Digital Resources for Covering Traumatic Events

A DART CENTER TIP SHEET FOR COLLEGE MEDIA ADVISORS/EDITORS AND STUDENT JOURNALISTS

When a traumatic event occurs on your campus or in your community, there are several resources on the digital platform that can help you cover the story.

Digital resources

The search function is your friend. When gathering information during a traumatic event, you will have several ways to find a source. Here are a few:

- **Use the advanced search function on Twitter**: this will allow you to find people in general or find people by location, by date and by hashtag.
- **Use the open graph search on Facebook**: this will allow you to search people, interests, locations and photos.
- **Locate people through Foursquare**: this geo-location service allows you to locate people by specific area. This can be helpful if you are trying to identify where people may or may not be congregating when a traumatic event has occurred. You can then go to that location/scene and find out if there is anyone there to interview.

Help people find each other. During traumatic events, people may be separated. You can be a resource to them by helping them locate one other. Google Person Finder provides a mechanism for people to report those who may be missing or need to connect with loved ones or friends.

Mobile apps can be helpful in times of crisis and disaster. Don't wait for a crisis or disaster to hit. Download these apps ahead of time so you are prepared. Here are a few that might be helpful depending on the situation:

- Red Cross
- NOAA
- Disaster Alert
- FEMA
- Consider local emergency agencies and utilities as well.

Social media resources

Curate source lists on Facebook and Twitter ahead of time. You should have local, state and regional sources in your digital toolbox that relate to natural disaster, crisis or traumatic events. Compiling these lists will save you valuable time when a traumatic event occurs; they will allow you to quickly access sources and information when you need it most.

Here are some best practices for covering breaking news events provided by Twitter and Facebook that can be helpful when covering traumatic events:

- Tweeting Breaking News Events

- Facebook Best Practices for Journalists

Twitter Alerts program. Twitter has created a program that informs individuals when a crisis or disaster hits their area and sends informational tweets. The program is free to join. Several

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national and federal agencies have signed up to be part of the Twitter Alerts program. You may want to consider whether it makes sense for your college publication to enroll.

Organize the conversation. Using tools such as Tweetdeck or Tweetbot will help you arrange and keep track of multiple hashtags or Twitter handles. They can help you organize conversations so that you can focus on what is being discussed and how you want to proceed – whether to corroborate information, identify potential sources or provide information to the public.

Identify major hashtags. When a traumatic event occurs, people will take to social media to inform friends, colleagues and loved ones of what has happened. In these moments, hashtags are formed with usually two or three surfacing within the first half-hour. It's important to keep track of these conversations, and if you post, use the same hashtags to join the larger conversation.

Be safe and tell others the same. During particular crises or disasters, Facebook has a "be safe" option that allows individuals to mark their status as safe. If you are at the scene, this can be a helpful tool to use to inform your editor/advisor that you are safe. This can also be helpful for others if they are seeking ways to inform their friends, colleagues and loved ones that they are not in danger.

Use tools like Pipl or Spokeo to verify identities of those you find online through social media.

Corroborate image information. Images can be made up, recreated from the past or manipulated, and then posted on social media during a traumatic event. Corroborate images with other sources to make sure they are legitimate. You can Google the image or use the following websites that help identify manipulations or fakes: FotoForensics or Regex

Mental health and wellness digital resources

Don't forget mental health and wellness sources. Identify sources for mental health and wellness ahead of time that are local, state and regional in scope. When a traumatic event occurs, people may be looking for help and/or exhibiting forms of traumatic stress or PTSD. Providing digital resources such as those below can be helpful for the public. They may be seeking hotlines to call for help, agencies that can provide preventative or intervention services depending on the situation.

National Center for PTSD: PTSD Basics

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence Guidelines on PTSD

International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies

National Center for PTSD: Child Sexual Abuse

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Suicide Prevention Resource Center

Suicide Prevention by CDC

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

National Domestic Violence Hotline

National Sexual Violence Resource Center

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