

WHITE PINE LIBRARY COOPERATIVE

The A-B-C's of Q's & A's

Thinking Like a Journalist
in a Library Setting



Libraries have accelerated and expanded their media savvy over the last 10 years

My first week at Ferndale,
in early 2010, I was asked to create a
Library Blog...

& I remember asking myself,
Why would a library need a blog?
And then I quickly told myself:
Of COURSE a library needs a blog!

The next month, we started our
Facebook Page. And then Twitter, and
then Instagram, and then even
Snapchat and Pinterest.

Beyond Self-Promotion... Libraries Can Create Compelling Content that Crafts a Narrative

This Content can be FOR & ABOUT
our Community & involve INTERVIEWS

Library History
Staff Profiles
Local History
Local Authors
Local Musicians
Local Artists
Educational Content / Student Engagement

The Library's web presence can become a
platform for presenting narratives & interviews
about ALL of these topics of local interest

Library Staff as Storytellers

Three Outlets for Journalistic Brevity & Brio

WRITING

Blogs, Social Media Captions, Press Releases, Event Descriptions

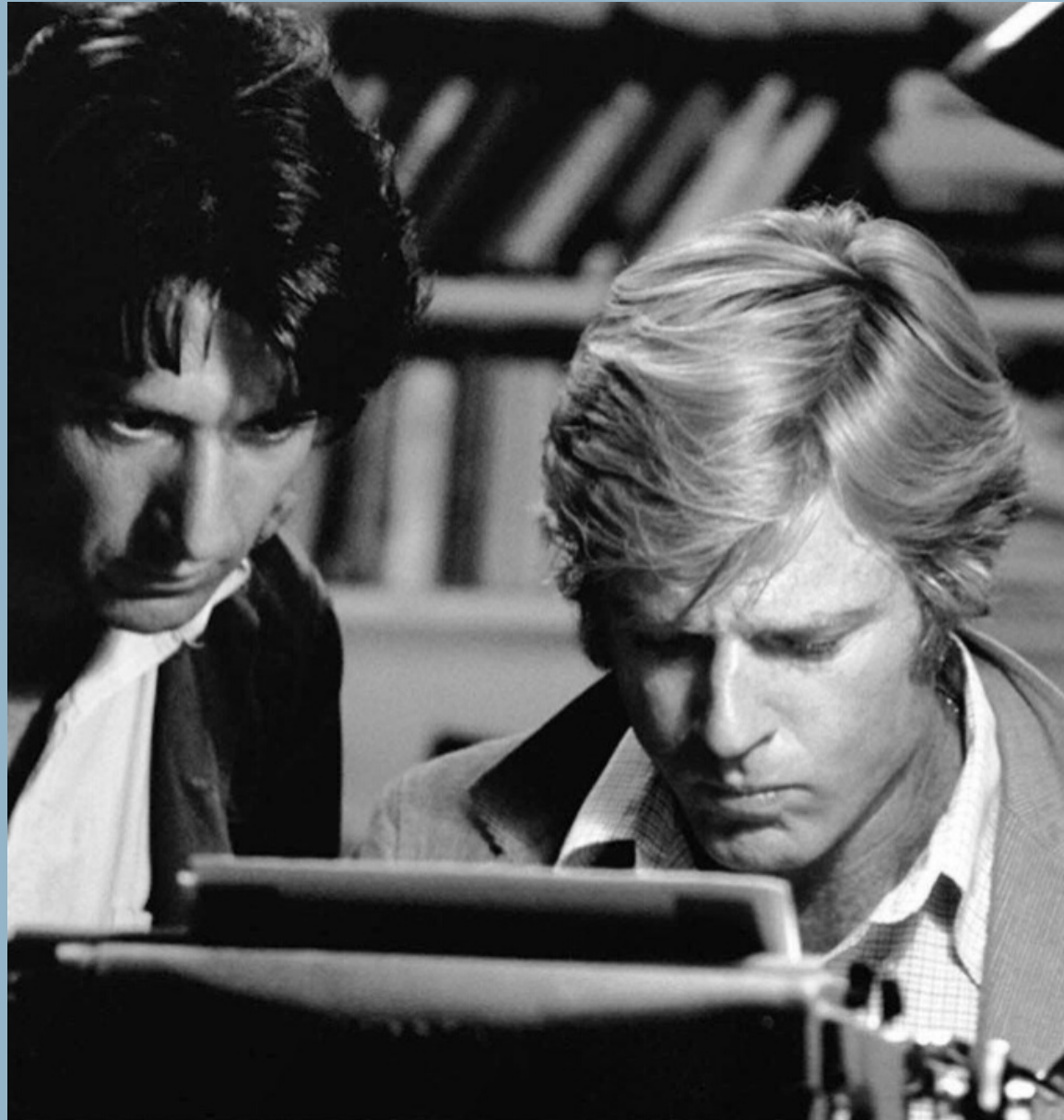
STORYTELLING

Crafting a Narrative for your Library and your Community

INTERVIEWING

Your blog, your YouTube channel, your Instagram's IGTV feed, and potentially your podcast can all require strong interviewing skills.

