



CITY & REGIONAL  
MAGAZINE ASSOCIATION



ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
MAY 30 - JUNE 1, 2026

NEW  
ORLEANS,  
LA





2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE COMMITTEE



**EDITORIAL**

**Lydia Woolever**  
*Baltimore Magazine*

**Lauren Cohen**  
*Baltimore Magazine*

**Kelley Massicot**  
*New Orleans Magazine*

**Emma Waldinger**  
*Madison Magazine*

**Rachael Lindley**  
*360 West Magazine*

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**SALES**

**Kate Henry**  
*New Orleans Magazine*

**Carin Keane**  
*Gulfshore Life*

**Mike Martinelli**  
*San Diego Magazine*

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**AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT**

**Lorann Cocca**  
*Baltimore Magazine*

**Lori Birney**  
*Formerly of MetroCorp*

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**DESIGN**

**Chelsea Mamerow**  
*Milwaukee Magazine*

**Tom White**  
*St. Louis Magazine*

**Tiffani Amedeo**  
*New Orleans Magazine*

**Crystal Wise**  
*360 West Magazine*



**AGENCY / STUDIO**

**Jacquie Chakirelis**  
*Cleveland Studios*

**Evan Wood**  
*Missouri Life Magazine*

# SCHEDULE

## SATURDAY, MAY 30

8-10:30 A.M.	Board of Directors Meeting
1:00 P.M.	Registration Opens
4-5:00 P.M.	<b>WORKSHOPS</b>
5-7:00 P.M.	Opening Cocktail Reception at Hotel's Mardi Gras Ballroom

## SUNDAY, MAY 31

8-9:00 A.M.	Group Breakfast
8:45-9:00 A.M.	Opening Remarks
9-9:30 A.M.	<b>KEYNOTE</b> with <b>Megan Wray Schertler</b>
9:30-10:00 A.M.	<b>KEYNOTE</b> with <b>Andrew Davis</b>
10-11:00 A.M.	<b>SESSION 1</b>
11-11:30 A.M.	Refreshment Break and Networking
11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.	<b>SESSION 2</b>
12:30-2:00 P.M.	Group Lunch with Lifetime Achievement Award
2-3:00 P.M.	<b>SESSION 3</b>
3-3:30 P.M.	Refreshment Break/Networking
3:30-4:30 P.M.	<b>SESSION 4</b>
6-9:00 P.M.	Offsite Party at The Sazerac House



 **MONDAY, JUNE 1**

8-9:00 A.M.	Group Breakfast
8:45-9:00 A.M.	Opening Remarks
9-9:30 A.M.	<b>KEYNOTE</b> with <b>Jordan Vita</b>
9:30-10:00 A.M.	<b>KEYNOTE</b> with <b>Ross McCammon</b>
10-11:00 A.M.	<b>SESSION 5</b>
11-11:30 A.M.	Refreshment Break and Networking
11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.	<b>SESSION 6</b>
12:30-2:00 P.M.	Lunch with Presentation
2-3:00 P.M.	<b>SESSION 7</b>
3-3:15 P.M.	Break
3:15-4:00 P.M.	<b>SESSION 8</b>
6-6:30 P.M.	Awards Cocktail Reception
6:30-7:30 P.M.	Awards Banquet
7:30-9:30 P.M.	<b>AWARDS CEREMONY</b>

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# WORKSHOPS

SATURDAY, 4-5:00 P.M.

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## **The Subscription Growth Playbook: Proven Tactics That Work**

Interested in high-level strategies for converting readers into paying subscribers and sustaining long-term loyalty? Learn core strategies to turn casual readers into paying subscribers—and keep them for the long haul. We'll cover the most effective conversion tactics, smart funnel optimizations, and retention moves that reduce churn and strengthen loyalty. You'll leave with clear, actionable ideas you can plug into your growth strategy right away.

**Speaker:** **Natalie Sorge** of NPS Media Group

## **Selling Sponsored Content That Renews (and Scales)**

Sponsored content can be one of the most profitable products city and regional publishers sell but only when it's packaged, priced, and positioned correctly. This session focuses on how to sell sponsored content with confidence, move beyond one-off stories, and build repeatable programs advertisers understand and renew. We'll walk through what's working now, from sponsored lists and guides to evergreen profiles and editorial-led brand storytelling. A key focus will be how video strengthens sponsored content and increases perceived value. You'll see practical examples of pairing a sponsored article with short-form video, social clips, and on-site embeds to drive higher engagement, longer time on page, and clearer ROI. We'll also cover how to price these bundles and explain their value without overcomplicating the pitch. Attendees will leave with a clear understanding for packaging sponsored content, pricing it for profitability, selling based on outcomes instead of impressions, and presenting results in a way that shortens renewal cycles and leads to larger, longer-term partnerships.

