

DIGITAL TRANSITIONS:

Nonprofit Investigative Journalism

Evaluation Report on the Center for Public Integrity
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Informed, engaged communities.

Foreword

For two decades, the Center for Public Integrity has, as one political commentator put it, shown its “probing flashlight into so many Washington dirty-laundry baskets.” The result has been best-selling books, dozens of major awards, and changes in public policy and practice.

Yet like all other major media organizations at the dawn of the digital age, the center has faced its share of challenges. How do you keep the flow of investigative journalism both useful and engaging?

Two years ago, Knight Foundation awarded the Washington D.C.-based center a grant to begin to transform itself into a nonprofit investigative leader in the digital age.

As part of its evaluation process, Knight Foundation hired a seasoned team - including a leading evaluator, an award-winning investigative editor and a social media analyst – to probe the center’s efforts.

Part of being a digital age investigator is being confident about the idea of transparency – and the center’s leadership agreed the report could be released to the public as an example of “open evaluation” done in a timely manner to support organizational improvement and learning.

ITS FINDINGS:

- > The Center for Public Integrity is producing hard-hitting investigations even as it transforms its digital presence.
- > It can better pick stories by thinking about their potential to shape the public policy agenda. (Recent work on the Gulf oil spill is an example of this).
- > A continuous flow of new digital techniques will give the center not just more reporting power but even greater distribution and new ways to engage people.

The report notes the center was able to raise its donations from individual donors by 23 percent, despite the recent economic downturn.

The Center for Public Integrity’s story holds lessons for all nonprofit news sites.

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Overview

The Center for Public Integrity (CPI) is a nonprofit organization based in Washington D.C with a mission of producing original investigative journalism that makes institutional power more transparent and accountable.

CPI is nonpartisan, and is committed to comprehensive reporting in the United States and around the world.

IN DECEMBER 2008, THE JOHN S. AND JAMES L. KNIGHT FOUNDATION AWARDED CPI A ONE-YEAR GRANT TO TRANSFORM ITSELF INTO A PROMINENT LEADER IN THE FIELD OF DIGITAL NONPROFIT JOURNALISM. Recent technological advancements have led to tremendous changes in the way the journalism field does business. The Knight grant was to help CPI employ new tools, approaches, and staff to keep pace with, and take better advantage of, these changes. The grant also enabled CPI to grow its online marketing and outreach efforts, and to improve the digital display and interactivity of its reports.

THIS REPORT SUMMARIZES EVALUATION FINDINGS ABOUT CPI'S RECENT PROGRESS. The evaluation, commissioned by the Knight Foundation, was a short-term (five-week) assessment of CPI's progress. A three-member team with expertise in evaluation, investigative journalism, and online metrics conducted the assessment. Its purpose was to examine CPI's track record, the organization's use of new tools and methods, and CPI's capacity to be an effective and credible digital media presence.

AS THE REPORT REVEALS, CPI HAS MADE CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS IN ITS TRANSFORMATION EFFORTS. Although CPI experienced a period of relative instability several years ago after the departure of its legendary founder, the organization has remained a strong presence in the investigative journalism field. On the digital front, CPI no longer uses its website primarily as storage for downloadable content, and now offers the more interactive experiences that users expect. CPI has also created a social media footprint and is growing an audience in that new medium. Additionally, distribution in general has become more strategic, moving farther afield from the "if we build it they will come" approach and more toward the use of tailored outreach and marketing plans. **AT THE SAME TIME, THE EVALUATION REVEALED THAT ADJUSTMENTS COULD INCREASE CHANCES FOR FURTHER IMPACT.** These adjustments primarily focus on things CPI already is working on, but will need to continue building to be more effective. They include thinking more about the selection of issues to ensure that CPI is tapping into what citizens and policymakers care about and are likely to act on. It also includes continuing to work on strategic distribution so that content gets into the hands of the people who are positioned best to effect change. And it means taking better advantage of online opportunities, so CPI is purposefully engaging users in two-way communications, rather than passively informing them.

Overall, the evaluation's findings show that CPI is earnestly engaged in the process of transformation. A good foundation for change has been laid, but CPI recognizes more work must be done and is both poised and eager to continue building on the organization's progress so far.

Strategy and Evaluation Summary

Most evaluations employ the use of logic models—visual representations of the projects or strategies being evaluated that show how their activities are expected to lead to their desired impacts. Logic models are useful for evaluation efforts because they offer a results-oriented framework that helps focus their inquiry.

THE LOGIC MODEL ON THE NEXT PAGE SUMMARIZES CPI'S OVERALL STRATEGY FOR USING INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM TO CATALYZE AND INFORM POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE. It was developed for this evaluation as a way to both illustrate how CPI defines success and illustrate what the organization is doing to achieve its intended social change impacts.

The model starts on the left with CPI's key activities. First and foremost, CPI aims to conduct high-quality investigative journalism. Through strategic distribution, the organization then aims to make sure audiences receive and can engage with the investigative content that is produced. CPI also focuses on education to build the capacity of others to do their own investigative research and reporting, and conducts global outreach to build the broader field of nonprofit journalism. Finally, CPI focuses on development to ensure its nonprofit work can sustain and take on important issues as they arise.

After activities, the model moves to the direct outcomes of CPI's work. These are outcomes that result from CPI's activities, and are results for which CPI is directly accountable. The model groups these outcomes into five main categories—organizational capacity, high-quality content, distribution, audience engagement, and field capacity.

Next are the indirect outcomes of CPI's work. This is the point at which the audiences who have engaged with CPI's work are expected to use it to hold institutions and people accountable. When this process works, the eventual impact is social change in the form of policy or systems change.

THIS FIVE-WEEK EVALUATION FOCUSED ON GATHERING DATA TO INFORM CPI'S PROGRESS ON ITS DIRECT OUTCOMES.

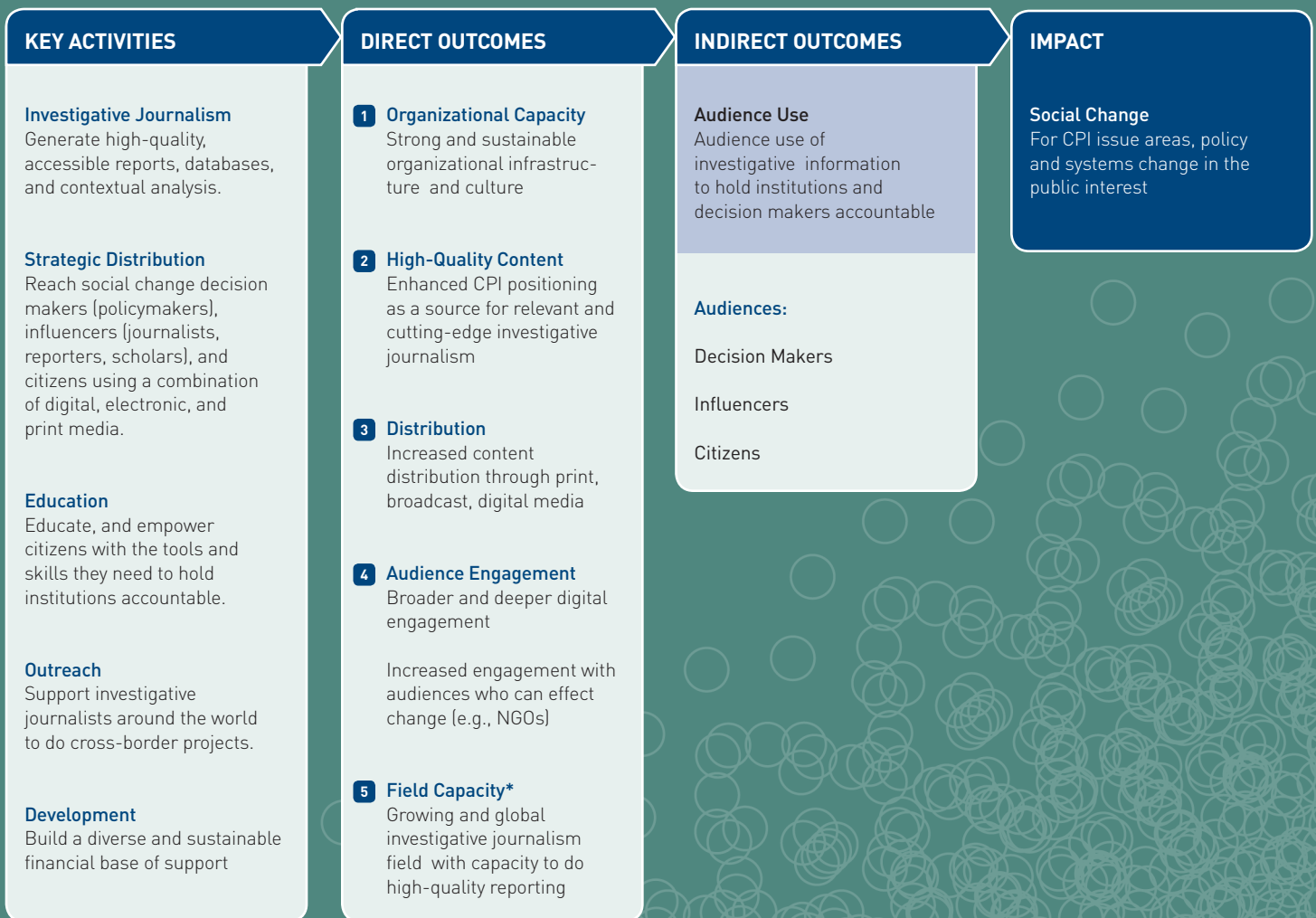
The remainder of this report summarizes findings and lessons in the first four direct outcome areas. The fifth area on field-level capacity was outside of this evaluation's scope.

