

Scripps Howard Foundation provides grants to support journalists with AI tools

Feb. 20, 2025

CINCINNATI – The Scripps Howard Foundation is giving \$2 million to the Howard Centers for Investigative Journalism at the [University of Maryland](#) and [Arizona State University](#) to empower journalists with artificial intelligence tools. The three-year grants will allow the Howard Centers to test and pilot several AI tools that support local news.

The Foundation established the Howard Centers in 2018 to honor the legacy of Roy W. Howard, former chairman of the Scripps-Howard newspaper chain and a pioneering news reporter whose relentless pursuit of the news took him around the world, spurred innovation and helped lay the groundwork for modern journalism. The Howard Centers train the next generation of investigative reporters by producing national caliber investigative projects in partnership with faculty and news organizations across the U.S.

The University of Maryland will use the \$1 million grant to develop a series of AI products:

- **The Beat Book:** The Beat Book will employ artificial intelligence to help local news organizations assess and improve coverage of their communities. Using AI methodologies, the Beat Book will scour a cooperating publication's archives to identify how that publication has covered a particular beat in the past.
- **The AI Reporter's Tool Box:** An idea initially developed by students at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism, the Tool Box will use AI and other machine learning technology to make the reporters' workflows – such as transcribing an interview – more efficient and their reporting more accurate.
- **AI Meeting Watchdog:** This AI system would monitor live-streaming video of government meetings and provide timely notifications of newsworthy events, story idea tips and summaries of key action.
- **The Visibility for Local News Project:** This project aims to help local news become more visible online – in search engine results and on social media. The insights from this project will be used in courses for Merrill undergraduate students, who will collaborate with Maryland local news organizations to help them improve digital visibility and track changes in audience.

“Our students and faculty will help local newsrooms implement tools that will transform journalism and journalism operations, while also reimagining journalism education,” said Rafael Lorente, dean at the University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism. “Like other revolutionary technologies, we can make choices about how we use AI. Our faculty and students have chosen to create and deploy tools that make journalism smarter and better. We are incredibly grateful to the Scripps Howard Foundation for making this work possible and for their continued support.”

Arizona State University will use the \$1 million to launch AI initiatives:

- ASU will recruit a professor trained in artificial intelligence to explore the role and implications of AI in journalism and the ways in which the industry can adapt in this new environment of emerging technologies. The professor will teach courses in AI investigative journalism, research uses of AI in investigative journalism and share findings with investigative journalists across the industry. ASU will also recruit a graduate research assistant and graduate student worker each year of the grant to support the professor's research and dissemination of findings.
- ASU will launch a website and monthly e-newsletter that provides the latest information on AI use in investigative journalism and distribute it to a broad network of investigative journalism experts. It will include a quarterly review of the latest products of AI technology based on testing and usage in live investigative journalism environments.
- The school will design and offer a certificate in investigative journalism with a focus on AI.

- ASU will conduct annual training workshops for AI experts and users in investigative journalism. The goal of the workshops will be to generate concrete plans for collaborations on testing particular AI tools and applications.

“Artificial intelligence is dramatically impacting journalism,” said Battinto L. Batts Jr, dean of the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at ASU. “We must take a strategic approach to understanding and leveraging AI in the process of charting that future. The Cronkite School plans to be an ongoing and relevant player in that endeavor and appreciates the confidence the Scripps Howard Foundation has shown in our team.”

[Learn more about the Howard Centers for Investigative Journalism.](#)

Media contact: Molly Miozzi, 513-977-3713, molly.miozzi@scripps.com

About the Scripps Howard Foundation

The [Scripps Howard Foundation](#) is a private foundation established in 1962 to advance charitable causes important to [The E.W. Scripps Company](#) (NASDAQ: SSP) and the Scripps and Howard families. The Foundation is dedicated to creating informed and engaged communities through journalism education.