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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Journalism Conundrum: Perceiving Location and Geographic Space Norms and Values

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Journalists have been incorporating geographic space into their news work for centuries (Carey, 1987; Tuchman, 1978; Gasher, 2007; Mersey, 2009). The location of where the fire occurred, the parade took place, or the soccer match was played has always been a part of the story. However, in the process of incorporating geographic space into the story, how does that location of the news event matter to the news reader? Using the theoretical framework of Spatial Journalism (Schmitz Weiss, 2015), this study explores the perception of geographic space and how journalism might perpetuate existing notions of their definition of news in a geographic space (Hess & Waller, 2015) which combats the reality of what the public may identify as news near to them. Based on a national online survey administered to U.S. adults in fall 2017, the study finds that perceptions of proximity of news differ from existing journalistic structures.

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**Keywords:** journalism; location-based services; mobile; news geography; Spatial Journalism

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## Introduction

Journalism today faces some hefty challenges and several opportunities in relation to news coverage. Recent industry reports (Rosenstiel et al., 2011; Gottfried, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2015a) and academic studies (Wilken, 2008; Gordon & de Souza e Silva, 2011; Hess & Waller, 2015) show that news coverage, especially local news remains important despite shifts in consumers' news interests, device and/or social/digital media use.

Hess and Waller (2015), however, argue that the digital era has created hype around local and hyperlocal in the media, 'local news is nothing new', they claim, 'but there is an unmistakable 'hype' around its reinvention and rejuvenation in the digital age' (1). There has been a significant growth in blogs, non-profit and for-profit local news sites, which have emerged and evolved in recent years (Gordon & De Souza e Silva, 2011). Conversely, it has been noted that local news has dwindled (Abernathy, 2016) with some attributing this to news deserts (see Abernathy, 2016), places where local news coverage is non-existent or sparse in a specific geographic area. These upheavals in local news puts into question how geographic space is part of the question in today's news ecosystem.

Using the theoretical framework of 'Spatial Journalism' (Schmitz Weiss, 2015), this study critically explores the perception of geographic space and how journalism might perpetuate

existing notions of news within these geographic spaces (Hess & Waller, 2015) challenging what the public may identify as local news. This study asks: (1) how do news consumers perceive proximity? (2) where do news consumers get news located near them? and (3) what are the ideal ways they seek news near them? Through an online national survey administered to 979 people in October 2017, this study details how and where news consumers are obtaining their local news and in what geographic contexts. Survey findings show that among the news consumers surveyed, a third get news geolocated to them. Secondly, they perceive and want local news beyond the city level – they want the news proximate to their geographic location by neighbourhood, time and distance.

By researching how news consumers perceive proximity and the ways they perceive local news near them in their community, this study shows the nature of today's news culture as well as the gaps of how geographic space is understood in journalism.

### **Theoretical framework**

In this study, two concepts are important to define – (1) the role of proximity or what is near in terms of news, and (2) geographic location as it relates to the news. Proximity is conceptualized as defined by Donnelly (2005) 'indicates the local nature of the news—how close, both physically and psychologically—an event is to the reader' (59). Proximity is a construct that has been examined in the journalism scholarship for decades as a news selection device in the newsroom as well as a news value among news consumers (Martin, 1988; Luttbeg, 1983; Donnelly, 2005; Armstrong, McAdams & Cain, 2015; Oppegaard & Rabby, 2015). However, research has yet to discover proximity's meaning in the digital and mobile media environment where the news can be geolocated to the news consumer. Digital and mobile media are driving new pathways to where news consumption is happening and changing the idea of what is local, near or proximate.

Geographic location is conceptualized in this study as the space and place in which a news event occurs. Local news can be a news event that occurs within a specific area, whether that is in a city, neighbourhood or other defined notion of what makes it local to the news reader. Local may also be defined not by its physical attributes, but also by a grouping of people in an area. As Ali (2017) notes, 'perhaps, then, rather than "place," it is better to think about the local in terms of the broader notion of "community"...' (40–41). Thus local news is defined by how the community lives, plays and works in that geographic area that shapes the news events that happen around them.

