



**ONLINE NEWS
ASSOCIATION**

Retrospective

2025

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ABOUT ONA

DRIVING INNOVATION IN DIGITAL JOURNALISM

The Online News Association (ONA) convenes and equips digital innovators and newsroom leaders with the resources they need to drive a sustainable journalism industry. Our programs advance newsrooms' understanding of what's coming for the industry, deliver practical training and connect changemakers to each other.

ONA has been guiding digital transitions since its founding in 1999. Our early members were among the few in their organizations who saw the internet's potential to strengthen journalism, at a time when many viewed online news as less credible than print or broadcast. ONA has led the industry in exploring emerging opportunities and served as a resource hub for journalists through multiple cycles of significant transformation. These disruptions have included the decline of legacy print outlets, the rise and fall of social media platforms and, in more recent years, the emergence of news influencers, a shift to independent creator journalism, and the rapid mainstreaming of generative artificial intelligence.

In 2025, as we marked ONA's 26th anniversary, our programming centered a key lesson from this experience: Journalism must actively define and shape technology's role in our field rather than the other way around. From supporting ethical and effective AI implementation to guiding journalists through its implications on their careers, our work created tangible, positive change for individual journalists, their organizations and the communities they serve.

Explore the 2025 highlights in this retrospective and get excited to embark on another year of learning and building solutions together.

A LETTER FROM NIKETA PATEL, CEO & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of ONA,

When I joined ONA as CEO & Executive Director, I knew I was stepping into an organization with a powerful legacy and an equally powerful opportunity to evolve. What I didn't fully anticipate was how urgently that evolution would be needed.

2025 made the stakes impossible to ignore. Layoffs continued to reshape newsrooms. Journalists were threatened, detained and arrested while doing their jobs. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 130 journalists and media workers were killed in 2025. And through all of it, the communities that rely on local news kept depending on it for safety information, for trusted voices, for a grounding sense of what is true.

ONA's response to this moment is our new three-year strategic plan, which I'm proud to have released in my first six months as Executive Director. This is our new north star: help journalism not just survive change, but thrive through change. That means shifting ONA from a general professional development organization into a year-round hub for adaptive leadership, equipping journalists and news leaders at every level with the skills, foresight and community they need to lead through disruption and drive innovation.

That work was already underway in 2025. We deepened our investment in emerging leaders through the Women's Leadership Accelerator. We expanded our AI in Journalism Initiative into its third year. We grew our team and built new infrastructure to support members not just at our annual conference, but throughout the year. And we gathered over 1,200 journalists and media makers at ONA25 in New Orleans, which is proof that this community's appetite for connection and collaboration is as strong as ever.

None of this happens without you. Your investment in ONA is an investment in the journalists, newsrooms and communities on the front lines of this work. As we head into the next chapter guided by a clearer mission, a bolder vision and a growing ecosystem of leaders across the field, I'm grateful to have you with us.

The future of journalism isn't something that happens to us. It's something we build together. I hope what follows shows you just how much we've already built and how much further your support will take us.

With gratitude and in solidarity,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Niketa".

NIKETA PATEL
CEO & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ONLINE NEWS ASSOCIATION



ONA STRATEGIC PLAN

Our new strategic plan was developed through many workshops with ONA staff, our board, our consultants and supporters. It reflects countless conversations with our community about ONA's history, our role in the industry and how we can meet this pivotal moment for journalism. Out of that work came four strategic pillars. Together they describe what it actually takes to lead through change — understanding what's coming, building the skills to act on it and staying connected to others navigating the same terrain.

When it came time to look back on 2025, it made sense to organize this retrospective around the first three pillars. This shows how much of last year's work was already building toward this future, even before the plan was finalized, and it gives us a clear-eyed accounting of where we're strongest and where we have room to grow. As you read on, you'll find the highlights, milestones, and moments from 2025 grouped under each pillar — a reflection of both what we accomplished together and the foundation we're laying for the next three years.

OUR VISION

A journalism industry that doesn't just survive change but thrives through it— where continuous learning, strategic collaboration, and adaptive leadership across all roles and functions create an ecosystem powerful enough to meet democracy's evolving information needs.

