

# Curation challenges and opportunities

## Storify as a participatory reporting tool in a journalism school newsroom

**Abstract:** News curation tool Storify is a publication platform for journalism and news now used by diverse mainstream media, (including ABC News, The Times, Al Jazeera and The Washington Post), news wire services (Associated Press and Agence France-Presse), and news generators (the White House, United Nations and World Bank, to name a few) to curate and publish 'social stories' online. Within the journalism classroom, Storify is recognised as having value in enabling students to produce news stories based on social content while also challenging them to assess content, consider agendas and develop news consumption and storytelling skills (Mihailidis & Cohen, 2013; Thorsen, 2013; Sacco & Bossio, 2014). Its use raises issues that go to the heart of journalism ethics, including questions over repurposing of material, relationships to sources, use of non-elite or vulnerable voices, source selection and the need to check veracity. This requires educators to revisit the need for skill development in selection and verification of content. This article examines five lessons learned in the use of Storify in a journalism class newsroom as a tool to curate breaking news about the search for Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 and how these lessons have altered teaching practice.

**Keywords:** Australia, breaking news, ethics, journalism ethics, Malaysia, news agenda, news curation, social media, Storify, storytelling

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### Introduction

WHEN comedian and actor Robin Williams took his own life on 11 August 2014, the news was first revealed by a sheriff's press release and tweeted within minutes by Henry K. Lee, a reporter with the San Francisco Chronicle (Carr, 2014). That statement was in turn retweeted more than 1600 times and prompted a further 7.3 million tweets referencing his death

within 24 hours (Newscomb, 2014). Williams' death was just one of dozens of major news stories broken or developed on social media in 2014. Twitter's new Reverb tool, which counts tweets per minute on topics, found 7.8 million tweets referencing #Ferguson, over nine days after the shooting of teenager Michael Brown in August; 476,000 tweets on the Glasgow Commonwealth Games on a single day in August, and 10.9 million tweets about footballer #Messi during the World Cup (<https://twitter.com/twitterreverb>). The conversation around news issues that takes place on Twitter, as well as on Facebook and other platforms such as Tumblr, Instagram and YouTube, has transformed the way news is reported by different media, whether it is the use of Facebook images in newspapers to Twitter feeds that run along the bottom of news programmes. It has also led to the emergence of social media curation tools that seek to collate, aggregate, collect or curate social conversations.

This article considers the use of one of these tools, Storify (Storify.com) to curate breaking news. Issues inherent in its journalistic use are considered through the experience of using Storify within a journalism class-based newsroom in covering the search for Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, including its strengths and weaknesses as a teaching and reporting tool, and how it engages students in content selection and verification.

### **Understanding Storify**

Storify is a social media curation tool that allows users to find, select, collate and contextualise social media posts, either by searching for posts by particular users, on particular themes, or from specific locations. It can be used as a 'live blog' tool, with curators selecting and republishing multiple perspectives on a breaking event such as an election, natural disaster or awards ceremony. It can be a way of collecting social media reactions to a particular occurrence, such as comments and YouTube videos posted after the death of actor Robin Williams. It can aid analysis of hashtag-driven topics on social media, such as the satirical response on Twitter to the reintroduction of knighthoods by Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott or track the spread of the hashtag #IllRideWithYou on different platforms after the Sydney siege in December 2014. Storify describes the benefits of its platform as enabling 'everyone (to be) a reporter' as well as being useful for extending the reach of events, preserving social discussions and capturing activity around memes (Storify, nd).

The use of Storify in the journalism classroom, while relatively new, has been the focus of limited study. Cochrane, Mulrennan, Sissons, Pamatatau and Barnes (2013) tested the use of Storify as a substitute for traditional essay-based journalism assessment, finding students engaged with material at a deeper level and that the process encouraged critical thinking and creativity. Wall (2014) used Storify as part of a pop-up newsroom operation designed to give students

access to a journalism-style mobile reporting option, but found students tended to discount the value of the tool, seeing the retweeting or aggregating material as something less than professional journalism (Wall, 2014).

