



DECEMBER 2016

Spaceship Media is founded by Eve Pearlman and Jeremy Hay in the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election.



Spaceship Media's first project, **Officers & Students: A Conversation**, is launched.

JANUARY 2017

Talking Politics begins. This is our first women-only, cross-country conversation, bringing together Trump voters from Alabama and Clinton voters from California. The conversation took place on Facebook and lasted 2 months.



Spaceship Media partners with AL.com to examine the achievement gap that exists between white and black students in Alabama and nationwide, for a project titled **Tackling the Gap**. It brought together 60+ Alabama teachers of different races and from different grade levels to discuss the causes of this inequity, and to strategize to address it.



MARCH 2017

Talking Politics ends, but participants create their own Facebook group to continue the discussion after having such a positive experience talking across divides.



AUGUST 2017

50 California residents team up with Spaceship Media, **Univision**, the Bay Area News Group, and Southern California News Group to take part in **Talking Across Borders**, a discussion about the enforcement of immigration laws.

SEPTEMBER 2017

Along with Minnesota Public Radio/American Public Media, we supported a conversation called **Feeding The Future**, where all different types of farmers-- large and small, conventional and organic, joined in a technical, productive conversation about what modern-day farming practices will best suit our planet in the future.

OCTOBER 2017

Our partnership with the award-winning Seattle Times Education Lab begins for a project called **The Homeroom**, a conversation in which parents and guardians of students of color and teachers and paraeducators around Washington state discuss the inequities faced by many students of color and how to tackle that problem.

JANUARY 2018



Our biggest conversation yet, and our first nation-wide one, **The Many**, is launched. The Many brought together

over 400 women from across the country, of all different political stripes, into a Facebook group for a wide-ranging conversation that would last through the November midterm elections.

MARCH 2018



Guns, An American Conversation kicks off with a 2-day workshop at the Newseum in Washington, D.C. 21 participants with a wide range of opinions on guns met in person for the event, beginning a conversation that continued with a 150-person, moderated Facebook group.



Spaceship was born after the 2016 election to address the interlinked problems of decline in trust in journalism and the rise of polarization. All of us, journalists and non-journalists alike, face a challenging social and political landscape: polarization is on the rise, trust in journalism is strikingly low. Here is some readings if you're interested in polarization and how polarization impacts democracy and community.

POLARIZATION IMPACTING COMMUNITIES & JOURNALISM

Local News Is Dying, and It's Taking Small Town America With It

Bloomberg

Summary of the numerous negative effects of local journalism budget cuts, including lower voter turnout and higher municipal costs. This affects communities in rural, suburban, and urban areas, especially areas just outside of large cities. Minority communities are the most underserved by local news.

“Between 2003 and 2016, the percentage of Americans who said they have a great deal or a fair amount of trust in the media fell from 54% to 32% before recovering somewhat to 41% in 2017.”

Knight Foundation & Gallup

How we know journalism is good for democracy

Local News Lab

Compilation & summaries of numerous reports that point to how journalism benefits democracy, categorized by:

- Erosion in Civic Engagement
- Money on Local News Produces Hundred of Dollars in Public Benefit
- Local News is a First Draft of History
- Local News Builds Social Cohesion and Strengthens Community (and Vice Versa)

The Hidden Costs of Losing Your City's Newspaper

CityLab

Deep dive into the financial burden that communities across the country assume when a local paper folds, from short-term into the long-term.

Is Funding for Nonprofit Journalism Predetermining its Lack of Local Diversity?

Nonprofit Quarterly

Summarizes report covering nonprofit journalism funding, which tends to be highly concentrated among a few high profile organizations while most of the rest appear to have trouble attracting foundation and big donor dollars

Taxpayers Lose in the Bond Market When Local Newspapers Close

Bloomberg

When local newspapers shut down or are forced to scale down their operation due to budget cuts, bond yields rise between 0.05 and 0.11 of a percentage point, which adds up for taxpayers.

Want to reduce political polarization? Save your local newspaper

Nieman Labs

Examines the connection between decline in local journalism and increased polarization as people only have national news outlets to turn to.

Across America, corporate ownership and closures are leading to vast 'news deserts'

Poynter

Review and summary of report examining the effects that corporate ownership and digital disruption have had on local news across the United States.

“For the first time in surveys dating to 1992, majorities in both parties express not just unfavorable but very unfavorable views of the other party.”

From a 2016 Pew Research Center report Partisanship and Political Animosity in 2016

Goodbye, Newspapers. Hello, Bad Government

Bloomberg

Opinion piece on the adverse effects of the print apocalypse, as it affects local government and taxpayers.