OUR MISSION

We equip journalism professionals across all roles, functions and career stages with adaptive leadership capabilities, strategic foresight, and collaborative communities and networks, creating a connected ecosystem where shared learning, experimentation and innovation strengthen journalism's capacity to serve democracy.



1

Foresight & Intelligence

Helping journalism professionals understand what's coming.

2

Learning & Leadership

Building the skills to lead through industry transformation.

3

Communities & Networks

Creating meaningful connections across roles and organizations.

4

Organizational Strength

Growing ONA's capacity to support journalism's future.



02

**INDUSTRY
INTELLIGENCE
AND STRATEGIC
FORESIGHT**

ONA is an essential resource for digital journalists and newsroom leaders interested in better understanding and navigating what's coming next in journalism. As an ongoing disruptive force in the industry, artificial intelligence was again a major programmatic focus area for 2025.

Started in 2024, the AI in Journalism Initiative draws on ONA's 26 years of experience supporting the journalism community in adapting to new technology, leveraging the collective capacity of ONA's membership to deliver resources and programming that are practical, ethical, and productive. Since its launch, the initiative has engaged more than 3,000 journalism leaders.

In addition to AI, our 2025 programming highlighted two more major themes impacting every area of journalism: climate and resilience. Both leading up to and at the ONA25 annual conference, Sept. 10-13 in New Orleans, we dedicated significant programming space to discussing how climate change should be considered in every beat and every part of the newsroom. And with major disruptions at every turn, we held space for discussions on how to cultivate resilience in our careers, our organizations and our communities.



From left to right: Martin G. Reynolds, Lisa Armstrong, Leonor Ayala and Alicia Bell speaking at their session *Belonging Under Fire: Defending DEI and Belonging in Journalism* at ONA25, which dove into the debate about whether to keep the charge but soften the language—or stand firm, knowing that changing the language can rewrite the story.



A packed house for "What's Hot and What's Not in Video," a session looking at emerging trends in video journalism.

FORWARD-LOOKING DISCUSSIONS

Virtually and at ONA25, community members shared insights on the latest trends shaping our industry to inform newsroom leaders on what's coming next. Sessions included discussions on personal resilience in the face of national reckoning, handling the unintended amplification of biases, inaccuracies and potential propaganda when AI systems build upon each other, navigating the shift to generative search, AI and source protection, revenue opportunities in the emerging AI content licensing market, and emerging trends in video journalism.

FEATURED SESSIONS

Race, Gender and Climate: Reflections on Katrina 20 Years Later

Twenty years before we gathered in New Orleans for ONA25, Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath devastated New Orleans and exposed deep inequalities in how the U.S. responds to disasters. The panel reflected on resilience in New Orleans and the lessons for journalists today as the impacts of climate change grow more severe. This conversation brought together moderator Errin Haines, Editor-at-large and co-founder of The 19th, with Terry Baquet, Editor-in-Chief of the nonprofit newsroom Verite News, Melissa Harris-Perry, a college professor and an award-winning writer, speaker and media host, and Halle Parker, Health Reporter for Verite News.



Left to Right: Errin Haines, Melissa Harris-Perry, Terry Baquet and Halle Parker



FEATURED SESSIONS

Journalist-turned-CEO Ben Collins on how The Onion is reimagining journalism, one viral satirical headline at a time

After Global Tetrahedron took the helm in April 2024, The Onion resurrected its print publication, relaunched the Onion News Network's parody videos on YouTube and nearly doubled its staff. Interviewed by ONA's Niketa Patel, The Onion CEO Ben Collins shared why he's optimistic about the future of the industry, and what journalists can do to build resilience and thrive in a weaponized media environment.



Leading at the Margins: Personal Resilience in the Face of National Reckoning

In an era marked by political backlash, disinformation, and intensifying attacks on marginalized communities, newsroom leaders who focus on vulnerable populations are carrying a unique and heavy burden. This conversation covered how to stay resilient, protect journalists and build community under siege. Ethar El-Katatney, Editor-in-chief at Documented, moderated the conversation with Madeleine Bair, Founding Director of El Tímpano, and Maritza L. Félix, Founder and Director of Conecta Arizona.