BENEFITS OF ALWAYS BEING INFORMATIVE & CONCISE



COMMUNICATING BOTH EFFECTIVELY & COHERENTLY

You're a Reporter and your Patrons are your Readers

Library Staff can be,
and often are
Content Creators:

Social Media Captions

Event/Program Info

Blogs

Press Releases

Instructional Videos

Updates about Collections

Digital & Old-fashioned Flyers

and

Virtual Programming

Proofreading is Paramount

Libraries are viewed as institutions of higher learning, which means we definitely don't get a pass when it comes to even the smallest of typos...

If you are a content creator for your library, make sure one (and ideally, two) others on staff are checking your work.

This holds for even the smallest bit of communicate, including social media captions.

Accurate | Clear | Correct

GRAMMATICAL ELOQUENCE
IS A DISCIPLINE ONTO ITSELF





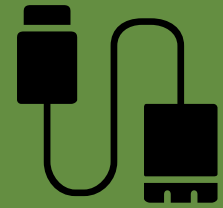
The Benefits of Looking & Working Ahead

Deadlines Can Do You Good

Create a timetable for content,
especially if you are scheduling interviews

WE'RE NOT ONLY DECIDING WHAT OUR PATRONS NEED TO KNOW,
BUT WHEN THEY NEED TO KNOW IT...

JOURNALISTS ARE NATURALLY
DETAIL-ORIENTED WORKERS



BUT SO ARE LIBRARIANS AND
LIBRARY STAFF...

WHEN LIBRARY WORKERS START
THINKING LIKE JOURNALISTS, IT
PREDOMINANTLY SHIFTS THE
FOCUS OF THEIR OWN
ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHS
INTO IMPROVING THEIR
COMMUNICATION SKILLS.

A JOURNALIST IS CONSTANTLY
CONSIDERING WHAT THEIR
READERS ARE THINKING; WE CAN
CONSIDER WHAT OUR PATRONS
OUR THINKING...

Beyond thinking
about what our
"readers" might like,
we are thinking on
our feet when we're
in the midst of an
Interview

Social Media

THINKING IN HEADLINES
&
NOT BURRYING LEDES

A VOICE FOR YOUR LIBRARY

Social Media captions allow us to inject verve, humor, but also eloquence into the messaging and the narrative of our library

ATTENTION-GRABBING

Make sure you know what your patrons will find most exciting about a post, a resource, or a program, and accentuate that.

BE CONCISE!

