for people like you and I who are close to local news, to forget that a lot of people don't know how it works. So. The business model. Supporting newspapers and other forms of local media over the years was pretty weird. So advertisers used newspapers and. As TV became a bigger deal, broadcast television to reach potential customers. And that meant that the way that newspapers could charge the most money for ads was to reach the broadest audience possible, and to reach the people who were likely to be making the purchasing decisions in their households. So that led to kind of this odd bundled hodgepodge of information that you got in a daily paper, right? You'd have political news, high school sports, the style section, maybe a recipe, you know, on a Wednesday. And then all of that would be packaged alongside ads for department stores, for, vacation homes, for. Dog business. Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Tied. Like. Whatever. So you would essentially have advertisements funding newspaper operations, and that would help pay reporters salaries. Classified ads were also a huge deal. The, there were, you know, some major metro, some major metropolitan newspapers had entire floors devoted to just handling classified advertising. And the joke was often that those were the floors where the money was printed, because it was such a huge source of revenue. So with the rise of digital communication and the web. Newspapers started to lose those mass audiences because it became easier for. Advertisers to reach potential customers through other channels and the pace of and in the case of classified ads, digital spaces like Craigslist really decimated that. So as a result, you know, digital publishing, for all of its exciting innovations and, potential power really did decimate the business model that supported newspapers and other forms of legacy media for most of the 20th century.

JVN How did social media, like, really drive the nail in the coffin for local print media, and even just print media as a whole?

MEG HECKMAN Yeah. So I think one of the one of the things that in hindsight, newspaper companies probably should have done differently when they switched to digital is charging for their content. There was this philosophy in the early web that information is free, and that's lovely. And I think in many ways has improved some aspects of journalism. And I'll talk about that in a second. But it's also not really honest. I mean, good journalism costs money. Reporters and editors and photographers and videographers and data storytellers, they all need to eat. They all need to pay their mortgage. And so good journalism isn't free. And just because the business model that supported it for so long has been decimated, doesn't mean that all of a sudden, this entire class of vital professionals, people who are doing work that is vital to the survival of democracy and society's ability to solve big problems. That doesn't mean that they can or should work for free, and that all news organizations should be expected to give their stuff away. And I think the early web and the rise of social media really gave audiences that expectation that all news, all information should be free.

JVN Where does that leave our communities that don't have local newspapers now?

MEG HECKMAN Bottom line, the consolidation of local news media and the decimation of the business model that supported it has led to fewer local journalists covering things that matter to communities. And that can be really serious stuff like your local city council or corruption in county government. Or it can be the stuff that makes us feel like we're part of a community, like high school sports or, local business owner who's donated a ton of money to

a soup kitchen because she feels it's the right thing to do. We lose a shared set of facts and a shared sense of belonging when we lose local media, and that's why it's so important. Like I said before, for local media to represent as many segments of society as possible. We also lose the watchdog role of the press. Everyone, every community should have journalists on the lookout for the good, the bad, the confusing, and have a place where it can be reported transparently and regularly. And when we don't have that, when communities lose local news organizations, they become what's called a news desert. And news deserts are usually defined as communities, rural, urban demographic with limited access to credible and comprehensive information. Hey.

JVN With TV, so much local TV has been like, also, like consolidated so that there's really only like a very small handful of companies that own all the local news TV stations. And as Meg mentioned before, I don't know if you guys have ever seen that John Oliver, piece about like, all the local news reporters who, like, are seeing, like, the same stories. It's because really, like, all of these local news stories are giving like a small smattering of stories that they can incorporate into their broadcast. And then they may be given, like 1 or 2 minutes to do something of their actual own, like from in-house. But a lot of places, like, literally don't have anybody to do in-house journalism like that. So, so once that happens on the local news side, sometimes you don't even have NPR or a local radio station that can even or it's like, you know, a few towns over or like, so that's how the idea of like a news desert, that's what we're referring to. But how does that also leave people vulnerable to misinformation?

