THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

THE FUTURE OF LONGFORM PUBLISHING

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Moderator:

JOHN DICKERSON
Chief Political Correspondent
Slate

Panelists:

CHAD MILLMAN
Editor in Chief
ESPN The Magazine

DAVID NASSAR
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SARAH SAMPSEL
Director, Digital Strategy
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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. NASSAR: Thank you all for coming. It's great to see a good crowd here on a cold, rainy almost May night in Washington. So thanks for coming out. And I see a lot of faces I recognize and many I don't. So please feel free afterwards if you want to say hello. I would love to meet any of you. My name is David Nassar; I'm the Vice President for Communications here at Brookings and the publisher of the Brookings Essay.

We are really pleased tonight and very honored to have such a great panel and what we think will be a great discussion about what we all mutually discussed earlier is not necessarily the best term but we're going to use it for the moment, and that's longform. And the future of longform -- or as I tweeted a couple of times I think maybe even to put it more broadly, the future of digital publishing I think which is part of what this discussion is about.

So I'm going to quickly introduce our panel and then turn it over to John Dickerson our moderator. So starting with John, moving from my right to my left, before joining *Slate* -- well, John is the Chief Political Correspondent for *Slate* magazine and the Political Director for CBS. Before joining *Slate* John covered politics at *Time* magazine for 12 years and served as the White House Correspondent. He's the author of two longform series, the most recent is on presidential attributes which won the Ford Prize for Distinguished Reporting on the Presidency. And previously he wrote an in depth series of articles about risk. And I know from spending lots of time talking to him he continues to remain interested in the presidency in particular. So if there's any scholars or research assistants in the room who are working on that subject you may want to talk to John afterwards.

Sarah Sampsel is the Director of Digital Strategy at *The Washington*

Post and she leads digital strategy new products and design and she's recently made the move up to New York and she's living in Park Slope because she's heading up a new office for *The Washington Post* in New York, which some of you may be interested in, that is focused on largely around design. Right?

And Hannah Fairfield is the Senior Graphic Editor at *The New York Times*. She produces, edits and manages visualization products across the newsroom. Formally the Director of Graphics with *The Washington P*ost and was very instrumental in Snow Fall which I think many of you are aware of.

Chad Millman sitting immediately to my right is the Editor in Chief of *ESPN The Magazine* since 2011 and now ESPN.com. How long as it been with ESPN.com?

MR. MILLMAN: Two months.

MR. NASSAR: Two months? So sort of new.

MR. MILLMAN: It's been a good run so far.

MR. NASSAR: Yeah? And he's author of a recent national bestseller, The Ones Who Hit the Hardest, and *The New York Times* seller, They Call Me Baba Booey. I haven't had a chance to check that out yet but I --

MR. MILLMAN: It's a lot like what John was doing at the White House.

MR. NASSAR: Okay. (Laughter) And I feel I should know it because it came up twice in discussion prior to the event. He's also the author of a book called, The Detonators, which I think many people in this room if you've missed it might be interested in about a 1916 bombing in the New York harbor by the Germans which ultimately led to a whole series of events around World War I and World War II. So if you haven't heard of that check it out.

All right, John.

MR. DICKERSON: Great. Thank you, David. Thanks all of you for being here. I want to start -- David already touched on this, the uneasiness with this word longform. And, Chad, I'm going to start with you but we're each going to weigh in on this. What are we talking about when we're talking about longform? If you go to longform.org it's basically just a long text piece. If you think of Snow Fall you think of like a new, rich experience. And then it might be a third animal all together. So start us off.

MR. MILLMAN: I guess my feeling is that the term is just precious and longform has existed for years and it's called storytelling and magazines and newspapers have been doing it for decades. And what happened is in -- you know, I hate this phrase, "in the digital age", but the way people consume media now things are much shorter and sort of it's much more consumable in small bites. The metabolism is shorter. And because of that people decided oh, wait a second, I'm doing something that's longer and longform sounds like it's elevated. And so now all of the sudden there's things coming out oh, hey, we're a longform site. I'm like, dude, your called doing what doing magazines do. And so I find the term to be unbelievably irritating. (Laughter)

MR. DICKERSON: Right. So that's -- I share that. But, Hannah, there is something -- there's a new animal being created here too though because in a, you know, in *Time* magazine you'd have eight pages and there would be some pictures but you couldn't watch the pictures move and they didn't move based on your movements. And I mean there is new thing being created here so maybe it needs a better name.

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: Well, whatever you want to call it I think what we're talking about today is the kind of animal that takes a story that is maybe in length a little bit longer but certainly the kind of story that removes you from where you are sitting in your chair and it takes you on a journey in a way that may be a short blog post or a tweet is not going to. So it takes you into the story and it uses some of the tools

that we didn't have a couple of years ago when there was magazine longform that looked a little bit different. And we really try to use video and photography and graphics to not just go alongside with the story but actually continue with the story. So as you're reading you're inside the journey of the story. And then all of the sudden you're inside a video that takes you in front of an important character and where that scene is and you hear that person's voice. And maybe it's a very dramatic story and you hear kind of the apex of that particular moment. And then you move on and you're into the environment of where that person was.