**Speaker:** **David Arkin** of David Arkin Consulting

## LUNCH PRESENTATION

MONDAY, 1-1:45 P.M.

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## **How to Make a Million-Dollar Issue**

*Texas Monthly's* Top 50 BBQ issue comes out only every four years, and in 2025 they rallied around it across all departments, with the resulting revenue crossing the \$1 million mark. Hear this case study from the sales, studio, editorial, and audience departments on how they worked together, starting a year in advance of the issue, to create (and sell) new editorial products around the Top 50 list, promote subscriptions, pitch creative offerings from the studio, and report and write the list at the heart of it all.

**Panelists:** **Sunday Leek, Emily Allen, Anna Walsh, Victoria Millner** and **Hannah Vickers** of *Texas Monthly*



## OPENING COCKTAIL RECEPTION

SATURDAY, MAY 30  
5-7:00 P.M.

**Location:**

in the Mardi Gras Ballroom  
at the New Orleans  
Marriott hotel

## SECOND LINE AND PARTY AT THE SAZERAC HOUSE

SUNDAY, MAY 31  
5:30-8:00 P.M.

The Sazerac House is an immersive museum and distillery, located in a restored 1860s building. It celebrates the history of America's first cocktail, invented in New Orleans, created with local Peychaud's Bitters and rye whiskey.

**Location:** 101 Magazine St.

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# KEYNOTES

## SUNDAY

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9-9:30 A.M.

### **The Power of Devoted Audiences**

**Megan Wray Schertler**, Co-Founder of In Real Life Media

Magazines don't just build audiences; they build believers. This talk explores how emotional and intellectual connection turns readers into advocates, and how that devotion translates into organic amplification, pricing power, and stronger brand relationships. It's especially relevant for sales, audience, and studio teams looking to better explain the value of their readership beyond impressions and clicks.

9:30-10:00 A.M.

### **The Cube of Creativity: Why Adding Constraints Sparks Innovation, Action, & Builds Business**

**Andrew Davis**, Founder of Monumental Shift

We all need bigger editorial budgets, more staff writers, more time! You'd love another photographer on payroll, fewer production delays, and better printing rates. Yeah, we'd all love to see bigger circulation numbers and faster ad sales! We're all stressed out, overworked, and producing award-worthy local journalism with skeleton crews. Maybe, instead of fighting all these constraints, we need to embrace them, because the truth is, constraints breed creativity! Andrew Davis will introduce you to the Cube of Creativity: four creative constraints you can add to any project to drive better outcomes faster, with real-life case studies and actionable steps so you can apply intelligent constraints to your editorial and sales and audience development operations. Learn how limitations result in more compelling stories, less burnout, and outsized impact for your city or region.



**Megan Schertler** is a leading voice in print-first publishing strategy, known for turning ambitious editorial visions into revenue-ready brands. Co-founder and managing director of In Real Life Media and creator of the Magazine Accelerator, Megan works with magazine founders and brands to design systems that transform cultural capital into real business growth. She was previously the publishing director of *Highsnobiety*, the managing editor of *Fantastic Man*, *Interview*, *CR Fashion Book*, *Document Journal*, *COS Magazine*, and *Hypebeast*, and was on the editorial teams of *SHOWstudio* and *Marie Claire UK*. With deep editorial instincts and strategic rigor, Megan helps magazines define their unique position, build sustainable business models, and grow with integrity.



**Andrew Davis** is a bestselling author and internationally acclaimed keynote speaker. Before building and selling a thriving digital marketing agency, Andrew produced for NBC's *Today Show*, worked for The Muppets in New York and wrote for Charles Kuralt. He's appeared in the *New York Times*, *Forbes*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and on NBC and the BBC. Andrew has crafted documentary films and award-winning content for tiny start-ups and Fortune 500 brands. Recognized as one of the industry's "Jaw-Dropping Marketing Speakers," he is a mainstay on global marketing influencer lists. Wherever he goes, Andrew puts his infectious enthusiasm and magnetic speaking style to good use teaching business leaders how to grow their businesses, transform their cities, and leave their legacy.