A number of academics have proposed greater use of Storify as a tool within journalism schools. Robinson (2013) found Storify to be useful, and proposed that it be included as an essential part of the curriculum for journalism educators in the digital age, as part of what she sees as a shift between news as a finite, discrete product to news as a process (Robinson, 2013). Mihailidis and Cohen (2013) propose that journalism students—when forced to assess content, perspective and agendas—develop critical evaluation and analytical skills, while participating in local, national and global conversations. They argue that teaching students only about bias leads to cynicism, while placing student into learning environments in which they must engage in sifting through an abundance of sources builds appreciation of the diversity of online voices (Mihailidis & Cohen, 2013). At the same time, Bakker notes that a division remains between those journalism schools that have embraced the skills needed to use tools such as Storify, and those that still frown on those practices loosely collected under the term content curation. When discussing content curation with one journalism school, Bakker reports that a staff member believed the teaching of ‘curation to journalists would be comparable to teaching pickpocketing at a police academy’ (Bakker, 2014, p. 604).

Part of the disquiet about the practice of content curation, and its more automated cousin, content aggregation, derives from issues that go to the heart of traditional journalism ethics and modern time-limited practices. They include questions over repurposing of material, relationships to sources, ethics around the use of ‘ordinary voices’, questions over source selection and the need to check veracity—all while publishing at speed. These issues are discussed briefly here to provide additional context for the ethical practice and teaching of Storify.

### **Reuse and repurposing of material**

Storify as a tool allows the curator to seek out material that has been used elsewhere on a wide range of social media platforms, including public Facebook pages, Twitter (with searches available for users, individual words, hashtags and geographic area), Instagram, Google Plus, YouTube, Flickr, Giphy.com (which features animated gifs), and Tumblr, among a growing list of source sites. There is also the ability to republish material directly from non-social media sites using a URL function. Users choose what to search for and then select and compile their Storify from these sources, with the option of including contextual paragraphs or commentary.

Whereas clear copyright practices are in place for the reuse of material in printed or traditional broadcast media, curation tools lack both the case law and

clear legal framework that might dictate what can and cannot be used and how material should be linked to the original creator. Storify's terms of service require the curator to have checked they have the rights to reuse material, link to other pages, or repost another party's words or images, but the interface does not require the curator to verify at the point of publication that this has taken place (Brewer, 2013), and it would be cumbersome if it were to do so. There is nothing that physically prevents a curator from reusing someone else's material at length, therefore and—as a Storify is embeddable—it is possible for that content to be replicated on another website. Martin (2015), while looking predominantly at aggregation rather than curation, notes it can often be depicted as 'bad practice' given that it both destabilises the status quo of traditional media while risking the exploitation of others' creative rights (Martin, 2015).

### **Relationship to sources**

The Australian Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance code of ethics is clear about the relationship a journalist should have with his or her sources, requiring journalists to 'aim to attribute information to its source. Where a source seeks anonymity, do not agree without first considering the source's motives and any alternative attributable source. Where confidences are accepted, respect them in all circumstances' (Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance, nd). This relationship is well-established in the practices of traditional media, in which a source might be someone the journalist would speak to or hear (the shop owner you might interview after a fire, the councillor quoted at a public forum, the protester chanting at a rally and the occasional man on the street for colour). Where source material was taken from documents, it would be from a known or trusted company, source, authority or at least, of identifiable origin (Pavlik, 2000). Storify sources are less clearly defined, however. A Flickr user with a newsworthy photograph might be named and identified as the rights owner of the work or might go under a pseudonym or 'handle' with no identifiable contact details. A YouTube video might be put up by someone who has no right to publish the material in the first place, and who certainly cannot pass those rights to someone else. An anonymous Twitter user might make an emotional, powerful or amusing comment that appears to add value in the same way the man in the street's take would have in a traditional print story—yet there may be no easy way to assess their motivation. The murky nature of who owns the rights to what material, a lack of clarity about the weight that should be given to someone's statements, and the incredible abundance of freely expressed opinion on social media, can all prove to be highly tempting for curators to publish and be damned—and in doing so feel less obligated to honour relationships with sources than they might in a more traditional media publication role (Martin, 2015; Heinrich, 2011).

There are attempts to redefine journalistic ethical practice to address these issues. Where duty ethics and virtue ethics have strong legacies in ordinary source relations, Martin argues the ethical relationships shift when interacting with ‘crowdsources’, online communities and user groups: ‘Here, sharing declaration, disclosure and debate are the new foundation of participation and audience loyalty’ (Martin, 2015, p. 91). The procedures Martin recommends journalists take to care for their networked community sources include linking to original documents, allowing users to track the development of arguments and events, and engaging the community in the ‘accuracy, depth and mutual benefit of their work’ (Martin, 2015, p. 92). Storify, while not addressing all these points, does provide for links to original material, allows for events and conversations to evolve with a degree of transparency, and has functions that enable readers and sources to comment on and respond to the curated work.