And Snow Fall -- one of the earliest pieces that we worked on was what we called the flyover. And it was you're reading along and you're reading about this sort of ski town and then all of the sudden the story stops and we fly you along the road to get you into the ski resort and then we take you over the ski resort and then we carry you over a mountain outside the ski resort and we show you where a group of skiers left the resort and stood on kind of, you know, what felt like the top of the world. And we let our readers stand on the top of the world right there. That kind of immersion, I think that kind of storytelling we didn't have those tools a couple of years ago and I see that, you know, Brookings and, you know, at *Slate* and *Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, and ESPN, we're all kind of excited about, you know, using those tools to push this forum, whatever you want to call it, to really push it forward.

MR. MILLMAN: You know, I just want to say that the problem with longform is that it implies long equals quality and that's not necessarily the case. And so what we try to do at ESPN and what Hannah was just talking about with sort of flying over, that's enterprising. And that takes resources and that takes commitment and that takes ingenuity. And just doing something long doesn't make it good, it just makes it good in the past five years because people are not used to consuming things that are

long.

MR. DICKERSON: Sarah, weigh in here with your definition of this elephant in the room.

MS. SAMPSEL: Sure. I mean I agree with everything they just said. I think, you know, there's so much out there right now, right. We're competing against everybody now because we're competing against or for people's attention and for people's time because there's so much to look at. So I think there's sort of this resurgence of longform -- sorry (laughter) -- but it is, you know, it's like a different way of consuming something. So if you're used to being on Twitter all day and having a million things fly at you and push alerts and pop ups, there's something really therapeutic about having some time and some, you know, a really deep dive onto any subject really. And I think we've seen a lot of really interesting things out there.

And to Hannah's point about how we add elements that add to the story and bring you into different parts of the story using photography and graphics I think some of these presentations that you're seeing now are sort of the best kind of collaboration that we can't do alone. We need all of the different types of skill sets in a newsroom to come together and bring this kind of thing to the table that's new and exciting and fun and delightful for people to see.

MR. DICKERSON: Hannah, what about sort of the conflict maybe with Chad's original description of this which is a great story that can be great and wonderful just as text? And if I'm reading an immersive, fantastically reported and well told story I may not want to fly over into the -- I may not want to -- and I'm not -- Snow Fall is kind of in a class by itself and so -- but there are others where, you know, I don't want the "geegaws" and the "thises" and the "that's". I want my story. Is there -- talk about that tension a little bit because what longform has now become is not just long but it's also

like there's this happening and there's this happening and it's not necessarily creating that immersive experience that you described.

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: I entirely agree that not every long story needs to or wants to or makes sense to, you know, have a design that's built out, you know, with a lot of different elements. Some stories lend themselves to the kind of visuals that Sarah's worked with a lot at *The Post*. You know, there's -- video is really good at sort of the intimacy of seeing a voice and hearing something, and graphics are really, really good at giving you a little bit of that bird's eye view or the data and visualization that can buttress arguments. But not all stories need either of those; not all stories are character driven. So you're not going to necessarily want that kind of intimate video. Not all stories need a huge buttressing from statistics. So then video and graphics don't really have a part in that and that is just fine. Not every single one of these needs to be built out like that. But the opportunities that we look for are where you have a wonderfully told story that can be elevated, that can reach a completely different audience, that can get people really excited and more than that, given them more of the story with these elements. It's really adding to the whole storytelling. It's not decorating it, it's pushing the storytelling forward.

MR. DICKERSON: David, what you're trying to do here at Brookings is kind of even another kind of animal. I mean this isn't -- this is new to all of us in the sort of traditional media world but it's really new in the think tank world. Can you talk a little bit about the experience that you've had here, what you've learned and how you see the shape of it?

MR. NASSAR: I mean it is really new but I think it's also very similar. We were talking before this event and I think it was immediately apparent there's a lot similarities that come out in terms of the -- I mean the way Hannah describes it for

example, the kind of opportunities that you look for I think is very much the kind of opportunities that we look for. The challenges that we face I think are some of the same challenges that the traditional media faces in terms of pushing these articles out. It's been a great vehicle for us. It's given us an opportunity to tell stories in a way that, you know, without the platform we might not have been able to do. It's been an opportunity to be able to reach new audiences which is something I think we're going to talk more about, but I imagine that's why all of us do it at some level is to find new audiences for our content and to hold them longer too. You know, we are all competing for people's attention and with our Essay we find pretty much universally there's a -- you know, we hold people longer in the content than we do with other pieces of content. Now sure, you know, you could argue well that piece is 5,000 words so of course you keep them longer, but it doesn't really matter does it? I mean in the sense that the people are staying with a piece of Brookings content longer. So for all those reasons it's good. And I just think it's also just opened up people's eyes to what's possible to do with the kind of public policy content that we create in a way that people hadn't maybe thought about before.