Civic Engagement Strongly Tied to Local News Habits

Pew

This report focuses on five ways the public can connect to civic life and compares the local news habits of Americans who engage in each with those who do not.



The Build

Newsroom leaders — reporters, editors, columnists — and community members work together to think through what conversation will have the most value for the community.

They take a look at the landscape of the community, where the charged conflicts or divisions lie, and what fault line/s it makes the most sense to organize around.

Ask questions like:

- What are the political and social issues dividing people in your communities?
- What groups or communities are at odds or not talking?
- What question should we frame a discussion around?



The Gather

After identifying the subject of the conversation, create a plan for gathering participants.

The Gather begins with a call out or invitation to community members through partner news organizations and social channels. A call out is typically worded something like this: are you interested in and open to a respectful conversation with people on the opposite side of issue X?

Ask questions like:

- How long will the project last?
- How many people would make a worthwhile conversation?
- How will reporters gather and discover stories and how will they work with moderators?
- What platform do you want your project to be based on?



The Welcome

When the group has been assembled, you're ready to welcome everyone. The participants should answer introductory questions and begin to get to know each other, the moderators, and the reporters.

Introductory questions to ask participants:

- What do you think of people on the other side?
- What do you think they think about you?
- What do you want to know about them?
- What do you want them to know about you?



The Experience

The Experience — the conversation itself — reminds us that this project is, most importantly, about the communities we serve; that our work is about creating meaningful, valuable — sometimes even transformative — experiences for those on opposing sides of difficult issues.



The Carry

The Carry is how moderators support participants in what can often be difficult conversations across divides.



The Nourish

The Nourish is where facts and research enter the conversation. Participants may ask for FactStacks, but it is also the job of moderators and reporters to recognize where a FactStack can help support a conversation that has reached an impasse.



The Share

The Share is where editorial content about promoting deeper understanding between groups of people is generated.

THE SEVEN STEPS IN BRIEF

**The last four steps of
Dialogue Journalism
— Experience, Carry,
Nourish, Share —
all happen
concurrently.
Each element is
fundamental creating
a successful project.**



WHAT IS DIALOGUE JOURNALISM?

Dialogue Journalism is a journalistic practice developed by Spaceship Media for convening extended, moderated, fact-supported conversations between groups of people who have not been communicating or have not been communicating effectively.

What features define Dialogue Journalism?

SUSTAINED



Many of us are used to receiving and reacting to information at hyperspeed. Dialogue Journalism works to slow some of these processes down. Weeks-long, moderated conversations give participants a chance to get to know each other as well as reflect with more nuance and depth about the difficult issues and policies that matter to all of us.

MODERATED



Yes, it is difficult to engage in meaningful, respectful conversations with people whom we disagree, particularly because the tenor and tone of our national discourse is so often ugly and unproductive. But we know that when given a chance and structure in doing so, people can engage constructively across social and political fault lines. Careful moderation supports participants in the practice of engaging thoughtfully and with empathy across differences.

NOURISHED



One of the struggles we face in our public spaces is a lack of trust in information. With Dialogue Journalism we report in response to the information needs of the people in the conversations we convene. We report in a transparent, non-narrative form that we call FactStacks. By responding directly to the information needs of the divided communities we serve, and reporting in a non-narrative and transparent way in an effort to remove bias and perception of bias we work to make our reporting trusted and useful for the conversation participants we serve. You can read more about

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED



Without community, there is no dialogue journalism. We focus on people getting to know one another and create community when none existed before due to lack of communication or deep divide. Moderation focuses its efforts in building community with posts that encourage participants from either "side" to expose their humanity and questions that lead with empathy and curiosity.

INTERACTIVE



Often, threads on social media blow up with the most ideologically entrenched voices emerging loudest. By modeling and encouraging questions and comments that are constructive and rooted in deep curiosity, journalists are interwoven into the community they build which leads to more meaningful communication and trust.

INVENTIVE NOT PRESCRIPTIVE



When something isn't working in Dialogue Journalism, we pivot. Every dialogue we host has been different. There are key questions and guidelines that inform our practice but there are multiple ways to achieve success. If something isn't resonating with your community or the journalists involved in the project, try something else — even things we've yet to dream up!



"I think it being acknowledged off the bat that we all come from different experiences, and that we will be openly discussing these differences to further our personal understanding makes it such a pleasant platform."

Jasmine Kick

Republican, Minnesota, August 2

"I'm glad we have had so many young people join the group and walk away with a positive impression. Learning the lessons on how to participate in respectful discourse is challenging in today's social media environment. Hopefully many more young people like you can have a positive impact on social media sharing going forward and change the environment and move the direction from name calling and one line insults to sharing real thoughts and ideas."