THE INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS (ICIJ) WAS ALSO OUTSIDE OF THE EVALUATION'S SCOPE. ICIJ is an important part of CPI and is critical to the achievement of the organization's global mission. But because the Knight Foundation's grant did not fund this work directly, ICIJ was not a specific focus for this inquiry. Even without exploring ICIJ in depth, however, it was clear that ICIJ is achieving important results around the world in all of the outcome areas on the logic model.

THE EVALUATION USED STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS, DOCUMENT REVIEW, AND ONLINE ANALYTICS TOOLS TO GATHER DATA FOR THIS REPORT. Interviews were conducted with 32 individuals representing CPI staff (conducted in-person), funders, board members, and industry insiders (see Appendix A for a list). In addition, CPI's online work was analyzed using a set of Web and social media analytic tools.

Center for Public Integrity

Logic Model



* The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) was outside of the evaluation's scope.

1 Does CPI have strong organizational capacity?

KNIGHT FOUNDATION AREAS OF INVESTMENT

- > New staff to enhance digital outreach and improve audience interaction both online and offline
- > Marketing to increase visibility
- > Supports for efforts to generate funds from diverse sources, including through new membership-level donors

POINTS OF PROGRESS

- > CPI continues to be a respected leader in the field of nonprofit journalism.
- > CPI is embracing the notion of a necessary transformation in the way it does business.
- > Individual giving increased last year by 23 percent.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- > CPI's overall positioning in the field is still in flux.

Organizational capacity refers to the knowledge, skills, and systems CPI needs to do effective investigative journalism both now and in the future. It includes the organization's strategy and culture, leadership and management, and ability to adapt. The Knight Foundation's 2008 grant supported CPI's organizational capacity in several ways. For example, it provided funding for new staff and supported marketing to increase the organization's visibility and donor base.

This evaluation looked at organizational capacity from the perspectives of both internal staff and external stakeholders. Interviews with CPI staff captured the changes the organization has made over the last year with the Knight Foundation's support. They also captured CPI's thoughts on its future direction. External stakeholder interviews captured perceptions about CPI's positioning.

POINTS OF PROGRESS

CPI CONTINUES TO BE A RESPECTED LEADER IN THE FIELD OF NONPROFIT JOURNALISM. It is well known within the journalism industry that CPI struggled to remain a potent force after founder Chuck Lewis left. However, the hiring of CPI Executive Director Bill Buzenberg, a highly regarded former public radio journalist and news executive, along with several respected investigative journalists and computer-assisted reporters, has renewed confidence in the organization's potential and has inspired goodwill. This was an important step for CPI, since so many successful collaborations in the business today spring from trusted relationships among individuals who share values and respect one another's work.

External stakeholders that included editors at top newspapers, online media sites, and national public radio stations consistently said they believe CPI is raising the bar on its journalistic output, and particularly welcome CPI's strategic focus on computer-assisted reporting and data analysis. As a result, they are taking a harder look at CPI's content for potential distribution.

Prior to these changes, many feared the loss of a resource that they viewed as essential. They consider CPI's location in Washington D.C. and its strategic focus on money and politics as a "sweet spot" that distinguishes CPI from other investigative journalism nonprofits. With so many investigative targets in the nation's Capital and a diminishing number of reporters to tackle them, industry sources view CPI's existence and strength as essential.

1 Organizational Capacity

CPI IS EMBRACING THE NOTION OF A NECESSARY TRANSFORMATION IN THE WAY IT DOES BUSINESS. The field of journalism is experiencing a time of tremendous transformation. The incredible rise in the popularity of online media has affected print media readership and advertising revenues, which in turn has had a significant impact on overall revenues. Consequently, journalists across the country have lost their jobs as numerous daily newspapers have downsized. Investigative journalism budgets have been among the hardest hit in the industry. All of this means that investigative journalists and organizations like CPI that grew up under more traditional media models now need to embrace new ways of working and must adjust to stay viable.

CPI is weathering this transformation and is learning how to take advantage of it. Those interviewed praised CPI leaders for their willingness to experiment and try new things while not losing sight of the organization's core mission or journalistic values. Industry insiders noted that CPI is changing the way it reports and presents stories through, for example, the use of online reports that feature impressive graphics, searchable databases, and multimedia components.

The sense is that CPI, an organization steeped in the traditions of print journalism, is not only open to new ideas, but is experimenting successfully. As one source put it, "They have a deeper appreciation of data analysis, their website is constantly improving, and they are doing more outreach to other news organizations and a lot more collaboration. All of this has increased under new leadership that is open to new techniques and pushing initiatives to become more digital and more sophisticated in the use of data and digital tools." Another added, "They have been doing good public service journalism for some time now and now they have evolved to engage in database analysis and embrace new models of distribution while maintaining the high standards of investigative reporting,"

INDIVIDUAL GIVING INCREASED LAST YEAR BY 23 PERCENT.

In recent years, CPI's fundraising priority was stabilizing the organization. Now that the organization is on firmer ground financially, CPI is working on decreasing its heavy reliance on foundation funding. The vast majority of its about \$4.5 million annual budget comes from foundations. Because it is a nonprofit and must remain unbiased in its story selection, a good portion of CPI's budget will likely continue to come from foundations. But diversification and being more creative with fundraising efforts are organizational priorities.

Knights Foundation funding supported CPI's efforts to diversify its donors. In 2010, CPI hired new development leadership to go after high net worth individuals and others passionate about the organization's work.

CPI's two-year review of individual giving, which co-mingles online donor and direct mail members, shows that \$289,709 was raised in 2008, and \$355,911 in 2009. This represents an increase of \$66,202, or 23 percent.¹ The number of online donors increased from 786 to 952 individuals, an increase of 21 percent. While this represents progress, individual giving was still only about 6 percent of CPI's overall budget in 2009. As such, CPI acknowledges that individual giving through membership, direct mail, online, and major giving must continue to grow.

¹ CPI received a \$1,793,000 gift in 2009 from the employees at Greenlight Capital, a hedge fund. CPI came to their attention through the Who's Behind the Financial Meltdown report. This figure was not included in the individual giving figures.

1 Organizational Capacity

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

CPI'S OVERALL POSITIONING IN THE FIELD IS STILL IN FLUX.

While many view CPI as essential and in the process of making important changes, there are also questions about CPI's overall strategy and where it is headed. External stakeholders are uncertain about exactly where CPI intends to land in terms of its positioning in the field.

Most of those interviewed were not concerned about this uncertainty. They understand that CPI is changing, exploring, and finding its place. They have faith that the current leadership is headed in the right direction.