### **Ethical use of ordinary voices**

While it is unarguable that the social media and web pages curated in a Storify are from ‘public’ sources, it is equally true that many authors, tweeters or posters may assume their words would have very small or near-private audiences. As an example, a person (such as @sender) who responds directly to another on Twitter by tweeting a person’s name (such as @recipient) at the beginning of a tweet limits the publicity of that tweet from public view. In the example “@recipient I hated the movie Jaws” that tweet would appear on @sender’s profile page, as well as under @recipient’s ‘Mentions and Notifications’ tab. It would appear only on the ‘Home’ timelines of those people who follow both @sender and @recipient. The tweet would not be obviously in the wider public arena, however (Twitter, nd).

Yet a Storify curator searching for the term ‘Jaws’ would see this tweet as part of the results that arose and could add it to their curation. This raises questions about whether the material should be classified as really public or part of a relatively private conversation. This question matters little when the commentary is on the merits of Jaws as a movie, however it is possible to see that a reply about whether someone has voted and how, or the casual disclosure of illicit activity, could have far greater implications in many places. In addition, the standard journalistic practice of right of reply is turned on its head when you take the quasi-public comments of an individual and reuse them without seeking permission: does right of reply exist when it is your own words?

A safeguard built in to Storify allows the curator to notify all people included in the Storify that they have been quoted (with the words ‘You have been quoted in my Storify’ and a shortened URL); however this remains optional for curators. There is also no compulsion for Storify users to remove or reframe comments that the original source would like deleted. This may be an important issue in the quoting of non-elite, unqualified, unauthorised or vulnerable voices.

## Source selection

The rise of content curation has prompted a revival of the long-standing metaphor within journalism scholarship of ‘Mr Gates,’ the gatekeeping subeditor who selected topics in Manning White’s 1950 study of content choice. Bakker (2014) argues this metaphor is of greater relevance today, with journalists doing more gatekeeping along with greater searching for, curating, moderating and editing of content, rather than their traditional role of producing original works (Bakker, 2014). Axel Bruns (2003) has likewise revisited the practice of gatekeeping, but describes a shift to ‘gatematching,’ which includes news users organising the flood of available stories (Bruns, 2003). While Bruns’ description was written before the advent of Storify, Thorsen (2013) applies the idea of gatematching to real-time curation of news in live blogs, both a precursor and relative of Storify (Thorsen, 2013). Through live blogging, Thorsen argues, journalists are operationalising their curator role, harnessing multiple sources of information and engaging with audiences in the process.

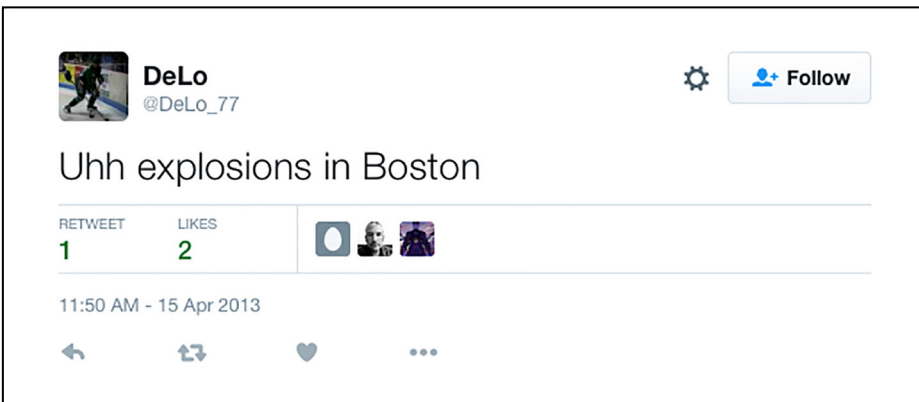
Thurman and Walters (2012) also looked at live blogs and found that while journalists were able to work with ‘usual suspects’ who might frequently comment on a specific topic or report from a geographic area, curation provided the opportunity to extend coverage to voices not normally heard in news. These include ‘insignificant’ actors who might have funny, clever or pertinent things to add, and anonymous commentators whose perspective may develop or add to discussion (Thurman & Walters, 2012). This practice has been identified in Storify coverage in the Arab Spring (Stanoevska-Slabeva, Sacco, & Giardina, 2012; Sacco & Bossio, 2014) and London Riots (Guerrini, 2013), with ordinary citizens playing a significant role both creating and acting as sources in Storify coverage of fast-moving geopolitical events. Still, elite voices have been found to dominate social media coverage of events, particularly when reporters rely on ‘trusted’ sources, often authorities or other media members, over the reports from unknown ordinary actors. This was the case in reporter Andy Carvin’s coverage of the Arab Spring on Twitter. Carvin’s work prompted study given the sheer breadth of his coverage, estimated at more than 60,000 tweets over 10 months. While he relied strongly on institutional elites in his coverage of uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, it was found that he built his use of alternative voices over time and approximately half his tweets on Egypt’s revolution came from non-elite voices. (Hermida, Lewis, & Zamith, 2014).