Debra Semanco, *Independent, Ohio, October 23*

WHAT PARTICIPANTS HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE MANY

"I think for me, I've come to realize that people are not going to change their minds. However, if I can learn how to communicate better with those who differ from me, I'll be better off. That's my takeaway from this group — if I can learn to talk to people who have different views respectfully, then it serves a purpose. It's hard though, because sometimes I want to shout out, "why do you believe this?" but I think the group is teaching me to not name-call and insult the other side."

Wendy Ascione-Juska
Democrat, Michigan, July 9

"You know, I was just thinking today- The Many is very much integrated into my daily life these days. With the midterms just a few months away, I've been exploring the void I'm going to have when our time is over and how I'd be interested to continue with it in another similar forum. It has taught me to be measured and considerate and conscious of both my words and my boundaries and has really constantly challenged me to keep an open mind. I wonder if I will backslide into old bad habits if I'm not consciously making efforts to do all of these things daily."

Lauren Rowland
Democrat, Alabama, September 29

"Finally getting a chance to hear from people who have different points of view has reaffirmed my belief in how valuable our differences are, and softened my anxiety about the future of our country. Some of the discussions in this group are really hard, but I welcome them because it gives us a chance to practice having them — and we NEED to have them. This group gives me hope."

Bethany Sugawara
Independent, Washington, June 18

"This group is already helping me learn how to be more patient and have these conversations constructively."

Ashley Edwards
Democrat, Alabama, March 7

"It's been a challenging and fun experience, and a reminder for me that "everyone has a story" and that story has shaped them and their views. Get to know the person's story as that will help you understand them, help you find common ground, help you sympathize and have empathy. Those things help you hear; you can hear and not have to agree; you can disagree and not be ugly."

Holly Ashley
Republican, Alabama, October 31

"This group has also challenged me to be personally active in community issues that are important to me. There are a lot of options...just where to start?!"

Vanessa Kooper
Republican, Louisiana, August 22



Happy Friday! It is my turn to express my gratitude for being chosen to participate in this group. I have tried to listen to all views and appreciate those who did the same for me. My position on guns has not changed but my ability to acknowledge alternative viewpoints has. Thank you especially to the mods for all their dedication. Onward!

Helene Cohen Bludman, *Pennsylvania*
Guns: An American Conversation, 2018

I had an epiphany of sorts on Friday night during Real Time with Bill Maher. At one of several moments he bashed Trump voters and for the first time a voice sounded off in my head: "Hey, wait a moment, those are my new friends in The Many you're talking about!" It's only been a few days with you all but I now feel a sense of protectiveness of my new sisters.

Caroline Holley, *New York*
The Many: A Conversation Across Divides, 2018

Thank you for allowing me to participate in this amazing group. I have probably read more than written. I only wish that our government would have discussions as civil & respectful. Thank you to Jeremy & Eve for all you have done in the last month.

Jaqueline Messer, *California*
Talking Across Borders, 2017

"This has helped me to have some better idea of why people differ in their responses. This issue [immigration] is close to my heart, and usually my attempts to discuss it with people who disagree have ended up in rather ugly places. This has been very different. I am grateful to all of you who took time to write, and grateful for this community where it's possible to discuss difficult questions tenderly and thoughtfully."

Joanna Hoyt, *Other, New York, October 29*

**WHAT PARTICIPANTS
HAVE TO SAY ABOUT
SPACESHIP MEDIA**



Many approaches to engagement focus on getting something from the audience — attention, insights, questions, stories, opinions, social media shares — and Spaceship Media’s dialogue journalism model produced all of those for MPR News’ Feeding the Future project. But it also allowed us to give something to the community: a welcoming space to interact with journalists and with each other and to create meaningful conversation.

Linda Miller, *Director of Journalism, Minnesota Public Radio*

WHAT NEWSROOM LEADERS SAY ABOUT SPACESHIP MEDIA

‘Engagement’ is swiftly becoming a cliché in our industry, more social-media marketing than genuine connection. But during Southern California News Group’s recent relationship, Spaceship Media arrived at results that felt more like an authentic connection — to real people reaching out to one another over a volatile, heartfelt, polarizing issue. At a time when it’s easy to dismiss the population as too polarized to compromise on anything, the ‘Borders’ conversation made a case that where and how the conversation takes place can fuel quality communication.

Tom Bray, *Managing Editor of Content, Southern California News Group*

The Spaceship model has shown how divided people can come together to grapple with difficult questions and emerge with new insights about themselves and their views. This is work that offers a new way to think about the role of journalists and their capacity to serve communities and improve the world through fact-based inquiry, combined with courage and civility.

Michelle Holmes, *VP of Content, Alabama Media Group*