But several expressed apprehension. They pointed to the speed with which CPI's competitors like ProPublica, Center for Investigative Reporting (CIR), and Huffington Post have grown in size and influence, and believe CPI may be lagging. "There are some signs of change, but I don't get a sense of the strategic vision. I think they have a ton of potential, but they really need to think about how they approach stories and how they can have impact," said one industry insider, a fan of CPI who nonetheless thinks that other leading nonprofits may be seen as more cutting edge.

Another review came from someone familiar with all three leading nonprofit investigative journalism ventures (CPI, CIR, and ProPublica). He thinks CIR and ProPublica may be doing a better job of selecting targets, getting stories published, and having an impact. He said: "What is the clarity of their mission? CIR is producing kick-ass journalism every day. They are building a sustainable model and becoming an integral part of the California news media. ProPublica gets a whole lot more publicity and more positive kudos than it really deserves. That said, they've obviously done some really good work. I think CPI's niche focus should be D.C. power, which makes them different from CIR and ProPublica. But they have to find a way to produce more timely, topical journalism that makes a difference."

Suggestions about CPI's positioning emerged from the interviews. Several suggested that CPI carefully consider the stories it picks and the way it tells them. Others suggested CPI's strategy should focus on finding the best audiences for its work, such as public radio or TV partners who can bring life to public policy stories and bring in the audiences who are most interested in hearing them. Still others expressed confidence that CPI's decision to operate more like a newsroom and break more stories will make the organization a more powerful force. There are clear signs that all of this is already happening. For example, CPI is now engaged in strategic planning that touches on all of these points (see Appendix B for new story and issue selection criteria, for example). For now, however, many in the industry are unaware of these developments. In addition, some lack of awareness can be explained by several interviewees' admissions that they infrequently access the website where the reporting resides.

2 Is CPI producing relevant and cutting-edge content?

KNIGHT FOUNDATION AREAS OF INVESTMENT

- > Support for development and marketing of key stories, including Campus Assault and the Cold Case project on unsolved Civil Rights era hate crimes
- > Partnerships with journalism schools to ensure students' contributions to the Campus Assault project.

POINTS OF PROGRESS

- > CPI is transforming what it offers.
- > Recent reports show how CPI is thinking differently.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- > CPI should pursue more ground-breaking, game-changing content.
- > Linking to the public and policy agenda is essential for impacting social change.

This outcome focuses on what CPI is producing from its investigative journalism efforts. To be effective in this field, CPI's audiences must view CPI's content as high quality, credible, relevant, newsworthy, and capable of catalyzing change.

The evaluation examined this outcome through the lens of external stakeholders who must relate to and use CPI's content in various ways. For example, editors decide whether to publish it; policy audiences decide if and how it matters in the policy arena; and other audiences decide whether to partner with CPI on expanding the story (e.g., on their campus or in their state) or distributing it.

POINTS OF PROGRESS

CPI IS TRANSFORMING WHAT IT OFFERS. Industry insiders are noticing the effects of transformations at CPI. They sense that CPI is building the staff and momentum needed to become an essential online newsroom, with higher metabolism and more reporting muscle than in the past.

For some, CPI is moving away from being too “wonky,” an organization that put out occasional think-tank-like reports and raw data with insufficient insight and impact. “They did reports that were in the weeds,” said one prominent editor. “They got databases and put out raw information. They didn’t connect the dots. They have a new model of becoming an essential news organization.”

CPI's aspiration to operate like a newsroom that produces hard-hitting weekly and monthly reports (as well as longer-term investigative projects) is widely viewed as an important step forward and a welcome change that has begun to affect the timeliness and relevance of its content. CPI now has daily news meetings during which discussions occur about how to break news on “happening now” topics. Staff from all parts of the organization participate, including development, marketing, and multimedia. The focus is not solely on going long and deep—producing one or two big projects per year—as CPI has done in the past. The newsroom style means CPI is producing more important stories that break ground on topics such as the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. CPI's editorial metrics provide evidence of this positive shift. In 2009, CPI

2 High-Quality Content

developed 14 major projects (up from 4 in 2008), had 512 postings (up from 207 in 2008), and worked with 12 computer-assisted reporting databases (up from 3 in 2008).

RECENT REPORTS SHOW HOW CPI IS THINKING DIFFERENTLY.

Over the last year, CPI has produced reports that illustrate how the organization is thinking differently. The Campus Assault project is a prime example.

The project started with a high-quality investigation that collected data using a survey of campuses and rape crisis centers across the country. The distribution strategy for the report (see more on distribution in the report's next section) was both direct with CPI's own lists, networks, and social media communities, and indirect using partnerships with other print and online media outlets. For example, a partnership with NPR "localized" the project in various NPR markets and exposed the story to millions of listeners (NPR news programming reaches 26 million people each week). Suzanne Reber, Deputy Managing Editor for Investigations at NPR, described the stories as "extremely powerful" and said they consistently ranked in the Top 5 on NPR's website. Reber is particularly fond of CPI's data analysis stories because they highlight important social trends that she can localize for NPR audiences.

In addition, CPI also sought partnerships with campus newspapers to enhance the report's distribution. When lack of capacity and sincere interest became a barrier to this approach, CPI created a Reporter's Toolkit that resulted in longer-term and broader-scale distribution. CPI also developed targeted relationships with NGOs that had capacity and networks focused on this issue, that then pushed the story to audiences interested in using it to effect policy and practice

changes. This multi-pronged outreach approach reflects a more strategic and nimble way of thinking about how to get CPI's content into the hands of more people, and into the hands of people for whom the issue is already salient.

According to CPI, to date, 301 media outlets, campus newspapers, and NGOs have published the story. While the exact number of newspapers that used the Reporter's Toolkit is unknown, 65 college newspapers published the story.² Also, more than 40 college and student-issue focused NGOs cited or wrote about the story.³

Finally, CPI localized this story through the Investigative News Network (INN), a group of about two dozen nonprofit journalism organizations around the country that do investigative reporting (CPI is a founding member). Five regional INN members published local pieces that amplified the story's findings.

As CPI continues to develop under its newer leadership and staffing, industry insiders interviewed said that the sophistication and depth of their projects is expected to continue to improve. As one interviewee put it, "The sexual assault series is more like what they should be doing. You need to do more of it to get better at it."

2 E.g., The Badger Herald (U of WI-Madison); The Daily Free Press (Boston U); The Daily Texan (U of TX Austin); The Diamondback (U of MD); Yale Daily News; State Press Newspaper (AZ State U); Daily Illini (U of IL); Daily Collegian (Penn State); The Brown Daily Herald (Brown U); The Daily Bruin (UCLA); The Brown and White (Lehigh U); The Michigan Daily (U of MI).

3 E.g., American Association of University Women; CA Coalition Against Sexual Assault; Campus Progress; National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities; Students Active for Ending Rape; Boston Area Rape Crisis Center; Tufts U Survivors of Sexual Violence; The Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma; The Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center at U of MI; CA NOW; and Legal Momentum.

2 High-Quality Content

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

STAKEHOLDERS REQUESTED MORE GROUNDBREAKING, GAME-CHANGING STORIES. When asked what would cause an organization to use more of CPI's work, media insiders zeroed in on CPI's story selection and storytelling. They thought CPI could have more impact if it selected harder-hitting stories and told those stories in a more engaging way, as it did with the Campus Assault series, which offered fresh findings and moral force.

This was a consistent theme throughout external stakeholder interviews. Discussions about CPI led back to: "Tell them to break more good stories." "Tell them to do more breaking investigations on hot topics." "Tell them to be less plodding." Most encouraged CPI to move away from stories that state the obvious and move toward journalism that breaks new ground in areas that are ripe for change.

Several comments along these lines surfaced. "They need to use the numbers they come up with in data analysis to go to a higher place," said one source. Also, "They need to connect the dots in a more narrative fashion. They would do well to avoid database roundups on more obvious topics and move to original narratives that are in virgin territory... They should do original exclusive work. Also, I think they could do more about their metabolism...they tend to go more toward reports a think tank would produce than a powerful story based on deeper reporting." "They don't go after enough hard targets where you say, 'Gee, I didn't know that.'"

In summary, sources interviewed said CPI should not:

- a) Solely report the obvious (e.g., lobbyists are trying to influence; special interests are giving money)
- b) Rely on data without compelling reporting around it
- c) Report on issues for which data are available but the issues are not on the public radar
- d) Write stories to accompany data projects that are overly policy focused, do not tell readers why they should care (the "so what?"), or do not "name names" so readers know who to be mad at or what to tell their Congressional representatives.

