

ARIEL ZIRULNICK

ARIEL@ARIELZIRULNICK.COM
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WHO I AM

I'm an entrepreneurial journalist passionate about doing journalism *with* communities and building systems that make that sustainable.

TOOLKIT

- Work across editorial, audience, product, and revenue teams to develop mission-aligned, sustainable growth strategies
- Produce practical research that newsrooms can quickly apply
- Design repeatable processes for community and audience engagement that can be incorporated into the editorial workflow
- Build communities of practice

FELLOWSHIPS

Executive Program in News Innovation and Leadership, City University of New York (2022-23)

Nine-month program that equips emerging leaders to lead news business transformation

Leadership Academy for Women in Digital Media, Poynter (2020)

Week-long leadership training to equip women to be journalism industry leaders

Miami Fellow, Miami Foundation (2017-18)

18-month civic leadership program that equips emerging leaders to better Miami

Social Entrepreneurship Bootcamp, Radical Partners (2017)

Training and mentorship to grow my social impact in Miami

WORK EXPERIENCE

Director of News Experimentation | LAist (July 2023 – Present)

I lead a newly created team tasked with targeted research and developing and scaling experimentation with new editorial products, formats, and features; systems and workflows to sustain new ways of working; and new ways of partnering with community members.

Senior Editor, Community Engagement | LAist (Nov. 2021 – July 2023)

In this editorial-engagement bridge role I was responsible for researching community needs and ensuring that the insights informed editorial decisions. I helped conceive and validate new ways to serve community members and co-create our journalism with them, then documented and routinized the successful strategies.

Membership Puzzle Project (Nov. 2018 - Aug. 2021)

Positions held: Fund Director; Managing Editor, Membership Guide

I led the Membership in News Fund, a global effort to support newsrooms experimenting with membership models. I gave grants, coached newsrooms, designed venture support, led workshops, raised funding to expand our work, and presented globally. I led the production of the Membership Guide, which is accessed thousands of times a month in 4 languages and became the basis for multiple classes.

Director, The New Tropic (Jan. 2016 – Nov. 2018)

I led editorial, community, and growth strategy for WhereBy.U.s's flagship, covering elections, breaking news, and natural disasters in community-centric ways that made us an agenda setter. Our newsletter grew 600% under my leadership and several of my engagement and growth strategies were adopted by other WhereBy.U.s brands.

East Africa correspondent (Aug. 2014 to Jan. 2016)

I started as a staff writer for The Christian Science Monitor, then freelanced for CSMonitor, Foreign Policy, The Washington Post, Quartz, and others. I received a Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting grant.

The Christian Science Monitor (Sept. 2010 to Aug. 2014)

Positions held: Middle East Editor, Europe Editor, Staff Editor, Intern

As Middle East editor, I oversaw two staff writers and 10+ freelancers, covering events such as the backlash to the Arab spring, the Syrian civil war, and Iranian nuclear talks.

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RECENT PRESENTATIONS

Local news and community engagement

- SRCCON (2023) – Making User Needs a Reality For Your Newsroom
- MediaParty (2023) – There's a More Human Way to Segment Our Audiences
- ONA (2022) – Design Thinking Your Editorial Strategy, How a Listening Tour Can Build Buy-in in your Newsroom
- SRCCON (2022) – Let's design climate coverage our audience actually wants
- INN Days (2021) – The difference between audience engagement and community engagement
- API Listening + Revenue Summit (2020) – Catching the COVID-19 bump
- SRCCON (2020) – Where is the community relationship management system?
- Engagement Innovators Summit (2019) – The Citizens' Agenda
- SRCCON (2019) – The Citizens' Agenda

Membership

- MediaParty (2022) – Workshop on membership program design
- Lviv Media Forum (2021) – How to know if you're ready for membership
- Online News Association (2020) – Presenting the Membership Guide
- Festival de l'info Locale (2020) – How to know if you're ready for membership
- Splice Beta (2020) – How to staff membership in your newsroom
- Solutions Journalism Network Revenue Summit (2019) – What media can learn from other member-driven movements
- Médias en Seine, SembraMedia (2019) – What is membership, and what do members want?

TEACHING, CONSULTING, AND SERVICE

Co-founder and organizer, Perspectives, July 2022 - Present

I co-founded Perspectives in summer 2022 to bring expertise from outside the news industry into journalism spaces through in-person and online events on the sidelines of journalism conferences.

Instructor, Craig Newmark Graduate School for Journalism at City University of New York, Nov. 2020 to present

- Teaching a class on turning audience insights into strategy for the News Product Management Certificate program in January 2024
- Teach the "Building Community" module of CUNY's 100-day Entrepreneurial Journalism Creators Program, which covers how to identify a value proposition, choose a revenue model, conduct audience research, and develop engagement routines.

Sustainability Analyst & Coach, LION Publishers, July 2022 to present

I am one of the analysts for LION Publisher's Sustainability Audits, which offers publications a thorough assessment of their news business and recommendations to enhance organizational sustainability. Beginning in November 2023, I will also be an on-call coach

Independent consultant, facilitator, and speaker

I help news publications and creators build engagement routines and design and launch membership programs and other loyalty and revenue products. I also help journalism support organizations design venture support for grantees and occasionally write for publication about membership, audience engagement, audience needs, and sustainability. Previous clients include RevLab at the Texas Tribune, THE CITY, News Product Alliance, the Center for Community Media at CUNY, Meta's Bulletin program, LION Publishers, FT Strategies, Tiny News Collective, and the Media Development Investment Fund.

EDUCATION

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, B.A. 2010

Majored in journalism and international studies (Middle East focus)

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Spring 2009 semester

Took honors-level coursework in Middle East politics during a semester abroad