

Sabbatical Report: Spring 2025

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The stated goal of my semester-long sabbatical was to advance my third Book, an edited book on teaching the intangibles of journalism. This edited book follows up on my first solo-authored book, *The Journalism Behind Journalism: Going Beyond the Basics to Train Effective Journalists in a Shifting Landscape* – and includes voices of journalism professors, researchers, and practitioners from around the world. The main objective of this book is to teach journalists and journalism students intangible and resilience skills to help them report effectively in adverse conditions, which are becoming more and more common for people doing journalism around the world. These conditions include war or conflict; adversarial or authoritarian governments; natural disasters; systemic racism, marginalization, or exclusion; and other crises or restrictions.

This book includes perspectives that can be additive to my initial book. This new edited book expands on my second book by focusing on additional intangible and resilience skills, including additional voices and additional skills, including understanding the impact of content, managing vulnerability, cultivating worthiness, countering feelings of imposter syndrome, and expanding our understanding of expertise, identity, and who is a source as strengths of good journalism. At the same time, journalists must know how to maintain the safety and well-being of themselves, their sources, and their loved ones as they report on antagonistic power brokers. These skills can help today's journalists better inform and enlighten the public, speak truth to power, and serve as a voice of the people. This book also provides guidance on how to teach and cultivate these intangible skills so critical to doing journalism well. Mastering these skills can help students become journalists who can truly help inform, contextualize, explain, engage audiences, and ensure a strong, healthy society.

As part of this project, I was to write two chapters, the intro and conclusion, and begin editing chapters written by other authors as they were submitted.

Chapter authors include:

- Jennifer Thomas, Associate Professor, Journalism; Howard University
- Anita Varma, Associate Professor, Communication, UT Austin
- John Watson, Associate Professor, Media Law & Journalism Ethics; American University

- Aubrey Nagle, Resolve Philly
- Daniela Grassau & Constanza Ortega-Gunckel, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
- Jan Faizullah, University of Peshawar
- Qun Wang, Assistant Professor, Communication & Media Studies; Fordham University
- Jesús Ayala, Assistant Professor, Journalism; Director, Beach TV News; CSU Long Beach

The sabbatical leave afforded me the opportunity to significantly advance this project. I accomplished the following:

- 1) Finalized the book contract with Routledge. Contract negotiations and book development talks were substantive and took several months to finalize. The end result is a stronger book proposal with a more focused topic and goals.
 - a) As part of the updated book proposal, an additional chapter was added, which I am writing.
 - b) Book development discussions also included updating and advancing the ideas contained in many chapter proposals. I spent a substantial amount of time communicating with the other authors to finalize the approaches and goals of their chapters, develop a consistent chapter structure, and synthesize the ideas of each author into a coherent whole.
 - c) Finalized chapter and book formatting to ensure consistency throughout the read.
 - d) NOTE: Protracted negotiations with the publisher delayed a portion of the writing. Nevertheless, much has been accomplished, and the work is on track to be completed on schedule.
- 2) Collaborated with chapter authors to finalize ideas, concepts, and topic areas.
 - a) These collaborations included emails, zoom meetings, and phone calls. These meetings were designed to solidify each chapter focus and topic area and ensure that each chapter is unique and covers something different.
- 3) Wrote drafts of my original two chapters.
 - a) Sabbatical afforded me the opportunity to spend focused and un-interrupted time writing and researching, leading to solid drafts of my introduction and conclusion chapter.

- b) Research involved identifying case studies and examples of the intangible skills discussed in this book being utilized in real-world news coverage situations. It also involved identifying recent academic work that has explored the ideas the book touches upon to ensure our assertions are supported by data and examples.
- 4) Attend a writer's retreat and workshops.
 - a) As part of my efforts to dedicate focused time to writing and editing, I attended a week-long book retreat in Bucine, Italy. The retreat included a mentor who was a former journalist, which allowed me to get feedback related to my goals and from a mentor who understood the writing style and approach of this type of book. As a result, my writing benefitted, and the chapters are stronger than they would have been without such feedback and guidance.
- 5) Began editing chapters submitted by authors involved in this project.
 - a) At the time of my sabbatical conclusion, three chapters had been submitted - out of seven. I have edited these chapters and am in the process of synthesizing feedback to the authors.

This comprehensive volume on journalism pedagogy is needed more and more in academe and practice, because journalism professors, researchers, and practitioners increasingly recognize the need to move beyond teaching the basic skills that have defined journalism education for decades. That traditional approach is no longer adequate to comprehensively and contextually cover an increasingly complex, polarized, and fractured world. In addition to teaching students how to write, edit, interview, research, and develop story ideas, there is now a critical need to teach skills such as curiosity, empathy, tenacity, and other intangibles that were formerly taken for granted. Though such recognition exists, very little has been written to help guide those who seek to incorporate these lessons into their curricula.

In summary, sabbatical afforded me valuable time and space to advance this substantive and complex work, collaborate with the many others involved, and position the project for timely completion and submission. I am proud of the work that has been completed and excited to see this book published, so it can contribute to what is currently scant but in demand content on the subject of intangible and resilience skills in journalism.