While there is the potential, therefore, for Storify to allow a much greater diversity of sources beyond those in traditionally powerful roles (including government authorities, other media, academics or community leaders), these groups remain powerful online and it can be a challenge to move beyond traditional frames for stories (Mihailidis & Cohen, 2013; Sacco & Zhao, 2014; Sacco & Bossio, 2014).

## Verification of sources

The social media world has no uniform rules for identification of users and sources. Facebook has recently changed its ‘real name’ policy to allow for real-life names that are not legal names (Cox, 2014) but remains vigilant against fake accounts. Twitter enables users to have aliases and even register parody accounts in other people’s names, as do Instagram, Youtube and many others, while still requiring users to have a user profile. A third emerging group of social media sites are known as ‘anonymous’ social platforms, in which no user profile is required (Perez, 2014).

This lack of uniformity makes it difficult for a Storify curator to assess whether material posted on social media sites is by someone who might be in a position to know whether a statement made is true—whether, for example, a report of an explosion in Boston just as the 2013 Marathon was concluding really occurred.



**Figure 1: Believed to be the first tweet of the Boston Marathon explosions in 2013 (Rogers, 2013)**

In the absence of simple identification processes, Thurman and Walters (2012) found some journalists admitted not taking verification steps when quoting from social media, as the information was ‘too small’ to worry about going through a long exercise. At the same time, journalists believed curation tools meant they were able to provide depth of coverage and greater transparency (Thurman & Walters, 2012).

Despite the risk that journalists will incorporate material without checking the source of information or its accuracy, Storify has in its design some elements that allow the reader to identify clearly where items of information originate, and thus apply some of their own critical analysis as to its veracity. As Sacco and Zhao (2014) note, the format of Storify achieves three of the five pillars of objectivity outlined by Delforce (1985). The pillar ‘tell everything, hide nothing’ is served through the link-back function of Storify content to its original

source. The pillar ‘be neutral’ is enabled through Storify’s ability to collate a broad range of voices. And the pillar ‘journalism as an ethic’ is made easier through the transparent visual delineation on a published Storify between what is information gleaned from a source and what is authorial intervention or context (Sacco & Zhao, 2014).

### **Using Storify in a journalism classroom**

To illustrate how some of the issues identified in Storify and similar curation practices can be explored in teaching journalism, a case study is presented of how the tool is used by a daily journalism website operated by an Australian university, with particular focus on the coverage of the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370.

ECU Daily is the online student journalism and broadcasting publication for Edith Cowan University—a convergence journalism site that combines the work of undergraduate journalists and broadcasters with that of postgraduate broadcasting students. While most articles are text-based, students are required to demonstrate alternative storytelling techniques such as the use of infographics, slideshows, audio packages, traditional video and mobile video as part of their publication portfolio. Working on the premise of learning through doing, two classes of students write, edit and produce 20-30 stories a week, including promoting stories through social media platforms, predominantly Facebook and Twitter.