Attendees participate in a scenario planning and visioning exercise at the AI Leadership Summit.



Attendees connect at the AI Leadership Summit.



Nikita Roy, Founder of Newsroom Robots Lab, delivered a keynote session on what's coming next in AI at the AI Leadership Summit.

CASE STUDIES

ONA plays a crucial role in sharing case studies and implementation across diverse newsrooms to learn from each other. Our virtual and in-person deep dive case study sessions included real-world uses for custom GPTs, transforming workflows, student collaborations, and changemaking strategies for across the organization.

ONA X NEWSROOM ROBOTS AI LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

In partnership with Newsroom Robots Lab, organized the ONA x Newsroom Robots AI Leadership Summit, held May 19-20 in Detroit. The event was designed to connect and support the “nodes” who are leading AI adoption in their newsroom from any position. Attendees ranged from investigative reporters to C-suite, all advocating clear-eyed and strategic leverage of AI technologies in their organizations.

The program included a look at where the technology is going and how it's impacting news business models, change management and scenario planning sessions, an unconference where attendees pitched and led sessions and discussions with their peers, and a [live Newsroom Robots podcast recording](#) with Zach Seward, Editorial Director of AI Initiatives at The New York Times. The unconference featured tableside discussions for participants to continue the conversation on the topics raised during the forward-thinking discussions of the first day, such as the potential “death of the article” as the standard unit of content delivery for journalism organizations – considering potential replacement news products that leans into the patterns of audience information consumption that come from generative AI in search and agentic AI. Nearly 50% of survey respondents mentioned this conversation as the most thought-provoking at the event.

“

Some critically important issues surfaced over the two days. I left with a clearer picture of where news is likely headed and also a thousand questions about the opportunities for local publishers.

Quotes from ONA x Newsroom Robots AI Leadership Summit attendees

“

Not all conferences land. This one did – it asked better questions than it answered. We worked through uncomfortable questions, assumptions, and contradictions.



03

**CONTINUOUS
LEARNING AND
ADAPTIVE
LEADERSHIP**

LEARNING AT ONA25

The 2025 Online News Association Conference (ONA25) was a four-day gathering of journalism and technology leaders, hosted at the Hyatt Regency New Orleans, Sept. 10-13, 2025.

Drawing attendees from across the online news industry, the conference welcomed early-career practitioners, seasoned newsroom leaders, entrepreneurs, academics, executives, technologists, journalism support professionals, and all manner of other experts in journalism.

The program emphasized five main areas of practice

- Leadership + Strategy + Culture
- Technology + Product
- Reporting + Editing
- Revenue + Sustainability
- Audience Development



Ethar El-Katatney, P. Kim Bui and Mallory Johns led a hands-on working group session on policies, sourcing, data practices, safety protocols, funding models and more to uphold trust and resilience in newsrooms covering polarized issues.



From left to right, Ethar El-Katatney, Erika Carlos, Da'Shaun Harrison and Kenneth T. Miles speak at their session Covering A Divided Nation (moderated by Sara Lomax, not pictured).

PRACTICAL LEARNING SESSIONS

ONA25 offered more than 134 total session blocks, including 53 breakouts and 13 workshops, all broadly built from community pitches, as selected and developed by our all-volunteer Program Committee. Our 199 ONA25 speakers were quite diverse, with a majority identifying as people of color, and about 32 saw double-duty, presenting or facilitating multiple sessions.

Practical training is a hallmark of ONA conferences, with the aim of getting insights and tools to attendees they can put to work right after the conference ends. The conference also offers a range of deep-dive workshops for attendees to build their strategies and collaborate on resources to take home. Highlights from ONA25 included sessions on making the move to independent creator model journalism, building a collaborative playbook for newsrooms covering polarized issues, building a mutual aid model for crisis coverage, building a sustainable revenue mix to power nonprofit journalism, and using AI in FOIA investigations and climate accountability journalism.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP ACCELERATOR

The 2025 Women's Leadership Accelerator selected **26 journalism changemakers** for an intensive leadership training and coaching program. Members of the cohort are adaptive leaders spearheading positive change within their organizations and the journalism community at large. They represent a range of journalism expertise, including AI, product, audience, social video, television, operations and strategy, data and audio. They came from local public media, local and national newspapers, local independent news organizations and journalism-adjacent organizations, and several are entrepreneurs, founders or independent creator journalists. They serve audiences in 14 U.S. states and six other countries, with locations ranging from Kansas City to Miami to Qatar.

