Report Back on NCMR

**1. Describe one thing you learned at NCMR that you didn't know before (can be an experience you had or a person you met as well)**

I learned that on Capitol Hill now, a Congress member with a sketchy idea for a bill will be told, "Um, you don't want to get 'SOPA-ed.' " That is a testament to the potential for powerful, rapid and organic uprisings against bills that would hamper the internet or make us pay twice -- or more -- to access it.

The sessions I DID attend brought together the best sources for the internet freedom story: Friday’s “What’s Next for Internet Policy?” and “After SOPA: The New Wave of Internet Activism.” Jo Ellen Kaiser’s TMC session was productive; she brought together the MPREPP reporters with policy advocates – including amalia deloney of CMJ – for a good give and take about generating, framing and maximizing stories about media and media reform topics.

I mostly got a better sense of what media outlets are out there and how they share the same content across platforms (radio, TV, print, online...) This is something FSRN definitely should do to make money. I also learned a lot (from you and others) about the pros and cons of seeking foundation money and how to best go about forming those relationships.

I went to meet people involved in the media reform movement. Most of them I already know. Like Bob McChesney, for example. NCMR is the only time and place that I have been able to sit and chat with Bob about the business of journalism, consolidation and other trends affecting content and the distribution of news and information.  While these talks are almost always too brief, they are informative and give me something to chew on for the months ahead.

Two fold: meeting fellow grantees from The Chicago Reporter and New America. I learned about the kind of work they do, how we can collaborate -- possibly --this year, and also their take on the overall media landscape: what they cover, why they cover it, what they're seeing in their coverage area. The biggest takeaway from me at these things is the networking.  I go there to meet people in the business. During the media policy discussion on Saturday, I made future news contacts from the media policy grant program that I would not have had before. Not only would I not have their contact, but I would not know what they think regarding the issues they cover. Because of NCMR I am now in touch with Carrie Biggs Adams of the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians: a good source for conservative attacks on public broadcasting; David Green, who is working on projects about how the media covers aspects of the War on Terrorism; Amalia Deloney who is a great source on social class issues related to media policy and Todd Wolfson, a media mobilization activist and journalism professor at Rutgers who had a great story about Comcast and the telecom lobby's impact in the Philadelphia area. This could be a story I pursue this year. Never heard about it until Saturday.

Alex Friedmann of Prison Legal News outlined the kickbacks companies get from prison phone calls in a way that I hadn't heard before

1. Before attending the NCMR, I did not realize how broad an impact media coverage had on immigration struggles. The "coming out" of undocumented activists and related media coverage has helped humanize the immigration debate, but much more needs to be done to keep families together and safe. Mainstream media coverage of immigration issues has framed the debate in way that often ignores the impacts that immigration enforcement has on families and individuals, and if more people could see how these policies impact the lives of real people, immigration "reform" may look quite different.

We were not aware of the specifics around issues of Internet privacy and the very real threat posed to individuals and journalists

I covered 10 things in my blog post but the biggest thing I learned is how independent media outlets work together and how that is essential to the free flow of information in this country.

Session on role hackers play in saving our democracy was interesting and something I didn't know about. Also meeting Patrick Kitano and learning about his new Twitter-based distribution network.

I learned quite a bit more about surveillance, especially how internet policy relates to data mining and monitoring. We've been thinking of covering surveillance, so that was particularly useful and the policy angle gives us something extra: its a place for public comment and debate. Surveillance feels overwhelming, and if we can convince listeners that they're able to understand and influence policy it will seem less insurmountable.

Also learned a bit more about broadband access.

I learned so much from a panel on privacy and surveillance. The panel was a mix of an attorney, academic, activist and technologist. I thought they all brought really unique perspectives to how privacy and surveillance are interpreted through law and how it affects average users. I was especially interested in Seeta Pena Gangadharan's contributions to the panel. She described how the steps some activists and technologists recommend to secure one's identity online are complicated, especially for first time computer users. I also learned from the panel that Tor was created by the Department of Defense.

However, aside from policy education, I learned a new perspective on the intersection between art, policy and activism at another panel. The founders of CultureStrike discussed how artists are often relegated into production roles in activist efforts and their creative process is not respected as "real" activism. The discussion of artists happened in a larger discussion of how cultural change precedes political change and we need a cultural revolution led by artists just as much as one led by activists. The panel also challenged the dichotomy between artists and activists.

**2. Based on what you learned at NCMR, what topics/ areas would you like TMC briefings to cover--what do you want to learn more about? what do you want to cover?**

“Is Facebook a Threat to a Free Press?”

More briefings on FCC issues would be great too, since that agency gets covered so little in Washington!

I think the reporters in the group should also collaborate more with one another in finding sources or even doing tape syncs (for radio folks) in our different towns. Let's focus on the advantages of our spread out geography!

From my own point of view and area of expertise and coverage at In These Times, I want more on media consolidation and just the business of making media. How does one make a living at this, or is journalism becoming a hobby, as John Nichols pointed out during his panel on Friday. I'd like to here about the political ramifications of a dwindling mainstream press (in theory) designed to serve the public to one that is privately funded by public interest groups, whether its the Kaiser Family Trust or Koch Industries. Whatever side of the political aisle you are on, such a trend does tend to pull the rug out from under the main mission of a traditional and (again, in theory) unbiased press. This type of topic is right up your main panelists' alley. I am certain this is a subject Craig Aaron knows well.

I'm interested in learning more about online surveillance and internet privacy issues because it's something Making Contact would be interested in covering.  I'd also be interested in hearing more about "digital divide" issues- and particularly how communities are responding/ doing it themselves.

The media policy/ framing TMC discussion was useful in thinking about how we cover these issues.  What I took from that was that media policy is most engaging when connected with people's stories and interconnected issues (for example prison phone justice).  I'd like to hear about how broadband access and similar issues could be covered in the same way.

Topics to cover - immigration in the media, unions in the media, the human impacts of broadband/phone access issues, corporate schemes to dismantle community infrastructure initiative - media mobilization project.

I would like to hear more about efforts to set up neighborhood broadband networks and Wi-Fi zones in neighborhoods and what different communities are doing. I also want to hear about resistance to these efforts. I plan to blog on this especially because we have a Wi-Fi zone in the nearby city of Ventura (San Buenaventura) and I would like to help set one up in my city of Santa Paula.

I  came back with a heightened concern about surveillance and privacy. Would like to know more about how we can report on angles that aren't already being covered by our national security reporters.

Basically access issues, I didn't have time to run between access issues and surveillance workshops, so while i came home with a rudimentary understanding of broadband access and the ways in which individual cities are circumventing comcast, I'd love to know more.

I would like to hear more about current policy battles and what people are doing across the country to fight them. For example, I'd love to hear more about MAG-Net's efforts working with DC groups and groups across the country. I'd like to hear more about Allied Media Project's work in Detroit and Philly-based media justice groups in Philadelphia. I think often times policy work becomes very Hill-centric, but the real stories are on the ground.

The last call we had on the IP transition was great. It was a call with a locally-based group who works directly with people affected by deregulation and a national telecom policy expert. I thought this was helpful because we were presented with two possible sources for a story on the IP transition. I ended up calling up both of them and setting up interviews for my story on the IP transition.