MEG HECKMAN Yeah. So I mean, humans crave information about what's going on around them. And if you can't find it easily through traditional media or even, digital start up, you're going to go to what's available to you. So Facebook, Twitter, Nextdoor, like you were talking about earlier, Reddit, other digital platforms. And some of those spaces can be great. You know, I'm in a couple of local buy nothing groups and a couple of local community groups on Facebook and Reddit. They're fabulous. People find babysitters, people get rid of unwanted lawn furniture. They, you know, rehome pets, all of that great stuff. So I don't want to completely throw that out. What I'm going to talk about is different from that. It is really easy for even the most well-intentioned news consumer to click their way down a rabbit hole of conspiracy theories, and that can be really damaging to our ability to engage in fact based debates, because it's unrealistic to expect everybody to agree on everything all the time. We don't want that. The point of democracy is that we debate and have open and ongoing discussions about what the role about the role of government in people's lives, what is appropriate, what should that look like? But to do that, we have to have a shared set of facts. And if we have people tumbling down that rabbit hole of conspiracy theories, those types of nuanced, fact based conversations get a lot harder to have.

JVN And trans issues are a really good example of that because everyone has had like a platform now. It's like whether it's on X or whatever, it's like someone can go say a bunch of stuff that's not true, like set like someone can literally say, like, I fully transitioned when I was 12 and I had extreme regret and did it and and like I and and it turns out they're like a 45 year old man who never transitioned, never did anything like they just went and said a bunch of shit on X, and then how many times does that thing get sent to someone else who then takes these like, well, 12 year olds are getting searched without parental consent? Well, no, they're not like they're not. But like, we don't have a shared set of facts to have these

conversations from, because so many people have been empowered to print misinformation and just they're just full on lies, just print full lies.

MEG HECKMAN Mainstream newsrooms have historically been overwhelmingly white, male, straight and cis, and as a result, that has shaped professional norms around what gets covered, what doesn't get covered around the terminology that we use and. I believe that most journalists get up in the morning, go to work, and really trying to book a job and really try and cover the stories that they're following accurately, authentically and with respect. But it is so easy to not know what you don't know. And so if you are working in a newsroom where there aren't any out trans people, where there aren't any out queer people, it might be really easy to not realize that you should be checking something, not double checking terminology or picking up the phone and calling a medical professional to double check if something is or is not happening. In a certain community or what the standard medical treatment is. And that can be that can be really dangerous if you don't know what you don't know. And so I think there are a lot of different ways to guard against myths and disinformation. And one of them is increasing access to high quality local news from more communities and making sure that the news that we deliver is as representative as possible of all segments of society. And that means we need to be making strategic decisions as we rebuild the local news ecosystem, to make sure that the people who own that media, the people who are leading those newsrooms and the people working in those newsrooms are representative of the communities that they cover as much as possible.

JVN So how can we look to rebuild the local news ecosystem and trust in our sources, like, is that happening? Well, anywhere like like is that where is this where the hope comes in?

MEG HECKMAN Yeah. There's hope. Like, I, I am a journalism professor. I teach journalists, I am an evangelist for local news and, and, local storytelling in all of its forms. And for me, what that means is remembering that two things can be true at the same time. We have to acknowledge the very real challenges that are facing journalism and democracy right now, and help our students for help. I help my students have a very clear eyed, honest understanding of that. At the same time, we need to remember that there's a lot of great stuff going on to rebuild the local news ecosystem, and we have the opportunity to do it in a way that's going to make it even better and even more inclusive. We're not there yet, but there's hope and there is no one big solution. There's going to be a lot of different little solutions to get us there. And so that's exhausting. But it also means that a lot of people can be part of the solution. And what the solution looks like differs community to community, region to region. So there are a lot of, local independent online news publishers that have emerged in the last, decade, 15 years. They have a trade group. It's called lion, which is a fun acronym. And they are.

JVN Like local.