MR. DICKERSON: So let's talk about trying to put one of these things together. Hannah, picking up on your point about it not every story can have this done to it. Chad, in the writing, the old fashioned writing of magazine pieces which I did at *Time*, and we all know what these leads sounded like, the big leads where they come loping over the mountains and there's lots of wind and flowing hair and it's about three paragraphs until you find out what the hell the story is about. (Laughter) On line you can't do that because by the time you get the second gallop of the horse they've gone off to do something else. On the other hand a lot of the longform -- the way they're written a lot of the longform leads have that old fashioned kind of I'm here to tell you along story, you know, get a drink and sit by with me. How do you put from --just from the kind of old

fashioned structure and creation of a story how do you think about that in terms of the pacing and the storytelling, recognizing that there are some distractions that a person is balancing here that's different than the old days when you just had a magazine?

MR. MILLMAN: Oh, I think from a writing perspective we don't think about it differently at all. We generally take whatever the writers do and just throw it all away and put our own lead on it. (Laughter) But, you know, whether it's in *The Magazine* or whether it's on line we want that story to - -we want to draw someone in with that sort of beautiful, elegant, dramatic, never overly dramatic lead. Because we do think that engages them. But we do have sort of theories on how we think about -- you know, a lot of these pieces we do that are the more enterprising in nature, they often have news attached to them. And so with those stories we will end up pulling out a "newser", what we call, you know, a "newser", so 800 words that captures just what the news is of that particular story. Knowing that, you know, there's going to be people who are not going to sit through a 10,000 word story but there's still valuable information in there. SO we put the "newser" in sort of we call our headline stack which is the 10 stories on the right of the -- in the right rail of website and then there is still that main story that people can engage with if they want to engage with it. And often times we find that the engagement on the feature story is significantly higher than what it is with the "newser" from a traffic perspective and from a time spent perspective. So that to me is always very encouraging. So I don't think we edit any differently. You still want it to be a great story and you still want it to be something that reads beautifully because at the end of the day, you know, it's a little bit of an inside baseball thing, but we all -- we like sort of that grand history of storytelling and we don't want that to be any different no matter where it is.

MR. DICKERSON: Well, that's encouraging. As somebody who writes long, tortured leads. (Laughter)

MR. MILLMAN: Yeah, yeah. We rip that right out of there.

MR. DICKERSON: Sarah, when you take a hold of one of these projects what are you looking for that can really make this into a different kind of experience?

MS. SAMPSEL: Sure. Right. I mean to all of these points you don't do this for everything. I think you really have to look on your calendar and figure out exactly what's coming and what kind of really good things are bubbling up around. So we target these things pretty far in advance and they need to obviously now in such a visual sort of platform that we're in now and the way that people are using these types of stories and consuming them, I think we need to target things that do come from a stronger visual side that have a very good photography story to tell as well as a written story to tell. And whether or not there's data to take and to express in different ways and different graphics that we can use throughout, you know, that's all stuff that we really, really look for to make sure that there's enough to give it such a grand presentation. I think when you see something that's presented in these ways, like you have different expectations so you like -- it is a little bit precious because they look better. The internet looks bad. So like when you see something that doesn't look bad I think a lot of people are like oh, wait, wait, this might be something good, right. And that's a lot of presentation, that's a lot of thinking about how the pacing of the story needs to be different than the rest of the things that are shoved into templates throughout the site. And a lot of those things are done by hand and I think, you know, the bigger heads up we have the more time we have to work with reporters and photography and to figure out what we might need to do these types of things. And it's -- sometimes it's great and sometimes it's a last minute crazy --

MR. DICKERSON: Scramble.

MS. SAMPSEL: Yeah, yeah.

MR. DICKERSON: Hannah, how do you work with the team that puts

these together? I mean does the writer just file his copy and it's pristine and so really there's no editing that need to be done with that.

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: Always.

MR. DICKERSON: And how does it go down? I mean is there some collaboration where you say, you know, you should write more about this because then we can add something that's more dynamic to it?

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: What often happens is the writer begins the reporter and begins to figure out what the structure of the piece might be. Is it going to be written in a chronological way, is it going to have a very sophisticated structure with a lot of sort of flashback moments. There's a lot of ways as you know to structure a story. So once the writer has gotten enough of the story, enough of the reporting in hand and can have that kind of beginning outline that's a really good time for us all to come together. So in the early stages a lot of graphics editors will know what the topic is about and get good reporting and be working with video to look at the footage and kind of feel like what -- we'll be gathering the raw material. But until we know what the structure of the story is going to be it doesn't help us to kind of get together and be able to envision how it's all going to come tougher. And sometimes everything fits together beautifully in a puzzle piece and we can, you know, publish in a very short amount of time. But more often what happens is we figure out what is the strongest elements of the video and is that going to be a longer narrative piece that you're going to want to pause the writing and put that in, or do you in fact want small snippets where you just see individual characters and they're just, you know, 25 second videos, real small. And then sometimes what happens is that we have really good visual material and the story as it's written initially doesn't set up that good material to continue the story. As I was saying before the most successful of these are ones where the writing and the multimedia elements

work together in a really powerful way so the story is continued through the video and the graphics and everything. So sometimes we have to go back to the writers and we have to say can you set up this scene? We're going to be inside this room and the characters are together and something very important is just about to happen and we want to get people to see where they're standing in the room and what's about to happen. Can you set that up for us in the writing? So we'll go back and the writing is actually edited often then at that sort of second write through to fit the pieces that we're needing to put together.

