



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

Kelly Massicot
New Orleans Magazine

Emma Waldinger
Madison Magazine

Rachael Lindley
360 West Magazine



SALES

Kate Henry
New Orleans Magazine

Carin Keane
Gulfshore Life

Mike Martinelli
San Diego Magazine



AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Lorann Cocca
Baltimore Magazine

Lori Birney
Formerly of MetroCorp



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.	WORKSHOPS
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.	KEYNOTE with Megan Wray Schertler
9:30-10:00 A.M.	KEYNOTE with Andrew Davis
10-11:00 A.M.	SESSION 1
11-11:30 A.M.	Refreshment Break and Networking
11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.	SESSION 2
12:30-2:00 P.M.	Group Lunch with Lifetime Achievement Award
2-3:00 P.M.	SESSION 3
3-3:30 P.M.	Refreshment Break/Networking
3:30-4:30 P.M.	SESSION 4
6-9:00 P.M.	Offsite Party at Galeriè de Galatoire



 **MONDAY, JUNE 1**

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

WORKSHOPS

SATURDAY, 4-5:00 P.M.

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.

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.

in the Mardi Gras Ballroom at the New Orleans Marriott hotel



SECOND LINE AND PARTY

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

at Galeriè de Galatoire, 211 Royal St. in the French Quarter

KEYNOTES

SUNDAY

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.

KEYNOTES

MONDAY

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.

EDITORIAL

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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*

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**

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 Vogel** of *Boston*, **Lydia Woolever** of *Baltimore Magazine*

SALES & EVENTS

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

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

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*

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, six-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*

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), 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

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*

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*

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

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

DESIGN

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

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*

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: Photo Editor and Illustrator David Elmo Cooper

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*

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

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*

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*

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*

STUDIO & AGENCY

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

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

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

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*

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

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: David Arkin of David Arkin Consulting

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

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

Join us for a 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

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*

AUDIENCE

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

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 Rabouin of The Black Press / **Moderator:** Cheryl Thompson-Morton of The Lenfest Institute for Journalism

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

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*

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

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*

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

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



NEW



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Magazine

Laurie Laykish
VP of Membership
LOCAL Life

Logan Aguirre
VP of Events
417 Magazine

Matt Coen
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St. Louis Magazine

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Immediate Past
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Carin Keane
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Irene Peterson
Mpls.St.Paul Magazine

Todd Matherne
New Orleans Magazine



SPEAKER BIOS



Logan Aguirre is the publisher and owner of FourOneSeven, the leading regional media company in southwest Missouri that produces *417 Magazine* and *Biz 417*. Under her leadership FourOneSeven has undergone a full rebrand and redesign, launched new products like Think Summit, Ladies Who Launch, Remarkable women's public speaking program and The Legacy Network while also being recognized as a Great Game of Business All Star five years running and a Springfield Chamber Small Business of the Year winner in 2025. Logan is deeply committed to 417's mission of "Shining a Light" and is an active community leader. Logan is a graduate of Mizzou's journalism school, she's married to her husband of 21 years Dave and together they have a daughter Lucy and a son Cruz.



Emily Allen is the senior vice president of Audience Development at *Texas Monthly*, responsible for shaping the company's cross-platform strategy to engage and grow its audiences. She oversees circulation, subscription initiatives, consumer marketing, and leads media partnerships and paid marketing efforts that drive editorial product launches, brand storytelling, and event ticket sales. Partnering closely with editorial, product, events, and executive teams, she ensures that audience experiences remain cohesive, insight-driven, and true to *Texas Monthly's* commitment to quality journalism.



David Arkin, with a 25-year career in media, has served in various roles such as reporter, editor, director, consultant, and executive for newspapers, TV stations, media associations, and startups. Renowned for his audience leadership, he has developed high-quality content and transformative digital strategies, leading to significant audience growth, new revenue streams, and improved processes for both large media organizations and family-owned companies. He led content for nearly a decade at GateHouse Media. David has been recognized as the Local Media Association's Digital News Innovator of the Year and served on boards like the Associated Press Media Editors. He currently owns his own consulting company, David Arkin Consulting, where he provides fractional digital leadership, branded content, SEO and social media services to more than two dozen clients.



Eve Binder is a design leader whose career began in editorial and print, where she spent more than a decade as an editorial designer working across magazines and publications. She brings that foundation in storytelling, typography, and layout to her leadership of modern design teams, shaping cohesive visual systems and mentoring multidisciplinary creatives. Now director of Design Operations at Lightspeed Commerce, Binder has also led teams at Grubhub and JPMorgan Chase, translating the rigor and craft of magazine design into scalable, user-centered digital experiences.



Jacquie Chakirelis, an award-winning marketing, media professional and an international speaker, was named one of the top 50 Influential Women in Content Marketing and LinkedIn's Top Ten Rising Stars in Marketing. She serves as the director of Digital Strategy for Cleveland Studios, a regional publishing powerhouse of magazines and digital content including *Cleveland Magazine* and *Ohio Magazine*. Jacquie founded a nationally-syndicated talk radio program and podcast, *Family Matters Radio*. The thirteen-year media company was a pioneer in women-issue programming that was honored by five Society of Professional Journalism awards. She helped produce the national social network Momslikeme.com that debuted in over 80 communities across the Gannett media network. As an on-air contributor for NBC-TV, she engaged with stories for a mom-focused audience representing Momslikeme.com.