This does not mean that CPI should stop producing projects that take six months or a year to develop. Rather, the issue is that CPI sometimes tackles topics that are important but not compelling or timely enough for potential distribution partners. Some suggestions also surfaced that CPI stories could be easier to read and better told. But again, signs of change are being noticed in all quarters. The Campus Assault series was repeatedly cited as an example of better story selection and storytelling.

LINKING TO THE PUBLIC AND POLICY AGENDA IS ESSENTIAL FOR IMPACTING SOCIAL CHANGE. As mentioned earlier, CPI is uniquely positioned in Washington D.C. and has a strong reputation for its expertise on money and politics. This reputation is based on clear and demonstrable policy-related impacts. Just this week, for example, impacts were seen from a February 2009 story on the lack of regulation for coal ash, a toxic byproduct of burning coal to produce electricity. The report clearly played a role in the Environmental Protection Agency's new plans to regulate coal ash.

2 High-Quality Content

While this example and others like it are impressive, interviewees felt CPI could capitalize more on its proximity to Capitol Hill. Suggestions emerged, for example, for CPI to consider working Capitol Hill sources harder and make the rounds to get more tips on agenda-setting stories. This is the hallmark of good beat reporting—engaging sources and breaking scoops.

An established and long-standing organization in Washington D.C., CPI enjoys access to many sources who can lead reporters to stories about gaps in government accountability and transparency. The hiring of veteran reporters like John Solomon (as a Journalist in Residence) is seen as a step in this direction, since he is known for breaking through the clutter of D.C. news and producing scoops. He brings with him sources in the defense and intelligence communities and the Inspector General ranks, among others. CPI should continue this trend, looking for reporters who are plugged into government regulatory, investigative, and oversight bodies.

Questions also emerged on whether CPI is sufficiently plugged into, or is paying enough attention to, the Capitol Hill agenda. The suggestion was for CPI to work more closely with Members of Congress and committee staffers to identify investigative leads or areas in which the policy agenda is headed.

As one high-ranking Congressional staffer who often acts as a source for reporters put it, “My view is that CPI has a reduced profile in the past few years...To have impact up here [on the Hill], you need to realize that you can’t set the agenda; they have to find out what the agenda is and how they can leverage their resources in a way to have impact. Their Tobacco Underground series should have found a Senator with a relevant committee or subcommittee with an interest in that issue who might use their report as a basis for a committee report or hearing. That way you raise the profile of the issue and the organization.”

CPI’s stories have linked to Congressional actions. For example, the Chairman of the Senate’s Special Committee on Aging recently called for tougher oversight of the organization that protects retirees’ pensions after a CPI report revealed that the organization failed its financial audit and misled lawmakers (see Appendix C for other recent examples). Interviewees were not saying CPI does not make this connection at all; they were saying they would like to see more of it.

Is CPI effectively distributing its content?

KNIGHT FOUNDATION AREAS OF INVESTMENT

- > Online marketing and communications consultants
- > Partnerships with NGOs and other organizations
- > Publication partnerships with media outlets
- > Targeted email and web advertising campaigns

POINTS OF PROGRESS

- > CPI is transforming how it offers its content.
- > CPI is modernizing its approach to distribution and audience engagement.
- > CPI is pursuing more partnerships with journalism schools.
- > CPI is also doing more outreach with NGOs.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- > Continuing to improve strategic distribution is critical, particularly if the goal is social change.
- > Developing media partnerships should continue to be a priority.
- > Digital distribution does not trump the importance of producing content that is relevant and useful.

This outcome area focuses on whether CPI is effectively reaching its audiences. It covers changes in what CPI offers and how it offers it. The evaluation focused on the organization's strategy from the perspective of CPI staff and by examining CPI's products and content. It also viewed it through the lens of industry insiders who represented potential distribution partners.

POINTS OF PROGRESS

CPI IS TRANSFORMING HOW IT OFFERS ITS CONTENT.

Editors of prominent media sites and publications consistently report that CPI is more fully engaged in 1) trying to push its material onto distribution sites that far outstrip CPI's direct reach 2) organizing its reporting initiatives in a way that permits collaborations with radio, TV, etc., 3) pushing media partners to embed links back to the CPI site to drive traffic, and 4) trying new ways to reach new audiences, such as NGOs, think tanks, and students.

Without a doubt, CPI has increased its presence in important media outlets. CPI developed 19 partnerships over the last year. These included relationships with the Washington Post, Financial Times, Politico, Huffington Post, NPR and others.⁴ Editors at these outlets described their partnerships with CPI as "productive," "symbiotic," or "essential."

NPR and Politico, in particular, appear to make sense as outlets for CPI's journalism, based on synergies in audience interest. For example, Politico has an affinity for CPI stories because its audience has an inherent interest in stories about money, politics, and power. The online news organization particularly values CPI's authoritative data analysis and

⁴ The list of 19 includes ABC News; AP Exchange; Atlantic Monthly; BBC; Christian Science Monitor; CNN; Financial Times; Google Flipper; Grist Magazine; Huffington Post; Indianapolis Star; Kaiser Health News; LA Times; NPR; Politico; Reuters; 60 Minutes; Washington Post; Wall Street Journal.

3 Distribution

findings, and appears more apt than newspapers to run CPI “ranking” stories (e.g., top campaign bundlers).

CPI IS MODERNIZING ITS APPROACH TO DISTRIBUTION AND AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT. CPI draws praise for its experimentation with everything from social media to crowd sourcing to offering webinars and toolkits that allow student journalists to localize stories in their communities.

CPI board members interviewed were particularly keen for the push forward in digital engagement and innovation. They want to see CPI move rapidly to the forefront of the digital revolution—experimenting with social media, citizen journalism, downloadable databases, visualization tools, mobile applications, and more. “Their willingness to experiment is exactly what we need right now,” said one industry source. “CPI had a strong brand but was not associated with being nimble. Now they have embraced social journalism... they value feedback and are always trying to stay one step ahead of the industry.” “They need to build a bridge to the younger generation, and they are starting to do it,” said another. When asked whether Twitter and Facebook postings reach influential audiences, the source replied: “How do you think young Congressional staffers get their news?”

CPI IS PURSUING MORE PARTNERSHIPS WITH JOURNALISM SCHOOLS. Collaborations with journalism schools at colleges and universities across the country help CPI to both enhance its distribution and build the capacity of up-and-coming journalists.

On the distribution side, CPI is building on the successful Campus Assault model described earlier in this report. That story was covered in 65 college newspapers.

On the field building side, CPI has fellowship programs with two universities (American University and the University of Delaware). CPI also offered six internships last year—one each from Princeton, Howard, and Brandeis Universities, and three through a competitive application process. Finally, CPI started a partnership with the Knight Foundation’s News21 Project at Arizona State University. CPI provided both the topic and the data (National Transportation Safety Board

crash recommendations after horrific accidents), and CPI staff members have been meeting with the student team.

CPI IS ALSO DOING MORE OUTREACH WITH NGOS. Getting CPI reporting into the hands of NGOs is an “indirect outcome” as defined on the logic model on page 5, as NGOs represent “influencers” in the policy process. These NGOs, many of whom are policy or advocacy groups that represent both sides of the political spectrum, are expected to use CPI information to effect social change. To foster this connection with NGOs and other influencers (e.g., Congressional staffers), CPI hosts conference calls, webinars, and other press release events to generate attention with these audiences. CPI reported that it connected with 1,375 NGOs and congressional staffers in 2009 through its outreach efforts (up from 1,073 in 2008).

As examples of how these efforts pay off, CPI identified 30 NGOs that have used the organization’s work recently.⁵ The NGOs both distribute CPI reporting on their websites or in their newsletters and publications, and use it in their research, programs, and campaigns. This is promising, but because getting CPI’s information into the hands of organizations that can use it to advocate is critical, CPI must continue to emphasize and substantially grow these outreach efforts. This should include follow-up with particularly promising NGO connections when a good match exists between CPI’s story and the NGOs’ focus, reach, and influence (understanding that CPI must toe this line carefully to protect its unbiased and nonpartisan reputation).

