Skills training is not enough for the digital journalist

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An excellent article by Nikki Usher in the (American) Online Journalism Review which makes an important point for anyone engaged in journalism teaching. It's not enough to have the multiple skills for the digital environment, you must also have the multiple attitudes:

> "The truth is that most skills boot camps don't turn the majority of the journalists who attend them into professional quality video editors or graphic designers; in fact, many of the projects they turn out in training sessions would not be fit for the Web. But the value of these training sessions is that they do help journalists learn to see the potential of what these new tools can bring to the work they do – so instead of making multimedia experts, journalists can learn how to think like them. But we ought to reconsider the goals of these training sessions and align them to change thinking to change practice, rather than use them to change practice and hope it will change thinking."

Usher admits she is an 'ivory tower' academic, but she is obviously deeply intelligent and well-read, as she quotes my book. But she goes further than I do in coming up with useful guidance on how networked or digital journalism works in practice:

> What is this multimedia thinking that should be happening in training sessions? Here are a few suggestions for journalists and their news organizations.
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> 1. Journalists need to understand how the Web and multimedia goals will work within their own organizations. News organizations need to clearly communicate how these Web goals will influence the work production cycle.
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> 2. Journalists at all levels of the news organization should believe that they can contribute to the multimedia vision of their organization. The future of the newsroom is also in your hands, and thinking like this forces journalists to think multi-dimensionally.
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> 3. Journalists are not alone in the newsroom. Even if journalists themselves cannot think about how to make their work relevant to multiplatform content, someone else in the news organization can. Most of your organizations have people on staff that can help you brainstorm, even if you can't. Multimedia training is also about making new connections across your organization.
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> 4. Silos, departmental rivalries, and departments that don't communicate with each other cannot exist if multimedia initiatives are to succeed.
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> 5. Journalists no longer control the distribution of the content they produce. This is a very scary thought for many journalists, but the reality is that once something is published (usually on Web sites), it belongs to the audience of readers and becomes part of a conversation about the news.
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> 6. Journalists need to rethink and reposition themselves the leader of this new conversation, which includes everyone from the traditional water cooler chat to bloggers.

Of course, this isn't entirely news to those people who are trying to produce the next generation of journalists. My

colleagues at the Journalism department at the London College of Communication have always been aware that journalism is about more than shorthand. But the rapidly changing nature of digital journalism and the diversity of platforms and procedures means that the next wave of hacks – if they can find jobs – have a more complex and creative future ahead of them.