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# KEYNOTES

## MONDAY

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9-9:30 A.M.

 **Building Connection and Trust with Independent Journalism through Product Development**

**Jordan Vita**, Vice President of Product of the *New York Times*

Hear how the *New York Times* is evolving its news product to deepen reader trust—becoming faster, more visual, multimodal, and human. From live blogs and video storytelling to audio and interactive formats, the *Times* is re-establishing news as an essential daily ritual rooted in transparency and connection, including how they are positioning the brand locally.

9:30-10:00 A.M.

 **The Constraints are a Gift: How to Turn Editorial Limits into a Pathway to Great Storytelling and Powerful Identity**

**Ross McCammon**, Editor-in-Chief of *Texas Monthly*

When Ross McCammon moved back to his home state of Texas to work at *Texas Monthly* after two decades in New York, he considered it the fulfillment of a professional dream. Finally, real guardrails! None of the “general interest” of *Esquire* and *GQ*! A defined coverage area! He could finally put into practice—he would be forced to put into practice—a theory he developed about magazine journalism during his time in New York: The more specific the constraints, the more resonant the story. For Ross, this has proven to be true, about both articles and entire publications. The key to a great magazine is identifying your editorial territory and committing to what it contains: irresistible stories made singular by the curiosities and sensibilities of your staff.



**Jordan Vita** is the head of product for News at the *New York Times*, leading cross-functional teams that partner with editors to build the tools, news experiences, and editorial formats driving audience growth and engagement. Previously, Jordan served as the product lead for live coverage, video, and visual journalism, launching features that helped readers navigate the day's most critical stories. A 2023 Sulzberger Executive Leadership Fellow at Columbia Journalism School, Jordan holds an M.S. from Medill at Northwestern and a B.A. from UNC-Chapel Hill. Jordan's tenure at the *Times* began in 2016 as a member of the Data team.



**Ross McCammon** is editor in chief of *Texas Monthly*. He's held senior editorial positions at *Esquire*, *GQ*, and *Men's Health*, and he's written features for *Wired*, *Elle*, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, *Cosmopolitan*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. His book *Works Well with Others* (Dutton) investigates the relationship between workplace behavior and career success. The *New York Times* calls it "charmingly finicky," and Nick Offerman says it's "hilarious and true." McCammon grew up in Dallas, where he spent the early part of his career. After almost 20 years in and around New York City, he now lives in Austin with his wife and two children.

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# EDITORIAL

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## SESSION 1: 10-11:00 A.M.

### Using Your Archives

Whether we're looking back five years or 50, our magazine archives are a treasure trove of content, context, and even story ideas. Panelists discuss digitizing their archives, repurposing past pieces, and finding new inspiration in old stories.

**Speakers:** **S. Holland Murphy** of *D Magazine*, **Alicia Orta** of *Texas Monthly*, **Bradford Pearson** of *Philadelphia Magazine*

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## SESSION 2: 11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

### AI Real Talk

In today's ever-evolving media landscape, AI is increasingly positioned as a silver bullet. But is it too good to be true? During this practical and pragmatic dialogue, panelists discuss editorial ethics, newsroom guidelines, effective applications, reader transparency, and navigating your staff's mixed emotions about this emerging technology.

**Speakers:** **Andrew Deck** of Nieman Lab, **Lindsay Muscato** of *Columbia Journalism Review*, **Anna Walsh** of *Texas Monthly*

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## SESSION 3: 2-3:00 P.M.

### Staff Support: Internships, Fellowships, and Freelancers

Editors discuss how to establish thriving internship programs, develop a pool of diverse contributors, and expand our in-house efforts. Plus, grants, partnerships, and true talk about what we're paying people.

**Moderator:** **Lauren Cohen** of *Baltimore Magazine* / **Speakers:** **Sherri Dalphonse** of *Washingtonian*, **Christine Jackson** of *St. Louis Magazine*, **Alicia Orta** of *Texas Monthly*

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## SESSION 4: 3:30-4:30 P.M.

### Translating Print to Digital (Design Collab)

Editors and designers spend countless hours creating our monthly magazines—but the work doesn't stop when the issue leaves the printer. What happens when those stories go online? Translating from the printed page to our digital platforms isn't always easy, especially for small staffs with limited budgets. Panelists from edit, art, and digital departments will discuss strategies, struggles, and successes.