Melissa Chowning is the CEO of Twenty-First Digital (aka TFD), an audience development agency with a mission to help media organizations create an indispensable relationship with their audience that drives relevance, sustainability, and profitability. She has also served as a coach for The Meta Journalism Project Accelerator Program, Google News Initiative (GNI) and the Poynter Institute where she teaches newsrooms worldwide how to grow their audiences online.

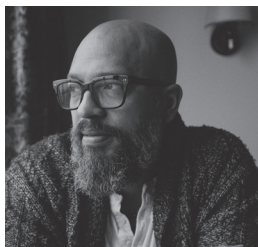


Lorann Cocca, a self-described print princess, has almost a decade of print media experience—with seven of those years dedicated to every facet of audience development. As the director of marketing at *Baltimore* magazine, Lorann has developed winning strategies across all reader touch-points—from social media and direct mail to newsstand and live events. Prior to *Baltimore*, she worked in the editorial and marketing divisions at *ELLE* and Phaidon. She holds an MS from New York University in Publishing: Digital and Print Media, and some of her favorite print magazines include *The Surfers Journal*, *Sneeze*, *Thrasher*, *GQ*, *Interview*, and, of course, the city regional which she serves.

SPEAKER BIOS



Lauren Cohen is the digital senior editor at *Baltimore*, where she oversees the magazine's daily website. In addition to designing all print stories for the web, she also assigns and edits content that runs exclusively online, collaborates on social and email marketing products, and works closely with print editors to bring their features to life digitally. Throughout her 12-year trajectory with *Baltimore*, Lauren has covered everything from food news and local events to senate hearings and development stories online and in print.



David Elmo Cooper is a Brooklyn-born multidisciplinary artist, photo director, and educator whose work explores the intersection of visual narrative and cultural identity. As photo director, he has been a key contributor at national titles including *Parents*, *Health*, and *Ser Padres*. David helped launch *Siempre Mujer*, a pioneering lifestyle magazine dedicated to the Latina experience. He also collaborated on the redesign of *Health*, taking the publication from a fitness-centric title into a holistic wellness brand centered on the mind, body, and spirit. David serves on the Board of Directors for the Society of Illustrators and teaches at Pratt Institute, the School of Visual Arts, and the Fashion Institute of Technology. His work has been recognized by *American Illustration*, *The Art Directors Club*, *3x3 Magazine*, and the Society of Publication Designers.



Sherri Dalphonse joined *Washingtonian* magazine in 1986 as an editorial intern, then worked her way up the masthead—with stints as the features editor, a senior editor, and the executive editor—before being named the magazine's first female editor-in-chief in 2022. Today, she oversees the magazine's editorial staff, and guides its stories and direction. Her work has won multiple awards. In 2018 and 2007, she won the CRMA Gold Medal for Reader Service, for the magazine's unconventional Newcomer's Guide (2018) and for an exhaustive Great Places to Work feature (2007). She has also won Gold Medals for writing, for a profile of singer Eva Cassidy and for an article on the real-life "Rain Man," who turned out to be a young man from Springfield, Virginia. She lives in DC.



Andrew Deck is the AI staff reporter at *Nieman Lab*, a publication of Harvard's Nieman Foundation for Journalism. His reporting spans topics including labor, deepfakes, copyright law, and emerging business models. Prior to Lab, Deck was a founding reporter at *Rest of World*, an international nonprofit publication. There, he began covering generative AI extensively before the launch of ChatGPT. His reporting has been cited by researchers at Google DeepMind, taught to undergraduates at Yale, and was referenced in a lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security. His writing has also appeared in *The Nation*, *Popular Mechanics*, and *The Japan Times*.



Peter Diamond is the digital editor of *Mpls.St.Paul* magazine. Nominated for three awards from the City and Regional Magazine Association, winning Best Newsletter, he oversees the editorial operations and strategy of *mspm.com* and the other digital channels of *Mpls.St.Paul*, including the Daily Edit newsletter and social media.

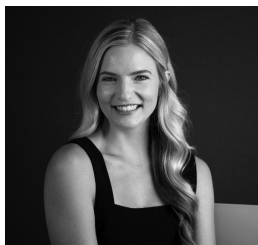


Danielle Dredger is a digital marketer and visual storyteller. She began her career as a television news producer in Albany, NY, before transitioning into marketing and development for nonprofits. She is currently the senior manager of digital marketing and fundraising at *Consumers' Checkbook*, a consumer-advocacy publication based in D.C. Dani is a proud University of Maryland alum, and in her spare time she enjoys exploring new places, baking focaccia, and reading (and discussing) books.



Ricky Ferrer is the vice president of digital product at *D Magazine*. Joining the team as digital art director in 2012, he helped lead two site redesigns, launched several new digital products, and played a key role in shaping the magazine's online presence. A Dallas native, he now oversees the vision, design, technology, and production of all digital properties. His work centers on creating intuitive, engaging experiences that elevate editorial content and deepen audience connection.

SPEAKER BIOS



Lauren Frappier is COO of Twenty-First Digital, where she leads operations and builds infrastructure that supports sustainable growth for modern media brands. Since joining in 2018, she has developed expertise in HubSpot implementation, lifecycle marketing, and email strategy. Lauren began her career as an intern at *D Magazine*, building a strong foundation in media and publishing. She is based in Dallas, Texas, where she lives with her husband and two children.