In order to understand the terrain of local news in journalism today, it's important to review the scholarship to understand how the journalism industry has conceptualized geographic location, and how the role of geographic location impacts today's digital/mobile media news consumers' habits. These key areas will be discussed next.

### ***The beat reporter and location***

The idea of geographic location in the journalism industry can be conceptualized in the form of the beat reporter role. The field has long established the specific techniques on how a reporter does their news work (Tuchman, 1978; Fishman, 1980; Carey, 1987). For the notion of beat reporting, a reporter is given a specific geographic area or topic and they must research that 'beat' and become knowledgeable about it (Tuchman, 1978; Fishman, 1980; Howe, 2009). They must identify the stakeholders, the power players, the opponents, the officials, and the benchwarmers in that beat so they can know who to contact for information and interviews (Reimold, 2013). They must find stories for the beat. As Howe (2009: 46) states, 'in practice, the resource allocations of newspapers will determine which events are detected and reported. News beats are the result of this resource allocation problem.' This

means that a reporter often will be assigned to a neighbourhood as a beat if multiple events happening there are newsworthy and it warrants continual coverage. If fewer newsworthy events happen in that area, a reporter is not usually assigned that beat. As a result, the covering of a community or neighbourhood is lost in this 'beat' practice and becomes one of a forced and quantified routine.

The importance of a journalist's work should not be relegated to just finding stories or quantifying newsworthy events as part of a geographic 'beat,' but the journalist's ability to capture history and build a community in that geographic area. Journalism can be the act of shaping a community as Gasher (2009a: 1) states:

Journalists, then are not simply innocent bystanders or detached witnesses capturing objective, mirror-like pictures of society. Rather, they are active participants in the construction of our realities. They tell us who we are, where we live and work, what we believe in, what we care about, and they draw boundaries between 'here' and 'there,' 'us' and 'them'.

Usher's (2009) study of journalists at the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* post-Hurricane Katrina highlighted the fact that journalists who were covering the different areas of the city were also experiencing tragedy themselves as a result of the hurricane – and they were living it as well as reporting on it. In this sense, the journalists are the community while covering such a news event. Thus, their role went beyond just covering a beat, but being a community advocate and or community gatherer in that geographic area:

But it is incorrect to view journalists as mere cogs in a routinized system, whereby they are simply churning out stories as part of their beat procedures. What Katrina and the TP demonstrate is that journalists think deeply about the work they do, their experiences as community members, and the effect of their work upon their readers. The outcome of such reflexivity, particularly in situations where a community is under duress, may produce coverage that can directly advocate for this community's needs (Usher, 2009: 226–227).

As much as journalists can be community gatherers, they can also shape geographic bias in their news work without realizing it. Howe (2009) conducted content analysis of news coverage and showed that metropolitan areas in Arizona from 1999–2007 were spatially biased based on the journalist's identification of location. The biases were based upon city size and socioeconomic status related to news coverage. The areas that were covered most were more 'newsworthy' locales and situating places within the context of other places (Howe, 2009: 45).

The news practice of covering a geographical area for the sake of doing so as a beat is a contentious one as some researchers have noted (Usher, 2009; Gasher, 2009a; Gasher, 2009b). However, other researchers (Ali, 2017; Howe, 2009) have noted that news organizations and journalists might have preexisting biases and business distribution motives that dictate the coverage areas that local news is reported on. Geography has long been tied to the business side of how news is distributed that dictates the rest of news production (Tuchman, 1978; Chyi, 2011; Ali, 2017). News organizations often will determine the audience they serve by the geographic location of where they can distribute and who they can reach whether by region, city, market area, census tract, etc. Often, this information is provided through market research organizations.

In broadcast journalism, media measurement organizations like Nielsen have dictated television viewing areas for decades in the U.S. Ali (2017) argues that media regulation and policy have had a stronghold on how broadcasters distribute their news locally, 'In

broadcasting for example, localities in the United States are defined as 'designated market areas' (DMAs) rather than as cultural or political communities' (41). This market approach is the same for newspapers:

In practice, newspapers define their market boundaries using specific descriptors—for example, Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) ABC (Audit Bureau of Circulations) Retail Trading Zone, ABC City Zone and Newspaper Designated Market Area (NDM)—each serving specific purposes. Print newspapers operate within these clearly defined market areas (Chyi, 2011: 98).