⁵ E.g., AARP; Center for Responsive Politics; Consumer Reports; CREW (Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington); Feminist Majority Foundation; OMB Watch; Project on Government Oversight; Students Active for Ending Rape; Sunlight Foundation; Taxpayers for Common Sense; Tobacco Free Kids; Beyond Pesticides; Campaign for America’s Future; CATO Institute; Center for American Progress; Center for Environmental Health; Center for Media and Democracy; Common Cause; Environmental Priorities Coalition; Environmental Working Group; Greenpeace; Heritage Foundation; Institute for Children’s Environmental Health; Institute for Southern Studies; National Center for Public Policy Research; National Resource Defense Council; Pesticide Action Network; Public Citizen; Union of Concerned Scientists; World Watch Institute.

3 Distribution

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

CONTINUING TO IMPROVE STRATEGIC DISTRIBUTION IS CRITICAL, PARTICULARLY IF THE GOAL IS SOCIAL CHANGE.

Like any organization striving to inspire change and not just educate, CPI must constantly think about whom it needs to reach and how to reach them. For every story, the answers to these questions are different.

Interviewees wondered about the extent to which CPI is reaching the audiences who are truly capable of effecting change. Part of this equation is about what stories are pursued (i.e., the point above about making sure they link to the public or policy agenda). The other is about making sure the people who matter know about the stories and use them. Ideally, those two parts of the equation will be linked—the stories pursued should be based, at least in part, on the interests of those who will use them.

CPI's current targeting and distribution strategy includes the following elements:

- CPI subscribes to an online, public relations media database that contains thousands of national media contacts. Unique media lists are crafted for every story.
- NGOs, good government groups, think tanks, and policy experts are targeted, depending on the report topic. CPI frequently uses webinars as part of a project launch—inviting the media and NGOs to view online interactive resources and ask questions.
- For some stories, CPI initially selects a partner (based on the subject matter and partner reach and clout) to get exclusive story access for several hours. A broad news release then follows.
- CPI's managing editor meets face-to-face with existing or prospective partners who are likely to run CPI stories or provide links to CPI content.
- CPI sends notice of its stories to more than 22,000 e-newsletter subscribers, with direct links to the latest stories and content on the CPI website. Notices are also placed on the website, and messages posted on Facebook and Twitter.

Industry insiders said that CPI's targeting and distribution efforts are not aggressive or strategic enough. Traditional New York and D.C. media still largely influence policy and politics, and CPI needs to figure out how to better occupy this space. Further, skepticism surfaced about whether CPI's website could draw a critical mass of traffic to influence policy in Washington D.C.; some dismissed social media as “fashionable” but a lower strategic priority for a group such as CPI.

Again, the issue here comes back to who CPI's audiences are and how best to reach them. CPI is not only trying to effect change in D.C. The organization is inspiring change at multiple levels (local, regional, state, federal, and global), and across multiple sectors (not just money and politics). This means CPI must target numerous types of audiences in different places, at different levels, using a diverse set of channels that include social media. Still, CPI cannot be all things to all people, and the challenge raised was for CPI to continue to optimize its choice of audiences and how the organization reaches them.

DEVELOPING MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS SHOULD CONTINUE

TO BE A PRIORITY. Editors of media outlets said other nonprofit journalism organizations more aggressively pitch stories to them. Prominent New York and Washington-D.C. based newspaper editors also said other organizations are sometimes better at finding stories that fit their audiences and have sufficient heft to win the competition for precious newspaper space. “ProPublica has this down to a science,” said one, although numerous people interviewed recognized the difference in funding that ProPublica commands. Others said they hear from CPI more frequently than in the past, but not as consistently as other collaborators, suggesting that CPI may want to look more closely at the way it engages strategic partners.

Finally, CPI could raise its profile and improve its reach by employing the techniques that have quickly elevated new

3 Distribution

and emerging media outlets to a higher status. One strategy for distributing stories is talking about them on other media platforms. “There is no reason they shouldn’t be on TV all the time talking about money and politics. We’ve found that to be a very important part of our strategy. We did over 3,000 radio and TV hits in our first year. We had a full-time person trying to book us around the clock. They have had enough success now that they should try to take a higher profile. That said, the best way to raise your profile is to break stories. If you break stories and blanket every possible platform with your people, people will come to your site and read them.”

DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION DOES NOT TRUMP THE IMPORTANCE OF PRODUCING CONTENT THAT IS RELEVANT AND USEFUL.

This theme surfaced repeatedly, and is one which CPI also raised. How content gets distributed is important, but what gets distributed is more important. People want CPI to produce more breaking investigative journalism that has moral authority and says something new. Interviewees emphasized the desire for a strategy that focuses on agenda-setting content. “I think the jury is still out on how important it is to do Twitter and Facebook. It’s fashionable. I still think if you do a good investigation, it gets out there and reaches the right people who can influence change. We aggregate stories and have social networking but at our core we are here to do good journalism.”

KNIGHT FOUNDATION AREAS OF INVESTMENT

- > Hiring of multimedia staff
- > Development of media communities to be news sources and aid in distribution
- > Creation of teaser videos for YouTube and other video and photo sharing site
- > Social media presence on sites like Facebook and Twitter
- > Adaptation of reports for mobile phone distribution.

POINTS OF PROGRESS

- > CPI's website and report interactivity have improved.
- > The total number of unique visitors to the CPI website in 2009 was 1.05 million, up 8 percent from 2009. Traffic spikes with new report releases.
- > The most popular website section by far is the Investigations section.
- > Website traffic is driven by referrals from other sites.
- > With nearly 7,000 fans of CPI and ICIJ combined, CPI's Facebook presence is growing.
- > CPI is also off to a good start on Twitter.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- > Developing a robust digital media distribution takes time, strategy, and funding.
- > Social media can more fully evolve as a two-way communications channel.
- > CPI should develop a high-level "dashboard" that captures and summarizes the impact of its online activities.

This outcome area gets at a major component of the Knight Foundation's 2009 grant, which was to substantially enhance CPI's digital media presence. In addition to hiring new staff to focus on this area, the grant supported website improvements, CPI's entrance onto the social media scene, and exploration of mobile phone distribution. These changes are seen as essential for both better distribution—meeting audiences where they are—and for CPI's reputation as a modern and cutting-edge organization. Here, CPI must compete with newer start-ups like Huffington Post that were founded with an online platform and frame of mind rather than with a print media paradigm.

The evaluation examined CPI's online performance in four areas: 1) the **website**—interactivity, visitors, sources of traffic, quality of referred traffic, visitor engagement, and tools to increase engagement, 2) **social media**—performance on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, 3) **publication partnerships**—impact on growing online traffic, and 4) **mobile distribution**—content distribution through mobile platforms.

POINTS OF PROGRESS

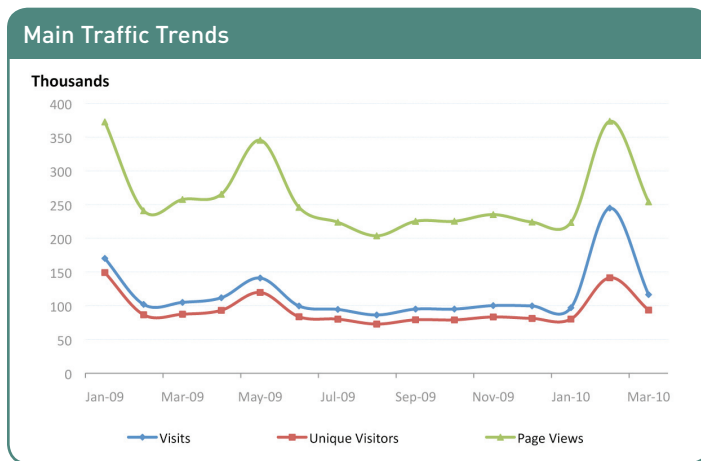
CPI'S WEBSITE AND REPORT INTERACTIVITY HAVE IMPROVED. CPI's website is the central repository of all of its content. The site is an important reference point for all citations in other publications.

Knight Foundation support for the hiring of new multimedia staff was key for website improvements. CPI online reports now meet modern user standards in terms of both looks and function, and incorporate interactivity that allows users to relate directly to CPI content and data. A recent example can be seen with the Gulf oil spill. To help tell this story, CPI obtained Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) data through a Freedom of Information Act request and then created an interactive U.S. map that other news organizations and bloggers can embed.⁶ The map displays each oil refinery and its inspection dates, violations, and proposed penalties. More interactive additions like this are possible if CPI generates the support it needs for its overall website design strategy.

