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Today’s papers are full of stories about a digital revolution out of control: NSA revelations, face-recognition software, and the many ways corporations mine our identities. Those are all important stories. Yet, missing from this mix are equally important stories—stories about media consolidation, the IP transition, and the digital divide—that tell us how the digital revolution has impacted people of dissimilar classes and geographies very differently.

These are the kinds of stories we rely on the independent news media to tell. Free from shareholders and unwilling to kowtow to politicians, the independent news media serves as the ultimate check on the powerful. Too often, however, reporters at independent news outlets shie away from important media policy stories because they are too hard to understand or too difficult to tell.

That’s why the Media Consortium’s Media Policy Reporting and Education Project is so critical. Over the past three years, the MPREP program has trained 18 reporters at 12 outlets to tell the public about media consolidation, monopoly prison phones, and the lack of broadband access—and also about how communities are fighting back, with low power fm, community broadband, and an insistence on net neutrality.

In 2014, we plan to continue this program, providing training to 10 reporters through 10-12 briefings open to the public. To deepen this training, we will bring these reporters to the FCC for an intensive two-day workshop. There they will meet face-to-face with policy experts, and learn how to read through FCC documents to uncover new stories. Likewise, the policy experts will learn from reports what angles make a good story, and how they can work together to best inform the public.

The program will result in the production of dozens of feature stories on issues that impact real people’s lives—the importance of free internet at libraries so children and the unemployed alike can surf the web; the necessity for ensuring that seniors still have lifeline phone coverage; the guarantee that a woman on a reservation can use a cell phone to call her doctor in the next town—and reporters trained and ready for whatever new media policy issue comes their way.

The Media Consortium requests $35,000 to create this program; $25,000 for the year-long training, and $10,000 for travel to DC for 10 reporters.