MR. DICKERSON: I want to get to audience and how people react to these pieces and what you've learned about they interact with them. But I want to ask each of you sort of -- and, Chad, I'll start with you, is what we're calling longform, is it icing or is it cake? In other words is it -- ESPN does all this other great stuff and then this is just this really wonderful little thing, boutique thing we do over here that everybody loves and it's a pretty jewel, or is this really a kind of core and the rest of it is?

MR. MILLMAN: It's so funny because we just had this conversation in a meeting last week and so, you know, ESPN is lucky in that the President of ESPN is this guy John Skipper and John Skipper happened to have started *The Magazine*, you know, 16 years ago. That was how he got started at ESPN; now he runs the whole thing. He cares so passionately about storytelling that whether it's icing or cake doesn't really matter because it's an imperative for ESPN. Like the amount of money *The Magazine* makes compared to the rest of ESPN, I say to Skipper often I don't think you should be spending a minute a year paying attention to what *The Magazine* is doing because that's the ratio, you know. And he was like I'm doing -- you know, he's from North Carolina, he's like I'm just real passionate about storytelling and so. And so it makes it important at ESPN. But I also feel like so there is an icing of what we call a halo effect for a lot of the

things we do, whether it's the enterprise storytelling we do in *The Magazine* or on line or if it's the 30 for 30, you know from ESPN films that air often. Those things elevate ESPN's credibility sort of with fans. They are things that fans come to us to see. But I do think they're incredibly valuable to our advertising partners, I think they're incredibly valuable because they are things that fans want to dig into. It is the cake that they want to eat. And so I think it's a little bit of both, happily.

MR. DICKERSON: Excellent; icing and cake. Hannah, how about for *The Times*? I mean Snow Fall has become this thing. There may not be -- actually would you describe what Snow Fall is for the few who might in the audience who don't know what it is? And we keep talking about Snow Fall like everybody should know.

MR. MILLMAN: They should.

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: Raise your hand if you've read Snow Fall. Okay. So not everybody. Let's see, in 10 words or less, it's a story by John Branch, one of our sportswriters. He won the Pulitzer for it last year and it's a long tale about skiers who were really superlative skiers, possibly better skiers than Sarah, I'm not sure. She's very, very good. And they were back country skiing and triggered an avalanche. But the story of this very large, very close, very professional group of skiers was very, very dramatic. And John got the kind of reporting that you dream to get in sports. And it was such a powerful narrative. And he wrote the whole thing before we were involved, before any of the visual team was really involved. And in reading that first draft which was very, very big, it was cut down finally and then if you've read and wonder what was in it that made it four times longer than it actually was when it was published. But it was the kind of story that we knew, there was a moment in time where we said this has everything we want to do to change the way we're beginning to think about these kind of packages. And we got a nice big team together and said we're going to really try

to do something completely different here.

MR. MILLMAN: I should add it was revolutionary for the way everybody sort of looked at the way you could do these stories. At ESPN we continued to talk about it. It was just -- it was phenomenal. And it opened up everybody's eyes to the ability to marry sort of the video, the photos, the way you could use all those elements to tell a narrative that wasn't just sort of subject and verb and then some pictures next to it, and parallax scrolling or whatever, you know. It was like -- it was fantastic.

MR. NASSAR: John, I just want to jump in because when you asked the question about icing and cake I realized -- and I want to answer the question too -- but I realized I neglected to recognize when I started the author of our new Essay who's in the room. Stuart Taylor, Jr., if you could stand up and waive his hand; he's in the back. We published a new Essay today called, "The Big Snoop: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Terrorists" which Stuart authored and which -- I'm biased but I think it's great so I hope you all take a look.

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: I'm not biased and I think it's great. (Laughter)

MR. NASSAR: But this piece --

MR. DICKERSON: I should -- sorry -- before we move on from that it has -- explain what's on the left rail that adds -- this is the kind --

MR. NASSAR: Sure.

MR. DICKERSON: -- that.

MR. NASSAR: Yeah. So the piece is about the NSA and the spying scandal, right, and so Marcia Underwood, it was her idea so I want to give her credit, who's also here if she wants to wave her hand. And probably at the end I'll ask the whole Brookings Essay Team to stand up maybe. But came up with the idea of the clever

notion of saying well the piece is about the spying scandal, why don't we be transparent and show people what we're looking at when they're looking at the piece. And so when you go to the piece now on the left hand side of the screen you can see some of the statistics that we see behind the scenes from you watching the piece.

And there's that and then also directly to your question about sort of is it cake or is it icing, one of the things that we did with this piece which I love is that we went out to Dupont Circle and down to the Mall and our video team interviewed people on the street, and it's called, "The Word on the Street Segment" in the piece, and got people's points of view about the NSA's spying scandal. So I mean certainly Stuart's piece is cake, it's all cake, right, it's rich in depth. But that kind of an enhancement, adding that piece of video, is not just icing either, right. It's giving people other -- sort of the average person's perspective on this story in a way that I think, you know, is not all that common with these kinds of things.

