The Innovation Project

What: You’ll go through the process of preparing and actually submitting an innovative idea for news to the Knight News Challenge (see newschallenge.org).

Why: Think of this as a hands-on midterm. No essay here. Instead, you’ll put into practice the things we’ve studied so far about the Web, digitization, challenges for the news biz, and opportunities to improve how journalism is conducted and how it gets paid for. Plus, you get a chance to secure some real money in the process! Even if you don’t win this year, the experience will prepare you to think like an innovator and entrepreneur in whatever field you enter.

Evaluation: Your grade will depend on (1) your adherence to my guidelines below and those provided by the KNC; (2) your integration of the theories and best practices we have learned so far in class; and (3) your overall creativity, effort, and interest in this project—trust me, it shows through.

Deliverables: The project will come in three parts, as follows—

1) Innovation Review: Part 1 is designed to help you get a much better feel for the News Challenge, past and present, so as to understand how your own submission could best meet the requirements. You’re going to write an assessment of roughly 750 words (single-spaced) that evaluates News Challenge winners from 2007-09, in particular, and gives some additional attention to current entries. Please organize this report into three sections: (1) What did previous winners do well? What kinds of trends do you see? Themes? Key approaches? Give examples, with links. (2) Conversely, what are their weaknesses? What could have been done better? This part may be hard to write but will help you spot niches to exploit. Give examples, with links. (3) Finally, describe your own project idea—even in broad terms—and connect it what you’ve described in this report. Give me the basic elevator pitch: Be clear, concise, and specific. Format: Please send this to me by the start of class Thursday, either via e-mail (with links embedded) or as a post to your blog (in which case, e-mail me the link to the blog post).

2) Innovation Presentation: Now that you have a better sense for what’s out there and some germinating ideas for your own project, you’ll make a short 6-minute presentation to the class on that topic area. So, let’s say you’re interested in crowdsourcing. For your presentation, you might want to quickly show us an existing example of crowdsourcing, and then briefly explain how yours would go beyond that in X, Y and Z ways. The goal here is communicate your idea well enough that you can get some initial feedback, in addition to informing us all about your chosen area of innovation.
3) **Innovation Proposal:** The last and most important component of this project is simply completing the News Challenge application and submitting it on time (by Oct. 15, 2009). This application will test your ability to take an innovative and entrepreneurial-minded approach to the future of news, and propose a venture that could very well become a reality down the road. For credit, you need to send me e-mail confirmation that your proposal was received by the News Challenge office within the time frame they specified.

**Grading:** Review, 5% of your semester grade; Presentation, 5%; Proposal, 25%

**Schedule and Deadlines:**

— *Tuesday, Sept. 29:* Reading due: WWGD?, pp. 1-69 (response on blog)

— *Thursday, Oct. 1:* Innovation Review due via e-mail by 8 a.m.

— *Tuesday, Oct. 6:* Innovation Presentations begin; continue Thursday 10/8

— *Thursday, Oct. 8:* Reading due: WWGD?, pp. 70-118 (response on blog)

— *Tuesday, Oct. 13:* Rough draft of News Challenge proposal for workshop

— *Thursday, Oct. 15:* Innovation Proposal due: After finalizing your submission, send me via e-mail (1) a copy of your proposal and (2) confirmation that the Knight Foundation received it by the deadline. You will receive zero credit on the proposal unless I have both of these items in hand. (This Thursday will be an in-class workshop.)

— *Tuesday, Oct. 20:* Reading due: WWGD?, pp. 119-144 (response on blog)