

A 2024 AGORA JOURNALISM CENTER REPORT

Community Perspectives on Rogue Valley's Information Ecosystem

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Executive Summary

Professor DeVigal's Engaged Journalism class conducted a study to survey the Rogue Valley's information ecosystem and its residents' information needs and assets. This report aims to summarize the study findings and provide recommendations to address the gap in the existing information landscape.

The study found that Rogue Valley residents are keenly interested in news and information about local events, businesses, and government activities. However, they often face challenges in accessing such information because it is scattered across various sources lacking a centralized platform for local news. To address these issues, the study suggests that local news providers collaborate to establish a more unified and easily accessible information hub, consolidating the diverse resources available in the Rogue Valley media ecosystem. This collaboration might involve sharing content, pooling resources, and creating a joint platform for local news.

In summary, the study underscores the significance of local news and information in nurturing a vibrant and engaged community. By working together to construct a more user-friendly and centralized information system, local news sources can better cater to the needs of Rogue Valley residents and contribute to strengthening the community as a whole.

Acknowledgments: The authors thank the residents of Rogue Valley, Southern Oregon University, Jefferson Public Radio, Ashland.news, and Jackson County Library for their contributions to this study. We sincerely appreciate the community members who participated in discussions and surveys. This report represents original student work and recommendations from the University of Oregon's Engaged Journalism course.

Professor's note: To spread awareness of the information needs assessment survey reported here, we partnered with local organizations, including Southern Oregon University, Jefferson Public Radio, Ashland.news, and Jackson County Library. While this outreach likely improved response rates, it also likely contributed to uneven response rates around the Rogue Valley.

Introduction

On the morning of Sept. 8th, 2020, 40 mph winds swept through the Rogue Valley, rapidly spreading the Almeda Fire toward unsuspecting Jackson County residents. The sight of "enormous" plumes of smoke engulfed the valley. Crowded on a local viewing point overlooking Northern Ashland and the neighboring town of Talent, Kate Jaques Prentice and her neighbors were anxiously rooted as they waited for emergency notifications of the oncoming blaze.

"Aside from our local hill that had cell service, my entire neighborhood was left without any communication network," said Jaques Prentice. "Our ability to access the internet or timely emergency updates was unpredictable, which in this scenario is life or death."

With a lethal combination of high winds and unpredictable emergency notifications, locals throughout Southern Oregon would be left disconnected from updates concerning the fire's path.

After a dramatic rise in wildfires in the region, Talent was severely affected by the Almeda fire in 2020. One of Oregon's most destructive wildfires in recorded history, the Almeda Fire swept through the Rogue Valley. It destroyed, according to the [New York Times](#), "nearly 4,000 homes and other structures," between Ashland, Phoenix, Medford and Talent.

Four years later, Jaques Prentice feels wildfires have become a regular component of living in Southern Oregon. Despite the constant threat, her community remains unprepared for the inevitability of another disaster. In recent years, widespread notification failures have become a severe concern in wildfire evacuation systems across the West Coast. In the same Times article, Jim Tankersly reported that "few Californians received alerts about the rapid spread of the Camp Fire, which leveled the city of Paradise and surrounding areas in 2018 and became the deadliest fire in the state's modern history. Officials also held off on issuing alerts to Butte County, Calif., residents [...] as the Bear Fire approached, and the messages they did send out did not always prompt people to evacuate." Citing a systemic failure in activating emergency notifications, radio and tv programs in the Rogue Valley would be left "uninterrupted by emergency alerts" altogether, according to Tankersly, "leaving only residents who had signed up for an online notification system the chance to evacuate from the region."

"Our ability to access the internet or timely emergency updates was unpredictable, which in this scenario is life or death."

— Jaques Prentice,
Talent resident

[Community members](#) have noted that a severe lack of local communication networks severely worsened the wildfire's impact in Southern Oregon. The inconsistency of emergency alerts highlighted the region's lack of structured communication networks across all generations and demographics. Many elderly residents, more prone to distrust government and technology, and non-English speaking immigrants were left confused and uninformed of the fire's path.

Because of the region's lack of trusted and easily accessible sources of emergency information, residents turned to social media to fill that need. According to Tankersly, "The patchwork of official notices fed confusion for those who lived and worked in the fire's path [...] Many residents said that they had had to search for information on social media and that not all of what they had found was accurate." With a lack of information from state and local officials, many residents were left to their own devices and resources, searching for safety measures in the face of the region's most significant natural disaster.

"Last year's historic fire season taught us that being prepared can truly be the difference between life and death," said former Governor Brown. "Between extreme weather, wildfires and the pandemic, it became clear that our state needed a streamlined and customizable way to enable emergency managers at the local, county, Tribal and state level to communicate with the populations they serve across the state and at a moment's notice."



With unprecedented statewide access, OR-Alert is still grappling with its emergency notification dispatch. In early June, Klamath County requested state aid to fight the Golden Fire. The regional request resulted in a statewide level 3 evacuation notice broadcast due to an "[operator error](#)."

At an [OPB interview](#), the director of the state's Office of Emergency Alert System, Andrew Phelps, said, "I think what we'll see is that technology isn't always the solution." Phelps said, "It's the high-tech, low-tech and no-tech that got people to safety."

The incidents in Oregon's Rogue Valley highlight a critical intersection between state emergency preparedness and local news, especially in the increasing public reliance on social media for emergency and civic information. In moments of crisis, as traditional emergency alert systems like OR-Alert encounter challenges, people often turn to local news organizations and social media platforms for immediate updates and community news. Still, information on social media may or may not be reliable. This shift underscores local news's crucial role in verifying and disseminating accurate information amidst a sea of online data.