MR. DICKERSON: When you think about public policy now do you start sorting it through the longform lens? So you think like oh, here's a big kind of meaty topic that needs this treatment? I mean have you started to sort of put that into your original thinking?

MR. NASSAR: Part of the vision of the Essay is to try to think about how we can take the lessons that we learned from the Essay, both about production and about audience development and apply them to the rest of Brookings content. And I think we're starting to be able to do that in some small ways. And so the answer to your question is yes, but a lot of times we have to stop ourselves and say, yeah, but we don't really have the resources to do that for this other thing. But sometimes we do try and say yeah, but we can do this piece and we try to add that to it. And I think it's just -- it's changed our editorial calendar model, it's changed our production model, it's changed the

way we think about audience, all of that.

MR. DICKERSON: So, Sarah, let's switch over and talk about audience now. First of all what do we know about the people who are reading and sticking with these stories? And also what do we know about the people for whom they have no appeal?

MS. SAMPSEL: So every time we release some of these stories again they are usually something that we've targeted ahead of time as something pretty special in this enterprise calendar and, you know, they get homepage play, they get a lot of promotion. There's a strategy on the social media side about how we tell people about it, so that's also very important. So they tend to get a lot of page views. They get a lot of people coming back a few times. We get a lot of time spent on these pieces which is all good because they're longer and you assume their reading it. And, you know, they have some traction with sharing and people talk about them and there's comments and very rich sort of user generated opinion and content out there about them. So what we know in sort of a trend line is that people that read them are very heavily engaged in what it is. The unique visits on some of these things tend to be maybe smaller because -- it depends on the story. But the time spent versus the number of people is sometimes different than what you would see on something that's just like a regular news story. So what that's sort of telling us --

MR. DICKERSON: Which has -- a regular news story is more cotton candy.

MS. SAMPSEL: Right. Like --

MR. DICKERSON: Lots of people but fast hit and they move on.

MS. SAMPSEL: Right. Just like regular news day, regular story, reported and written pretty much the same way, right. And then there's something that's

a little bit more special. Obviously people are spending more time with it. People read those things off line a lot; they read them on mobile devices heavily. You think, you know, a big long story a lot of people aren't going to pick up a phone but it's a huge audience. And we have to be aware of that when we're designing for things like that.

MR. DICKERSON: Right. Aware of it meaning you don't want to look at in your screen and then go oh, I'll read this on the subway and it looks like hell.

MS. SAMPSEL: Right. That and also like if it's heavily enriched with graphics and visuals, those things have to load quickly, they have to be optimized for slower connecting speeds of various devices and you want the quality to be just as good for the person on the phone as it is on the desktop computer that they may be looking at it on so.

MR. DICKERSON: What did you learn, Hannah, about how they're consuming it, where, who is it, were there more people reading it on weekends, were they -- what did you learn about how they consume these?

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: In terms of patterns of reading so much of it has to do with the content. If it's a sports-oriented story or it's a political type story. It really depends on -- just because we put a lot of, you know, interesting multimedia or design in a certain way doesn't mean that we're going to get the audience to come to us. The content is always first.

But I wanted to continue to touch on what Sarah was talking about with mobile because I think that's -- I mean you sort of titled this future of longform and I think that that's something that not quite enough people are thinking about. There's a huge audience, at least I mean 50 percent really, of -- I mean certainly at least at *The Times*, of these longform pieces being read on, you know, the tiniest of screens. And these are long pieces. So how you navigate, how you chapterize, how you work the multimedia in

is, you know, a design challenge even on top of that. Something that looks beautiful on a screen that's this big needs to be rethought when you're talking about a small screen. And I feel like that's where, you know, some of my headspace is right now, just beginning to think about I want that experience to be beautiful on the phone and having half of our audience reading those articles on the phone, that's not going to start falling. We're not going to go back to 40 and 30 percent of people on the phones. It's going to get bigger and bigger. And so, I mean I really need to be focused entirely on thinking about how people are accessing these beautiful long pieces with all of the things we want to build for them but in a way where the phone version isn't skipping over some of that stuff, isn't getting little pieces of it. It's a challenge.

MR. DICKERSON: Yeah. Because I think -- I mean, Chad, on ESPN Iditarod story there is on the right rail there's this wonderful dogsled team and you click and listen to the narration and then you can wander through and see what each different dog does and that would be hell on a mobile device.

MR. MILLMAN: Can't do it.

MR. DICKERSON: Yeah.

MR. MILLMAN: It's the same at ESPN as Hannah's talking about. You know, we did a story about Yasiel Puig a couple of weeks ago and he's a second year player for the Dodgers who came from Cuba and he was smuggled from Cuba to the United States by drug smugglers and then when he got to Cancun in the middle of his journey to the United States he was stolen by one smuggling ring -- from one smuggling ring by another smuggling ring. When he got to the United States members of the smuggling ring he was originally with threatened him at spring training to pay him. Members of that smuggling ring ended up getting killed. And so it's an epic, sprawling, 10,000 word story. The page views, you know, well above 700,000 page views, close to

a million page views probably by now -- this was two weeks ago. Engagement unbelievably high. It's all the cake, right; it's everything you want from a story like this and 50 percent of that has come in on mobile. So, you know, you look at what that story looks like on the desktop and we're stoked because we got these beautiful illustrations and all these fun sort of things going on in the middle of it and then the designer will show me, all right, here's what it's going to look at on the phone. I'm like, what the freak, dude. Like there's nothing fun in here. You're looking at the story and that's kind of it. And so that's why, you know, Hannah talks about sort of sign posts within the story. That story was chapterized so it continued to engage people throughout because you need them in a handset and to be engaged when they might not get the visuals along the rails that they might otherwise be getting.