⁶ See the map at www.publicintegrity.org/project_assets/refineries/SWF/refineries.swf.

4 Audience Engagement

THE TOTAL NUMBER OF UNIQUE VISITORS TO THE CPI WEBSITE IN 2009 WAS 1.05 MILLION, UP 8 PERCENT FROM 2008. The number of total page views also increased by 8 percent in 2009 over 2008.



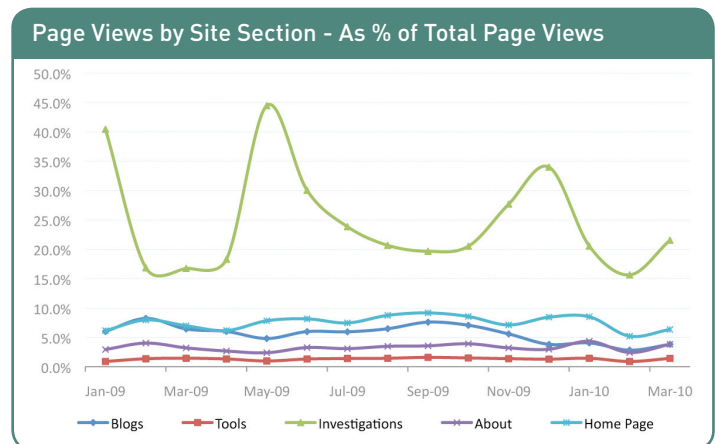
AS EXPECTED, WEBSITE TRAFFIC SPIKES WITH MAJOR REPORT RELEASES. With support from the Knight Foundation, CPI has been attempting to grow the audience for its content, especially on its website. In 2009, the number of unique visitors per month averaged around 100,000, with increases during months when reports were released.⁷

But the overall trend for website traffic was fairly level in 2009, keeping in mind that assessments of website traffic today must acknowledge that audiences now have multiple options on where to engage with an organization's content. Because of the explosion in social media usage, for example, traffic on organizational websites are affected if audiences start to consume their information on Facebook or Twitter rather than in longer form on the website. In addition, audiences may be reading CPI's content on other sites.

Content engagement metrics, such as average time spent on the website and number of pages viewed per visit, were also fairly level. The average time that users spend on the site averages in the two-minute range. Almost 60 percent of all visitors "bounce" (stay for less than 10 seconds and see only one page). While 60 percent is high and above "industry standard," the bounce rate cannot be taken at face value. For

example, if visitors go directly to the page they are looking for (e.g., a specific article), they may quickly print, copy, or read the headlines without viewing other pages. Or, "unqualified" visitors may be accessing the site (visitors who are not really interested in CPI content) as a result of unforeseen or dubious referrals. But because the bounce rate is quite high, CPI should examine the root causes in more depth.

THE MOST POPULAR WEBSITE SECTION BY FAR IS THE INVESTIGATIONS SECTION, WHERE THE BULK OF RESEARCH ARTICLES LIVE. Based on the number of page views, as expected, traffic in this area spikes when new work is released. The page view metric then returns to the norm (15%) later.



WEBSITE TRAFFIC IS DRIVEN PRIMARILY BY REFERRALS FROM OTHER SITES. Organic search traffic (unpaid search traffic from Google mostly) is the biggest source of website referrals, and it was the only source identified with a growing trend line. This may be an indication of growing brand recognition, as well as the site having better search engine optimization.

⁷ Subprime Mortgage in May 2009 and Campus Assault in February 2010.

4 Audience Engagement

Top 10 Referring Sites in March 2010

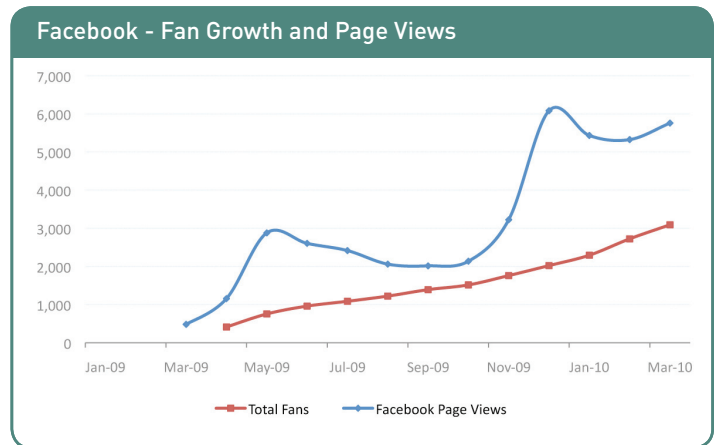
Top Referral Sites	Visits
Google.com	2,136
huffingtonpost.com	1,704
facebook.com	1,249
en.wikipedia.org	943
npr.org	897
images.google.com	790
pennsylvania.hometownlocator.com	779
poynter.org	687
texas.hometownlocator.com	580
newyork.hometownlocator.com	573

Referral traffic from publication partners currently is not significant. While CPI's work is referenced on many websites, it is unclear if the articles on those sites drive traffic back to CPI as effectively as they might. One major reason offered is the lack of referral or attribution links in the articles published on other sites. CPI gets numerous citations, but few articles provide links back to the original article. This is an issue that CPI should address, and in fact CPI reports that it is working on that issue now.

In addition, traffic from social media is still relatively small, driven mostly from Facebook. However, CPI reports recently it has been driving much more traffic from Twitter.⁸

WITH NEARLY 7,000 FANS OF CPI AND THE INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM OF INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS (ICIJ) COMBINED, CPI'S FACEBOOK PRESENCE IS GROWING. At the start of 2009, CPI had no social media presence. Since establishing one, Facebook fans have grown steadily. CPI now has 3,430 fans. ICIJ has 3,226 fans from around the world (some may be fans of both at the same time).

Facebook is CPI's most active social media space. Fans can take a number of actions—post to the page (just like CPI can), comment on a post, or “like” a post (by giving it an electronic thumbs up). Throughout 2009, interaction increased among CPI's fans. While total posts from CPI trended down, fan interactions went up.



CPI IS ALSO OFF TO A GOOD START ON TWITTER. CPI's @PublicIntegrity and @ClimateLobby communities have attracted a promising following in the little more than one year since their launch, with 2,343 followers by the end of April 2010.

Currently few subscribe to CPI YouTube videos, but according to CPI, YouTube plays a minor role in the overall video distribution strategy. The strategy mostly involves embedding videos on affiliate sites. However, without a dedicated video analytics tool (e.g., Visible Measures or TubeMogul), it is not possible to gauge interaction with these videos. CPI is open to investigating such a tool for future use.

CPI IS STILL IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING OR IMPROVING ITS PLANS FOR MOBILE DISTRIBUTION, DOWNLOADABLE DATABASES, AND DATA VISUALIZATIONS. Their idea is to develop rich content suitable for mobile platforms such as the Apple iPad. CPI does, however, make its podcasts available for download to mobile platforms like the iPhone or iPod.

⁸ See the DocumentCloud at www.publicintegrity.org/documents/entry/2080/

4 Audience Engagement

Downloadable databases and data visualizations are also “new” tools that CPI is planning more use of to enhance website user experience and make information more accessible. They also have the goal of driving engagement and loyalty. A recent example of using the Web to make content more accessible comes from the online library that CPI experimented with to share investigative materials on the Gulf oil spill. CPI used DocumentCloud—an index of primary source documents and tool for annotating, organizing, and publishing them online—to post U.S. Coast Guard after-action reports on past oil spill training exercises. CPI should continue to experiment with new ideas like this, while also evaluating them to determine if the time and resources spent in their development pay off in terms of their use.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

DEVELOPING A ROBUST DIGITAL MEDIA DISTRIBUTION TAKES TIME, STRATEGY, AND FUNDING. CPI has spent the last year building a digital media footprint and has made important progress in this regard. The organization is now poised to enhance that footprint. Continuing to grow the size and reach of CPI’s online audience is important. So is implementing a strategy to develop the *quality and depth* of CPI’s relationships with that audience.