About the Rogue Valley

The Rogue Valley is a region in Southern Oregon named after the Rogue River running through it. Spanning Jackson and Josephine counties, the valley includes cities from Ashland in the south to Wolf Creek in the north. The area is known for its natural scenery, outdoor recreation, and agricultural products. The three largest cities are Medford (pop. 83,000), Grants Pass (40,000), and Ashland (21,000). Other towns include Phoenix, Jacksonville, Eagle Point, White City and Rogue River.

Professor's note: Our outreach was focused in Ashland due to partnerships with local organizations, which led to higher participation from Ashland residents. We apologize for not expanding engagement across the broader Rogue Valley; classroom resources were limited. We hope to broaden future studies to identify interventions benefiting under-resourced communities statewide. This report's references to the Rogue Valley focus heavily on the southeastern area of the region.



The Area's Information Sources

The closure of the Medford Mail Tribune last year marked a pivotal moment of change and challenge in the region's local news landscape. Amidst this backdrop of shrinking news sources, various media entities, from traditional outlets to social media platforms, are stepping in to partially fill the void, reshaping how the community gets information.

“Community journalism really is one of the pillars of democracy that we can't live without. Democracy really needs an informed public. The old business models we have haven't been working, but we still need that informed electorate.”

— Travis Moore,
publisher of the Daily Courier

The Medford Mail Tribune, one of the state's oldest newspapers and Oregon's first publication to win a Pulitzer Prize, officially ceased publication in January 2023, leaving the Medford area without a print news outlet. After the Mail Tribune's closure, the Daily Courier in Grants Pass announced its expansion plans. In addition, EO Media, a fourth-generation family-owned business based in Oregon, created a new online publication, the Rogue Valley Times, to fill the local newsroom gap. When speaking on the closure of the Mail Tribune, Travis Moore, publisher of the Daily Courier, said, “Community journalism really is one of the pillars of democracy that we can't live without. Democracy really needs an informed public.” Moore said, “The old business models we have haven't been working, but we still need that informed electorate.”

Rogue Valley also has a range of radio stations that provide news, music and entertainment programming. Some of the most popular radio stations in the area include Jefferson Public Radio, KBOY 95.7 and KRWQ 100.3. This area has several local television stations, including KOB-TV NBC 5 and KSYS PBS 8. KTVL CBS 10 continues to broadcast without local journalists. These stations offer local news, weather and sports coverage, and programming from national networks. Many residents of the Rogue Valley also rely on online news sources such as the websites of local newspapers and news stations. Several digital-native news outlets have emerged to serve the Rogue Valley communities in recent years.

Social media platforms like Facebook, Nextdoor, and X (formerly Twitter) are popular sources for breaking news and community updates. The Jackson County Library Services has branches in Ashland, Central Point, Eagle Point, Gold Hill, Jacksonville, Medford, Phoenix, Rogue River, Talent and White City. Besides these sources, several community organizations in the Rogue Valley provide information and resources to residents, such as the Chamber of Commerce, Rogue Valley Council of Governments and local nonprofits that serve specific communities.



Methodology

Understanding the Community

The students gathered data about the Rogue Valley using social media platforms, official city websites, and visitor information sources. This initial research helped us understand the community and provided valuable support for the subsequent information assessment survey to better understand how information flows through the community, along with our community discussions and ultimate visit.

The survey asked Rogue Valley residents which sources, platforms and physical spaces they visit for local news and information. It also inquired about what type of policy-related information is most important to them. See the complete survey in Appendix A.

Before the start of the term, Professor DeVigal collaborated with Southern Oregon University, Ashland.news, and Jefferson Public Radio to develop a community information needs survey and facilitate its distribution online. Ashland.news [published an article](#) to get the word out about the survey. Jefferson Public Radio also aired a similar [audio interview](#) on their talk show, “The Jefferson Exchange,” which included an interview with DeVigal, who also serves as the director of the Agora



Journalism Center at the University of Oregon. This segment highlighted previous reports on information needs and reiterated our mission to share the insights we've gathered on community values regarding news and information. Both stories included a link to the online survey at the end of the articles. Furthermore, Jefferson Public Radio explored the concept of “physical spaces where the community comes together” in another [article](#), drawing from early findings in this report.

The library posted flyers containing a QR code to the online survey in their regional libraries spread throughout Jackson County. The flyer contained a QR code and link to the online survey, along with some background information about the goal of the survey.

While this partnership likely contributed to overall higher response rates to the survey, it also likely contributed to a higher response rate from Ashland residents and to the March 2023 listening session held in Ashland.