Storify has been a part of the newsroom since its inception, with students using the tool to collate and curate social media stories, usually on breaking news events. The tool has been incorporated as it provides students with an authentic and accessible participatory journalism experience, allowing them to create social stories just as they would within a mainstream newsroom—or even ahead of publications that lack the knowledge and tools to capture social media commentary. Since July 2013, students in the newsroom have Storified events including the September 2013 Australian Federal election, reactions to the death of Mick Jagger’s girlfriend on the eve of the Rolling Stones Perth concert (later cancelled), football finals, and social media reaction to comments by Australian Treasurer Joe Hockey that ‘poor people don’t drive cars’. Students are required to produce at least one Storify over the semester.

In March 2014, Malaysian Airlines flight MH370 disappeared. En route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, the plane carrying 239 passengers and crew last made contact with Subang Air Traffic Control in the early hours of March 8 (Malaysian Airlines, 2014). Searches in the subsequent days focused on the area around its last known position, with the search field gradually expanding to the point where on March 16, Malaysian Airlines described searching land and sea surrounding 11 countries in the region (Malaysian Airlines, 2014). On March 17, in response



to new information, it was announced that Australia would lead the search in an alternative area in the Indian Ocean, and on March 20, two objects were spotted, described by Prime Minister Tony Abbott as ‘new and credible information’ that could be connected to the MH370 (Hurst, Farrell, & Branigan, 2014).

ECU Daily’s newsroom reporters posted their first MH370 Storify on March 20 announcing the new search area. The Storify, entitled ‘Has Australia Found MH370’, drew on multiple sources to report the Prime Minister’s comments, the results of an Australian Maritime Safety Authority press conference on the spotted objects, images released from that conference, a list of the countries and planes involved in the search, a map of the search area and tweets from media outlets and non-elite sources (<https://storify.com/ECUNews/has-australia-found-mh370>). Media organisations and reporters quoted in the Storify included America’s ABC News, New Zealand’s News Talk ZB, CNN, Britain’s *The Telegraph*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Agence France-Presse, *Wall Street Journal Asia*, David Wright (a reporter for America’s ABC News who was on board one of the search planes) and Australian aviation reporter Ben Sandilands. In addition, non-elite social media users were quoted, predominantly making comments about the impact on families and their hopes for a swift resolution, as well as one user who remarked that:



**Figure 2: A social media comment included in ECU Daily’s initial Storify on MH370.**

The first Storify was compiled over approximately eight hours, and received more than 10,000 views within the first two days. The associated Twitter feed of images and links to the Storify was viewed more than 100,000 times in the first week. Over the next week, an additional three Storifys were published (available at <https://storify.com/ECUNews>), some featuring more than 100 individual tweets, images, videos and other social sources—tracking events as they occurred. Students were rostered to take over coverage in four or five-hour stints. While editorial approval was needed before they published a new

Storify, students were empowered to update each live Storify throughout the day, giving them responsibility for sourcing and curating the material. Coverage ceased after a week when it became apparent that the search was not likely to yield immediate results. Poor weather had impacted on the ability of planes to reach the search area, which reduced the amount of new material that could be reported. While there was an abundance of social media commentary by users, this was also of declining usefulness as there were few new facts to add to the story and the vacuum was filled with growing speculation. From an editorial perspective, there were declining numbers of viewers to each new Storify, so the decision was made to replace Storify reporting with traditional coverage that would resume only when there was something to report.

The reasons for using Storify as the primary reporting tool for covering MH370 were simple and are described here, as they may be relevant to other newsroom situations.

1. News was breaking quickly. Particularly on March 20, the day two potential objects were identified in the Indian Ocean, there were numerous updates that needed to be made to the story, including the Prime Minister's press conference, an Australian Maritime Safety Authority press conference, the dispatch of planes and their return. Storify allowed all these changes to be recorded in one frequently updated story.
2. There was an international audience as well as international sources. This meant that there was 24-hour social media reaction that could refresh the story as people around the world woke and responded to news. A geographically dispersed audience also reduced the barrier to readership that might exist in a purely Western Australian or Australian story; to a local reader ECU Daily might be just a student journalism publication but to an international reader it was another legitimate source of news and information.
3. Our reporters were not easily able to access key locations in the story, but this was also true of most other news organisations. Storify can be particularly useful in cases where reporters need to rely heavily on social media sources—as has been seen in uprisings in the Middle East and subsequent Twitter reporting. In this case, student reporters could not access the search zone but neither could anyone other than a few reporters given access to search ships and planes. Major press conferences were streamed, so students were not disadvantaged by barriers to reporting live, such as having to travel from university to the conference location.
4. There was an opportunity to add value beyond that given in the 24-hour news. Despite the large number of media outlets covering the story, there was significant sameness in the images, angles and information provided.