**Speakers:** **Lauren Cohen** of *Baltimore Magazine*, **Ricky Ferrer** of *D*, **Christine Jackson** of *St. Louis Magazine*, **Emily Kimbro** of *Texas Monthly*

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## SESSION 5: 10-11:00 A.M.

### Divisive Times

We're in the midst of a historic moment for American journalism. Panelists discuss best practices and potential approaches for reporting on these difficult times, be it covering communities in need or under threat, documenting civil rights abuses and civil unrest, or compiling resources for readers. Plus, we share stories that have made an impact.

**Moderator:** **Lydia Woolever** of *Baltimore Magazine* / **Speakers:** **Sherri Dalphonse** of *Washingtonian*, **Peter Diamond** of *Minneapolis St. Paul Magazine*

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## SESSION 6: 11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

### Relationships Matter: Refocusing the Reader Experience (Audience Collab)

Competition and content come from everywhere these days. In this crowded attention economy, how can city-regional magazines set themselves apart and provide an antidote to all the noise? More publications are moving toward strategies of quality over quantity, and seeing results—from reader loyalty and product revenue to a renewed motivation across departments. Panelists discuss practical ideas for putting readers at the center of editorial and marketing strategies, including cover decisions, story assignments, targeted distribution efforts, and event curation.

**Speakers:** **Lorann Cocca** of *Baltimore Magazine*, **Anna Walsh** of *Texas Monthly*

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## SESSION 7: 2-3:00 P.M.

### Good Taste: Delving Deep on Food and Drink Coverage

Long-time hospitality writers discuss multifaceted approaches to the modern food and drink beat—from tracking local dining trends to exploring the complex histories of regional cuisines to examining what our culinary cultures say about who we are. In this era of shifting consumption, content overload, and AI, we'll unpack what's resonating with readers today and how this coverage is evolving to meet the future.

**Speakers:** **Jess Mayhugh**, **Leslie Pariseau** and **Kayla Stewart**

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## SESSION 8: 3:15-4:00 P.M.

### Editorial Therapy AMA

A good time to ask all those final burning questions! Back by popular demand, this lively problem-solving session is a freewheeling exchange where participants are encouraged to workshop strategies, share their toughest edit challenges, and receive practical solutions from peers.

**Moderators:** **Bradford Pearson** of *Philadelphia*, **Chris Voge** of *Boston*, **Lydia Woolever** of *Baltimore Magazine*

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# SALES & EVENTS

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## SESSION 1: 10-11:00 A.M.

### **The Mindset of an Elite Sales Professional - If You Win the Game on the Inside, You'll Win the Game on the Outside**

In this dynamic and transformative session you will delve deep into the psychology and mindset that differentiate elite sales professionals from the rest. Designed for ambitious salespeople aiming to elevate their performance, this session will provide you with the mental tools and strategies needed to excel in the highly competitive world of sales. Understand how to cultivate a Winning Mindset and understand the core beliefs and attitudes that drive top sales professionals. Learn how to develop a resilient, positive mindset that thrives under pressure and embraces challenges. Bonus: Building Mental Toughness: Gain insights into developing mental toughness to handle rejection, setbacks, and stress with grace and perseverance.

**Speaker:** **Julio Melara** of InRegister

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## SESSION 2: 11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

### **What's New in Events Roundtable**

From major wine events, to fashion shows, thought leadership, and food (big BBQ, supper club and sushi events) this roundtable discussion will focus on ideation, sponsorship, audience and the profitability of city/regional events.

**Panelists:** **Laurie Laykish** of *LOCAL Life*, **Denise Polverine** of *Cleveland Magazine*, **Mike Martinelli** of *San Diego Magazine* / **Speaker:** **Diana Vdovets** of DRV Collective

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## SESSION 3: 2-3:00 P.M.

### **Breaking into National and Luxury Budgets**

CRMA media companies have some of the most affluent and well educated audiences there are! So why are some city magazines getting national automotive, jewelry and fashion brand ads and sponsorship revenue while others are not? Hear the steps that some CRMA members have taken to crack the code and break into these big budgets for local magazines, digital media and local events.

**Panelists:** **Frank Jones** of *Palm Springs Life*, **Anand Pallegar** of *Sarasota Magazine*, **Carin Keane** of *Gulfshore Life*, **Lynne Montesanto** of *Boston Magazine*

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## SESSION 4: 3:30-4:30 P.M.