MR. DICKERSON: David, did you find with -- particularly on the Essay that had to do with Newtown -- that you got what we call sideways traffic at *Slate*, which his people may not even know what Brookings is but it just passed around and it's about a hot topic and it's well told and it has these other elements to it. And that -- and so you get entirely new kinds of people who come in from the side.

MR. NASSAR: Certainly from social, yeah. I mean the pieces are built to take advantage of the social world and we work very hard to try to make sure that they get spread around in a social way as much as possible. And definitely traffic comes through that channel. We also see with mobile, by the way, I mean we have this -- we're going through the same mobile revolution that all of you are and for public policy friends who are in the room, and I see some of them in the front row, you know, who have much smaller staffs than what's available at the institutions that are on the panel with me, you know, to be completely honest I think it, you know, gives our team ulcers, right. That they have to make sure that not only is the piece built and built well but is built for every

possible device that people could possibly look at it on. And because for us for the Essay these are all custom built, right. So one piece of code going wrong at 11:00 o'clock the night before the thing is supposed to launch can cause the whole thing to collapse.

MR. DICKERSON: So let's have -- let's blue sky what we would like the future to look like. So one thing I love about the Kindle either when you're reading a book or even when you download text into it is you can be reading it on your phone, highlight things, make comments and then be reading it on your computer and it takes you to where you were when you were on phone. The highlights are in there, the notes are in there. There's this seamless relationship with the text across all your devices. You don't have to like page through to find out where you were in the new one. That's not true of all of these. What kinds of features like that would make the reader experience -- and, Sarah, I'll start with you -- better? What kinds of things -- is there a game element to this kind of storytelling where that could be used where there's actual participation in the narrative in some fashion? Is there a way that the author participates maybe somehow in some incredibly interesting way that nobody's thought of yet? Think about what --

MR. NASSAR: John, can I just tack onto that? Just to ask if all of you -- if you all publish your pieces on Kindle or, you know, in an e-book format as well because we do with the Essay and I don't know if all of you do, so.

MS. SAMPSEL: Sure, yeah. So I think all of those things you just mentioned, yes. I think, you know, if a story merits something like that it's very important to really think outside the box about the ways to better connect with somebody. I think the Kindle example you used is a really good example of platform where you really have to think about the ways people are using these things and the way that when you are commuting here on the subway in the morning, nobody's reading a paper anymore, they're reading a phone in their hand. So what does that mean? Like how do you sync

these things better, how do you make sure that every time they interface with *The Washington Post* they get a really good experience with it? It's not, you know, just a great story it's like wow that was so easy. Thank you for not putting a big ad in my face or making this thing like slow and my like browser crashes. Like you really have to be careful and aware of those things. And I think, you know, a couple -- about six months ago I think we introduced an enterprise template. We just had a lot of really good stories that needed special attention so we created a template that was pretty easy for people to build these stories in. And these are not like Snow Fall-esque, these are more like of a long story with visual elements. And we found that, you know, we increased the number of these things and people really love them but we also -- the more stories that we tell in this way the more kind of the thoughts that we have about oh, well wouldn't it be nice to put some like live pulling within this piece right here, or this seems pretty dense, maybe we should break something out and do something a little more unique with it. And the more we do them the better we kind get at them.

MR. DICKERSON: Hannah, what's your dream? SnowFall 2. What's that going to have? (Laughter)

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: Snow Fall 2 --

MR. DICKERSON: It will actually snow while you're reading it. (Laughter)

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: I had a --

MR. MILLMAN: We've already done that.

MR. DICKERSON: You've already done -- yeah, the Iditarod one, yeah.

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: It's not only snowing.

MR. MILLMAN: It's in development.

MR. DICKERSON: It was hell cleaning up after those dogs when I read

that.

MR. MILLMAN: I didn't want to talk about it here but.

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: I had an interesting conversation with our publisher after it came out and it was in a news wide discussion and someone was saying, you know, what is Snow Fall 2.0? And he said before anybody else, he said it won't look anything like Snow Fall. It's not that it's going to be a different topic, it's that the whole structure of it will be completely different. And we don't know what that is yet; I haven't quite found that but what I think is really exciting about what we're all doing is we're in that interesting experimental phase were we feel like, you know, we just had one kind of, you know, punctuated equilibrium where you're like, you know, kind of hanging out here and then all of a sudden, whoop, you know, evolution, right, and then you're up here. And everyone's kind of at that point where we're looking around and we're saying let's try a bunch of different things. A bunch of the series I've been working on this year we've been thinking about, you know, you think about pulling in people who --- audiences, readers who are interested in that piece and maybe they want to be a part -- they have stories to tell and they want to be part of a piece.