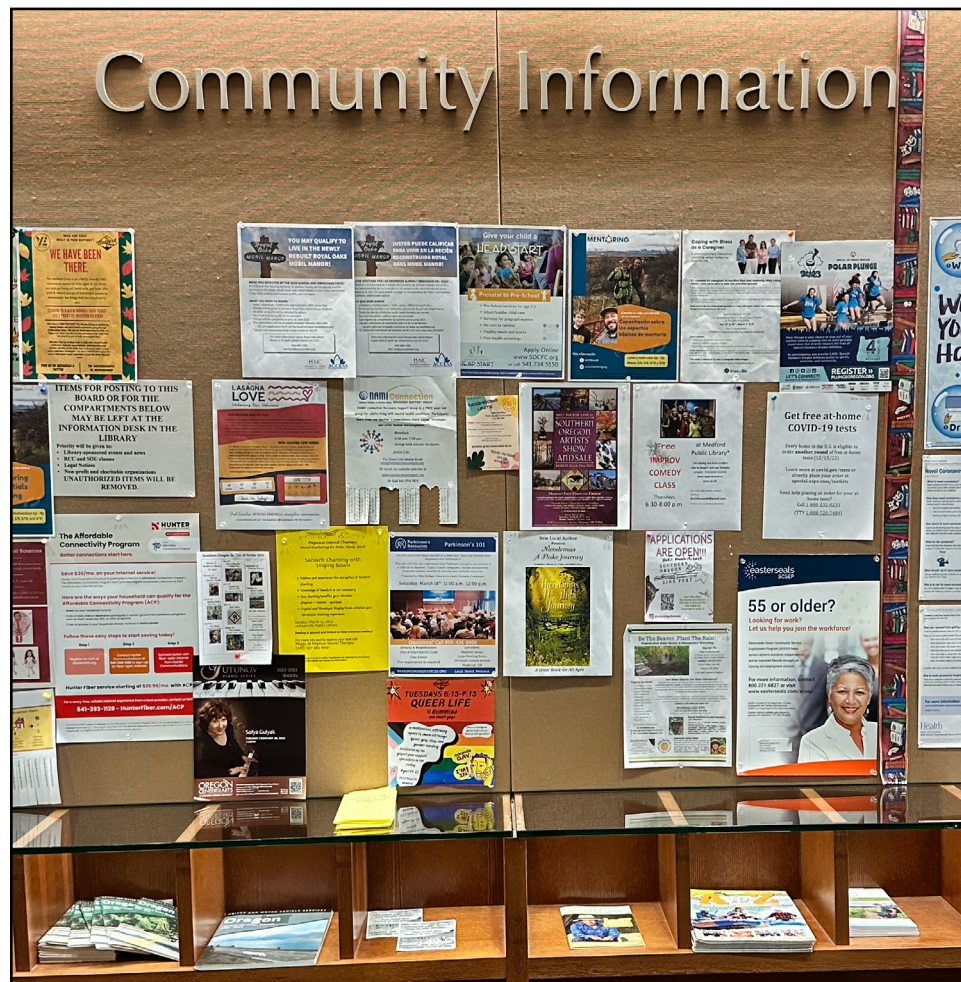
It is also important to note that the survey findings presented here are not based on a random sample of Rogue Valley residents. The findings accurately reflect the perspectives of community members who chose to participate in the survey and/or the listening sessions. Still, we do not know if the findings represent all Rogue Valley residents.

Survey Responses

Demographics

As mentioned, the distribution partners affected the resulting data. Around 43.8% of the respondents said they are from the Ashland area, a clear plurality compared to the other listed options from Southern Oregon. Of these residents, about 51.6% identify as female, and 89.3% identify as White/Caucasian. About 60.2% of the population is between 18 and 64 years old, and about 95.7% of residents older than 25 graduated from high school. The next highest was Medford, at a comparatively low 24.3% of respondents. With a population of 86,367, primarily white, followed by Hispanic/Latino residents, approximately 90% have a High School diploma/GED or higher. The total percentage of people in the age (16+) workforce is 60.3%. While the responses from other cities are present, the clear plurality of Ashland community member responses may lean heavily in one way that differs from the thoughts of community members from other cities and towns.

Despite our efforts, we note a lack of diversity among the respondents, particularly concerning Hispanic and Latino residents, with 87 percent identifying as white, six percent as Native and 2 percent as Hispanic. Most participants were seniors, with the median age being 64 years old. In contrast, the U.S. Census data for Jackson County indicates that 91.2% of the population identifies as white alone, 1.7% as American Indian and Alaska Native alone, and 14.9% as Hispanic or Latino. In terms of location, 44 percent of respondents live in Ashland, 24 percent live in Medford, and 32 percent are scattered throughout Central Point, Grants Pass, Talent, Jacksonville, Eagle Point, Phoenix, Cave Junction, White City, Rogue River, Klamath Falls, Roseburg and Shady Cove.