CPI’s digital media strategy should include several elements. First, CPI should clearly define the audiences it is trying to reach on each of its digital channels. Who is CPI aiming to reach on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, as well as on the website? What is the target demographic on mobile platforms? Audience definition for each space will provide a clearer roadmap for future digital media development. Plans can be developed, for example, to target more journalists on Twitter. Second, the strategy should identify traffic sources that can be leveraged to drive new and quality traffic to the website. This should involve a review of current referral sources to determine which offer the best referral opportunities, as well as how referrals might be improved (e.g., making sure partners offer links to CPI in any article citation). Finally, the strategy should establish benchmarks for meaningful metrics to inform digital distribution. Data on these metrics should both highlight success and identify what needs to be improved.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAN MORE FULLY EVOLVE AS A TWO-WAY COMMUNICATIONS CHANNEL. There is substantial potential to grow in this area with the right strategies.

For example, with Twitter, a primary driver of follower growth is the sharing or re-tweeting of an organization’s message that then reaches the followers of those doing the re-tweeting. In other words, tweets should lead to re-tweets, which should lead to follower growth. Currently, CPI’s Twitter followers are not re-tweeting as much as might be desired. For example, CPI Twitter analytics for a 30-day time period in April 2010 revealed these findings:

4 Audience Engagement

- > *0.19 inbound to outbound message ratio*—Number of replies or incoming messages to every tweet sent. This metric gauges the quality of conversations. The more replies or incoming messages, the more interactions with users.
- > *1 Unique @ Senders*—Number of people who replied to a CPI tweet.
- > *8 unique messages re-tweeted*—Number of times users passed on CPI’s messages to their followers, an indication of the potential viral nature of tweets and ability to expand reach. The more people re-tweeting CPI messages, the more CPI exposure on Twitter.
- > *Reach of 209*—Number of followers who either read or interacted with CPIs tweets. This is synonymous to active followers—measuring the number of followers who are actively engaged versus passive followers.

Moving forward, there are two issues regarding Twitter. First, a strategy is needed to define or refine the follower base to align it better with CPI audiences (e.g., journalists or other influencers). Second, CPI lacks a robust analytics package to help measure and track Twitter activities. Having access to key engagement and interaction metrics can help to focus attention on the main determinants of the quality and depth of interaction with followers.

Improvement in this area might require having a staff person dedicate more time to “social media relations.” This person would grow and nurture the communities developed so far by engaging more deeply with fans—starting discussions, providing more information and links on newly published content, opening up a two-way conversation channel to gauge the level of interest in current topics, and even using input from fans or followers as the basis for future CPI projects.

While the multimedia team is very skilled in managing site development, they are not specialists in the strategic distribution of investigative journalism content. Making sure the multimedia team partners more with this expertise moving forward is critical. This will ensure that social media work has a broader and more meaningful reach.

CPI SHOULD DEVELOP A HIGH-LEVEL “DASHBOARD” THAT CAPTURES AND SUMMARIZES THE IMPACT OF ITS ONLINE ACTIVITIES. While CPI is collecting some useful statistics now, collecting more data that indicate audience engagement will be useful. CPI already has taken this suggestion to heart and is creating an engagement index to more accurately measure such interaction. Appendix D offers examples of other useful metrics. CPI should then look at analytic tools to capture those metrics, such as a dedicated social media analytics tool.

Conclusions

TRANSFORMATION IS COMPLEX AND TAKES TIME. In CPI's case, transformation is even more complex because the organization is positioned within two fields—investigative journalism and digital media—that are also experiencing significant changes and are likely to be in flux for some time. The inevitable uncertainty that results when one's environment is constantly changing means that organizational transformation that takes place within it can be neither simple nor quick.

CPI also faces the reality that re-engineering existing organizations (including structures, cultures, systems, and sometimes people) is often harder than creating something new from scratch. This does not mean a start-up organization ultimately will be better off or more effective; it means the start-up has the freedom to begin in a different place.

When CPI made its initial grant request to the Knight Foundation, the organization recognized the level of effort and time that transformation demanded. As a result, CPI had in mind a longer-term strategy and a higher level of support. CPI knew that a little over one year would not be enough time to see the full array or depth of results the organization desired. Rather, CPI intended to work on a broader set of areas and activities that as a whole would support the kind of results CPI was looking for. The 2008 economic downturn meant that CPI could not pursue the whole plan at once; it had to carve out initial pieces. CPI still has its broader plans in mind, and is now requesting more support and time to implement them.

MANY FINDINGS IN THIS REPORT THAT WERE BASED ON EXTERNAL FEEDBACK WERE ALSO IDENTIFIED BY CPI AS POINTS OF PROGRESS AND AREAS FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENT.

For example, in its presentation to the evaluation team, CPI said that the organization's editorial challenges included the need to identify groundbreaking stories, add more strategic collaborators, and improve reporting capacity. Particularly in the areas of digital distribution and social media, CPI clearly recognizes that it is at the start of an ongoing journey that will require a continuous cycle of experimentation, learning, and adaptation. The CPI grant request that is currently being considered asks for funding to work on most of the areas identified in this report.

Evaluation findings did not contradict the direction CPI is headed; stakeholders just wanted more of it. A quote cited earlier in the report captures this thought clearly: "You need to do more of it to get better at it."

CPI HAS MOMENTUM. FUTURE FUNDS WILL LIKELY ACCELERATE THAT MOMENTUM. CPI used the Knight Foundation's support over the last year to build a foundation for the organization's digital transformation. Now that the foundation has been laid, CPI is likely to put future Knight funding to good use in advancing, and potentially speeding up, the change process.

THE EVALUATION'S FINDINGS ARE INTENDED TO OFFER BOTH CPI AND THE KNIGHT FOUNDATION INSIGHTS ON WHERE, SPECIFICALLY, THE ORGANIZATION MIGHT PLACE A STRONGER FOCUS AS TRANSFORMATION CONTINUES. This means building on practices that already are strong, as well as adjusting others as needed. The list to consider, based on feedback gathered for this evaluation, includes:

- > Defining and identifying the stories where CPI can have the biggest impact
- > Pursuing accessible journalism that dissects failure and points fingers
- > Gathering tips that are so compelling they prompt, inspire, or force collaborations with powerful influencers and with media outlets that act as a multiplier force
- > Continuing to add highly regarded data-crunching muscle and tools
- > Building out CPI's digital footprint and offering more two-way interactive experiences
- > Continuing to monitor and learn from CPI's progress as transformation continues.

FINALLY, WHILE IT WAS BEYOND THE SCOPE OF THIS EVALUATION, LOOKING AHEAD, CPI MAY WANT TO CONSIDER ENGAGING IN AN EVALUATION THAT EXAMINES ITS ACHIEVEMENTS ON THE WHOLE LOGIC MODEL ON PAGE 5, INCLUDING CPI'S SOCIAL CHANGE IMPACTS. A systematic study that examines if and how audiences are using CPI's content to hold others accountable and achieve social change would generate useful learning about what CPI has accomplished as well as the key factors that can enhance the organization's impact. Resources to support

Conclusions

such evaluation efforts should be incorporated into future funding proposals.

Related to this, CPI should develop and regularly (not just annually) monitor a set of meaningful performance metrics that are connected to direct and indirect outcome areas in the logic model on page 5. Examples follow. While tracking all of these may be too much and some of these are being measured now, a more comprehensive set than currently exists is recommended.

Suggested CPI Performance Metrics

DIRECT OUTCOMES

Organizational Capacity

- > Total \$ raised per year
- > \$ raised through individual giving versus foundations
- > Median \$ amount for individual giving
- > # of individual donors by source (direct mail, online, other)

High-Quality Content

- > # of stories resulting in industry awards

Distribution

- > # of stories picked up by distribution partners (monthly)
- > # of citations (CPI as an organization and its stories) in media outlets (monthly)
- > # of times CPI staff appear on TV, radio
- > # new media partnerships developed each year
- > Other digital metrics in Appendix D

Audience Engagement

- > # NGOs who participate on calls, webinars, etc.
- > Other digital metrics in Appendix D

Field Capacity

- > # partnerships with journalism schools

INDIRECT OUTCOMES

- > # NGOs who cite or use CPI content
- > # policymakers or their staffers who cite or use CPI content

NOTE: Data on audience use will be difficult to track reliably or meaningfully without specific data collection efforts designed to gather feedback from CPI audiences (e.g., a periodic survey of organizations contacted through outreach efforts to determine what they did with CPI content, and why they did or did not use it). CPI should consider incorporating such evaluation efforts into future grant proposals.