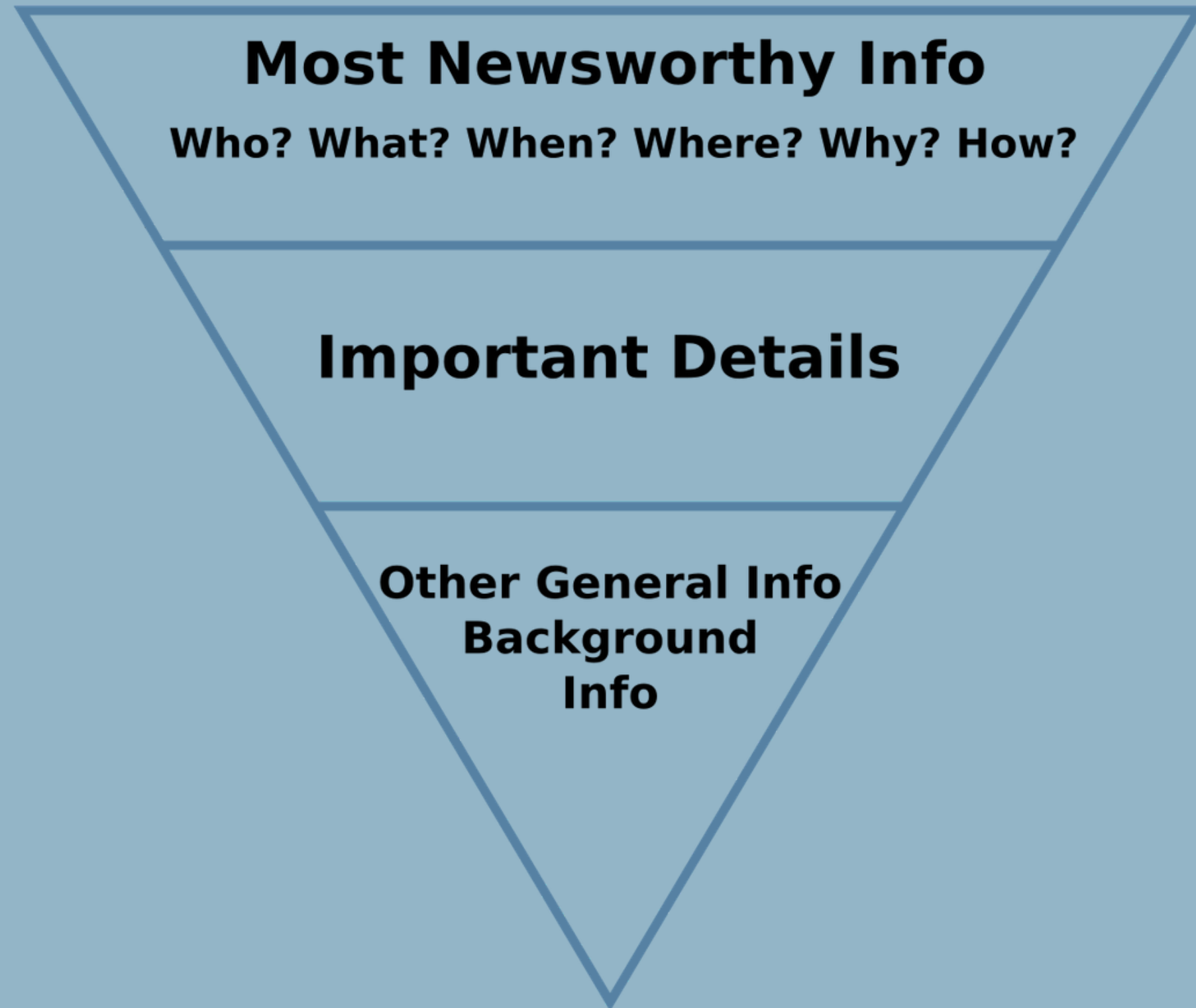
Make sure the most important aspects of your post or your event are clear from the get-go.

THERE ARE STILL PRESS
OUTLETS IN PRINT AND ONLINE
THAT ARE LIKELY INTERESTED IN
WRITING ABOUT A NEW EVENT
OR A NEW RESOURCE AT YOUR
LIBRARY...

CRAFTING A BRIEF, INFORMATIVE
PRESS RELEASE WILL MAKE IT
EASIER FOR THEM TO WRITE A
STORY ABOUT YOU.

CREATING A PRESS RELEASE CAN
ALSO HELP FEED INTO CONTENT
FOR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS.

News Story Structure



BRAINSTORM SOURCES
AND STORIES THAT
WOULD BE OF INTEREST
TO YOUR PATRONS:
LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS,
ARTISTS, AUTHORS,
LOCAL BUSINESSES,
OR EVEN TIDBITS OF
LOCAL HISTORY
(POTENTIALLY FROM LONG-TIME RESIDENTS
OR YOUR LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY)

OR, CONSIDER
FOLLOWING THE
'STORYCORPS' MODEL

Newspaper Lingo: "Human Interest" Stories

Features that are not "hard news"
but instead place People at
the "heart" of the story.



THE CLICHE ABOUT
LIBRARY STAFF IS THAT
THEY ARE INTROVERTS

BUT INTERVIEWING
REQUIRES US TO
ENGAGE OUR MORE
EXTROVERTED SIDE

REPLACE THE WORD
'INTERVIEW' WITH
'CONVERSATION' OR
'CHAT...'

- Know what questions you're going to ask and why you're going to ask them.
- Make sure your questions have a "flow..." (Have them written-out and on-hand)
- Adapt your questions based on the medium:
is this for a blog? podcast?
- Listen closely and carefully to each response; allow for improvisational follow-ups

Thinking Like an Interviewer

...continued

- Give your guest/subject a platform
- Challenge them with blunt/tough questions
- Take notes for yourself during the interview
- Silences are inevitable, let them run their course
- If you get to your final question, ask yourself:
did I get what I wanted?