In addition to training on leadership styles and organizational change, cohort members also benefit from both organized and informal opportunities to connect with the accelerator's powerful community of alums, speakers and mentors. This year's program engaged 35 speakers and coaches with wide-ranging expertise across digital media, including Kathy Lu, Charo Henríquez, Kari Cobham, Amanda Kludt, Jahna Berry, Tracy Brown, Sara Catania and Kenya Young.



WHAT THE COHORT SAID

“

The Women’s Leadership Accelerator came at a time when I needed both clarity and conviction. It helped me recognize the purpose in this season of my life and equipped me with the tools, confidence, and community to step fully into what’s next.

MONIQUE O. MADAN

“

WLA reignited my leadership purpose and helped me clarify my ambitions and goals. But most importantly, I am walking away with a community that I know will continue to inspire and illuminate. The program is just the beginning!

CAROL MOTSINGER

Meet the 2025 Women's Leadership Accelerator Cohort

- **Ade Kidwell**, Chief, Indonesian Service, Voice of America
- **Amory Sivertson**, Podcast Host and Senior Producer, WBUR
- **Averi Sanders**, Executive Successor & Operations Lead, The Omaha Star
- **Carol Motsinger**, Director of Storytelling, Editor of Life +Culture, Houston Chronicle
- **Ellery Jones**, Assistant Editor, Innovation, Chicago Public Media
- **Gabriela Fernandez**, Associate Director, Audience, Vox
- **Gabriella Nuñez-Garcia**, Special Projects Producer, WXIA 11Alive News
- **Joanie Tobin**, Supervising Producer, Digital Video, GBH
- **Kheira Tami**, Executive Producer, AJ+ (Al Jazeera)
- **Lacy Atalick**, Freelance Editor, recently Community Manager for Spaces, Village Media
- **Lena Han**, Product Manager, The Philadelphia Inquirer
- **Lina Batarags**, International Executive Editor, Business Insider
- **Liz Brazile**, Online Managing Editor, KUOW Public Radio
- **Liz Worthington**, Director of Product Strategy, American Press Institute
- **Lyneka Little**, Audience Engagement Editor, Prison Journalism Project
- **Madeleine Schwartz**, Editor in Chief, The Dial
- **Madeline Chosich**, Director of Marketing and Growth, Deep South Today
- **Majdolin Hasan**, GIJN Arabic Editor, Global Investigative Journalism Network
- **Meghan Snider**, Director of Development, Investigative Journalism Foundation of Canada
- **Mia Warren**, Managing Director, Feet in 2 Worlds
- **Monique O. Madan**, Co-Lead Advisor, Storytelling Community of Practice, Maynard Institute for Journalism Education; principal at The Madan Creative Group
- **Natalie Daher**, Director, Planning and Special Projects, Axios
- **Nelly Kalu**, Editorial Product and Project Manager, Center for Collaborative Investigative Journalism (CCIJ)
- **Pamela de la Fuente**, Managing Editor, Nerd Wallet
- **Shreen Khan**, Senior Producer & Partner Manager, URL Media
- **Sophia Rosenbaum**, Head of Digital Strategy and Coordination, The Associated Press

AI LITERACY AND PRACTICAL TRAINING

A key learning focus for 2025 was continuing to encourage journalists to better understand how AI works, the ways it's reshaping audience behaviors, and how it may be used to enhance their work, while maintaining ethical standards. ONA hosted a robust slate of virtual and in-person practical trainings for applications of AI in the newsroom, including sessions on video creation, data journalism and freelance journalism, growing reader revenue with AI-assisted marketing, prompting for journalists, vibe coding and more.