So I worked closely with one of our health reporters, Libby Rosenthal, on a big series called, "Paying Till it Hurts", about healthcare costs. And for every piece there were - -that we structured it so that -- we wanted people to get as many comments as possible. We just didn't ask for random comments, we asked very pointed structure questions. And we gleaned a lot of information from those comments and she wrote the next story based off of the comments. And it was seven part series; I think there's going to be an eighth one. And you see this kind of wonderful patterning through how the people who commented are now in the next story and you sort of get this wonderful leapfrog. That was very interesting. I would never have imagined that we were doing

that a year ago. So, you know, we're looking for those blue sky things.

MR. DICKERSON: Chad, I want to ask you the same question but also given that you oversee writers, the way this started at *Slate* was not -- it was basically to give the writers who spent a lot of time writing fast and in a sort of twitchy way to say you get to go off for a month and follow your dream, whatever it is. In fact the first criteria was that it can't be on what you normally write about. It's got to be something that's so different and so challenging to your normal way of doing things so that I was basically kind of a professional vacation although everybody worked three times as hard on them. Do you find -- I mean is that part of this as well, which is that people are dying to write these kinds of stories because it just exercises different muscles? We all kind of got in the business to do big, sweeping stuff if we got in the magazine business. Do you find that with your writers?

MR. MILLMAN: I'm going to be cautious only because there's a few of our writers here tonight, but, you know, they all want to write big, sweeping epics. What I love about the writers at *The Magazine* specifically is they are all incredibly motivated and they are also -- I find that there is an esprit de corps amongst them and that they -- and I'm thinking about sort of a certain group of writers who are in the same age bracket and they are competitive with each other in a way that is friendly and also supportive of each other. And I think that just drives a tremendous amount of quality. And so I know they're all reading each other's stories before they come in and I know they're all complaining about the notes that they're getting back. And I think that they -- you know, one of the beauties of ESPN is we have the resources and we have the mandate in telling these kinds of stories and so there are very few stories that our writers come up with that we're going to say if it is a big ambitious idea outside their scope, we're going to say no you can't do it. And I think that's the blue sky thing, is what is the next idea, where is the

exploration taking you. And it's taking the writers out of their comfort zone because when you do that, they're the talent, you know, they're the ones who are coming and delivering the ideas, they're the ones who are in the field and sort of know what's happening and they're talking to readers and they're scouring the papers in a way that I will never be able to keep up with. And so we rely on them to give us that next great idea that then we can sort of think about, all right, what is the technology we have available, what are the platforms we have available. You know, ESPN is a little bit different in that, you know, we have a magazine, we have a website, we have audio, we have television, and so our best -- our biggest successes are ones that drive a conversation around all of those platforms. But those ideas come from the writers. And so we need them to be as highly engaged as possible and then to do that we need them to be as challenged as possible. So we try to let them sort of have the freedom to fail as much as we possibly can. And believe me they fail plenty. (Laughter)

MR. DICKERSON: Yeah. Thank god they have editors.

MR. MILLMAN: They know exactly who I'm talking to.

MR. DICKERSON: Thank god they have editors. David, I'll finish with you and then we'll open it up for questions. But do you find now that scholars here are starting to think instead of the way they were traditionally working, that they might be thinking well I could do this in a longform way or is that transition still happening?

MR. NASSAR: Sure, yeah; absolutely. And we have scholars who are coming to us, you know, asking to do Brookings Essay type pieces or to write actual Essays. And the Essay -- speaking of authors, I mean the Essay was a bit of a diversion for us because we have used authors who are not Brookings scholars whereas the rest of the content that appears at Brookings.edu is all written by Brookings scholars. So that was a bit of a diversion and that was Strobe's vision. That was Strobe Talbott, our

president, that was his vision. So I think that has also sort of helped to widen the scope of what the piece can be in some ways. So I think -- but, yeah, we absolutely have authors coming to us with ideas now or coming to us earlier with reports and saying can we do anything like what you do with the Essay for this piece. And that's a great place to be in.

MR. DICKERSON: Great. All right. Well, let's open it up for questions. How do we -- should we just -- do they just shout it out or is there a line or?

MR. NASSAR: Why don't you just call on them, John.

MR. DICKERSON: All right. In the -- well, the woman I'm pointing to.

MR. NASSAR: We've got people with mics and they'll go around.

MR. DICKERSON: Oh, good. There's a mic to your right.

MR. REMINGTON: Hi, I'm Alex Remington. I also work for *The Washington Post* as a Product Manager. Three weeks ago *The Post* published an article about how difficult it is now to read longform writing because we are so constantly bombarded by these short nuggets and bites from all sources that we've actually developed different methods of engaging with content. So there's a neurological piece to this as well maybe and I just wanted to ask how do you deal with that? How do you engage with the fact that we are being unconsciously trained to read in a different way that we used to? We're more distracted than ever before. How do you read something long?

