



December 2006

Remember when Elvis changed American music from Memphis?

**Here's an invitation.** Come breathe some Memphis air in January 2007 and join a group of editors who together will focus on what has to change in our newsrooms for American journalism to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We'll call this Journalism That Matters - The Memphis Sessions.

It's an idea that Mike Fancher, editor-at-large for The Seattle Times and I dreamed up.

**Think of JTM – The Memphis Sessions as a kind of support group / think tank for change-minded editors.** The idea is to gather together a couple dozen forward-thinking editors from around the country and spend a couple of days learning from each other what we need to do to build 21<sup>st</sup>-century newsrooms. No hand-wringing. No whining. Just real-time plans for what we must do as editors to work faster, smarter, and without killing ourselves or our passion.

**Homework for The Memphis Sessions.** We'll use two documents as a baseline for our discussions. Each offers some thought-provoking ideas about how 21<sup>st</sup> century newsrooms might be organized and managed. You can download them from:

<http://www.mediagiraffe.org/jtm> . . . They are:

- 1) [The Next Newsroom. A White Paper for the 21st Century.](#) This blueprint has been developed over the past 12 months by editors associated with a change-driven program known as Journalism That Matters. Earlier JTM roundtables were hosted by The Fetzer Institute, the University of Missouri, and the University of Massachusetts as part of the Media Giraffe Project summit June 28-July 1. MGP director Bill Densmore will be in Memphis for our discussions.
- 2) [On Behalf of Journalism: A Manifesto for Change.](#) This manifesto was written by Geneva Overholser, the Curtis B. Hurley Chair in Public Affairs Reporting at the Missouri School of Journalism, Washington Bureau. Geneva's work emerged from a meeting at the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. Geneva will be in Memphis to help lead the discussions about the manifesto.

The timing for Journalism That Matters – The Memphis Sessions, is no accident.

Our group of editors will be meeting the day before, and on the opening day, of the National Conference on Media Reform. More than 1,700 media reformers from around the country will be here in Memphis to talk about the future of media. It's an impressive, big-name program. Some of the notables attending the National Conference on Media Reform include Bill Moyers, Ben Bagdikian, David Brock, Phil Donahue, Helen Thomas, Jane Fonda and Dan Gillmor. Check out the full program at [www.freepress.net/conference](http://www.freepress.net/conference)

Our events aren't connected, except that we will have plenty of cross-pollination with some of the media reformers. We'll invite some reformers and New Media leaders to our sessions. And, all editors who come to JTM -The Memphis Sessions can register for any/all programs for the

National Conference on Media Reform. So this will be a rare opportunity for reformers and established journalists to meet.

So, won't you come?

Journalism That Matters/Memphis Sessions have a clear focus. Real editors will plot real steps they can take in their newsrooms, their communities and in their own thinking to keep journalism vital and alive.

We'll gather on the afternoon of Thursday, Jan. 11 and continue through Friday afternoon Jan. 12. And, if you want to stay over, the media reform conference runs through the weekend and ends Sunday, Jan. 14.

My wife, Kate, has agreed to host a dinner for the editors at our home in Memphis. The dinner will give us a chance to mingle with our peers, let our hair down, and make the most of our creative time together. And, all of our sessions will be held just a few blocks from Beale Street so that we can mix in some fun after our work is over.

This isn't a sponsored event under the auspices of ASNE, no APME, or any newspaper group. We're gathering as an ad hoc group of editors committed to keeping journalism vital. If it works, we'll try to meet again, in other cities, at other appropriate times.

Peggy Holman and Stephen Silha, two Seattle-based facilitators, will join us to help us creatively work on issues and ideas important to the newsroom. Utilizing 'Open Space' technology and other processes for group discussions, they will provide some truly amazing tools to prompt creative thinking—among ourselves and in our communities.

If this sounds interesting, there are three things you need to do:

- 1) REGISTER -- Drop me an email or a call letting me know you want to come. We'll get \$75 from each attendee to cover some meals. Then go to the URL below to register by credit card. You can register for just JTM for \$75, or for JTM *and* the Media Reform Summit for a combined \$175. Here's the URL:

<https://www.123signup.com/event?id=qdqyq>.

- 2) LODGING -- Go to the FreePress lodging page (link below) and reserve a hotel room. With all the media reformers coming to town, you need to get a room *now*.

<http://www.freepress.net/conference/=Lodging07>

If you respond quickly, and you want to be in the same hotel with fellow editors or aren't staying over for the FreePress summit, email me and you can have one of a block of rooms I've set aside at the Holiday Inn Select for \$109/night for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, Jan. 11-14. Let me know if you want one of these, since this rate is not part of the FreePress blocks.

- 3) Bring your passion. It's up to us to save journalism.

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