MEG HECKMAN Local, independent online news publishers. So they are the lion publishers. And they have digitally native local news publications. Many of them are for profit, not all of them. And they're covering the same kind of stuff that local newspapers have historically covered. And, you know, there's, there's one really great one here again. I'm, I work in Boston, I'm based in New Hampshire, and there's, there's a local one here called the Manchester Inc link that's been going for years. It's wildly successful, and it's so successful

that, the woman who publishes it, she just expanded into a city a little farther to the south. So we're really seeing these hyperlocal news organizations gain traction.

JVN So where do we go for the information? Like what is the future and what do these kids think now? Or these like young journalists.

MEG HECKMAN I think so we often say that we're preparing our students for media jobs that don't exist yet. And to do that, we try to teach them or we try to give them a strong foundation in research, in verification, in listening, in humility. I spend a lot of time talking about humility and the importance of understanding that your lived experiences are not everyone's lived experiences. And. Teaching them to really listen and be able to identify and call out the kind of hypocrisy that you were just talking about. I really think that documenting and calling out hypocrisy is one of the strengths of high quality journalism. And we we try and pump them up a little bit and tell them, you know, they can be part of the solution. Now, it's wrong to expect a bunch of 22 year olds to solve everything. Like, that's just not fair. The everybody needs to be involved in this. But we, we try and give them the tools they need to. Yes, get their first job. And that is important. And at the same time, we give them. The confidence to know that they can apply those skills. Like I said, in jobs that don't yet exist. So that means we spend a lot of time teaching writing and audio production and video production and, basic research skills. You know, how you go out and talk to a complete stranger and get their name spelled right? But we also teach a lot of, data science. We teach a lot of computational skills, and we're adding more of those to our curriculum on a regular basis. We launched, a new master's program that is focused, specifically on this notion of, of media innovation. And we've hired faculty that have skills not just in journalism, but also in computational spaces like artificial intelligence. I'm I've spent a lot of time over the last 3 or 4 months educating myself about generative AI. And what is it going to mean for the practice of journalism? What's it going to mean for democracy? And like a lot of things, it's pretty nuanced. And we don't have all the answers yet. So we also spend time just sitting with our students in the unknown. We don't know what the next 30 years is going to look like, but we do know that responsible journalism is crucial to a free and equitable society. And we might not be printing newspapers anymore in 30 years, but people are still going to need a source of independent, credible information so they can make decisions that are the best for them and the best for their communities. And the reason that I got into journalism many years ago was because I like to write. I think human beings are fascinating and because I really believe that people. When they are given accurate, high quality information, they will make the decision. For the most part, that serves the greater good. And despite everything that's going on, despite everything that's happened, I still believe that. And I think a lot of our students believe that, too. And, it's our job to just give them the skills they need to go out in the world and do their work. And then on a much more practical level, you know, not everybody is going to work for 30 years in journalism, and that's totally fine. You know, I know people that work for a couple of years in a quote unquote traditional journalism job. And then maybe they go work as the head of fundraising in development for a legal nonprofit, or maybe they go work for, a benefit corporation that's doing something they're really passionate about. Or maybe they go become a lawyer or work in politics or work kind of really cool podcast like yours. Media is awesome. Like there's so much you can do with these skills. You're really versatile. So I think if you're a young person listening to this and you want to study journalism, study journalism, it's it's a great way of thinking and seeing the world.

JVN So what's the business model now like if it was that in the 1800s and 1900s, it was like you had local newspapers that were owned by families that maybe owned several newspapers, or maybe they only owned that one. And obviously you had like your whatever the version of like New York Times in like you had like bigger ones and littler ones, but that was like classifieds, ads, etc. then as those have consolidated and people have gotten bought by bigger companies and they've become more absorbed, and then a lot of those newspapers either just shut down or became non-profitable and shut down. So now, like there's just not a lot of local newspapers. There's you have like L.A. times, New York Times, those get a lot of like pick up. Then you have like you're like Huffington Post vice just closed. Like, what's the state of, like, print and digital media? Like, what's the business model now? Like, what's the ecosystem now in print?

