**Description**

What is the impact of a news story? Is it how many people a story reaches? How long users spend with the story? What if impact is more than that—what if we really want to measure whether a story changes conversations? How would we measure that?

Over the past four years, a network of independent news outlets (The Media Consortium) has worked with a team of researchers at Harvard to test out a quantitative means to measure whether stories change conversations. Briefly, the researchers applied an intelligent algorithm (the same used by Crimson Hexagon) to the full Twitter firehose to determine whether copublished stories on predetermined topics changed sentiment around those topics.

The results are now in, and we want to share them with ONA! The bottom line is that researchers did find a measurable change in sentiment when copublished stories launched. This indicates 1) that it may be possible to create a tool to measure how news stories change conversations and 2) that even small outlets can create measurable impact when they work together.

Ben Schneer, one of the researchers, will present the data. We suggest pairing him with Manolia Charlotin, The Media Consortium’s director of special projects, who oversaw the journalism side of the experiment.

**What will your audience gain?**

Literally no one in the world has done a journalism-based impact experiment with the rigor of the experiment we have just finished. The results have not been previously published or announced. So ONA will be the first time that anyone will be able to hear the full details of this research and the results we achieved.

What’s truly exciting about this research is that, although carried out by academics, the project and its results are very real-world. For example, over 40 outlets participated in 35 separate copublishing instances, including Truthout, Grist, AlterNet, In These Times, Bitch, Yes! magazine. We thus demonstrated that outlets of any size can make the kind of impact that changes conversations.

Our second speaker, Manolia Charlotin, will provide a detailed roadmap explaining what was required of outlets and what challenges outlets faced in participating. She will also talk about the many qualitative benefits outlets experienced from working together to co-publish their content.

Finally, we fully expect to launch a second set of experiments to see if we can develop an impact measurement tool based on this work. We will welcome audience members as potential participants in this second round.

Those in the audience will thus come away from this session with

1) a whole new way to think about and measure impact;

2) a roadmap to create journalistic partnerships that we have proven increase impact;

3) a chance to participate in the next phase of this project

**A Tweet**

Impact by the Numbers: a new way to think about, produce, and measure impact that’s available to outlets of any size

**How does your submission contribute to the diversity of the conference?**

Our submission contributes to the diversity of the conference in three ways:

1. Too often journalism lives in a bubble. In this presentation we are bringing cutting edge work from quantitative sociology to the conference. Especially in the area of impact, academics are the ones doing cutting-edge work: we need to hear from them!
2. The outlets that worked on this impact experiment and that will be represented here are small, with budgets ranging from $250,000K to $1M. We often look to the largest outlets as leaders on projects like impact, so it’s refreshing to see contributions from outlets at this size.
3. Manolia Charlotin, one of our two recommended presenters, is a Haitian-American woman who previously ran The Haitian Times. Along with her leadership at the Media Consortium, she brings in a deeper qualitative sense of the impact that can be made by community media.