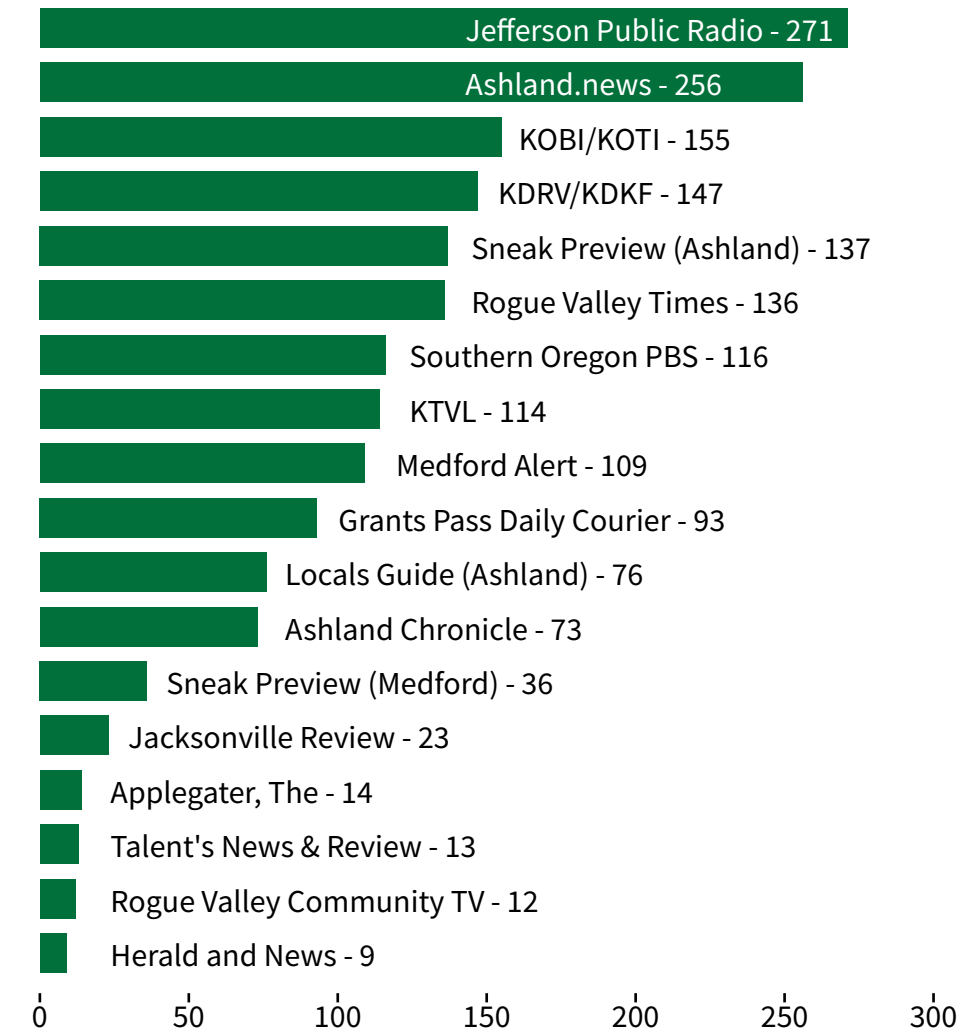


Recent data shows a similar trend in age group demographics. Overall, the Rogue Valley area consists of those in their late middle age to early senior years (50-60s). Most respondents received higher education, with 46 percent receiving a graduate or professional degree and 37 percent receiving a bachelor's degree. Twelve percent report finishing some college or technical school, and five percent report completing high school.

Community Information Habits and Needs

The information sources available in Southern Oregon are varied. According to our survey, close to 20 sources commonly used by Southern Oregon residents include radio, TV, newspapers, and other mediums. Two sources, Jefferson Public Radio and Ashland.news, emerged as survey respondents' most popular news sources. (Again, it is essential to note that this finding may be shaped by the particular array of people who responded to our survey.) Jefferson Public Radio was the most popular source, with 43% of the respondents. Ashland.news was right behind with 40% of respondents. KOBI was the most popular source of TV news and garnered 25% of the responses.

■ When something happens in your community, where do you hear about it?

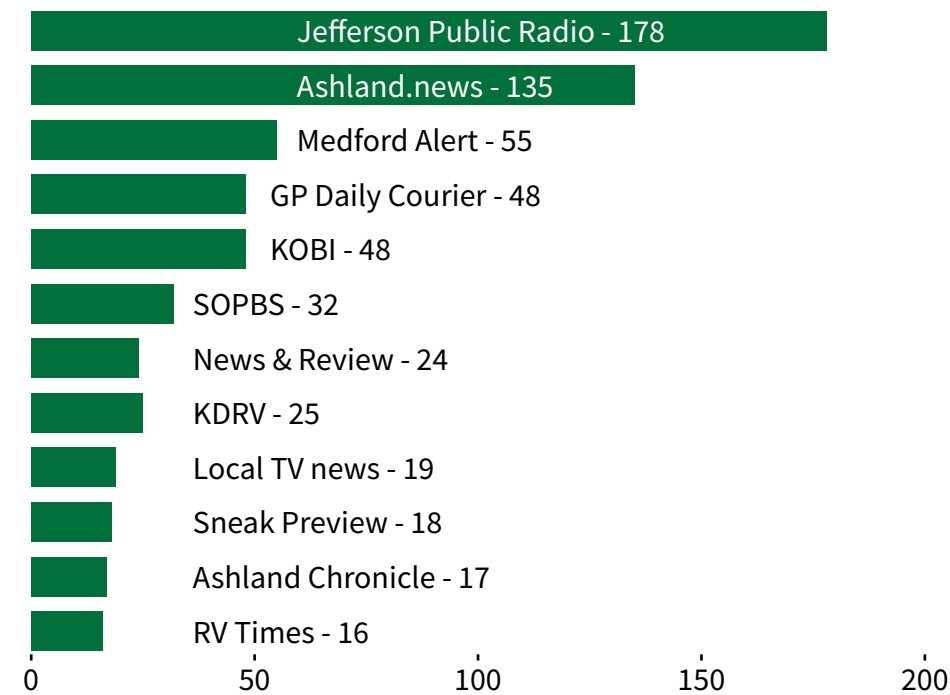


Trust in Local News

Regarding trusted news sources, JPR and Ashland.news ranked high in survey responses. Interestingly, both the X account Medford Alert and the news organization Grant Pass Daily Courier ranked slightly higher than local TV News.

These survey results reflect a more significant national trend of Americans still trusting local news amidst the widespread decline in news viability amongst the general public. As reported in a poll conducted by the [Knight Foundation](#), “more than twice as many Americans have higher emotional trust in local news than in national news.” The poll found that “emotional” trust is paramount to the public’s confidence in news and is crucial to engaging citizens in promoting communal and democratic values. As the Knight Foundation defines it, “emotional trust” encompasses how connected individuals feel to the news organizations, how well represented they feel by them, and how this affects their broader perceptions and engagement with democratic processes. Moreover, another survey conducted by the [Knight Foundation](#) also found that Americans across political party affiliations consistently trust local news ahead of national news organizations.