IMPACT

- > # of stories leading to committee hearings or investigations (at the federal, state, and local levels)
- > Citations of CPI reports by key decision makers during press conferences or policy debates
- > # policies or practices connected to CPI stories that were changed at the federal, state, and local levels

Appendix A

Interview List

12 CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEGRITY STAFF

- > Bill Buzenberg, Executive Director
- > Ellen McPeake, Chief Operating Officer
- > Armando Zumaya, Chief Development Officer
- > David Kaplan, International Consortium of Investigative Journalists
- > Gordon Witkin, Managing Editor
- > Tuan Le, Information Technology Director
- > Robin Heller, Foundations Director
- > Andrew Green, Web Editor
- > Cole Goins, Web Team
- > Erik Lincoln, Web Team
- > Steve Carpinelli, Media Relations Manager
- > David Donald, Data Editor

5 FUNDERS

- > Alberto Ibarguen, President and CEO, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
- > Gary Kebbel, Journalism Program Director, Knight Foundation
- > Mayur Patel, Director of Strategic Assessment and Assistant to the President, Knight Foundation
- > Peter Stemerding, Executive Director, Adessium Foundation
- > John Bracken, Program Officer, General Program, MacArthur Foundation

15 INDUSTRY INSIDERS

- > **Six prominent journalists** who are CPI consumers and publishers. Four are newspaper executives who oversee investigative reporting or Washington-based national reporting. Two hold executive positions with influential online news sites.
- > **Two Capitol Hill insiders**, including one highly-placed Congressional staffer familiar with CPI's work and the work of other nonprofit journalism and policy groups in Washington D.C.
- > Brant Houston, Knight Chair in Investigative and Enterprise Reporting, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- > Sheila Coronel, Professor of Professional Practice, Director, Stabile Center for Investigative Journalism, Columbia University (Board Member)
- > Sree Sreenivasan, Dean of Student Affairs, Professor, Columbia Journalism School (Board Member)
- > Joe Bergantino, Director, New England Center for Investigative Reporting
- > Suzanne Reber, Deputy Managing Editor, Investigations, National Public Radio
- > Jennifer Peebles, Texas Watchdog
- > Olivia Ma, News Manager, YouTube (Board Member)

Appendix B

CPI Strategic Planning Elements

The following are from CPI staff and board retreats and are part of current strategic planning efforts.

Project Area and Story Idea Selection Rationale/Criteria

MANDATORY CRITERIA

1. There's good potential for impact, for catalyzing change in subject area
2. Subject area is of great importance, has major impact on public interest
3. There is a lot of abuse of power, corruption, malfeasance, waste, fraud, dereliction of duty in the subject area
4. There's a vacuum of coverage or lack of high-quality, in-depth coverage in subject area

OTHER FACTORS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT

5. Existing expertise at Center in subject area.
6. Leadership in subject matter at Center.
7. Great public interest in subject area.

CPI Issue Areas of Focus

TOP PRIORITY SUBJECTS

- > Money in politics
- > Environment/energy
- > Finance
- > Cross-border investigations that mostly focus on above, at both international and state levels

AREAS OF INCUBATION

- > Health reform
- > National security

Appendix C

Examples of 2009-2010 Policy Impacts

Federal

INSPECTORS GENERAL: On May 18, 2010, Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-IA), speaking on the Senate floor, commented on CPI's story about vacant Inspectors General at many federal agencies, specifically crediting CPI for confirming that the White House does not support changing independent Inspectors General to political appointees.

BRITISH PETROLEUM: On May 17, 2010 during a White House Press Briefing, Press Secretary Robert Gibbs was asked to comment on CPI's story about British Petroleum's extensive OSHA safety violations.

SEXUAL ASSAULT: Spurred by CPI's Sexual Assault findings, national advocacy groups are now circulating a draft of proposed amendments to two federal laws, the Clery Act and Title IX, which require schools to respond to claims of sexual assault on campus and to offer key rights to victims.

U.S. Department of Education officials have promised to ramp up enforcement of Title IX in the wake of the Center's Sexual Assault on Campus investigation. Last month, Russlyn Ali, who heads the department's Office for Civil Rights, reiterated her pledge to release new guidance on the federal law protecting against sex discrimination.

EARMARKS: On October 8, 2009, in remarks on the Senate floor, Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) referenced CPI's Murtha Method story, highlighting the practice where members of a defense House subcommittee continued to steer earmarks and lucrative defense contracts to companies represented by their former staffers, who in turn steer generous campaign donations to those lawmakers. The House Ethics Committee also considered this report in its investigation of Murtha's Defense Subcommittee.

FINANCIAL REFORM: On the House floor and during a joint hearing of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee and Domestic Policy Subcommittee on June 11, 2009, Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) referenced CPI's financial meltdown project and had it included in the Congressional Record.

BROKEN GOVERNMENT: In February 2009, CPI briefed House Committee on Energy and Commerce and Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs staffers on CPI's Broken Government project findings.

State

STATES OF DISCLOSURE: Fourteen states have improved their ethical disclosure laws in the last year following CPI's latest States of Disclosure report. Louisiana and Mississippi have made the greatest strides. More than 250 media outlets across 45 states covered the latest CPI ranking. In addition to 20 newspaper editorials, CPI fielded calls from at least a dozen state ethics commissions wanting to learn more about the methodology used and how they could improve their financial disclosure laws. Recently, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW) used the States of Disclosure survey and financial disclosure data to help create its report on the "Worst Governors" in the U.S.

MARYLAND SEXUAL ASSAULT: Reporting done by student journalists at the University of Maryland resulted in a ruling by that state's attorney general that could force the school administration to disclose the names of students found responsible for sexual assaults.

ILLINOIS FINANCIAL MELTDOWN: Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan mentioned CPI's financial meltdown project in her testimony before the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission on January 14, 2010.

Appendix C

Examples of 2009-2010 Policy Impacts

Local

LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA LAND DEVELOPMENT: An editorial in Leesburg Today cited a CPI story from the Land Use Accountability Project that revealed irregularities in the way Loudoun County's Board of Equalization assessed a sizeable track of land owned by a local developer under consideration for purchase by the county. CPI's investigation resulted in county commissioners voting down the proposal and saving taxpayers millions.

Appendix D

Suggested Online Metrics

This template offers a holistic approach for looking at the main areas of CPI’s digital distribution.

DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL	SUGGESTED SEGMENTS	QUESTIONS
CPI Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blogs Podcasts Documentary Videos Interactive Graphics and Maps Slideshows Searchable Databases Sharing Tools Downloadable Materials 	<p>Non-Segment/General Items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Traffic by source and trends 2. Traffic by key referral sources and trends 3. Quality of traffic sources based on time on site, page views, bounce rate, and frequency of visits. 4. Total downloads <p>Segment Specific Items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Percent of total site traffic in each segment and how it is trending. 6. Measure engagement by segment—degree of interactivity with segment content or tool (usage)
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twitter Facebook YouTube Link Sharing Sites 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Total audience base in each area and trends (growth rate). 2. Degree of interaction in each area 3. Viral nature of content by area 4. Reach in each area 5. Referrals to CPI site <p><i>Note: All the above do not apply to link sharing sites. The primary metric for link sharing sites is the volume of traffic they refer back to CPI and related trends</i></p>
Publication Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Top 10 Partners 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Total CPI articles published/cited by partner 2. Total referral traffic by partner 3. Quality of referred traffic by partner—time on site, page depth and bounce rate
Mobile Platforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platforms by Type 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Total site visits by platform 2. Relative quality of mobile visitors 3. Type of content consumed by mobile visitors. 4. Relative engagement of mobile platform visitors
Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email Search Engine Optimizations/ Paid Search Marketing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Percent of total site traffic by campaign source and how it’s trending 2. Quality of campaign traffic 3. If paid campaign, ROI
Interactive Webinars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NA 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Total attendance numbers for initial webinar 2. Total downloads of webinar material 3. Traffic to webinar content and trends

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