Yumi Wilson leads a session on how journalists can unlock better research, sharper interview questions and stronger story angles with effective AI prompting techniques at ONA25.

ADVANCED GENERATIVE AI COURSES FOR ACROSS THE NEWSROOM

In spring 2025, we developed three intensive generative AI courses for three different cohorts of newsroom roles: visual journalists, newsroom managers and audience engagement leaders. We received 325 applications for 84 spots across the three courses, showing massive interest in this topic. Course participants learned about the specific applications and implications for AI in their roles, heard from peers about how they're using AI in their work, and worked together in four facilitated "design sprint" sessions to envision how their roles could be supported by AI technology. Among participants surveyed, 87% said they'd apply what they learned in their roles.

“

We have a group of passionate, collaborative and insightful journalists in this cohort who we can all help support, lean on, share ideas with, and continue these conversations.

GENERATIVE AI IN THE NEWSROOM COURSE PARTICIPANT



INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S MEDIA
FOUNDATION

PROTECTING JOURNALISTS ONLINE

In 2025, ONA launched a safety and security training series in partnership with the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF), generously supported by the Ford Foundation. The series kicked off with an in-person workshop at ONA25 in New Orleans, where IWMF's security and program staff led hands-on training for journalists facing escalating threats — from challenges to the First Amendment and front-line encounters with law enforcement to doxxing and online harassment. From there, the partnership expanded into virtual workshops covering topics such as covering protests, navigating ICE activity and managing digital and physical risks in the field. The series continued into 2026, reflecting both the urgency of the moment and the community's clear demand for this kind of training.

Due to the shifting nature of the legal landscape and to allow for more open conversations, most of the virtual sessions were not recorded. One session, [Staying Safe on Assignment: Navigating Law Enforcement](#), has become a popular resource that newsrooms turn to for guidance.

MJ BEAR FELLOWSHIP: THE FELLOWSHIP'S ROLE IN ONA'S WORK

The MJ Bear Fellowship is one part of ONA's broader commitment to building a journalism ecosystem where innovation can take root at every level. The 2025 cohort demonstrates what becomes possible when early-career journalists have the backing to experiment, take risks and make connections across the industry. Now in its second decade, the fellowship provides journalists under the age of 30 with a yearlong combination of professional coaching, conference access and peer community. Fellows are selected from a competitive global applicant pool and represent some of the most inventive work happening in digital journalism today.

2025 FELLOWS AND THEIR WORK

The 2025 cohort reflects the breadth of innovation shaping journalism's next chapter, from AI-assisted reporting tools to distributed newsrooms serving underrepresented communities to on-the-ground multimedia work in regions rarely covered with depth or care.

Alexi Cohan | Digital Producer, GBH News

Created and leads Politics IRL, a monthly digital video series documenting Gen Z voters across the political spectrum on issues including abortion, immigration and the economy

Bryce Cracknell | Founder and Editor-in-Chief, The Margin

Uses investigative journalism, personal narrative and data visualization to cover environmental justice, centering communities most directly affected by environmental harm

Dana Chiueh | News Innovation Engineer, Minnesota Star Tribune

Built Tipbot, an LLM-powered tool that analyzes incoming news tips for missing context and generates automated follow-up responses to improve the reporting pipeline

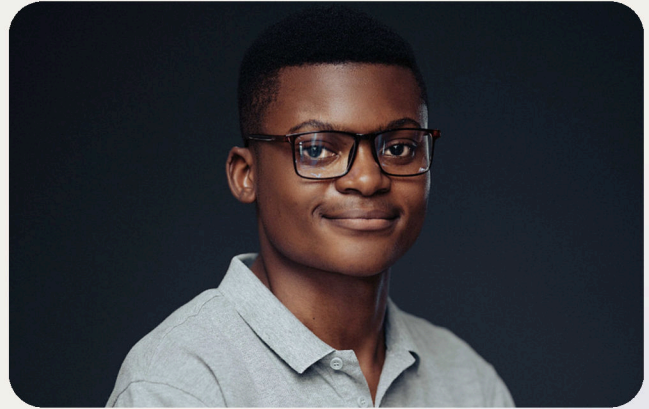
Riddhi Setty | Investigative Journalist

Partnering with ITV Network's Chief Technology Officer to develop an AI tool, trained by investigative journalists, designed to flag anomalies in publicly released corporate data, including annual reports, SEC filings and 990 forms

2025 FELLOWS AND THEIR WORK

Kevin Nsieyanji Tchokodeu | Doctoral Researcher, TU Darmstadt; Founder, Neuelt e.K.