MEG HECKMAN So the business model is a lot more varied and a lot less predictable and stable. And that's a real challenge. So what that means is what works for a major national publication like the New York Times or a very successful major metropolitan paper like the Boston Globe, where both of those publications have been able to drive digital subscriptions and serve new audiences. And their existing audiences in interesting, lucrative ways. That's not necessarily going to work. At the scale it would need to work at a tiny hyperlocal publication with an editor, a reporter, and like maybe a part time ad sales person. And. That means that each digital startup really, to a certain extent, needs to find their own way or find those 1 or 2 other publications that are covering communities similar to theirs and do what they're doing. So there's a lot more variability. We're also seeing an increase in foundation funding for nonprofits, nonprofit media, and then also partnerships between legacy for profit news organizations and nonprofits. And that's that's quite interesting. And can really help get more reporters out into the community pretty quickly. But yeah, the business model is a lot less stable, a lot less consistent, and there's much more variability. So what works at a major publication like The New York Times or The Boston Globe, both of which have successfully pivoted largely to digital, is not necessarily going to be something that a small 1 or 2 person digital startup in a rural community is going to be able to replicate.

JVN Newspapers were incredibly lucrative. You could make a lot of money from newspapers. They were kingmakers, like they like the Gilded Age, like they brought like family people into like huge wealth that they would not have otherwise had. And that I think a lot of those families have, like my family, like sold and are not in there anymore. And not that, you know, people like my family were like running news perfectly. But those rules of like that school of journalism, which was like integrity, you know, like whether it was really like, you know, something that was like exposing corruption or if it was like beep editors gave people room to cover important stories even though they were making money. And yes, they were enriching families. And yes, there was like racism, transphobia, like all of those things. But there was good for the community in the sense of that shared set of facts. But now, like, that was like kind of the trade off, like some people got rich, but at least everyone got like a shared set of facts. Now, like, there isn't that much money to be made anyway in print or digital. And so it's like, well, no one gives a fuck about a shared set of facts, because in this capitalistic hellscape, all anyone cares about is making the most money possible when it comes to like a big business sort of thing. So it's like, I think that's what I was trying to get at is like, what's the biggest fundamental change? It's that like, well, you just have to be a lot scrappier if you want to make money in news like in local news. And that really shifted the

paradigm in such a way that, like, I don't know if we're even done seeing the effects or what the future look like for local print or digital journalism.

MEG HECKMAN Yeah. And I think that gets to a central tension that's kind of always been there in in news. Right. We have information as a constitutionally protected civic necessity and information as a commodity.

JVN A commodity.

MEG HECKMAN So there's like this constant tension between those two roles that news specifically plays in our society. And that's pretty longstanding. But it's definitely. More dire now because it's, you know, it's easy or it was easier to fully cover local communities when you had a steady stream of revenue, when your classified ad department was basically printing money on the second floor. You know, it was really easy to hire a lot of reporters, to hire editors, to have extra editions. And like you said, the journalism that was historically produced wasn't always perfect, but. It was plentiful. And we've we've lost that. So we have to acknowledge what's been lost and also keep our eye on what's possible in the future in terms of rebuilding the local news ecosystem. Hopefully in a way that does a better job of serving all segments of society.