■ Which LOCAL information sources do you TRUST the most?

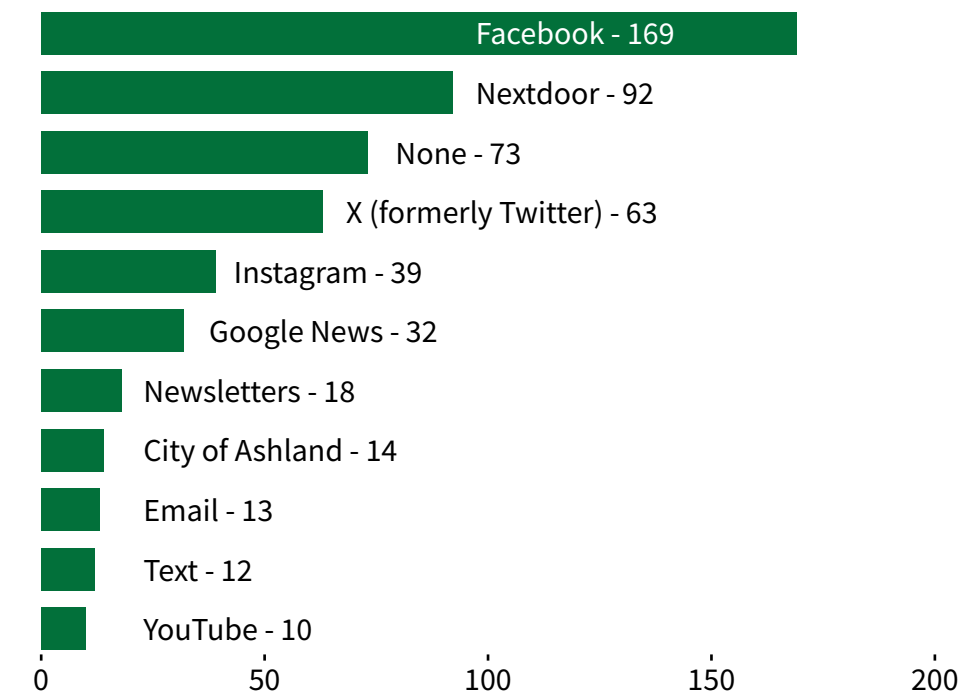


Additional entries that received 10 or fewer mentions: Friends, NPR, Library, Applegater.

Nonetheless, our study is also a reminder that Americans increasingly rely on social media outlets and social communication networks to access information about civic engagement and political issues rather than local news. Despite the reservoir of trust for some local news outlets, the data also reflects a more significant crisis in the public’s trust in news organizations’ ability to inform transparently and locally.

In terms of online sources, many survey respondents cited websites and social media as outlets where they find out about local information. Facebook was the most referenced platform, with 169 survey responses mentioning it as where they find out about local events online. Specifically, many respondents said they use Facebook groups to connect with their communities and keep updated on the news. Nextdoor was the second most mentioned online platform for discovering what is happening locally, with 92 mentions. X (formerly Twitter) came in third with 63 mentions. This is interesting as the survey was shared widely over X through Medford Alert’s account.

■ Which LOCAL information sources do you TRUST the most?



Additional entries that received fewer than 10 mentions: Chamber of Commerce, Friends-Neighbors, Reddit, Podcasts, Rogue Weather, Ashland Chamber, Rogue Action Center, SOU, Peter Sage, Peace House, Apple News, Medford City, Ashland Alert, NewsAlert, ODOT, Listserves, Medford City, Library, Snapchat, PulsePoint app, Epoch Times, Ryanweather, Oregon Catalyst, Democracy Now.

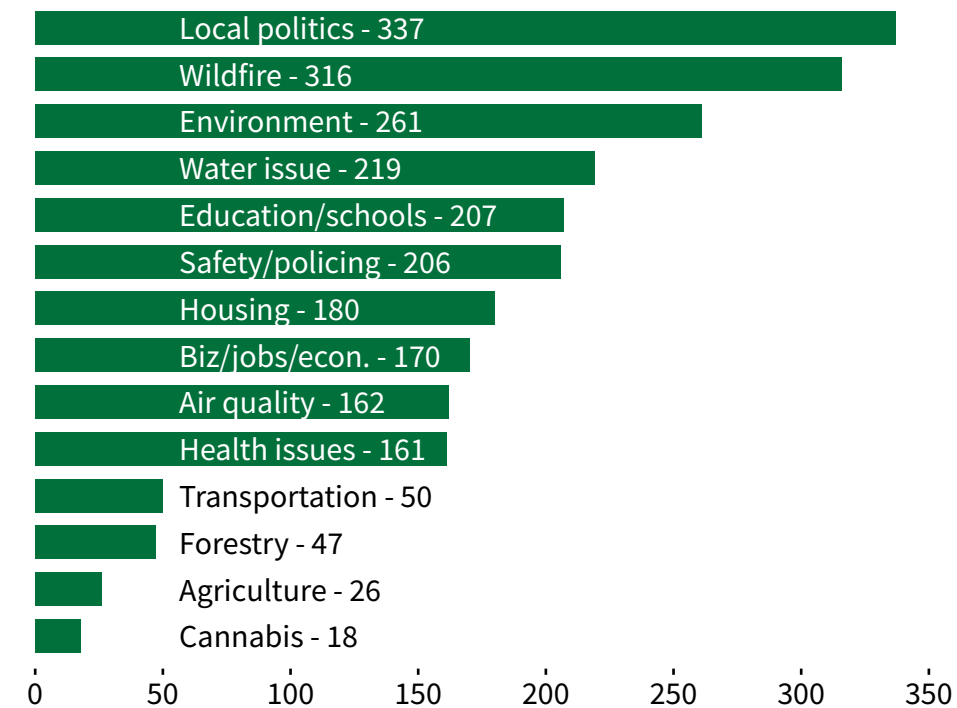
It is also important to note that 73 respondents said they do not use social media platforms, with one saying they “cannot handle the rhetoric or bias.” Other comments echoed this sentiment, with another respondent saying they “feel very disconnected” from their community without local newspapers.

