



A report to The Arca Foundation
Submitted by The Media Consortium, a project of the Foundation for National Progress
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Throughout the past six months, The Media Consortium has put dozens of media organizations on the fast track to integrate innovation and experimentation into their work, helping them produce cutting-edge, high-impact, sustainable journalism.

Evolve for the Changing Media Landscape

In early 2010, The Media Consortium launched its dynamic **Incubation and Innovation Labs**, which are designed to support our members in conducting rapid prototyping as a low-cost way to test new business, technology, community engagement, and content development models at a scale that they would not be able to achieve alone. The program has two components, the Digital Refresh Workshop and Digital Innovation Studio. The Incubation and Innovation Labs were reported on in both [Nieman Journalism Lab](#) and [MediaShift](#).

Developed in early 2010 and tested among three organizations through the summer, the **Digital Refresh Workshop (DRW)** used one-on-one support to help our members analyze and innovate around key digital strategies. DRW participants—*The American Prospect*, ColorLines, and The Uptake—represented a variety of media organizations all at different stages of their digital strategic planning process.

At the completion of the Digital Refresh Workshop, participating organizations had completed an in-depth analysis of their current digital profiles, nailed down future goals to revamp their digital strategies, and initiated at least one experiment to reach those goals.

“...The practical media smarty pantsyness that TMC brought to bear in the workshop will, I think, forever change our organization's sense of what impact for racial justice is possible with a news and action website.” —Noel Rabinowitz, Director of Media Programs, ColorLines/Applied Research Center

To help a larger group of TMC members understand, navigate, and experiment with new ways to overcome crisis and take advantage of new technological opportunities, we launched our **Digital Innovation Studio** in 2010 with a series of small group labs on the following topics:

- Moving into mobile: Cell phones, e-readers, and iPads, oh my!
- Integrating journalism with community engagement and community-building models
- Experimenting with new revenue-generating opportunities

Organized by Media Consortium staff, each of these small group labs included regular conference calls with outside experts, an in-person meeting for lab participants, online information sharing/communication spaces, and ongoing research into specified topic areas. The final result of each lab was at least one experiment, tested by the participating members, and supported and funded by The Media Consortium.

To date, experiments have been chosen and launched for the Mobile Lab and the Community and Journalism Lab. The Revenue Lab will be deciding their experiment in January. Mobile Lab participants chose a hackathon as their experiment and brought 50 journalists and programmers together to develop 6 groundbreaking mobile apps over a weekend. For more information about the hackathon, visit <http://bit.ly/hackrecap>. Community and Journalism lab participants are embarking on a partnership with the Public Insight Network, a database of over 90,000 sources that will help members experiment with audience engagement and crowd sourced reporting.

In Fall 2010, TMC staff worked with a team from Mozilla, The Medill School of Journalism, and [Hacks/Hackers](#) to develop a six week, peer-to-peer course titled **“Open Journalism on the Open Web.”** The course was designed to bring programmers and journalists together to educate one another about their respective fields and mutually benefit. Over 40 journalists and programmers participated in the course.

As part of our work to develop programs that educate journalists for the next evolution of news, TMC also launched the **Chicago chapter of Hacks/Hackers** to further develop the educational opportunities for and connections between programmers and journalists.

Foster Editorial Collaborations

The Media Consortium organized a content collaboration and distribution wire for the **2010 US Social Forum**, which took place in Detroit this past June. Over 15 Media Consortium members, grassroots media outlets, and social justice groups participated. The USSF organizing committee used this content to populate both the USSF 2010 official website and the daily print publication of USSF, Terra Viva, which circulated among over 10,000 social change activists every day of the social forum.

From Oct. 21-Nov. 4, The Media Consortium organized and worked with seven media outlets to support and promote important reporting and analysis around the short and long-term impact of the Supreme Court's *Citizen's United* ruling in a project we called **Campaign Cash**. More than two-dozen articles, videos, and radio pieces on the campaign cash issue were produced in just a week and a half. The Media Consortium coordinated and contracted promotional efforts for this project.

Our work helped influence the national conversation. Both the *New York Times* and NPR used our coined phrase of "campaign cash" in their coverage. Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) retweeted one of our blog posts, and Bill Moyers mentioned TMC Blogger Zach Carter's reporting in an address to Boston University. What we were able to accomplish in less than two weeks is just a snapshot of the power of combined original reporting and intense promotional efforts.

Expand Audiences and Build Core Infrastructure

Designed to heighten the visibility of our members' content on key political issues via smartly-written round up blogs and headline feeds, the **MediaWires** program has become a key tool for expanding the reach of our members' reporting to new audiences, a launching pad for new writers, and a tool for raising public awareness of oft-overlooked issues in the economy, health care, immigration, and environmental realms.

Over thirty-five organizations, including blogs and news organizations, TMC members, advocacy groups, and non-profits, are reprinting and sharing the MediaWire blogs on a regular basis. Collectively, these audiences have an audience of over 7 million. In fall 2010, we piloted five short video interviews with reporters at TMC member outlets. We look forward to exploring more multimedia opportunities for this program in the future.

In its second year, our **Independent Media Internship** program successfully recruited and placed five interns with the Uptake, the Washington Independent, Link TV, *Yes! Magazine*, and the Nation Institute in 2010. These interns completed a three-month, full-time, paid editorial internship that offered unparalleled, hands on experience working with leading independent media outlets. TMC staff recruited a diverse set of young people and put them on the path to become the next generation of media leaders.

Throughout the year, interns produced substantial research and reporting to MC members. One intern contributed to a major collaborative project between the Nation Institute and AlterNet in launching a citizen reporting project tracking the Tea Party. Another intern identified an interest in immigration reporting and ended up writing a weekly post on immigration news.

The Media Consortium developed and successfully launched a **new membership strategy** this summer. We've also rebuilt our membership committee and have brought several new member organizations on board. The new membership strategy includes a new, introductory associate member tier, which is an easy entry point for young or smaller organizations that may not have the capacity to participate in all TMC projects, but can contribute a diversity of audience and share innovative business strategies. New TMC members include:

Members:

Earth Island Journal

Truthout

Orion Magazine

Associate Members:

Feet in 2 Worlds

Free Speech Radio News

Western Citizen

TMC's current director, Tracy Van Slyke, is transitioning out in early 2011 and the organization is currently seeking a dynamic new director to lead the organization into its next phase. In the meantime, TMC staff have built a strong infrastructure and strategic plan to continue to build on our focus on innovation and deepen and expand our core programs in 2011. TMC is also preparing to launch a pilot program to seed and inform journalism around the issue of media policy.