### **Best Sales Ideas**

In this popular session, hear from CRMA members as they present their best ideas from the past year and leave with a Best Ideas Digital Book. This year, we will kick off with curated case studies on custom publishing projects, 6-figure hospital partnerships, how to work with creators to drive revenue, selling sponsored content video as well as sharing ALL of the best ideas that are submitted!

**Moderators:** **Carin Keane** of *Gulfshore Life*, **Dan Starostecki** of *Sarasota Magazine*, **Denise Polverine** of *Cleveland Magazine*

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**SESSION 5: 10-11:00 A.M.**

**Driving Revenue and Readership Through Branded Content (Studio Collab)**

In this dynamic session, Shannon Kinney who leads The Branded Content Project for Local Media Association and Local Media Consortium ([brandedcontentproject.com](http://brandedcontentproject.com)), you'll learn why you should consider Branded Content to fuel revenue and readership at your publication. We will also share findings and statistics from our nationwide survey of advertisers in 2025 on revenue potential, current spending, and the dozen categories to target that are spending more than \$1 billion per year in the category. You'll see best practices from peers, get a step by step on how to implement how to position it on your site, your magazine, social channels, and e-newsletters to maximize results for your clients, and tips on how to sell this exciting offering.

**Speaker:** Shannon Kinney of Dream Local

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**SESSION 6A: 11:30 A.M.-12:10 P.M.**

**Creating Multimedia Experiences That Sell**

How is it that *Our State Magazine* consistently produces a 240 page magazine and has 200,000+ paid subscribers without selling around topics like "Top Lists" and "Best of's"? Discover how strong editorial ideas can evolve into cross-platform opportunities that generate revenue. This session will highlight ways to transform print content into engaging multimedia experiences — from podcasts and video to live events — that create monetized opportunities for advertisers and connect them with audiences in authentic ways.

**Speakers:** Jenn White and Kimberly Simpson of *Our State Magazine*

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**SESSION 6B: 12:10-12:30 P.M.**

**Breaking into Community and Foundation Budgets**

Community foundations have quietly become the most effective civic conveners in local markets. Publishers are uniquely positioned to translate that model into sustained engagement, relevance, and trust. Learn how community foundations design engagement ecosystems, where publishers naturally fit into those ecosystems and how to structure partnerships that create shared value.

**Speaker:** Anand Pallegar of *Sarasota Magazine*

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**SESSION 7: 2-3:00 P.M.**

**From Efficiency to Dominance: Advanced AI Tactics for Modern Sales**

Many media sales professionals are already using AI — but they're using it the same way everyone else is. This session goes beyond surface-level prompts and basic automation to show how top-performing reps and teams are leveraging AI as a strategic sales advantage, not a productivity hack. You'll learn how to use AI to see deals earlier than competitors, personalize outreach at scale without sounding robotic, run better discovery, anticipate objections, shape deals before buyers do and more.

**Speaker:** Shannon Kinney of Dream Local

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**SESSION 8: 3:15-4:00 P.M.**

**Mastering the Art of Closing: Proven Techniques to Secure the Sale and Get Commitments**

Closing a sale is one of the most critical and challenging aspects of the sales process. This session is designed to equip you with powerful closing techniques and strategies to effectively secure commitments from your prospects. Whether you are a seasoned sales professional or just starting out, this session will provide you with actionable insights to enhance your closing skills and drive successful outcomes.

**Speaker:** Julio Melara of InRegister

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# DESIGN

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## SESSION 1: 10-11:00 A.M.

### Originality in the Age of AI

As AI generates endless content, originality and visual point of view have become the real creative advantage. When used thoughtfully, AI can expand creative possibilities. This talk explores how strong art direction, photography, and design help magazines reinvent legacy media and shape culture—proving that human taste and editorial vision still lead.

**Speakers:** Mallory Roynon

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## SESSION 2: 11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

### Capturing Flavor: The Art and Evolution of Food Magazines

Join Winslow Taft of *Food & Wine* for a deep dive into the artistry and emerging trends shaping today's food design and photography. From lighting and composition to styling and storytelling, Taft will explore how striking visuals bring culinary experiences to life across print, digital, and social platforms. He'll also discuss evolving audience expectations, the influence of social media, and how brands can stay ahead by blending authenticity with innovation in a visually driven landscape.