While many respondents referenced social media platforms for obtaining information, many websites for news outlets were included in the responses. Regarding local sources, Ashland.news, the Rogue Valley Times and the Grants Pass Daily Courier were all mentioned. Other official websites were referenced, such as the online pages of local chambers of commerce.

What People Care About

Survey respondents were asked to select up to five policy-related topics that they found most important. The list included Water issues, Transportation, Wildfire, Air quality, Agriculture, Forestry, Safety/policing, Housing, Environment, Education/schools, Cannabis, Business/jobs/economy, Local politics, and Health issues and allowed respondents to fill their own answer under “other”.

■ Out of the following, what type of policy-related information is most important to you?



Survey respondents highlighted local politics as the policy-related information most important to them. Local politics was followed by wildfires, an issue that regularly makes headlines throughout the Pacific Northwest. Policy-related information about the environment followed wildfires, with over 300 respondents selecting it as important. Water issues, education/schools and safety/policing followed closely behind in that order. Over 200 survey respondents selected both the economy and housing.

Listening Session

In early March, Professor DeVigal's Engaged Journalism class drove to Ashland, Oregon, to host a listening session with local community members focusing on the region's information ecosystem. The class studied the region's information networks and provided local businesses and community centers with a brief analysis of the area's news and information resources in Southern Oregon. The residents who attended the convening were predominantly older and white, a reflection of Ashland's demographic and “engaged” civic citizens.

Led by students from the University of Oregon, residents participated in a two-hour group discussion ranging from the area's information



networks to the state of local journalism. Alongside the University of Oregon's class, communication students from the neighboring Southern Oregon University also attended the discussion. Highlights from the

conversations were written on sticky notes and further discussed by participants. The final conversation, led by DeVigal, discussed various strategies and sentiments concerning improving local journalism and information networks. Conversations clustered around the following topics:

- 1. Community Connection** - The attendees discussed the need for local journalism to reflect and promote civic engagement. In addition to being more involved on a “communal level,” residents also discussed the demand for more journalism to build trust amongst locals. Several expressed words such as “intergenerational and inclusive,” “diverse sources,” “interconnectedness,” and “protecting democracy.” The desire and recognition of local news as a vital civic component are evident: attendees expressed that local journalism should strive to immerse itself in the region’s communal culture and livelihood to build trust and establish sustainable community information networks. Attendees all agreed that to protect democratic values and engage citizens, local journalism is at the heart of revitalizing communal connectivity.
- 2. Regional Perspective & Expertise** - The attendees discussed their desire for local journalism to be an authentic and respectful reflection

tion of their region. Residents agreed that journalistic standards for regional reporting should highlight local journalists’ connection to the area and community. Citing a lack of “credible” regional information outlets, residents noted that local news should prioritize journalism’s role in their local community. Several expressed words such as, “longevity of the relationship” and “community is fostered when news locally is thriving.” To build trust and a healthy relationship with their audience, local journalists should amplify regional perspectives and have expertise in the region’s socio-cultural history.



- 3. Establishing Trust through Transparency** - The most dominant topic of the session concerned the establishment of trust in news amongst locals. Residents voiced their concern over the current state of journalism and the diminishing impact of news outlets in the region. In addition, attendees were dissatisfied with the lack of veracity and transparency in local reporting, often feeling that local news fails to maintain “consistency, reliability and accuracy.” Residents believe that to establish trust, journalists should strive to incorporate more transparent reporting methods and be held accountable for factual discrepancies. Several expressed that journalists should “acknowledge mistakes,” make a “distinction between opinion and facts,” “show the process,” report “opinions on both sides,” and “build trust by including complexity in the stories.” Attendees also strongly agreed that local journalism should highlight their region’s diverse opinions and focus on community nuances rather than generalized statements to solidify their personal and professional involvement in the community.

Locals expressed a desire for regional journalism to reflect their communities’ needs and engage citizens more meaningfully, often citing a lack of representation in statewide reporting. Attendees of the seminar all agreed on the region’s need for a revitalized communication and information network. Altogether, locals felt that to improve local journalism, a return to community-informed reporting would be an initial step forward for the region. While professionalism and veracity were crucial to “good” journalism, residents also expressed their desire for local journalism to promote community cohesion and interconnectedness.



Recommendations

Based on the survey results, site visit, and facilitated conversation, we suggest the following steps for Rogue Valley's local media to meet residents' information needs, leverage local assets, and improve the region's information flow.