Christine Jackson is the managing editor of *St. Louis* magazine. She has been covering arts communities for city magazines since 2013 for publications, also including *Baltimore* and *Washingtonian*. Since 2021, she has led St. Louis' culture coverage, including the weekly Culture and Music newsletters. For the past nine years, she has also overseen editorial internship programs in both Baltimore and St. Louis.



Rose James is the senior vice president of Sales for Sheridan printing company. She began her career with R.R. Donnelley and has held various positions from manufacturing to sales leadership. With 35 years of experience in the magazine and catalog industry, she uses her extensive knowledge to help publishers deliver a quality product to their readers. Her dedication to the importance of print medium is showcased by her drive to help publishers improve advertising sales, increase readership, and achieve financial goals. Sheridan (and R.R. Donnelley prior to that) have been both proud and honored to sponsor CRMA's Annual Lifetime Achievement Award for almost two decades.



Claire Johnson is CEO of *San Diego Magazine* and Here We Are Studios, and co-founder of Del Mar Wine and Food Festival. She and her husband, Troy, acquired the media company in 2021—it has now been in business for 76 years. Originally from New York, she graduated from Loyola University with a journalism degree. Claire started her media career at NBCUniversal, where she worked in advertising and helped develop its Peacock platform before acquiring *San Diego Magazine*. Also a published photographer in publications like *Vogue* (and, of course, *San Diego Magazine*), Claire and her family live in Del Sur, San Diego.



Megan Johnson is the VP of Operations and Custom Publishing at FourOneSeven, the company that produces *417 Magazine* and *Biz 417* in Springfield, Missouri. In her 19 years at FourOneSeven she has served in roles ranging from advertising designer to corporate art director and marketing director before stepping into her current role on the executive leadership team. In addition to overseeing the operations, circulation, audience development, marketing, human resources and culture, Megan has grown the custom publishing division to a \$550,000 annual revenue stream. Megan graduated cum laude from Missouri State University with a BFA in graphic design and a minor in art history. A 417-land native, Megan is married to her husband of 19 years Tim and together they have daughters Elliot and Allie.



Troy Johnson is a San Diego-based food writer, TV personality, and publisher, best known as a judge on Food Network's "Guy's Grocery Games" and owner of *San Diego Magazine*. A former music journalist, he has written for various national outlets and specializes in covering restaurant culture, food science, and culinary history.



Frank Jones has been in the media and marketing professions for the past 40 years. He was production manager at Cline, Davis & Mann Advertising Agency, New York, N.Y. Frank is now the president and owner of Desert Publications, Inc. and publisher of *Palm Springs Life* magazine, as well as owner of Jones Agency Advertising and Public Relations. He is also the founding owner of Sunrise Media Outdoor Advertising, Fashion Week El Paseo (largest fashion week on the west coast), Palm Desert Food + Wine Festival (top five festival in California), and the Oasis Music Festival. Frank is the video producer of *Voices of the Monument*, and an Emmy award winning producer, writer, director on the environmental documentary *Voices of Santa Rosa & San Jacinto National Monument*.

SPEAKER BIOS



Carin Keane is the publisher of Gulfshore Life Media, where she leads strategic growth, revenue development, and brand partnerships across the company's print, digital, and event platforms. She oversees seven different publications under the Gulfshore Life Media umbrella. Prior to joining Gulfshore Life Media, Carin served for six years as market president and group publisher of *Modern Luxury Boston*. In a full-circle moment, she returned to a brand she helped bring to life as part of the Niche Media team that launched *Boston Common* in 2005. She has played an integral role in the launch of several notable publications, including *Boston Common*, *Interiors Boston*, and *Purist*. She began her career in advertising sales with *Boston Magazine* and *Connecticut Magazine*, where she built the foundation that continues to shape her leadership today.



Chuck Kerr is senior creative director at People Inc., where he leads brand design and visual direction for *Entertainment Weekly* and the PEOPLE App. With 20 years of experience, he's known for award-winning editorial design, team building, and innovative visual storytelling across print and digital platforms. He previously held roles at *Variety*, SagaCity Media, and the *San Antonio Current*. His work has been recognized by Society of Publication Designers, American Society of Magazine Editors, City and Regional Magazine Association, Communication Arts, and others. When not designing (or, more realistically, in meetings) Chuck can be found practicing bass guitar, walking his dog Evie, or searching for authentic Tex-Mex in LA.



Emily Kimbro is the creative director at *Texas Monthly*. She grew up in Lubbock and graduated from Texas Tech University with a degree in graphic design. Previously, Emily worked in Dallas as the art director of Southwest Airlines *Spirit Magazine* and as a designer at Fossil. She also served on the board of AIGA Dallas/Fort Worth. Her work has been recognized by the American Society of Magazine Editors, the Society of Publication Designers, *Print Magazine*, Communication Arts, the Society of Illustrators, and the City and Regional Magazine Association. She lives with her husband and two Australian shepherds in Austin, where she likes to spend her free time searching for undiscovered swimming holes in the Texas Hill Country.