This market approach though combats the reality of journalism today. Chyi (2011) conducted research of online newspaper readers and found that they were not just subscribers because of their geographic location to the newspaper:

... the mean distance between a typical online reader and the newspaper locale ranges from 65 to 423 miles (the latter is more than 7 hours of driving at the speed of 60 mph!), suggesting that the online readership is not completely confined by geography. Yet, it is the population of the newspaper locale and print circulation that determine the mean distance, suggesting that the geographic distribution of newspapers' online readership is deeply rooted in the print edition's geographic and readership base (106).

Chyi (2011) suggests that newspapers need to abandon their tradition of circulation and look to other methods by which to locate their readers – perhaps through zip codes or the IP address of the user's digital devices, 'All they need to do is to analyse empirical data, think in digital terms, and plan accordingly—knowing where online readers reside is just the very first step toward understanding who they are and what they need' (Chyi, 2011: 108).

News organizations today need to move beyond their antiquated definitions of location and dive deeper into the nuances of geographic spaces in this digital and mobile media era.

### ***Location and technological disruption***

A news consumer today can get news from the traditional platforms of print and broadcast but can also do so through a website, mobile news app or mobile text alert. As a result, accessibility and speed take on a new meaning for the news consumer in which they seek to get the news about what is happening around them while on the go and with whatever device they are using. This creates new understandings of what is happening around them within a few blocks or more. For example, a news consumer who is walking around the neighbourhood discovers a news story on his mobile app about a local restaurant in the neighbourhood that is closing. The news story notes that the restaurant has been around for 50 years and served as the meeting place for many community groups in which those meetings led to many initiatives in that community (i.e. neighbourhood watch, a new playground, etc.). The news consumer understands that the restaurant is closing but also understands the significance and meaning of this place for the neighbourhood, and a place that is only a few blocks from where the news consumer lives.

Thus, the space and place that news consumers move around in can dictate how they define their community at that moment in time. Peters (2012: 699–700) identifies three key factors that impact this kind of news consumption today:

1. Journalism is now produced to facilitate increasingly mobile places of consumption (Space);

2. Journalism is now produced to adjust for the faster pace of the information age (Speed); and
3. Journalism is now produced to interact with and provide multiple channels of access for audiences (Convenience).

Mobile devices make the notion of a fluid community a reality. To get the news at that moment from wherever the user is, can be a powerful tool for the news consumer who is seeking information to decide which restaurant to eat at based on news story of recent restaurant inspections or what house to buy based on a news story of local crime trends in that area.

Thus, the idea of local news for a news user today can be a variety of experiences: from place-based (i.e. a news story about local restaurant inspections in their area), event-based (i.e. a news story about the upcoming neighbourhood parade and where one can find parking) or life-based (i.e. a news story about the ins and outs of housing market in their area as one gets set to purchase their first home). For the news consumer, each experience can take on a different definition of how they want to be informed. Jansson and Lindell (2015: 92) identify the news consumer as dispersed and fluid:

News consumers of today potentially move further and further from being a homogeneous, spatially fixed mass audience into becoming a myriad of dispersed individual connoisseurs, picking and choosing between an increasing number of technological and symbolical news platforms designed under the leitmotifs of space, speed and convenience (Peters 2012, 699–700; see also Westlund 2013). We are witnessing a paradigmatic transition as to the ways in which news is consumed; the spatial practice of news consumption is changing into an increasingly amalgamated, mobile practice (see Hemment 2005; Dimmick, Feaster, and Hoplamazian 2010).

This news experience is compounded by the possibilities of location-based services that allow the user to get information based on their exact location. By using GPS signals in the phone and/or cellular triangulation to detect exact location, the mobile user can get information about places within feet of where they are standing.

Today, 9 in 10 smartphone users are getting directions, recommendations and information related to their location (Anderson, 2016). Applications like Yelp, NextDoor, and Google's Waze offer location-based services based on what the user needs to do – get a review, share information with a neighbour or get the fastest route to their destination.

These location-based services, identify a community by its geographic coordinates, thus providing a different connotation of what the community may be to that person – by blocks or physical markers (i.e. gas station on the corner where they buy their gas at all the time).