Founded two distributed newsrooms, Afrik-View and The Times of Cameroon, publishing reporting from more than 30 African journalists, currently exploring ethical AI integration to support and scale that work



MJ Bear fellow Ruben Nyanguila

Ruben Nyanguila | Photojournalist and Investigative Reporter

Producing a multimedia investigation into women-led artisanal production in rural DRC communities facing acute impacts from the climate crisis. Created and leads Politics IRL, a monthly digital video series documenting Gen Z voters across the political spectrum on issues including abortion, immigration and the economy



MJ Bear fellows: Back row from L to R: Bryce Cracknell, Kevin Nsieyanji Tchokodeu and Alexi Cohan. Front row, L to R: Dana Chiueh and Riddhi Setty.



04

**CONNECTED
COMMUNITIES
AND NETWORKS**

Core to ONA's impact is connecting our community across all news functions, communities and career stages. We convene the important moments for our members to share ideas, celebrate our community's work, and find camaraderie in the day-to-day.

ONLINE JOURNALISM AWARDS

The Online Journalism Awards (OJAs) have set the standards for excellence and innovation in digital journalism for 26 years. The 2025 awards received more than **1,200 entries** and celebrated standout projects in visual storytelling, collaborations, AI innovation, social media engagement, climate reporting and 18 other categories. A brand new category was introduced this year to spotlight innovative revenue strategies that enhanced an organization's financial sustainability and journalistic independence.

Winners in five of the categories received a total of \$57,000 in prize money, thanks to generous support from award sponsors the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications, the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication's Agora Journalism Center, McKinsey Publishing, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and SmartNews.

Community members gathered for a celebratory luncheon and ceremony, hosted by **Hari Sreenivasan**, Anchor and Senior Correspondent for PBS News Hour Weekend and PBS News Hour, on Friday, Sept. 12, in New Orleans.



Hari Sreenivasan



Madeleine Bair, El Tímpano

The ceremony included special honors for the 2025 recipients of the ONA Community Award, the Impact Award, and the James Foley Award for Conflict Reporting. These awards look beyond individual journalism projects to recognize individuals or small groups who have contributed long-lasting impact to the industry and serve as exceptional examples and inspiration for their peers.

- **Feet in 2 Worlds** — a nonprofit newsroom and journalism training organization that has spent more than two decades empowering immigrant journalists and reshaping the U.S. media landscape to be more inclusive, representative and community-driven — was honored with the [ONA Community Award](#).
- The [Impact Award](#) went to **Andrew Losowsky**, Director of Product / Product Editor at CalMatters and The Markup, as a visionary force for journalism that centers community perspectives and improves people’s lives.
- The [Rich Jaroslovsky Founder Award](#) celebrated **Robert Hernandez**, Professor of Professional Practice of Journalism at USC Annenberg and known by the ONA community for his incredible enthusiasm to explore emerging technologies and improvise or create new ways to leverage them for journalism.
- **Arlette Bashizi**, a photojournalist born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and currently based in Goma, was recognized with the [James Foley Award for Conflict Reporting](#).



Nicolás Ríos and Ethar El-Katatney, Documented



Imaeyen Ibanga, AJ+



Laura Lee, NC Local; Stephanie Rogers and Laura Hackett, Blue Ridge Public Radio

AI INNOVATOR COLLABORATIVE

ONA's AI Innovator Collaborative, a regular gathering for ONA members using AI in journalism, completed its second year in 2025. Meeting virtually on the second Tuesday of each month, access to the Collaborative is free for ONA members and designed to convene conversations around issues members are grappling with related to AI use. Comprising widely varied conversations and presentations, these meetings are a lightly-structured space for anyone who is excited, curious, or apprehensive about AI's role in journalism.