Shannon Kinney is a seasoned startup founder and executive with more than 30 years of experience in digital marketing. She has been at the forefront of digital transformation for media companies since 1995. With deep experience in sales, marketing, online product development and leadership, Dream Local Digital is her third nationally-scaled digital marketing solution company. She founded the company in 2009 "to bring the power of online marketing to small and medium sized businesses". She has helped more than 75,000 small and medium sized businesses and media companies through her work with Dream Local Digital. She spent many years on the Local Media Foundation and Local Media Association boards and currently is the lead for their Branded Content Project. She also writes a monthly column on sales for *Editor & Publisher* magazine.



Ursula Koons is assistant vice president of Sales at Fry Communications, where she has worked since 1996. She began her career in the bindery and later moved into prepress during Fry's transition to digital workflows, building a strong foundation in print production before joining the Sales team in 2010. With nearly three decades of experience, Ursula brings a practical, collaborative approach to helping publishers and brands navigate the evolving print landscape. She believes in the lasting impact of print and values the craftsmanship, teamwork, and problem-solving that drive the industry forward.



Laurie Laykish is the owner of *Local Life*, based in Hilton Head, SC. In 2017 she started the magazine by hiring a fantastic, experienced team and partnering with outstanding CRMA vendors. Prior to entering publishing, admittedly later in life, Laurie's career was in marketing and advertising in corporations and ad agencies in Toronto, Canada. Today, when she's not on Zoom calls or trying to find new revenue streams and operational efficiencies she walks her dogs, drinks wine, eats junk food and tries to play more golf and learn mahjong.



Sunday Leek is the vice president of Sales at *Texas Monthly*, based in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. She has held this role since 2020 and has been with *Texas Monthly* for a total of 18 years and previously served as the Texas sales director and the travel sales director for the publication. She has extensive experience in media and travel sales including serving as the associate publisher at *360 West Magazine* and the travel sales director at the *Dallas Morning News* and the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*.

SPEAKER BIOS



Andrew Majewski is owner of AdSpace Communications. He provides creative services, marketing, as well as GTM and long-term strategy for dozens of marquee brands per year—ranging from Harvard Publishing and *The Economist* to The American Diabetes Association. Andrew has provided controls for dozens of city and regional magazines throughout his career. In addition to having previously spoken at multiple CRMA annual events, he recently presented at The Center for Association Leadership's Marketing Membership Communications + Tech Conference.



Mike Martinelli is a media executive who speaks the language of both traditional publishing and modern digital growth. For 21 years in City and Regional Magazine publishing, Mike understands the pressure points facing legacy owners today—from rising print costs to the complexities of digital monetization. As the former president/COO of *San Diego Magazine* and publisher and digital publisher for Today Media's suite of brands (including *Hudson Valley*, *Westchester*, *Delaware Today*, *Main Line Today*, *Delaware Business Times*, and *Bethesda Magazine*), Mike has successfully navigated the industry's most turbulent shifts. He combines this operational expertise with the discipline of an attorney and current member of the New York State Bar Association.



Jeff Martoz is a print and publishing professional with Publication Printers, where he works with magazine publishers and brands to bring high quality print products to life. He focuses on helping clients navigate production strategy and timelines, ensuring the final product delivers on quality, timing, and results. Jeff is known for being easy to work with, his hands on approach, responsiveness, and ability to align print solutions with business goals, making print feel simple in a world where it often is not. A Chicago native and lifelong Chicago Bears fan, Jeff is a devoted family man with a 12-year-old-son who keeps him running between lacrosse fields, football sidelines, and band performances.



Jess Mayhugh is a James Beard Award-winning journalist with more than 15 years of experience as a lifestyle editor. She was the managing editor for Vox Media brands *Eater* and *PUNCH*, an editorial director at *Thrillist*, a staff writer at *Smithsonian* magazine, and held various editorial positions at *Baltimore* magazine. Her writing has also appeared in *The Atlantic*, the *New York Times*, *All About Beer*, and *Serious Eats*. Living in Baltimore, she prefers her crab cakes broiled, her Boulevardiers with rye whiskey, and challenges anyone to name a more beautiful ballpark than Camden Yards.



Julio Melara is an entrepreneur, publisher, and author. He is the president and CEO of Melara Enterprises, a multimedia company which includes prominent publications such as *Business Report*, *225 Magazine*, *InRegister*, *Daily Report*, and the *1012 Industry Report*, along with a variety of niche websites and e-newsletters. Julio is the founder of Business Report's Executive Leadership Academy, a program for professionals, small business owners, and entrepreneurs that offers personal development, professional growth, and leadership insights from CEO speakers. He is also the CEO of StudioE a content, communications and creative studio. He is the author several books, including *Do You Have The Time for Success?*, *It Only Takes Everything You've Got!*, *Keys to Performance*, and *Mental Snacks Volumes 1 & 2 – Nourishment for Your Mind and Fuel for Your Life!*



Victoria Millner is the design director at *Texas Monthly*. She grew up in Austin, and was a fan of all things Texas at an early age. Victoria attended journalism school at the University of Missouri, studying magazine design and multimedia journalism. She previously worked at other city and regional magazines, including *San Antonio Magazine*, before starting at *TM* in 2015. Her work has been recognized by the American Society of Magazine Editors, the Society of Publication Designers, and the City and Regional Magazine Association.