Frith (2015) identifies that location-based composition can impact the person's positive or negative experiences of those spaces and places. It is the idea your immediate space and place and the context you can obtain from it can provide the news consumer with a powerful tool that allows them to see in real-time information that they could not access before the development of mobile technology and location-based services.

The development of location-based news content has had its challenges. Experiments have found that journalists and consumers have difficulty in knowing how to use location-based news content (Nyre et al. 2012; Øie 2013; Oppegaard & Rabby, 2015). When a news event does not have a specific location or multiple locations, it can be harder for the journalist to categorize it in the system (Øie, 2013). However, the closer the news consumer is to the news content in proximity, the more satisfying an experience they have with that news (Oppegaard & Rabby, 2015). These experiments highlight there is more work to be done in making a location-based news system for the journalist and the news consumer.

It can be asserted that when a user is nearby to a space/place where information and context is available, they have a choice to be a part of that community depending on its use and function. Furthermore, this is accentuated by social networks like Yelp, NextDoor, and Google Waze that all depend on the community to populate the information which forms virtual communities around those places. That community can be interwoven with the physical community or not. Thus, the reporter who is trying to cover a neighbourhood, might be missing out on key signals of what is happening in a community that is virtual but also place- or geographic-bound through these mobile and social networks. This reflects a different reality of what the local news culture might be for today's news consumer.

### **Spatial Journalism framework**

As noted in the literature, there are different approaches to how geographic location and journalism have been examined in recent years. The disciplines of media geography, cultural geography, locative media and journalism studies have shed some light on these different approaches. Scholars from these disciplines have constructed different conceptualizations of location, information and media via locative news (Goggin, Martin, & Dwyer, 2015), locative journalism (Nyre et al. 2012; Øie, 2013), place-based journalism (Oppegaard & Rabby, 2015), geomedia (Jansson & Lindell, 2015, Rodríguez-Amat, & Brantner, 2016; Lapenta, 2011; Thielmann, 2010), and geo-social journalism (Hess & Waller, 2015). In each of these approaches, they provide a foundation to examining the intersection of media, location and information. However, in each of these conceptualizations, there is a lack of being able to dissect the nuances of how location (i.e. physical, augmented and virtual) can be broken down into the specifics of the journalism practice (e.g. news routines) and the news citizenry (e.g. the community's and individual's news consumption patterns). The ability to identify these nuances may be explored through the lens of 'Spatial Journalism'. Spatial Journalism can be defined as an emergent kind of journalism that incorporates space, place and/or location (physical, augmented and virtual) into the process and practice of journalism (Schmitz Weiss, 2015).

This framework provides insight into the layers of news production and news consumption. The framework has three criteria (Schmitz Weiss 2015: 10–11):

...information must be communicated across one or several channels (e.g. digital, mobile, etc.) to a group or public; information must be connected to its social meaning via a place, space, and/or location (physical, augmented, virtual); and information must be considered a form of journalism (e.g. text articles, websites, videos, graphics, multimedia pieces, blog posts, broadcasts/programs, print publications, tablet magazines, etc.).

Thus, for this study, the Spatial Journalism theoretical framework allows one to explore how news that is physically located near to the consumer is perceived. Furthermore, this framework allows one to gain insights into the specifics of the news citizenry by (1) how the proximity of information is conceptualized by the news consumer; (2) how the geographic location of the news consumer in reference to the location of where the news takes place (i.e. geolocated news) is conceptualized; and (3) where this kind of geolocated news experience is occurring in their daily media diet. Thus, for this study, a national online survey of U.S. news consumers will seek to understand the perception of geographic space and how these consumers receive news proximate to their location. This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

***RQ1: How does the news consumer perceive information in terms of proximity?***

***RQ2: Where do they get news that is located near them?***

***RQ3: What are the ideal ways they seek news near them?***



## **Method**

This study uses quota sampling from a national online survey administered to 979 people via Amazon Mechanical Turk in October 2017. Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) is an online system that allows researchers to recruit and pay subjects to complete tasks, such as complete a survey. MTurk is representative of the U.S. population and in some cases more representative than typical convenience samples (Berinsky et al. 2012; Buhrmester et al. 2011).