Four Ideal Areas to Cover for (almost) ANY Interview

1.) SIGNIFICANCE

What is special about this person's story, or about what they do?

2.) JOURNEY & DEVELOPMENT

How did they get to where they are / How did they develop their talent, trade, or disposition?

3.) INFLUENCES & FORMATIVE EXPERIENCES

These questions always lead to good anecdotes

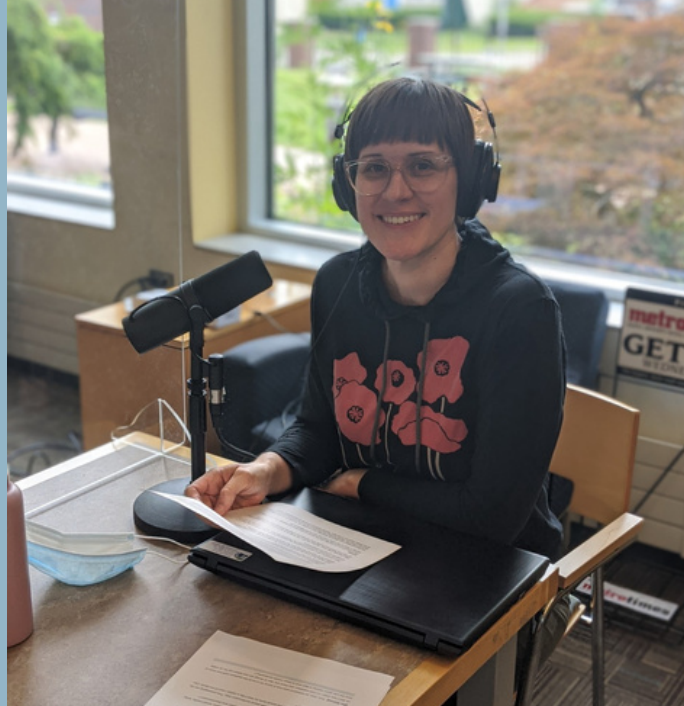
4.) FULFILLMENT OR ACHIEVEMENTS

What are the accomplishments or satisfactions they've found in life, in their community, in others?

If all else fails, there's always:
WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN & WHY

Ways and Means of Interviewing in a Library Setting

....but you're going to need some editing...



FOR A BLOG

- Handheld Digital Recorders
- Q&A over Email

FOR A PODCAST

- Recorded ZOOM Meeting
- Handheld Digital Recorder
- You can also use an app on your phone
- USB Mic for Recording & Streaming on PC and Mac

FOR A VIDEO

- Digital SLR Camera
- Your Phone
- Recorded ZOOM Meeting

EXTRA SETS OF EYES

Before publishing or sharing your interview, test whether its coherent and compelling by having staff members read it first.

THE INTERVIEW IS NOT THE STORY

Be ruthless when it comes to appraising which portions of your entire conversation will be interesting to a wide audience.

GAUGE ATTENTION SPANS

Cut out excess, redundancy, or encumbering details



"The secret to editing your work is simple: you need to become its reader instead of its writer."

-Zadie Smith



Wordpress



Youtube / IGTV



Facebook



StoryCorps

Outlets

PLACES TO PUBLISH YOUR
ARTICLE, BLOG, VIDEO,
COMMUNITY CONVERSATION
OR PODCAST

...so many platforms..., so little time...

LIBRARIES AREN'T SELLING ANYTHING...

We're active on social media, and we have a PAGE just like any other small business, but our primary purpose is to engage our community with culturally enriching content

STORYTELLING IS VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING

Normally, we might have in-person presentations, with local authors or local historians: your interview can substitute for that missed connection

REFOCUS ON THE LOCAL

Emphasize the importance of local history or the achievements and efforts of dynamic residents and local organizations.

Why a Library Should See Itself as a Storyteller



Key Questions for (almost) Any Interview

What are some of your most vivid memories....?

What was one of your most formative experiences...?

Who has been a profound influence upon your life...?

What do you find most fulfilling about (...their job, their art, their cause, their work)?

What are some aspects about ____ that you think go unnoticed?

What keeps you motivated?

**TELL ME
MORE!**



LISTENING is not a Passive Exercise

Your voice, your face & eyes, your body language,
can all play a part in engaging your Interview Subject

Think of Barbara Walters, Katie Couric, Oprah, Larry King...

mmhmm, tell me more, you don't say, oh really?

And, remember...

Sometimes your best question is the one you didn't write down