JVN When I think about, have you ever heard listened to Ultra by Rachel Maddow? It was about like, no, it was about like this, Senator. It was about this senator who was like basically working, spreading Nazi propaganda within the US Senate and like the late 1930s. Okay. And he was killed in a plane crash, actually, it was like very like conspiracy vibes. Let me Google his name. But this podcast is incredible. But the point of what I was saying is, is that a lot of the stories that were broken in that scandal and also in Watergate, like with Nixon, was local news reporters. It was like local print. And a lot of these investigative journalists, it takes years to put together a story and to break a story. And when you think about like, I think about, like those senators who are like selling their stock, like the day before Covid was like kind of announcing, but like that happens on hyper local levels, too. And when I think about publications who are, because it's become so centralized or like there's just, there's just very few print or digital spaces, it's like we're talking about stuff that's not really that important or like it's a lot of celebrities share. And also we know that like negative headlines get way more clicks if you can really break a negative story and it says a lot of really bad shit, and you can show to advertisers, like we drove 5 million people to our site, but it was based off of like salacious bullshit. It's like, well, that publication doesn't care. It was salacious bullshit. They got their money like they got their future. And so print is really scrappy to figure out what their future is right now. So I think that's why we see, like, I feel like I see a lot of take down print media that is like but it's not Watergate. It's not it's not like local judge was taking kickbacks and putting all these. It's not breaking stories on the child welfare system that every single day is making, like millions of dollars off of our off of our most marginalized people. It just it seems like a lot of these centralized news people, whether it's your Huffington, your rolling Stone, whoever, are just doing like rather lazy work that kind of takes up other people's work. And then when they do do independent work, it's just very salacious and drives their clicks for their advertisers. And it's not really helping any of our community or are good. Like, do you notice a difference in the quality of like, journalism in the last ten, 20, 30 years as far as like, like I think one really good example was like, was, Inventing Anna, like that story like that was in like that and the length like that, like

that took her years to produce and to create and to investigate. And it really shed light on some really intense, corruption in, like, court artistry.

MEG HECKMAN Yeah, I, I do think that. When eyeballs are everything. When growing, the biggest clickiest audience you possibly can. Is the goal of a digital news organization. Yeah, you're going to see a proliferation of really salacious, celebrity side news. And that's really frustrating, particularly right now, because there is so much great investigative work going on at the local level, some of it coming out of those digital startups. The Pulitzer Prizes the last few years have really honored and awarded local journalists doing really powerful work, at the local level. So it's out there, and it's frustrating to not always see it percolate up and kind of get stuck in the local community. Not that not that it's not super important, not that covering a local issue for the local community sake is a bad thing, if that's the point of a lot of local journalism.

JVN But it's like that corruption and that exposure, like it helps other communities. Like, wait, is that happening here? And it's like we don't get to share that information, right?

MEG HECKMAN And on the flip side, if a community has solved a problem that's harder to get out to.

JVN Because no one likes the positive story, it's like negative stories, like if it can, drama, fear and angst that goes further than being like, oh, we fix something. Like, if it's a warm hug, it's like, that might not get as many eyeballs is the thing that's like, wait, we're all in imminent danger, right?

MEG HECKMAN And that's too bad, because stories that are focused on solutions to society's problems, those can really help rebuild audience trust. There's a whole movement. You should probably do a separate episode on it called the Solutions Journalism Movement. Oh, yeah. Yeah. There's Yeah, look them up. The Solutions Journalism Network. I am not an expert on that by any means, but they're amazing. And I did one of their workshops and it restored my hope and humanity. So but this idea that, yeah, journalists do have or some news organizations have a tendency to overly pathologize society.

JVN Thank you so much for your time for coming on, getting curious. Your expertise is so valued. And thank you for teaching that up and coming journalists. Where can people follow you and what's next for you?

MEG HECKMAN Oh, gosh. So, I am deep in a couple of media history projects right now. I'm hoping one of them turns into my next book. But it's too soon to really talk about what that is yet I don't want to jinx it. And then if people want to find me on Trump. Gosh, where am I these days? I guess the best place to find me is Instagram or Threads, and that's at Meg Heckman. I'm also on LinkedIn because that's going to be where all the cool kids are post Twitter. And I am on Twitter, but I really don't want to steer anyone to that dumpster fire right now.

JVN Yeah, it's so sad over there, I know. Okay, so let's get on the LinkedIn. Me that was so good. And I just love that. And that, that gave me, like the last little bit that I need. Thank you so much for coming on. Getting curious. We appreciate.

MEG HECKMAN Yeah. Thank you. This was amazing. This was so great. This is really fun.