Furthermore, the quota sampling method was used to achieve a national representative sample by gender. The current U.S. Census population estimate by gender was used as the benchmark for this study (ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates, n.d.).

Participants received .70 cents upon survey completion. In order to qualify for survey completion, each participant was provided a unique code at the end of the survey that was automatically generated by the Qualtrics survey system to input into the MTurk system. Survey completion was verified by comparing the code in MTurk against the Qualtrics system code and if they matched, the participant would receive the incentive for survey completion.

## **Sample**

The original number of MTurk participants for this study was 1,061. However, 48 of the respondents didn't provide the correct unique survey code in their submission with MTurk and were eliminated from the study because their survey answers could not be matched in Qualtrics. At the beginning of the survey, participants had to answer if they access online news or not. If they didn't, they were not eligible to participate in the study since the study focuses on online media habits. Four participants were removed because they did not access online news. Nine participants were removed from the study for lack of providing gender response as this was the baseline for the quota sampling in this study. An honour statement was added at the end of the survey that allowed participants to confirm their truthful and accurate responses to help with the accuracy of the information provided in the survey, which has proven to be a successful method (Rouse, 2015). Ten respondents stated they did not provide truthful and accurate responses to the survey and they were removed from the study. An additional 16 respondents didn't provide the correct response for the quota sampling by gender and were removed from the dataset. The final number of respondents for analysis in this study was 979.

## **Questionnaire**

Survey questions were adopted and adapted from existing studies on mobile, online news, and location-based services use (Lin et al. 2016; Liu et al. 2012; Merisavo et al. 2007; Pew Research Center, 2015b; Pew Research Center, 2017; Wei et al. 2010). In addition, questions from the U.S. Census (American Community Survey, 2017) were used for the demographic section of the questionnaire. Also, as this study was part of a larger project, the larger project incorporated in-depth interviews with journalists who use location-based services in their work, and those interviews helped in the development of some of the location-based services questions used in this study.

## **Unit of analysis**

The unit of analysis in this study is geolocation. Geolocation is 'the process of finding, determining and providing the exact location of a computer, networking device or equipment. It enables device location based on geographical coordinates and measurements' (Techopedia, n.d.). For this study, geolocation is operationalized as the physical location of the news consumer in relation to the news story or information in that same location that is provided to them via their digital device (i.e. smartphone, laptop, etc.). Proximity is the state of how

close or far something is to the news consumer (Donnelly, 2005) and this study also seeks to understand how news consumers define this term as it relates to geolocation.

### **Measures**

To answer RQ1, respondents were asked to select how they consider information in terms of proximity by: city, neighbourhood, zip code or city block. As research has noted that the journalism industry has recognised geographic location mainly at the city level, this study sought to understand if other location identifiers such as neighbourhood, zip code or city block would be important to the news consumer.

As research has also noted that geographical space remains an important factor for news selection for news consumers, this study sought to find out if this resonated with this sample via the other two research questions. To answer RQ2, respondents were asked on a dichotomous scale (yes or no) if they receive news geolocated to the physical location of where they are. If respondents answered yes, they were asked in a follow-up question with an open-ended response to indicate what source they get their geolocated news from. The researcher reviewed all open-ended responses and then recoded the responses into the 16 categories shown in **Figure 2**. An other category was also created for those responses that were vague (i.e. news app) or not applicable to the question. This other category doesn't appear in **Figure 2**. To answer RQ3, respondents were asked their preference in seeking geolocated news to their physical location by distance, geographic coordinates, exact address, neighbourhood, context and time on a 5-point Likert scale (1-Prefer a great deal to 5-Do not prefer). In addition, respondents were asked on a dichotomous scale (yes or no) of the geolocated news they would like to receive (i.e. local weather and traffic, local entertainment and events, local crime, and local government and politics). This was cross tabulated by the 5-point Likert scale of questions of respondents preference for getting geolocated news by neighbourhood, time, distance, context, exact address, and geographic coordinates. Chi-square analyses were run using SPSS software for each of these questions and the statistics of those tests appear in Table 1.