In 2025, the Collaborative met 11 times, with guest speakers discussing, among other topics, AI images and ethics, impressions from the CES tech conference, licensing publisher data, accessibility in news, and AI use disclosures. The September meeting was held as an in-person meetup for members in attendance at ONA25.

AI Innovator Collaborative

A monthly gathering for ONA members
experimenting with AI

Join: journalists.org/ai-innovator-collaborative



CONVENING IN-PERSON AT ONA25

ONA's annual conference is the official reunion for the digital journalism community. Attendees consistently tell us they come back time and again for the hallway conversations that reinvigorate their passion for the work, the impromptu coffee conversations that spark new ideas and the chance run-ins with former colleagues and new collaborators. The registration team and volunteers coined the term "the ONA squeal" to describe the delighted reunions of friends who haven't seen each other since the last gathering.

The sense that everywhere you turn at ONA is another interesting connection and conversation isn't by accident. We design the conference to help nurture these important networking moments. In 2025, we allocated 20 session blocks to informal networking meetups to connect attendees with similar work roles and interests at ONA25, and another 11 hours to small-group career coaching for attendees to work through challenges together, with nine coaches and 32 participants meeting as part of this program.



We also hosted more structured spaces for attendees to compare notes and share what they're working on, including a roundtable on measuring AI ROI in newsrooms, and an AI potluck session where participants could bring their AI "recipes" to exchange around key newsroom functions like editorial, operations, fundraising and more, and collaborated on a crowdsourced AI cookbook full of real examples to put to work in their newsrooms. We also hosted a special Climate Café, a participatory discussion for journalists covering the climate crisis to share their personal experiences and impacts.

A perennial favorite, Table Talks returned to their pre-conference format at ONA25, with large, buzzy rooms full of small-group tabletop conversations about big issues facing the community. This year's attendee-led Table Talks discussions included helping colleagues level up with AI, uses of AI for students and young journalists, advice for when your job changes dramatically, reaching new audiences on the climate beat, connecting more deeply with sources and readers, emergency prep in your newsroom and much more.



ONA25 attendees participate in Table Talks, a series of highly participatory conversations aimed at tackling major issues in digital journalism, exploring new ideas and solutions to challenges.

CAREER CENTER

Newsroom employers, fellowship directors and graduate school programs count on ONA's [Career Center](#) throughout the year to discover journalism talent and build standout teams. Frequent recruiters this year included American Journalism Project, Apple News, The Associated Press, ProPublica, and Tarbell Center for AI Journalism. Since launching our new site in June 2025:

**Job Seeker
Account Signups**
3,334

Resume Postings
1,131



5.0

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ONA25 VOLUNTEER PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The program committee is a volunteer group of news leaders who review committee submissions and design learning programming for ONA's annual conference. We're grateful for their generous contributions.

- **Diya Chacko**, Science Editor, UCLA Health
- **Vera Chan**, Director, News & Media, Steelwork
- **Shereen Daver**, Programme Director, climateXchange
- **Jessica Estepa**, Editor/Writer, Independent
- **Rubina Fillion**, Associate Editorial Director, AI Initiatives, The New York Times
- **Katharine Gammon**, Freelance, Independent
- **Darlie Gervais**, Director, Advertising Boost Initiative, Center for Community Media
- **Rodney Gibbs**, Head of Audience and Product, NTLN; ONA Board member
- **Ryan Kellett**, 2025 Nieman-Berkman Fellow, Harvard University; ONA Board Treasurer
- **Adam Mahoney**, National Climate and Environment Reporter, Capital B
- **Marla Jones Newman**, VP, People and Culture, CIR/Mother Jones
- **Sarah Day Owen Wiskirchen**, Independent Journalist, Minerva Media
- **Kenichi Serino**, Deputy Digital News Editor, PBS NewsHour
- **Jessica Stahl**, Executive Editor for Strategic Initiatives, Grist
- **Ki Sung**, Managing Editor, KQED
- **Tejal Wakchoure**, Product Manager, Editorial, The Baltimore Banner
- **Kristyn Wellesley**, Senior Director, MediaNews Group/Tribune Publishing
- **Madeleine White**, Producer, The Decibel, The Globe and Mail
- **Sorayah Zahir**, Visuals Producer, The Wall Street Journal

ONA's work is made possible by the generous support of sponsors, funders, and mission-aligned organizations who invest in the future of journalism. From technology companies and news publishers to foundations and service providers, these partners fuel everything we do, and their impact reaches far beyond any single event.