SPEAKER BIOS



Lynne Montesanto has served as the publisher of *Boston Magazine* since 2016, where she has played a pivotal role in finding solutions to expand print revenue, creating audience-engaging digital products, and enhancing the profitability of the magazine's renowned events. She began her career in advertising, specializing in media planning and strategy. As group media director at Houston Effler Herstek Favat, she led the media team and was a key member of the new business development group, helping to grow the agency's client portfolio. Lynne transitioned into advertising sales at *Fast Company* magazine during the dot-com boom when *Fast Company* had become a leading publication for entrepreneurs and business innovators. Lynne went on to become multimedia sales director at the *Wall Street Journal*, managing the Boston office.



Carlos A. Morales is the director of Data Science and Audience Development at *Foreign Affairs* magazine, where he leads efforts to apply machine learning and behavioral analytics to editorial strategy and audience growth. Previously, Carlos served as research director at NBC and held roles at the Council on Foreign Relations and Univision, a background that spans commercial media, public affairs, and long-form journalism. He holds a bachelor's degree in anthropology from UC Irvine and data science credentials from the Columbia School of Engineering.



S. Holland Murphy is the executive editor of *D* magazine. In her years at *D*, Holland has sniffed a Cowboys kicker's cleat, watched a Vogue model get ready for prom, investigated a cat-show controversy, and walked with baby elephants in Botswana. Her desk is littered with stacks of *D*'s archived issues, which she uses as fodder for a series of "Flashback" columns.



Lindsay Muscato is a staff editor at *Columbia Journalism Review*. Previously, she was an O'Brien Fellow in Public Service Journalism and an editor at *TIME* and *MIT Technology Review*, as well as a staff member at OpenNews. Her work has focused primarily on the media industry, technology, and public policy. She was a 2011 Harpswell Foundation Leadership Resident in Phnom Penh and is a graduate of Northwestern University.



Liz Kelly Nelson is dedicated to helping independent journalists and media creators build sustainable careers in a rapidly evolving media landscape. As the founder of Project C, a concept she developed during her 2024 Sulzberger Fellowship at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, she is focused on empowering journalists to embrace new models, find sustainable revenue, and create impactful work outside of traditional media structures. As co-founder of The Independent Journalism Atlas, Liz is working to both quantify—and build infrastructure for— independent journalists. Liz was one of *The Washington Post's* first bloggers and prior to Project C, she led teams at Vox, USA Today, Gannett, and AOL. Liz is a 2025-2026 Terker Fellow at George Washington University's School of Media and Public Affairs.



Cassie Noyes has 20 years of experience in audience growth, digital marketing, memberships, subscriptions, and branding. She's worked with the top online food and lifestyle creators, as well as national outdoor and health brands, developing and implementing integrated marketing strategies. Cassie got her start in magazine publishing heading audience development for *5280*, playing a critical role in making it one of the top city and regional magazines in the country.



Alicia Maria Orta is a managing editor at *Texas Monthly*, where she oversees production of the print magazine and supervises the editorial internship program. She joined the magazine in 2020 as a copy editor. Prior to working in journalism, she earned her MFA with a concentration in literary translation from Columbia University, where she then spent a half-decade managing the international translation exchange program Word for Word and its anthology publications.

SPEAKER BIOS



Anand Pallegar is the founder of ATLARGE and the publisher of *Sarasota Magazine*. His commitment to deliver consistently successful strategies has catapulted his companies onto the world stage and guided the firm toward dozens of prestigious awards. Today, Anand leads a portfolio of successful companies and ventures driven by his personal life philosophy: Wherever we are, whatever we do, we have a duty to serve our community. Anand has been recognized by *Florida Trend* as one of 50 Floridians Who Will Change the World, Young Professional of the Year, Top 40 under 40, 25 People to Watch, and Emerging CEO of the Year. Anand currently serves as the vice chair of the Gulf Coast Community Foundation board of directors.



Leslie Pariseau is a writer and editor in New Orleans. She's written for the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *GQ*, *The Intercept*, *Oxford American*, and *Condé Nast Traveler*, among others. In 2013, in collaboration with Penguin-Random House, Leslie co-founded *PUNCH*, an award-winning web magazine about the culture of drinking. She is a former editor for both *TASTE* and *Saveur*, and co-author of *SPRITZ*. She is a three-time James Beard Award nominee and holds an MFA in fiction from Hunter College. Leslie owns Patron Saint, a wine shop + bar, and St. Pizza, a pizzeria + tavern—named Top 22 Pizzas in America by the *New York Times*—in the Lower Garden District with her husband Tony Biancosino.



Bradford Pearson is a National Magazine Award-winning journalist and author whose work examines everything from magicians to Japanese American incarceration to his own kidnapping. He's written for the *New York Times*, and *Esquire*, *Time*, and *Men's Health* magazines, among many other publications. He is currently the executive editor of *Philadelphia* magazine and a contributing writer for the Times' Special Projects team. He is currently the lead editor and writer on *Philadelphia's* February 2023 package "All Hail The Hoagie," which won the 2024 National Magazine Award in the lifestyle journalism category and was nominated for a 2024 James Beard Award in the dining and travel category.