### **Demographics**

Fifty-two percent were female and 48% were male, closely matching the U.S. census for national gender representation (51% female; 49% male) (ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates, n.d.). The majority of respondents were between the ages of 25–34 (40%). Other age groups represented: 35–44 year-olds (25%), 45–64 year-olds (22%), 18–24 year-olds (9%) and those 65 years and older (4%). The most commonly reported level of education was a bachelor's degree (39%). The majority of respondents said they access news from smartphones (50%), followed by laptop/desktop (43%) and tablet (7%).

### **Ethics**

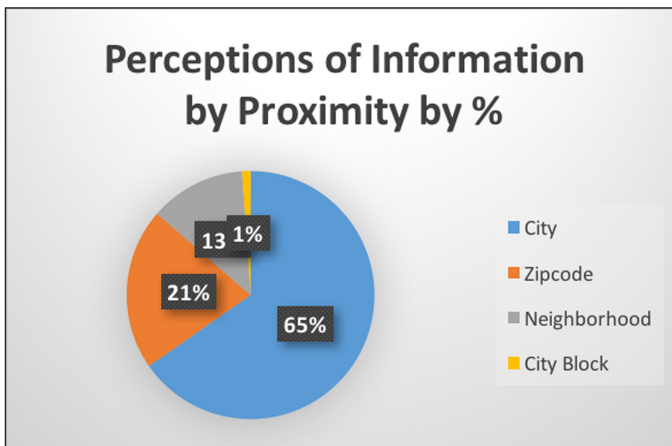
This study was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board.

## **Results**

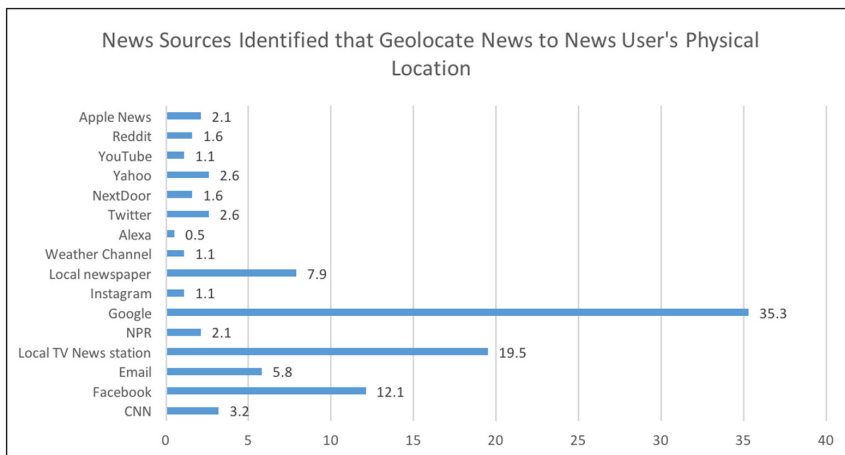
### ***RQ1: How does the news consumer perceive information in terms of proximity?***

Based on the survey findings of 979 adults, the majority of participants consider information by how close it is to them at the city level (65%) (see **Figure 1**). Zip code, neighbourhood and city block were less likely to be identifiers for proximity. This demonstrates that the news consumer considers information that is near them from the context of the city instead of the zip code, neighbourhood or city block they might be in. Thus, we can purport from this finding that respondents are mainly seeking news near them based on the city they are living in or visiting.





**Figure 1:** Perceptions of Information by Proximity.



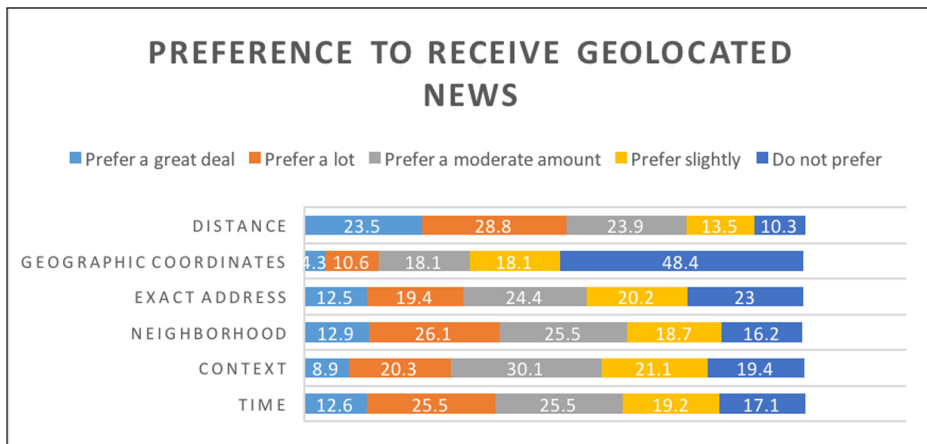
**Figure 2:** News Sources Identified that Geolocate News to News User's Physical Location.