Recommendation 1: Establishment of a Local Hub for Collaborative Journalism

To enhance the accessibility and reliability of information sources within the Rogue Valley community, we recommend identifying local media outlets and civic organizations willing to collaborate and contribute to a local collaborative hub for local news and civic information. Based on our survey responses, several trusted media outlets have emerged, including Jefferson Public Radio (JPR), Ashland.news, the Daily Courier, and various local TV news stations. Additionally, non-media organizations, such as Southern Oregon University, Jackson County Libraries, Medford Alerts, and other local entities, can be beneficial partners in this initiative. Furthermore, we recommend fostering partnerships with emerging news organizations like the recently established Rogue Valley Times by EO Media. A local news collaborative hub uniquely fosters synergistic information sharing and resource pooling among diverse media outlets and civic information sources, comprehensively addressing nuanced community-specific information needs that individual organizations might overlook or lack resources to tackle effectively.

Professor's note: Our distribution partners have long contemplated a local news hub linked to either SOU or another local institution. They see significant value and welcome an opportunity to pursue this further with other local players. Algorithmic-based aggregators such as NewsBreak and Google News exist. Still, local journalists' curatorial role would provide a more accurate and relevant representation of the region's local news coverage.

Recommendation 2: Development and Transparency of Content Guidelines

In pursuing ethical and credible journalism, establishing and publishing clear and comprehensive content guidelines are paramount. Key ele-

ments of these guidelines should address the editorial process, including who oversees the editing of stories and the methodology employed. During the Ashland Listening Session, community members emphasized the importance of a transparent code of ethics for journalists, viewing it as a means to hold media outlets accountable and ensure their reliability as sources of information.

Creating a unified and comprehensive code of ethics to which all participating entities adhere will foster consistency among the partners and instill trust within the community. When community members have insight into how and why news is reported in a particular manner, it becomes easier for them to trust the published stories. This transparency will be instrumental in building and maintaining the credibility of the information hub and the organizations it comprises.

Recommendation 3: Fostering Community Engagement and Local News Access

One of the central challenges faced by the Rogue Valley community is the absence of a localized platform for engaging with news and information. This void has led to a significant information gap, with residents often seeking information from close relatives or private groups on social media, fostering insular information bubbles within the community.

To address this issue, we propose establishing a consistent, sustained community gathering space, which could be hosted in local libraries or community centers. In addition to these in-person meetings, a website should be maintained to provide updates and facilitate asynchronous interactions between community members. However, as identified in our interviews, creating physical gathering spaces has proven challenging.

To ensure accessibility and engagement for all community members, we recommend hosting these events in various locations throughout the community and nurturing diverse partnerships. These partnerships can be cultivated by scheduling monthly or weekly gatherings in collaboration with local organizations and trusted community leaders. When organizing events, leveraging these partnerships and relationships can draw participants to the physical space. Utilizing surveys can also help identify topics of interest to the community and align event content with community concerns.

A community calendar is proposed to sustain long-term commitment, providing locals with reliable event information and updated resources.

Recommendation 4: Engaging Communities Where They Are

A significant challenge observed in several communities within the Rogue Valley and across the state are news deserts, with limited access to local news, particularly in smaller towns like Phoenix and Central Point. Survey responses have revealed that individuals in these areas heavily rely on social media to stay informed about local events, elections, and community developments.

To better serve the informational needs of these underserved regions, it is essential for journalists to actively integrate themselves into the communities they cover. Journalists should prioritize their presence in spaces where their target audience is most active. This entails maintaining a robust online presence, engaging in face-to-face interactions, and attending local events whenever possible.

Similar to our team's listening session in Ashland, journalists should establish partnerships with local organizations to host events and discussions pertinent to their reporting communities. Hosting such events fosters audience trust and credibility and facilitates networking and collaboration with local sources.

Survey responses have highlighted the effectiveness of multimedia storytelling in engaging audiences and conveying compelling narratives. An expanded social media and multimedia presence is crucial to reach individuals who prefer consuming content in formats beyond traditional print media.

Efforts to solicit feedback through social media platforms should extend to follow-up conversations with consumers to assess the efficacy of engagement strategies. These discussions ensure that social media interactions adapt to the evolving needs and interests of the community. Demonstrating accessibility through social media platforms should convey an attentive demeanor, reassuring community members that local media outlets are valuable resources for them.

Recommendation 5: Building Trust with Local Focus

In our pursuit of regaining public trust and emphasizing local stories, we propose a multifaceted approach:

- **Journalistic Portfolios with a Personal Touch:** Create visual portfolios showcasing a reporter's work and including a biography. This highlights expertise, transparency, and community connection. It also features a clear code of ethics and mission statement.
- **Engaging Readers through Feedback:** Add an "upvote" button to articles for reader input. Establish dedicated channels for community feedback via email and phone. Encourage residents to express their preferences for more or less coverage on specific topics.
- **Embracing Diversity in Reporting:** Hire reporters familiar with the region's diverse demographics, including the sizable Latino and American Indian/Alaskan Native populations. This ensures more accurate and authentic coverage of local stories.

Conclusion

By implementing these recommendations, the Rogue Valley can look forward to a more collaborative and accountable information landscape, better equipped to meet the diverse information needs of its residents.

The Engaged Journalism class developed a deeper understanding of the Rogue Valley's information systems and needs through a survey, site visit, and facilitated conversation. We recommend a collaborative effort among local media outlets and civic organizations to create a centralized platform, establish a clear code of ethics for journalists, and promote the platform through various marketing channels to improve the information ecosystem in the Rogue Valley. Another recommendation is the creation of a Rogue Valley public square in different locations to host biweekly community gatherings and a website to provide updates and ways to interact outside of in-person work.

Appendix A

Information Ecosystem Assessment Survey

We're researching how people discover and share what's going on in their communities, and we are thrilled to work with several local media partners and agencies in Southern Oregon. Our survey only takes a few minutes. The results of the survey aim to support the information needs of the community. Thank you so much for your thoughtful responses!

