

Gen Z must find journalism it can trust

By JACK ZHANG

Meet “Generation Z.”

The pundits are still determining what birth years that applies to, but most agree that it was between the late 1990s and the late 2000s. We grew up with developed internet, social media and convenience above all else. Forget millennials as the delinquent stewards of democracy — at least they still read online newspapers and journals. According to a 2017 study, Generation Z newspaper readership lags behind other age groups by nearly 30 percent.



Somehow, technology has made our information both more democratized and top-down at once. We can laugh at President Trump's gaffes live, but we also think little past what's presented to us in a five-minute YouTube politics video. We think of ourselves as activists when we point out Twitter typos or watch a NowThis clip on Medicare. Generation Z hasn't rejected informa-



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FOCUSED ON THE FUTURE: Jack Zhang, left, of Markham, Ont., a junior at Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, and Andrew Hoenig, a Franklin Pierce University senior, edit Jack's article for *The Presidency and the Press*, presented by the Boston Herald at Franklin Pierce.

tion, but we're more concerned with superficial understanding than the nitty-gritty of politics and ideology.

The inane and otherwise unreportable things that went ignored by mainstream journalism are now easily accessible to all of us, and Generation Z is eating it up. Real investigative journalism is already hard to come by these days. Imagine when Generation Z, the cohort that has already forgone substantive reporting in favor of BuzzFeed videos, becomes

the main purchasing bloc of the world. Real journalism, along with all our democratic institutions and the American political tradition, will wither away unless Generation Z supports and believes in it. As the Washington Post is so keen on saying, “Democracy dies in darkness.”

Beyond their unwitting weakening of solid journalism, Generation Z has gone even further: We have swapped emotion for reason. It's not hard to ridicule Trump for his antics or former

President Barack Obama for his halting speech, which is why it's easy for us to substitute these things for real political engagement. The convenience of personality-based politics has superseded real journalism — but we shouldn't blame millennials, Generation Z or even technology for that. Instead, we should build trust in reliable and substantial journalism for the future.

Jack Zhang is a junior at Phillips Exeter Academy.

Citizens often first to report breaking news

By ALENA MASTERSON

Old school journalism is making way, amid evolving technology, for new school journalism that is all about short, fast snippets of information from private citizens — not just professional journalists.

Now, people can see what's going on in the world in real time. Private citizens are often primary sources right at the scene — recording and commenting on events directly on the web.

In the age when distrust of the media is growing, the younger generation has come to rely on physical evidence such as firsthand accounts or video.

While some people may believe that younger people have no interest in what's going on in the world, in fact this generation is one of the most knowledgeable of all.

This is possible thanks to the fast



COURTESY PHOTO

WRITE STUFF: Franklin Pierce University journalism professor Paul Bush examines the work of freshman student Alena Masterson, a 2018 graduate of Pelham (N.H.) High School.

access to news the internet affords.

The news may not arrive in the form of a print article that's been combed through by multiple editors.

However, it is reporting the accounts and events of what happened. It is then up readers to dig further into the story to gain the details they want.

I support citizen reporting because it is an unfiltered and unaltered report of events happening instantly.

Politics has also turned toward social media, allowing this younger generation to hear directly from national and international politicians themselves.

Millennials are constantly flooded with new reports of events all around the world, big or small.

Rather than questioning whether old school or new school journalism is the right way, we should be asking how can we ensure a rapid-paced flow of information while having the sources and fact-checking for genuine reporting.

Alena Masterson is a 2018 graduate of Pelham High School and a Franklin Pierce University freshman

Participants share thoughts

Students participating in Franklin Pierce University's *The Presidency and The Press* program weigh in on Generation Z's perceptions of the media and relationship with the news:

“While fake news is a very real issue, there appears to be no set definition for what fake news is. Even the top publications in America seem to be struggling to grasp exactly what constitutes fake news.”

— Paul Lambert of Worcester

“Print journalism still has a place in this world. In fact, I believe it is the best way to receive fair, unbiased news without any of the opinion we hear from all the different TV news personalities these days.”

— Andrew Hoenig of Rindge, N.H.

“Some people think Generation Z has no interest in politics. But there are still enough Generation Zers interested in politics and journalism. If some people don't share this interest, they shouldn't be made to feel that they're doing something wrong.”

— Eastar Tarbox of Gilsum, N.H.

“I think fake news is purely opinion-based. It's all about a person's individual perception of a story. The president of the United States can claim one piece of journalism is fake news while a high school girl from New Hampshire can pull an entirely different concept from the same news.”

— Kathryn Anderson of Hooksett, N.H.

“I don't go to social media first for news because I have found numerous reports of inaccuracies. I want my news to get to the point. I still believe in traditional journalism and truth.”

— Evelyn Cutting of Alexandria, N.H.