**RQ2: Where do they get news that is located near them?**

Sixty-eight percent of respondents stated they don't get news geolocated to their physical location in comparison to 31% that do. Of the 31% that did, respondents were asked where they obtain that news from. As **Figure 2** shows, the majority identified Google (35.3%), local television news stations (19.5%), Facebook (12.1%) and local newspapers (7.1%) as the places for geolocated news.

**RQ3: What are the ideal ways they seek news near them?**

Respondents were asked their preference if they could get geolocated news to their physical location by specific identifiers: distance, geographic coordinates, exact address, neighbourhood, context and time. As shown in **Figure 3**, most respondents preferred to get their geolocated news by distance, neighbourhood and time. Geographic coordinates were the least preferred option among the survey respondents. This demonstrates that the news consumer in this sample would seek news as to how far it is from them (i.e. a few miles away), how near



**Figure 3:** Preference to Receive Geolocated News.

in time it is to where they are (i.e. 5 minutes away), and by neighbourhood (i.e. Smithtown, one neighbourhood over from theirs). In practical terms, these respondents would like a more granular or micro view of the location of the news they receive. It can be purported from these findings that respondents prefer to seek news by how many miles a news event is close to them, how many minutes away it has occurred from where they are, and what neighbourhood it happened in.

Furthermore, respondents were asked what type of geolocated news they would like to receive and this was cross-tabulated by the following location identifiers: the neighbourhood, time, distance, context, exact address and geographic coordinates. Across most location identifiers, a statistical significant result appeared using chi-square analyses that identified that respondents want geolocated news for weather and traffic, entertainment and events, crime, and government and politics (See Table 1 in Appendix).

## Discussion

This study identified that news consumers perceive proximity of information and news differently to what journalists and news organizations might define as such. The respondents get information and news by city, but want it more specifically by time, distance and neighbourhood.

As mentioned earlier, the journalistic tradition has mainly identified local news by the location of the news organization in reference to its city, its region, census tract or market (Tuchman, 1978; Howe, 2009; Chyi, 2011; Ali, 2017). However, news organizations and reporters are less likely to view geographic space from the aspects of distance, time and neighbourhood. Time dictates how far from the location the person is – if the news event is happening 5 minutes away versus 20 minutes away. This time element of proximity can make a difference for a news organization that is informing a community when an active shooter may be in their neighbourhood. Distance dictates how far the news event is from the consumer whether it's a mile away or 20 miles away. Again, a news event that happens 20 miles may be insignificant to someone who is seeking information a mile away from their home even if it's in the same city. Lastly, neighbourhood was another identifier that the participants noted. Neighbourhoods can often be much smaller than typical regions or counties of a city that often dictate the newspaper's approach to geographically covering a community (i.e. south county, east county, etc.). This complements existing scholarship showing the significance of physical geography is important to the news consumer (Mersey, 2009).

This study also noted that geolocated news is consumed by only a third. Of that third of the sample consuming this type of news, it's mainly offered through Google, whereas news organizations like local TV and newspapers were listed secondary. Although Google news depends on local news organizations to populate its news feed, a news consumer may not be completely aware of that fact and may brand the news to be Google. Participants also stated that they prefer to get geolocated news about crime, government, local events and weather/traffic. These are stories that news organizations are covering but identifying their geographic space to the news consumer may pose a challenge. Resources, staffing and technical know-how might be issues to its implementation in many newsrooms because it might entail a new distribution model that combats their existing one. However, companies such as Facebook and Google already have algorithms that can identify location of information and news and serve it up to the end user (as some of the survey participants mentioned). If these companies are able to do it, a news organization quite possibly could too. Time is of the essence for news organizations and the overall journalism industry to match wits with the current and future technology companies of tomorrow on this effort.