**Speaker:** Winslow Taft of *Food & Wine*

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## SESSION 3: 2-3:00 P.M.

### Leaving Room for Magic (While Dancing on the Edge of Catastrophe)

David Cooper has spent his career standing on the knife's edge where an iconic cover is just one bad pivot away from a total disaster. We've all been there: the budget is bleeding, the location is literally crumbling, or the "talent" is having a moment that wasn't in the script. But over the years, he's learned a secret: the catastrophe isn't the enemy. Often, it's the exact ingredient required to find the magic. In this session, David will pull back the curtain on the high-stakes world of visual storytelling. He'll share the "how-to" behind the \$500 miracle shoots that looked like a million bucks and the closed-set productions with icons like Christina Aguilera and Simone Biles.

**Speaker:** Photographer David Cooper

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## SESSION 4: 3:30-4:30 P.M.

### Translating Print to Digital (Edit Collab)

Editors and designers spend countless hours pulling together our monthly magazines. But what happens when those stories go online? Translating from the printed page isn't always easy, especially for small staffs with limited budgets. And how does a growing focus on digital impact this approach? Participants from edit, art, and digital departments will discuss strategies, successes, and enduring struggles.

**Panelists:** Lauren Cohen of *Baltimore Magazine*, Ricky Ferrer of *D Magazine*, Christine Jackson of *St. Louis Magazine*, Emily Kimbro of *Texas Monthly*

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**SESSION 5: 10-11:00 A.M.**

**Energizing Your Creative Process: Getting Teams Excited About Big Ideas**

Great design happens when teams are energized, aligned, and excited about the creative direction. But how do designers bring others along in the process and build trust in their ideas? In this interactive session, Eve Binder – whose design career includes work with *GQ*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *National Geographic*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Glamour*, and *Fortune* – shares insights from years of collaboration with designers and pitching to stakeholders. The session will also include a hands-on workshop where attendees will learn a simple framework for bringing teams together around a creative concept.

**Speaker:** **Eve Binder**

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**SESSION 6: 11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.**

**Editorial Design for a Multi-Platform World**

Editorial designers today balance the craft of magazine storytelling with the speed of digital publishing, all while navigating algorithm-driven feeds and a growing flood of AI imagery. *Slate* Creative Director Ivylise Simones shares how art teams design for multiple platforms while protecting the craft of editorial design. From homepage packages to social storytelling, she'll share how design evolves when stories are no longer confined to the printed page and why human judgment and visual storytelling matter more than ever.

**Speakers:** **Ivylise Simones** of *Slate.com*

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**SESSION 7: 2-3:00 P.M.**

**Designing for Engagement: Social Media Innovation**

Join Chuck Kerr of People Inc. and *Entertainment Weekly* for an inside look at how bold social media design can transform audience engagement. Kerr will explore creative strategies for capturing attention in social media spaces, including animated covers, interactive storytelling, and platform-specific design approaches. Elevate your visual presence, spark conversation, and build deeper connections with audiences through dynamic, fun, and forward-thinking digital experiences.

**Speakers:** **Chuck Kerr** of *Entertainment Weekly*

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**SESSION 8: 3:15-4:00 P.M.**

**Group Therapy: Real Talk for the Art Team**

Working on a city magazine can be incredibly rewarding and uniquely challenging. In this informal, discussion-driven session, designers and creative leaders will come together to share ideas, swap solutions and talk honestly about the realities of the work. From small teams and tight budgets to big expectations and evolving platforms we'll create space to bemoan the struggles, celebrate the wins and encourage each other to keep showing up for the communities our magazines serve. Come ready to listen, share (or vent) and leave with a few new ideas.

**Moderator:** **Chelsea Mamerow** of *Milwaukee Magazine*

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# STUDIO & AGENCY

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## SESSION 1: 10-11:00 A.M.

### Digital Doppelgänger(s): How Savvy Teams Are Augmenting Their Unique Talents Using the Magic of AI

Artificial Intelligence feels like magic. Draft a smart prompt, and presto! ChatGPT conjures up your client proposals, crafts your native advertising campaigns, and devises your branded content strategy. You can even commission Google's Gemini to respond to intricate advertiser questions! AI is truly awe-inspiring. But most AI-generated client campaigns, proposals, and creative briefs are generic at best, and nonsense at worst. That is until you start building your Digital Doppelgänger. Your Digital Doppelgänger is your AI-powered creative collaborator. Your virtual twin. They're your brainstorming partner, confidant, writing counterpart, and strategic advisor.