Irene Peterson is vice president of Strategic Growth at *Mpls.St.Paul Magazine*, where she leads advertising sales, partnerships, and new business initiatives. As a longtime member of the City and Regional Magazine Association, Irene is passionate about supporting local brands, growing engaged audiences, and exploring new opportunities across print, digital, events, and branded content. With a strong background in media sales and marketing, she focuses on helping her team and fellow CRMA members navigate the challenges and opportunities of today's media landscape with a collaborative and strategic approach



Denise Polverine is a proven, award-winning media leader with expertise in journalism, digital strategy, revenue and audience growth. She serves as vice president and publisher of *Cleveland Magazine*, *SCENE* and Cleveland Studios where she leads the brand across print, digital, social, video and live experiences, driving revenue and deepening engagement. She also teaches one evening journalism course per semester as she has for the past decade as a part-time lecturer at Case Western Reserve University. Denise is a four-time Emmy Award winner and was inducted into the Press Club of Cleveland's Journalism Hall of Fame in 2018 as its first "Digital Pioneer." She serves on several boards including as co-president of The Press Club of Cleveland and is a graduate of Cleveland Bridge Builders and Leadership Cleveland.



Dion Rabouin is the founder and CEO of a venture implementing digital transformations at legacy Black-owned newspapers known as The Black Press. The Black Press doesn't advise, coach or consult. They do the work, executing digital transformation projects for publishers. Prior to The Black Press, Dion was a markets reporter and video and podcast host who created and launched digital innovations at global publications including the *Wall Street Journal*, Reuters and Yahoo Finance, covering the stock, Treasury, real estate, crypto, currency and global bond markets. Dion has interviewed sitting presidents, central bank governors, CEOs, billionaire investors and finance ministers from around the world. He has a global perspective and a deep understanding of the economic issues that affect market participants, investors and everyday people.



Lisa Rounds is director of Studio MSP, the in-house branded content studio of *Mpls.St.Paul Magazine* and *Twin Cities Business*.

SPEAKER BIOS



Mallory Roynon is a creative director and brand visionary known for transforming iconic media brands for modern audiences. She most recently led Playboy's rebrand, redefining its visual identity and positioning, and previously spent over four years as creative director of *Cosmopolitan*, where she led a comprehensive redesign. Her work has earned top industry honors, including Society of Publication Designers, Art Directors Club, and Hearst Excellence Awards. She has also held roles at *Elle Decor*—where she commissioned a Smithsonian-acquired cover—and was part of the founding team behind *Airbnb Magazine*. Mallory specializes in building culturally resonant brands across print, digital, and integrated platforms.



Ivylise Simones is the creative director at *Slate*, where she leads editorial design and oversees the newsroom's visuals department. She is the first creative director elected to the American Society of Magazine Editors board. With extensive experience in visual leadership, she has guided art departments and shaped design at *HuffPost*, *WIRED*, *Mother Jones*, *New York Observer*, *Village Voice*, *Showtime*, *People*, and *Popular Science*. In 2016, she led the award-winning redesign and rebrand of *Mother Jones*. Originally from Miami, Ivylise now lives in New York with her husband and daughter.



Kimberly Simpson serves as the digital director at *Our State* magazine. Originally from Mississippi, Kimberly attended Elon University in North Carolina. She started her career at a content marketing agency, where she discovered a passion for managing creative teams. After an internal communications role for a major international corporation, she found her way to *Our State* in 2017. Now digital director, Kimberly leads the team responsible for creating and managing *Our State's* videos, podcasts, website, social media channels, newsletter program, and digital sales products. She lives in Greensboro, North Carolina, with her husband and two young sons. They spend free weekends turning the pages of *Our State* into road trips.



Natalie Sorge is chief marketing and growth officer at NPS Media Group, a multi-channel marketing company helping publishers and subscription brands grow and succeed in an ever-changing landscape. With over 15 years of experience in the publishing industry (previously at *Better Homes & Gardens*), she uses her extensive industry knowledge to execute tailored digital marketing campaigns for more than 30 clients, focusing on driving subscriptions, expanding audiences, and maximizing ROI. Under her leadership, her team has consistently delivered impactful results and forged strong partnerships within the industry.



Kayla Stewart is a James Beard Award-winning food and travel journalist, cookbook author, and former senior editor at *Eater*. Her work has been featured in the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Saveur*, *Travel + Leisure*, and *Food & Wine*, among others. Kayla served as a Fulbright Scholar in Indonesia and was awarded the UC Berkeley 11th Hour Food and Farming Journalism Fellowship. Her piece, "The Sweetest Harvest," won the 2023 James Beard Foundation Profile Award, and her stories, "Teach a Man to Fish" and "An African Food Legacy Endures in Palenque, Colombia," were anthologized in the 2023 and 2025 editions of "Best American Food Writing." She is the co-author, with Emily Meggett, of the *New York Times* bestselling cookbook, *Gullah Geechee Home Cooking: Recipes from the Matriarch of Edisto Island* (Abrams Books).



Winslow Taft loves making stuff. All kinds of stuff, but for this context, we'll focus on magazines. He loves making magazines. He fell in love with making student publications at Samford University, eventually progressing into the real world at the indie darling *mental_floss*, designing books, T-shirts, board games, and, of course, the magazine. Moving from bite-sized trivia to the best bites from leading restaurants in his role as creative director at *Food & Wine* continues to inspire new approaches, collaborations, and delicious ways of seeing. Winslow has earned accolades from his parents, The Society of Publication Designers, Type Directors Club, and the American Society of Magazine Editors.