Finally, this study highlights an important issue. The academy has an obligation and responsibility to study the powers of location-based technology (Frith, 2015; Wilken, 2015) and how it can impact journalism as we know it. This study highlights that among these participants, their news consumption might not be reliant on typical media companies and furthermore, their interest in proximate news and information might be reliant on a technology company versus a news organization. This can have implications for the journalism industry in maintaining as well as building credibility and trust with the news citizenry.

Also, the profession should play an active role in understanding the places and spaces their publics interact and live in as part of a healthy and robust journalism practice (Jansson & Lindell, 2015). Understanding the spaces and places they are in can provide insights into defining the communities they serve which may be neglected or excluded in the current media landscape (Frith, 2015). The lack of inclusion or neglect might come at a costly result for news operations in the loss of subscribers, listeners or readers when another platform or technology company can provide that service instead.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights how news consumers perceive the news around them differently from how news organizations currently have set their news distribution model. The digital landscape has created new ways for people to obtain news around them (i.e. mobile notifications, mobile apps, social media, etc.) and the representation of space and place in a mobile media world has changed for today's news consumer (Peters, 2012). News organizations have used distribution and business models that reflect an industrial age model (Küng, 2015) that contradicts with a 24/7 news cycle and information age model (Castells, 2000). As a result, a gap exists between news organizations and how they cover and distribute news to the communities they serve. Journalism has the tradition of being considered a community builder or gatherer (Gasher, 2009a; Reimold, 2013) but as this study highlights, it may be losing touch with that notion. A community that is formed around a space and place to a news event may be important for the individual citizen but may not be apparent to the reporter. This study advances the understanding that local news reporting needs to go beyond the standard structure of geographic location to one that cuts across time, space and place for a digital and mobile world.

As Peters (2012) states, the academy and profession need to pay attention, 'As the number of channels by which we can access journalism increases, and the spaces of journalistic consumption become more fragmented, mobile, and diverse, we must be attentive to how these shifts are experienced by journalism's various audiences' (704).

## Appendix

Table 1: News preferences by location identifiers.

News Type	Location Identifiers				
	Neighborhood	Exact Address	Context	Geographic coordinates	Time
<b>Local weather and traffic</b>	$\chi^2 = 67.501$ , d.f. = 4, p.000	$\chi^2 = 32.737$ , d.f. = 4, p.000	$\chi^2 = 58.219$ , d.f. = 4, p.000	$\chi^2 = 7.152$ , d.f. = 4, p.128	$\chi^2 = 68.531$ , d.f. = 4, p.000
<b>Local entertainment and events</b>	$\chi^2 = 87.248$ , d.f. = 4, p.000	$\chi^2 = 38.562$ , d.f. = 4, p.000	$\chi^2 = 84.910$ , d.f. = 4, p.000	$\chi^2 = 10.540$ , d.f. = 4, p.03	$\chi^2 = 81.020$ , d.f. = 4, p.000
<b>Local crime</b>	$\chi^2 = 85.685$ , d.f. = 4, p.000	$\chi^2 = 45.044$ , d.f. = 4, p.000	$\chi^2 = 48.562$ , d.f. = 4, p.000	$\chi^2 = 16.836$ , d.f. = 4, p.002	$\chi^2 = 72.563$ , d.f. = 4, p.000
<b>Local government and politics</b>	$\chi^2 = 41.730$ , d.f. = 4, p.000	$\chi^2 = 22.168$ , d.f. = 4, p.000	$\chi^2 = 33.179$ , d.f. = 4, p.000	$\chi^2 = 16.667$ , d.f. = 4, p.002	$\chi^2 = 21.181$ , d.f. = 4, p.000
					$\chi^2 = 116.417$ , d.f. = 4, p.000
					$\chi^2 = 107.739$ , d.f. = 4, p.000
					$\chi^2 = 136.297$ , d.f. = 4, p.000
					$\chi^2 = 51.932$ , d.f. = 4, p.000

Note: Chi-square tabulations were run against each news type and its location identifier.

## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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