At ONA25, that support underwrote scholarships, networking events and meals, product showcases, and moments of whimsy and delight like beignets and professional headshots. Year-round, it powers AI training that helps newsrooms navigate emerging technology, empowering the Women's Leadership Accelerator cohort, supporting fellowships for rising journalists, awarding cash prizes for many Online Journalism Awards winners and creating accessible learning and networking opportunities that define ONA's mission.



ONA Staff and Consultants. Left to right: Durrell Barnes, Kathy Lu, Liz Leith, Melinda Cooke, Brian Duff, Niketa Patel, Meghan Murphy, Karolle Rabarison, Bill Brady, Stephanie Backus, Mike Palendrano, Leah Rush, Hanaa Rifaey



ONA Board of Directors. Left to right: Ethar El-Katatney, Imaeyen Ibanga, Andrew Fitzgerald, Charo Henríquez, Rodney Gibbs, Angela Chao, Angela Pacienza, Ryan Kellett

Organizational funding, conference support and donations proceeds together sustain this work. We're deeply grateful to every organization listed here for their continued partnership.

- The 19th News
- BLOX Digital
- Canva
- Charitable Adult Rides & Services (CARS)
- CatchLight
- ChartBeat
- CNN Newsource
- Dataminr
- Democracy Fund
- Dow Jones Foundation
- Everlaw
- Expert.ai
- Ford Foundation
- Glide Publishing Platform
- Google News Initiative
- Help a Reporter Out (HARO)
- InPress
- John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- The Joyce Foundation
- JSK Journalism Fellowships at Stanford
- Knight Foundation
- Labrador CMS
- Letterhead
- LiveBreak
- McClatchy
- The Measure
- Microsoft
- MJ Bear Estate and Friends of MJ Bear
- MSN International
- Muck Rack
- The New York Times
- News Revenue Hub
- NewsBreak
- NewsGenie
- NewsWhip
- Newzdash
- Nextdoor
- Nota
- The Patrick J. McGovern Foundation
- Pew Research Center
- Project C
- Reddit
- Report for America
- SmartNews
- Storyful
- Stringr
- Subtext
- Supertab
- Taboola
- Tansa Systems USA
- True Anthem
- Trusting News
- University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications
- University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication's Agora Journalism Center,
- Viafoura
- WordPress VIP
- You.com

STAFF AND CONSULTANTS

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CEO and Executive Director

Hanaa Rifaey

Deputy Director + Interim CEO and Executive Director

Liz Leith

Head of Finance and Administration

Kelsey Proud

Interim Head of Programs

Meghan Murphy

Head of Programs

Karolle Rabarison

Director of Communications

Bill Brady

Strategic Partnerships Coordinator

CONSULTANTS

Hallie Cooper

Virtual Assistant

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IN MEMORIAM

Jeanne Brooks, a former staff member at the Online News Association whose contributions propelled the organization's early growth and success driving innovation at the intersection of journalism and tech, passed away on Jan. 5, 2025.

Jeanne was part of the ONA team from 2009–2013, serving first as the Community Engagement Manager and then as Digital Director.

Jeanne forged diverse partnerships that strengthened ONA's position as the leading convener and resource for journalists navigating rapidly changing tech platforms and tools. She expanded programs like ONA's annual conference, including creating the Midway to highlight startups and emerging tech; ONA Local, a network of volunteers gathering their local journalism peers for regular meetups; and ONACamps, a training series tailored to the needs of small community and nonprofit newsroom staff, independent journalists and entrepreneurs. Her work helped transition ONA to an organization with a large national and then global reach.



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PARTNERSHIPS

To explore partnerships and other ways to invest in ONA's programs and events, contact Deputy Director Hanaa Rifaey at hanaa@journalists.org.