SPEAKER BIOS



Cheryl Thompson-Morton is the Head of Advisory Programs at The Lenfest Institute for Journalism, where she leads efforts to support news organizations in developing strategies for financial sustainability and audience growth. Prior to her current role, Cheryl led the Black Media Initiative at the Center for Community Media at the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism at CUNY, designing programs to support Black-owned newsrooms through research, training, and networking opportunities. She also previously worked at The Lenfest Institute for Journalism, where she developed initiatives to strengthen the news ecosystem and support journalists of color.



William Tyrone Toms is an award-winning entrepreneur, published author, and co-founder of REC Philly—a creative agency and community hub located in center city Philadelphia. As the visionary behind REC (Resources for Every Creative), William leads an innovative platform that empowers artists, freelancers, and content creators with essential tools, education, and opportunities to transform their passions into thriving careers. REC has evolved from a modest warehouse in North Philadelphia into a multi-million-dollar company proudly serving clients including Google, Comcast, Urban Outfitters, Red Bull, Jason Kelce of the Philadelphia Eagles and more. Through REC Philly's agency work, William has overseen the distribution of over \$3 million to local creatives, with an ambitious goal of supporting one million creators globally in the next decade.



Diana Vdovets has worked across all facets of event production, building and leading high-impact experiences nationwide. After planting roots in Chicago in 2011, she established herself in the media industry, managing events for storied institutions including *Crain's Chicago Business*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, and the *Chicago Tribune*. Diana served as head of events and marketing at *Chicago* magazine, where she was the driving force behind the publication's event strategy, overseeing a full portfolio of annual signature events and custom advertiser events, while also spearheading media sponsorship strategy and brand partnerships. In 2023, she launched DRV Collective to bring this expertise to a broader range of clients.



Hannah Vickers has been with *Texas Monthly* for (almost!) ten years. In her current role with Texas Monthly Studio as the director of marketing, she oversees the Integrated Marketing and Ad Operations team. These teams ideate and develop strategic opportunities that create innovative solutions for our advertising partners.



Chris Vogel is editor in chief of *Boston* magazine and the longest-serving editorial director since its founding in 1970. He previously served as chief content officer of Metro Corp, overseeing *Boston* and *Philadelphia* magazines. Under his leadership, both titles garnered dozens of national journalism awards, cementing their places among America's top city magazines. A Livingston Award finalist and former college basketball player, he likes pillow forts.



Anna Walsh is the director of editorial operations at *Texas Monthly*, overseeing workflows and projects across all platforms. She moved to Austin in 2019 and shortly thereafter joined *Texas Monthly* as its managing editor. She previously worked in *The Washington Post's* Opinions department as a multiplatform editor; at the *Baltimore City Paper* as the copy editor, food and drink editor, and, later, managing editor; and at the *York Dispatch* as a sports copy editor.



Jenn White is publisher of *Our State* magazine, where she leads one of North Carolina's most established and influential media brands. Appointed by longtime publisher Bernie Mann, she became the first woman to guide the organization—bringing a forward-looking, revenue-driven approach to a brand defined by its authenticity and connection to readers, while honoring its 93-year legacy. With more than two decades at *Our State*, Jenn has held a range of leadership roles spanning circulation, the Our State Store, marketing, events, digital collaboration, and sales. Jenn offers a seasoned perspective on leading through industry transformation, building revenue strategies that support quality content, and maintaining brand trust in a rapidly evolving media landscape.

SPEAKER BIOS



Greg Wolfe founded magazine services agency Four String Media in 2020. He has more than 25 years of experience with circulation and audience development, most with Circulation Specialists, which was one of the original and leading circulation outsource companies, where he was president and owner. Greg operates as a high-level consultant on circulation and audience strategy, marketing and operations for magazine and media companies, and has experience with all types of consumer and business publications, as well as digital media. Greg has consulted for many city and regional publications and publishers, including Today Media, Metro Corp, MSP Communications, *Sonoma Magazine*, 5280 Publishing, *Missouri Life*, *Rhode Island Monthly*, and *Santa Fe Magazine*.



Evan Wood is the publisher of *Missouri Life* magazine. When he was nine, his parents, Greg and Danita purchased the rights to and revived the magazine. Growing up in the business Evan has served in roles ranging from part-time custodian to managing editor to now being the company's top salesperson. He has also worked at marketing agencies and other periodicals in Los Angeles and Chicago. Evan earned a master's degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His writing has been published in outlets ranging from newspapers to literary journals. In October 2024 he rejoined *Missouri Life* to continue the work his parents started 27 years ago. He is now applying his knowledge of content development, sales, and marketing to developing an in-house studio at the company.



Lydia Woolever is a senior editor at *Baltimore* magazine, where she writes cover stories and features, in addition to overseeing the monthly print publication's front of book. She joined the magazine in 2014 as an associate editor, previously working at *Esquire* magazine and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Her work has been nominated for and won multiple national awards, including City Regional Magazine Awards, as well as the FOLIO Awards, where she was named 2019's Editor of the Year.