JVN What happened to local newspapers? Did we learn that? Well, I think we did learn it. It's basically that, like, local newspapers took like a meteor, like a dinosaur to the media or kit, like, I think we've, like, learned from some other episodes that, like, the dinosaurs didn't just die all at once. Like, it took a minute. And that's kind of what happened to local news. It's like their business model was slowly decimated by the internet, especially like you're Craigslist. And then social media, like, just really update. And the economy of local news got flipped on its head, and it really hasn't ever rebounded itself. And a lot of these, like, digital startups that are in a lot of the digital startups are still trying to find their business model, which is just less stable and has more variance. We also learned that corporate consolidation has been very bad for local news, because really like corporate owners jobs is to create profit, not to serve the community. And that also means that, like when people are making news, they're trying to make news that appeals to the broadest amount of people. So that can kind of cloud the integrity or like the prioritization of like what stories get put where. So that also kind of puts the impetus on marginalized people, or people who care about things that are like not considered priority things, whether it's like environment, trans things, like whatever your thing is, it makes it more important for you to seek out your information, which just makes it harder to share the information. Be aware of the information and like, make other people care. Social media gave us this expectation that all news should be free. But really good journalism isn't free because everyone who. Is making the journalism still has to eat. They still got to support themselves. And then also, the biggest thing that I took away is that when eyeballs are everything, we will see a proliferation of salacious and celebrity news. Some of the most interesting things that I took away from the conversation is just the multiple waves of evolution that print media has faced, and how it ultimately kind of evolved into digital slash print. Newsroom representation matters. That's hugely important. It makes me wonder about a lot of newspapers in newsrooms, news deserts, like the creation of news deserts. Just the tension. This was another really interesting point, was the tension between the fact that, like, information is something that our society needs, but also to be healthy, but also information is something that's been commodified, like you have to pay for it, or you have to be taught how to consume it. Like not everyone just gets it. And that's kind of a gigantic obstacle. Okay. I like a lot more things I'm curious about, the normal than, like, a normal episode. Okay, so one thing that I'm really curious about. Same thing, but what has this history like for TV journalism, like local news reporting? I'm really curious that like for local TV stations, like what that's done. Like, same as what we learned about today, but like with TV stations. Also really curious that like what we're like the top ten most influential like print or local TV stories that like broke the biggest stories in history. Like was it Watergate? Was it that ultra gray guy from World War two? Like what? We're like the ten biggest fucking like, local news journalist breaking stories ever. Like, I want to know that and do like a fun episode on that. Well, it probably will be sad, but fun. Sad. Interesting. Sad. Also. Oh, Lion Publishers, I want to do something on that. That's in the social. Oh, and the Solutions journalism Network. And who's getting rich off of the news now? Like who's getting like. Or is anyone getting rich off the news now. Like what the hell's going on with like oh, oh. The other thing I'm really fucking curious about you guys is this line like the 1980s, like, I feel like I've heard about this law and we maybe even talked about in the podcast before and the 1980s were like, I think Reagan made it like like before this law, like the news was supposed to be like impartial or like unbiased or something, or at least like not report the opinion. But then this like, law came

and like changed all that and like, that's how we got Fox and CNN. So I want us to get a historian so we can learn about like that law. And if that's true or not, they need to figure that out more. Okay. That was fun. We love an episode. Getting curious. This is great. And we'll see you guys next time. You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan DNS. You can learn more about this week's guest and their area of expertise, and the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on. And honey, there's more where that came from. You can follow us on Instagram at curious, which even we are doing the most over there and it is so much fun. You can catch us here every Wednesday, and also make sure to tune in every Monday for a pretty curious still can't get enough? Subscribe to Extra Curious on Apple Podcasts for commercial free listening and our subscription only show Ask Gbn, where we're talking to sex, relationships and so much more. Our theme music is Freak by Quinn. Thank you so much to her for letting us use that. Our engineer is Nathaniel McClure. Getting Curious. It's produced by me, Chris McClure, Julia Melfi, and Allison Weiss, with production support from Julie Carillo and Currie and Chad Hall.