**Speaker:** **Andrew Davis** of Monumental Shift

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## SESSION 2: 11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

### Launching a Successful Studio

Hear from CRMA members who have launched studios and how they are pitching, pricing, creating and fulfilling campaigns including how to affordably create video to drive results and make renewals easy for sales!

**Speakers:** **Claire** and **Troy Johnson** of Here We Are Studio, **Logan Aguirre** of 417 Story Studio, **Evan Wood** of Missouri Life Studio

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## SESSION 3: 2-3:00 P.M.

### Print as a Strategic Asset, Not a Legacy Product

Reframe print as the center of gravity in a modern media ecosystem, one that supports digital, studio/custom work, events, and brand partnerships rather than competing with them, as well as what we're seeing with younger audiences: Gen Z's growing interest in print as an object, an identity signal, and a slower, more intentional form of media, and what that means for long-term audience value.

**Speaker:** **Megan Schertler** of In Real Life Media

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## SESSION 4: 3:30-4:30 P.M.

### From Editorial Trust to Brand Platform: Inside a Scalable Branded Content Partnership

Hear from the team at Studio MSP on a case study on the BeWell Care Chronicles. In this session, we will cover the following. 1. The Origin Story: why this partnership made sense. 2. Editorial Guardrails: what was protected and why. 3. Studio Mechanics: staffing, workflows, approvals. 4. Revenue Model: how it was priced and sustained; 5. Performance and Longevity: what made it repeatable. And 6. What They'd Change: honest lessons learned. Learn the practical and tactical steps to sell this level of partnership—and operationalize it in your own market.

**Panelists:** **Lisa Rounds** of Studio MSP, **Irene Peterson** of *MSP Magazine*

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**SESSION 5: 10-11:00 A.M.**

**Driving Revenue and Readership Through Branded Content (Sales Collab)**

Editors and designers spend countless hours creating our monthly magazines—but the work doesn't stop when the issue leaves the printer. What happens when those stories go online? Translating from the printed page to our digital platforms isn't always easy, especially for small staffs with limited budgets. Panelists from edit, art, and digital departments will discuss strategies, struggles, and successes. This is a collaborative edit-design session.

**Speaker:** Shannon Kinney of Dream Local

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**SESSION 6: 11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.**

**How to Sell Social Media and Video as High-Value Advertising Products**

Social media is one of the most misunderstood and underpriced assets at many city and regional publications. This session focuses on how to sell social and short-form video as defined advertising products, not add-ons or favors. We'll break down what advertisers actually want from social, and how sales reps can package reels, video clips, and branded posts into offerings that are easy to explain and easy to buy. Using real publisher examples, we'll show how to structure social and video packages that support sponsored content, guides, events, and newsletters. You'll learn how to price video with confidence, position audience trust as the differentiator, and avoid the common traps that lead to underselling. Turn social and video into predictable revenue streams, report results in a way advertisers understand, and create programs that drive faster renewals.

**Speakers:** Kenny Katzgrau of Broadstreet, David Arkin of David Arkin Consulting

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**SESSION 7: 2-3:00 P.M.**

**Why Magazines Can No Longer Afford to Ignore Video for Content, Audience, and Revenue**

Join us session that is all about producing effective and inexpensive video, pricing, selling, what channels it runs on (website, newsletter, social, other?), reporting/roi, etc. Each studio will provide 10 minutes of video best practices, lessons learned and more.

**Panelists:** Jacquie Chakerilis of Cleveland Studios, Megan Johnson of 417 Story Studio, Claire and Troy Johnson of Here We Are Studio

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**SESSION 8: 3:15-4:00 P.M.**

**Best Ideas: Whiteboard Session**

The can/can't and should/shouldn't 101 for studios: how publishers can leverage their existing capabilities and expertise to launch successful studio operations, and what kinds of agency work it could be best to avoid.

**Moderator:** Evan Wood of *Missouri Life*

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# AUDIENCE

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## SESSION 1: 10-11:00 A.M.

### Why Print Is an Essential Brand Lever in the AI Era

As AI accelerates content production and flattens differentiation, trust becomes the scarcest asset in media. This talk looks at why print and trusted magazine brands in particular are becoming more valuable, not less, as signals of credibility, taste, and authority. Learn proven methods for articulating why your print product isn't just surviving the AI shift, but actively counterbalancing it for readers, advertisers, and partners.