By seeking out small details that might not be otherwise covered by major broadcast or print reporters, students were able to add value to the total coverage.

### **Lessons learned**

Five key lessons were learned through our experience in reporting MH370 using Storify, as a result of the intense environment and the exposure of inexperienced reporters to a breaking story. Chief among these was the importance of selecting quality content from a variety of sources. Students were encouraged to seek information widely but as the amount of new information declined, so too did the quality of coverage and more commentary rather than factual information featured in the stories. As an example, on the first two days of the search, there were many tweets incorporated from journalists reporting in Malaysia and Beijing on the families there, but this declined as some of those families travelled to Australia and media focus shifted to Perth. Similarly, social media posts by local reporters became less useful over time as the search was cancelled on several days and outlets were left to report the same, limited information. At times, media outlet social media posts were reduced to reporters taking photographs of reporters or interviewing colleagues. This lack of 'new news' required students to look further afield for commentary and sources that were relevant and useful to readers.

A second lesson was the importance of sensitivity in the use and reuse of social media commentary, particularly given that many families were angry and grieving. A large number of Chinese families of people on flight MH370 travelled to Perth in the days after the search shifted to the Indian Ocean, and this opened another avenue for coverage, though a difficult one. Despite reminding students to take care when dealing with people who might be grieving, not all students understood what might be too offensive or unprofessional to include in their Storify coverage. In a couple of instances, students were advised against using tweets that suggested the plane had been found, that the plane had been hijacked, or that the plane had been abducted by aliens; none of these could be verified and the editorial team was wary of either raising hopes or adding to the emotional pain of families through flippant coverage.

Another incident highlights the importance of addressing with students the tone and nature of their Storify coverage, which can adopt some of the informality of social media. At one stage, an unfortunate hashtag that featured in a tweet added by a student to an MH370 Storify was inadvertently included in the social media promotion of ECU Daily's report. Storify has a function that incorporates hashtags into its notification message, which is sent to those sources who have been quoted. Normally, notifications are published on Twitter naming sources in the Storify, with the words 'You have been quoted in my Storify'. These notifications can include



**Dan Murphy**   
@dan\_murphy



Follow

A media pack of epic proportions. Standing by for Acting PM @warrentrussmp at RAAF Base Pearce. #MH370 @SkyNewsAust



RETWEETS

2

LIKES

3



8:40 PM - 21 Mar 2014

**Figure 3: Sky News Australia tweets a photograph of the media pack in Perth.**

key hashtags used in the stream, such as #MH370. In this case, the student curating the stream was not aware that they had included a tweet in the Storify with the hashtag #WhereIsTheFuckingPlane, which appeared for half an hour in ECU Daily's Twitter feed before being noticed and deleted. The immediate lesson here was for students to be more wary of allowing the tool to automatically send out notifications without checking first for inappropriate comments.

The need for verification turned out to be less of an issue than might have been the case in other breaking news stories, given that the main action was taking place offshore in the search zone and was reported back to the media

through controlled press conferences and issued statements. This reduced the risk of repeating false news from a self-identified witness but still required students to consider the authenticity of second-hand reports. Rather than quote a social media user who was quoting an authority, therefore, students were encouraged to find the original source and report that instead. In a story where breaking news is occurring and there are multiple potential witnesses, a new protocol has been developed for ECU Daily based on the work of the Center for News Literacy at Stony Brook University. Called 'I'M VAIN', the process uses the mnemonic to remind students that:

1. Independent sources are better than self-interested sources.
2. Multiple sources are better than a single source.
3. Sources who verify are better than sources who assert.
4. Authoritative/informed sources are better than uninformed sources.
5. Named sources are better than unnamed sources. (Klurfield & Schneider, 2014)

Maximising speed while retaining the quality of coverage was another challenge that emerged in the use of Storify and it became apparent that it was best to have students familiar with the tool driving the coverage, as they were able to do this fast enough to be competitive. Students new to Storify, who might have had ample time learning the ropes when covering a slower story such as the Oscar Awards red carpet, could not be afforded additional time or support when there were hundreds of competing organisations also covering the same material. Students who were quick Storifyers could cover a press conference or publish material online at the same pace as any major news organisation—some were able to publish mere seconds after statements were made at press conferences. The standard practice was for student reporters to tweet the conference as it went, capturing as much as possible on Twitter, then curate these tweets at a later point into the Storify of the day. The lesson here was that it would have been preferable to have a wider pool of competent Storify users in advance of the story breaking, to reduce the time needed to coach students in its use. The same is true for news organisations, however, and some mainstream journalists were simply not able to report as quickly on social media as a fast student curator. ECU Daily students are now introduced to Storify at the earliest opportunity to avoid this problem recurring.