Community Information Sources

When something happens in your community, where do you hear about it? *Please select all that apply.*

<input type="checkbox"/> Applegater, The	<input type="checkbox"/> Illinois Valley News	<input type="checkbox"/> Southern Oregon PBS
<input type="checkbox"/> Ashland.news	<input type="checkbox"/> Jacksonville Review	<input type="checkbox"/> Talent's News & Review
<input type="checkbox"/> Ashland Chronicle	<input type="checkbox"/> Rogue River Press	<input type="checkbox"/> Upper Rogue Valley Indy
<input type="checkbox"/> Herald and News	<input type="checkbox"/> Rogue Valley Community TV	<input type="checkbox"/> Jefferson Public Radio
<input type="checkbox"/> Grants Pass Daily Courier	<input type="checkbox"/> Rogue Valley Tribune	<input type="checkbox"/> KDOV/KDSO (TV)
<input type="checkbox"/> Grant Pass News & Review	<input type="checkbox"/> Roseburg News-Review	<input type="checkbox"/> KDRV/KDKF (TV)
<input type="checkbox"/> Locals Guide (Ashland)	<input type="checkbox"/> Sneak Preview (Ashland)	<input type="checkbox"/> KOB1/KOTI (TV)
<input type="checkbox"/> Medford Alert	<input type="checkbox"/> Sneak Preview (Medford)	<input type="checkbox"/> KTVL (TV)
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____		

What websites, social media or platforms do you use to find out what's happening locally?

Examples include Facebook, FB groups, Nextdoor, Twitter (ie: Medford Alert), Instagram, Reddit, email, texting/SMS, podcast series, and newsletters. Also, consider regional chambers, city websites, and social media influencers. Who do you turn to?

Which LOCAL information sources do you TRUST the most?

What are the physical spaces where people gather and share information in your community? How is information shared in these spaces? *Examples could be churches, restaurants, pubs, cafes, markets, libraries, community events, social clubs, the Farmers Market or another meeting spot.*

If somebody moved to town and wanted to find out what's going on locally, where would you send them?

Who's a person in town who knows a lot about what's happening in the community? What would be a good way to contact them?

Community Information Needs

Which information sources do you go to to find out about events, music, things to do with children, etc., in the community? (*Choose 3-5*)

<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/> Radio	<input type="checkbox"/> TV
<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook Group	<input type="checkbox"/> News websites/blogs	<input type="checkbox"/> City websites
<input type="checkbox"/> Family, friends, neighbor	<input type="checkbox"/> Church	<input type="checkbox"/> Library
<input type="checkbox"/> Community center	<input type="checkbox"/> Flyers, signs	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Out of the following, what type of policy-related information is most important to you? (*Choose 3-5*)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Air Quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Business/jobs/economy
<input type="checkbox"/> Cannabis	<input type="checkbox"/> Education/schools	<input type="checkbox"/> Environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Forestry	<input type="checkbox"/> Health issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Housing
<input type="checkbox"/> Local politics	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety/policing	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Water issue	<input type="checkbox"/> Wildfire	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

On a scale of 1-10, how informed do you feel about what's happening in your community?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Not informed</i>				<i>Somewhat informed</i>				<i>Very informed</i>	

On a scale of 1-10, how informed do you feel about what's happening in local government?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Not informed</i>				<i>Somewhat informed</i>				<i>Very informed</i>	

And how informed do you feel about what's on the ballot?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Not informed</i>				<i>Somewhat informed</i>				<i>Very informed</i>	

Biographical Information

Your name (*optional*): _____

Age: _____

I live in (*check only one*)

<input type="checkbox"/> Ashland	<input type="checkbox"/> Medford
<input type="checkbox"/> Central Point	<input type="checkbox"/> Phoenix
<input type="checkbox"/> Grants Pass	<input type="checkbox"/> Roseburg
<input type="checkbox"/> Klamath Falls	<input type="checkbox"/> Talent
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

How many years have you lived in the area? _____

What was your total household income in 2021?

Remember to include everyone, and your best guess is okay: \$ _____

What is the highest level of education you have attained?

- ☐ Less than high school
- ☐ Some college or technical school
- ☐ Graduate or professional degree

- ☐ High school diploma or equivalent
- ☐ College degree
- ☐ Other: _____

Which racial or ethnic background do you most identify with? *Please select all that apply.*

- ☐ American Indian / Alaskan Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic / Latino
- ☐ Middle Eastern / Northern African
- ☐ Mixed

- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Unknown
- ☐ Do not wish to disclose
- ☐ Other
- _____

What is your party registration?

- ☐ Democrat
- ☐ Republican
- ☐ Independent Party of Oregon

- ☐ Some other party
- ☐ Non-affiliated
- ☐ Not registered to vote

We value your participation in filling out this survey. Thank YOU.

Name of Interviewer: _____

Date & location of interview: _____

Questions? Contact Andrew DeVigal at adevigal@uoregon.edu.

Have you noticed a decline in local news and information in your community?

It's becoming a widespread issue across the US, and it's affecting our ability to build strong and functioning communities. One of the best ways to improve local news and civic health is to involve the communities most impacted.

That's why the University of Oregon researchers are surveying residents to understand how people like you get their information. We want to know what news sources you trust, what information is essential to you, and how informed you feel about what's going on in your community. To take a short survey, simply point your mobile phone's camera at this QR Code:



Or visit the following webpage:

<https://bit.ly/uosurvey-southoregon>



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