**Speaker:** Megan Wray Schertler of In Real Life Media

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## SESSION 2: 11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

### GRWM To: Leverage Creator Relationships to Extend the Impact of Your Editorial, Events, and Reputation

Content creators are not the competition, they're collaborators. As audience behavior shifts toward personality-driven platforms and influencer-led discovery, city and regional publications have an opportunity to extend their editorial reach, event visibility, and brand relevance through strategic creator partnerships. Panelists will share practical frameworks for identifying the right creators, structuring collaborations that protect your brand without diluting editorial standards, and connecting creator-led experiments to measurable audience and revenue growth.

**The Lenfest Institute Curated Panelists:** Liz Kelly Nelson of Project C, William Tyrone Toms of REC Philly, Dion Robouin of The Black Press / **Moderator:** Cheryl Thompson-Morton of The Lenfest Institute for Journalism

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## SESSION 3: 2-3:00 P.M.

### Print That Performs: How Production Choices Drive Reader Engagement

In a digital-first world, print still has the power to surprise, engage, and convert—when it's done right. Print That Performs explores how smart production decisions can directly influence reader engagement, brand perception, and audience loyalty. This session will unpack how choices around paper, format, design, frequency, personalization, and sustainability impact how readers interact with print magazines. Learn how production strategy can reinforce marketing goals, extend time spent with content, and drive measurable results across acquisition, retention, and revenue.

**Panelists:** Ursula Koons of Fry Communications, Jeff Marotz of Publications Printer Corp, Rose James of Sheridan

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## SESSION 4: 3:30-4:30 P.M.

### Future Proof Your Magazine - Reader Funded Publications

Our publications compete for advertising revenue in a myriad of ways—with other local outlets, of course, but now also with social media and influencer advertising. How do we make our business more resilient to changes? Independent publishers share how they succeed in building a passionate, multi-platform audience and translated that engagement into paid subscribers and a thriving reader-funded business with minimal or no advertising.

**Speakers:** Carlos A. Morales of *Foreign Affairs Magazine*, Danielle Dredger of *Consumers' Checkbook Magazine*

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## SESSION 5: 10-11:00 A.M.

### Building Resilient Audiences Without Search and Algorithms

How do we break up with big tech to build consistent, loyal audiences without depending on search engines and algorithms? This conversation will focus on newsletter growth, conversion paths, productized landing pages, and technical tweaks that increase resilience to platform shifts.

**Panelists:** **Melissa Chowning** of Twenty-First Digital, **Cassie Noyes** of Lucia

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## SESSION 6: 11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

### Refocusing the Reader Experience

Competition and content come from everywhere these days. In this crowded attention economy, how can city-regional magazines set themselves apart and provide an antidote to all the noise? More publications are moving toward strategies of quality over quantity, and seeing results—from reader loyalty and product revenue to a renewed motivation across departments. Panelists discuss practical ideas for putting readers at the center of editorial and marketing strategies, including cover decisions, story assignments, targeted distribution efforts, and event curation.

**Speakers:** **Lorann Cocca** of *Baltimore Magazine*, **Anna Walsh** of *Texas Monthly*

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## SESSION 7: 2-3:00 P.M.

### The Future of Audience Development: Trends Shaping 2026 and Beyond

Your audience has changed. How they discover, subscribe, and lapse look different now. What must publishers do to stay ahead? This forward-looking discussion covers the full audience development stack: paid social, email acquisition, bulk and gift subscriptions, single copy sales, renewals, and postal strategy. Plus, panelists share insight into the behavioral shifts, first-party data practices, and personalized messaging turning casual readers into long-term subscribers.

**Speakers:** **Greg Wolfe** of Four String Media, **Lauren Frappier** of Twenty-First Digital

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## SESSION 8: 3:15-4:00 P.M.

### Audience Development in City & Regional Media: Wins, Misses, and Lessons

Kick off the session with Andrew Majewski of AdSpace Communications as he showcases memorable campaigns from his creative vault offering real-world inspiration and insight. From there, the room joins in to swap stories of winning ideas, failed experiments, and the practical takeaways that shape smarter audience growth.

**Moderator:** **Andrew Majewski** of AdSpace Communications



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