THINGS TO DO

Audubon Aquarium
and Insectarium

Bike or Scooter with
Bayou Rentals

Cafe du Monde

French Market

Historic BK House

Historic New Orleans
Collection

Mardi Gras Museum

Mardi Gras World

The National WWII
Museum

New Orleans Drink
Lab

Streetcar Rides

Vue Orleans

Walking Tours

St. Charles Streetcar Line

Walk around
Audubon Park

Stroll through the
Garden District

Spend a few hours
on Magazine Street

Restaurants:

Camillia Grill

The Chloe Hotel

The Columns

Delachaise

Magazine Street Restaurants

Dakar NOLA

Gris-Gris

La Petite Grocery

Lillette

Saffron

Shaya

Canal Street Streetcar Line

Head down through
the Mid-City
neighborhood

Visit the Cemeteries

Head to Historic City
Park

Walk through the
New Orleans Museum
of Art

Restaurants:

Blue Oak BBQ

Flour Moon Bagels

Mandina's Restaurant

Parkway Bakery &
Tavern

Toups Meatery

Vessel Nola

Zasu



EAT & DRINK

RESTAURANTS

*Within walking distance of (or close to) the CBD/ French Quarter

\$\$\$\$

Brennan's Restaurant

417 Royal St.
brennansneworleans.com
B · L · D

*Chemin a la Mer

2 Canal St.
fourseasons.com/neworleans
B · D

Compere Lapin

535 Tchoupitoulas St.
comperelapin.com
D

Dickie Brennan's Steakhouse

716 Iberville St.
dickiebrennanssteakhouse.com
D

*Emeril's

800 Tchoupitoulas St.
emerilsrestaurant.com
D

Galatoire's

209 Bourbon St.
galatoires.com
L · D

*GW Fins

808 Bienville St.
gwfins.com
D

*Jewel of the South

1026 St. Louis St.
jewelnola.com
L · D

Kenji Omakase

217 Camp St.
kenjinola.com
L · D

MaMou

942 N Rampart St.
mamounola.com
D

Miss River

2 Canal St.
missrivernola.com
B · L · D

Nobu

8 Canal St. Caesars
caesars.com/caesars-new-orleans/restaurants
D

*Restaurant R'evolution

777 Bienville St.
revolutionnola.com
D

Seaworthy

630 Carondelet St.
seaworthynola.com
D

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Arnaud's

813 Bienville St.
arnaudsrestaurant.com
L · D

Bayona

430 Dauphine St.
bayona.com
L · D

Brasa Steakhouse

365 Canal St Ste. 220
brasasteak.com
D

*Cochon

930 Tchoupitoulas St.
cochonrestaurant.com
L · D

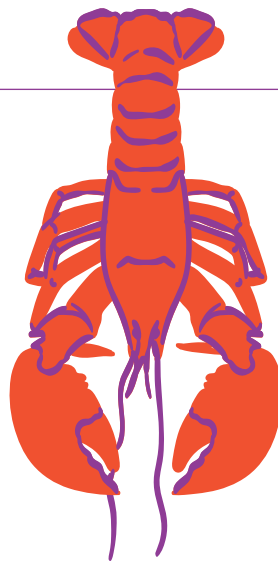
Cochon Butcher

930 Tchoupitoulas St.
cochonbutcher.com
L · D

Doris Metropolitan

620 Chartres St.
dorismetropolitan.com
D





***Herbsaint**

701 Saint Charles Ave.
herbsaint.com
L · D

Irene's

529 Bienville St.
irenesnola.com
D

Luke

333 Saint Charles Ave.
lukeneworleans.com
B · L · D

Mr. B's Bistro

201 Royal St.
.mrbsbistro.com
L · D

Muriel's Jackson Square

801 Chartres St.
muriels.com
B · L · D

***Peche**

800 Magazine St.
pecherestaurant.com
L · D

***Saint John**

1117 Decatur St
saintjohnneworleans.com
L · D

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***Antoine's**

713 Saint Louis St.
antoines.com
B · L · D

***Bearcat**

845 Corondelet St.
bearcatcafe.com
B · L

***Copper Vine**

1001 Poydras St.
coppervine.com
L · D

Dian Xin

1218 Decatur St.
dianxinnola.com
L · D

Jolie

324 Julia St.
jolie-nola.com
D

LUFU NOLA

1117 Decatur St.
lufunolafq.com
L · D

***Meril**

424 Girod St.
bemeril.com
L · D

Palm&Pine

308 N Rampart St.
palmandpinenola.com
D

***Pluck Wine Bar**

722 Girod St.
pluckwines.com
D

Sofia

516 Julia St.
sofianola.com
L · D

***Sylvain**

625 Chartres St.
sylvainnola.com
B · L · D

***Tujaque's**

429 Decatur St.
tujaguesrestaurant.com
B · L · D

\$

Napoleon House

500 Chartres St.
napoleonhouse.com
L · D

Ruby Slipper

204 Decatur St.
rubybrunch.com
B · L

 **EXTRA BARS & RESTAURANTS**

Chandelier Bar B · R

Peacock Room B · R

Sidecar B · R

The Rusty Nail B

Batter A Bakery R

Verti Marte R

Central Grocery R

Lafitte's Blacksmith Shop B

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The Finalists Magazine Sponsor



Opening Reception Sponsor



OUR DATA SPEAKS VOLUMES

A/V Sponsor



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Keynotes Sponsor



Breakfast Sponsor



WiFi Sponsor



Sales Track Sponsor



Lifetime Achievement
Award Sponsor



Agency/Studio Track Sponsor



Lunch Sponsor



Design Track Sponsor



Audience Development
Track Sponsor



Newsstand Sponsor



Tote Bag Sponsor

SEE
YOU

IN NEW
ORLEANS!