Lastly, the coverage illustrated that student reporters needed to take all opportunities to add value to coverage. Our publication lacked the complex relationships and requirements facing corporate reporters and this emerged as a positive opportunity. A reporter from Channel 7, for example, may be reluctant out of a sense of brand loyalty to quote the comments of a reporter from Channel 9, just as newspapers are disinclined to reference or refer to competing publications. Our students faced none of these conflicts and were instead able to source material and

refer to it whenever it was deemed relevant, whether that was an Indian journalist on Twitter whose primary audience was on the subcontinent or an American reporter embedded on the search planes. Again, while television journalists concentrate reporting on those things that are visually interesting, students took the opportunity to add value by going line by line through press statements from the Australian Maritime Search Agency to see what additional material they could add to coverage. If a location in the middle of the Indian Ocean was described, for example, students were able to find out what the weather was like there at that moment using sites such as [passageweather.com](http://passageweather.com), or what ships were in the area using [vesselfinder.com](http://vesselfinder.com). The additional information was often minor but useful for an audience hungry for any new detail. This lesson has been learned for other stories and ECU Daily now incorporates additional fact boxes, infographics and explainers where possible to add to major news stories.

## **Conclusion**

Curation as a reporting tool remains problematic in many ways, for media organisations and working journalists as well as for the educators preparing the next generation of reporters. In the world of curated reporting, the clearly defined guidelines that determine ownership and use of content, the relationship with and verification of sources, the protection of ordinary or vulnerable voices, and the choice of source material have blurred. For educators, therefore, Storify proves to be both a challenge and an opportunity—a challenge as it requires re-examination of core principles of ethical journalism practice and redefinition of boundaries, and an opportunity as it is a tool that has the potential to allow student journalists to perform authentic participatory reporting tasks and compete with working reporters to report social stories.

The search for Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 is provided as a case study for how Storify can be used in a student journalism newsroom to engage students in the production of social media stories on a breaking news issue, using Storify as a tool to build a large international audience. Through the use of Storify five main lessons were identified that were used to inform the use of the tool in future classes.

Firstly, it was found that issues such as content selection had to be addressed early and in consultation with students, as some needed assistance in searching widely for sources and information and help in adding value when factual details were scarce. The need to encourage sensitivity was a second issue that emerged, given that grieving families were anxious for information and that some social media posts—while funny, interesting or pert—could either raise hopes unfairly or be flippant in the face of grief. Verification, while not a significant issue for this story, remained something that was discussed with students, who were encouraged to find first-hand social media sources rather than people who

were merely retweeting others. In a situation where the information was not so scarce, nor tightly controlled through press conferences and statements, greater engagement with students on verification processes would be recommended. Speed was found to be a competitive advantage in covering the story, given the large number of other outlets similarly reporting on events. In many cases, the fastest students were able to report as quickly or faster than other outlets on things such as streamed press conferences. To avoid students taking too long to get up to speed with the Storify tool, it would have been ideal to have trained more students in its use before the story broke—a lesson that has been adopted in later semesters. Finally, value-adding to stories is another lesson adopted and incorporated in later coverage. In a fast-breaking, highly competitive story, in which readers are hungry for information, it was found that extending coverage with even minor details or additional background was valuable for the audience.

These lessons have been incorporated in the operation of the student newsroom and Storify remains a cornerstone tool used in the production of ECU Daily. Students in other journalism courses are now being exposed to its usefulness and educated in the issues that arise in its use.

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The logo features a dark purple rectangular background with a green border. On the left, a white circle contains the text 'NZ Centre for Investigative Journalism'. To the right of the circle, the text 'Encouraging and supporting investigative journalism in New Zealand.' is written in white. At the bottom of the purple area, a green horizontal bar contains the website address 'cij.org.nz' in white.

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