MR. MILLMAN: I will say that piece rocketed its way around sort of a certain group at ESPN. We were all engaged with that idea and sort of how do you get readers to sit with what you're doing. And I think that leads to innovations like Snow Fall where you know people need a lot of candy to get through something and if it's of high enough quality, all the different pieces, then you're going to get them to stick with you.

But we were just talking about this, you know, in the reception beforehand that quality is the winner here, right, you know. That quality is the best business plan. And as long as it's really, really good then people will stick with it. And now if you have the elements that sort of speak to the way people are trained to read these days then you're going to keep them. But there is no silver bullet to any of this. You just have to be good at it.

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: I think it was provocative and it certainly was a talker and I think that it was interesting but I don't necessarily believe that our brains are being rewired just because of Twitter. You know, there's a wonderful spectrum of media right now and, you know, we're lucky enough to cover, you know, basically the whole spectrum from the very short tweet to these wonderful longform pieces. And they all have a role and they all have an audience. And it's not that some people only do one because they're brains are rewired and some people only read longform. Everybody is reading everything at different times in different ways. I mean books are never going to go out of style and that's the ultimate longform, right? I'm convinced that this form -- I mean it hasn't even -- as you opened with this, that we call it longform, we think about it being slightly different, but it's been around for centuries and I don't think that we're evolving somehow past it because of our phones. Although it was an interesting article, but I don't necessarily think that it has really an impact on what we're doing.

MR. DICKERSON: Sometimes I wonder about longform when people tweet it or put it on their Facebook page that there's a little bit of what they used to say about *The Economist* which is more people said they read *The Economist* than ever actually did. (Laughter) And I think, you know, longform pieces will come out and people will start tweeting them in -- there's no way they could have read, you know, more than a screen and that -- but anyway, that's the traffic and we all like that.

MR. MCMAHON: Hi, I'm Bob McMahon. I edit the website of the

Council on Foreign Relations. Thank you. I'm Bob McMahon at the Council on Foreign Relations. Dave and I talked about these issues quite a bit over the last few months. I had a question about going back to the title of this meeting which is the impact on policy and public discussion. And what does it mean -- starting with David but others can answer as well -- are you trying to move the needle on terms of getting an impact in policy? Is it something where somebody on the hill is holding up your longform piece and saying, you know, because of this, this moved me to X, Y and Z, or, you know, is it a combination of that and it going viral on social media or, you know, kind of an all of the above? What constitutes success for the Brookings Essay or for some of the longform pieces you're trying to generate?

MR. NASSAR: Well, you sort of threw in another question at the end. But the answer is sort of the bulk of what you're asking sort of are we trying to get impact with what we're doing? Yes, for sure. And the idea behind, you know, sort of putting our foot into this water is that by using this platform we might be able to get impact in a way that -- in the same way that getting people on Twitter, right, as Hannah was alluding to. There's people who are going to consume all of this different kinds of content. The answer is not that there's one form that you have to pick over the other, the answer is that you have to do it all. And so some scholars reach people through Twitter, our website might be useful for others. Other people write op-eds in *The New York Times* and those are successful. This is yet another channel which potentially reaches people. We think this channel because it is attractive, because it is engaging, because we're trying to do all these different things with it has a chance potentially of reaching new audiences in a way that Brookings content hasn't in the past and has a chance of being shared and moved around Washington, say on the NSA discussion in a way that maybe something else might not be because it doesn't create that kind of discussion.

Now what constitutes success? That's a really complicated discussion about -- it varies from piece to piece, but certainly one metric is, you know, retaining people on the page, getting a wider audience of people to engage with the piece, but certainly reaching new audiences with the piece is important.

MR. DICKERSON: Did anybody else want to?

MR. MILLMAN: I would say at ESPN that obviously our environment isn't about getting things talked about on Capitol Hill but sports does engage in a lot of the social conversation. You just look at the Donald Sterling story over the past 96 hours and that is something that was much bigger than just the sports world and it engaged sort of worldwide. But certainly, you know, the Yasiel Puig story I talked about before, in the Florida State House they're talking about laws to change sort of the way the punishment for people who are captured as smugglers. So there is a byproduct that is social change and I think every writer is sort of thinking what's the big scope after they're thinking I got a great freaking story and I just want people to read it. But I think there's a secondary social change that comes from some stories in sports but we're never thinking about that.

SPEAKER: Hello. I am Floheen. I am a Ph.D. candidate in communications science and I am a Roma from Romania. And we know all how difficult it is to convert text into visuals being the most important thing in such a business. What is your secret when you convert text into visuals?

MR. MILLMAN: Oh, I believe that's a design question. (Laughter)

MR. DICKERSON: Yeah, that's going to be (inaudible) design.

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: It's an interesting verb you used to convert text individuals because I don't think I've ever thought about it in terms of converting. A lot of the visuals team does its own independent reporting parallel to the reporter and is creating the information and visualizations and video and audio and

photograph that is parallel in moving the story forward. So for me it's not an equation where something becomes another. It's very important to me that they work very, very closely together and that it doesn't become -- I know you used the word enhancement and I admit that grates a little bit because I really don't believe in this kind of, you know, putting some Christmas ornaments on the tree. I feel very, very strongly that the narrative story is continued by these elements and I think the most successful projects you can actually see that. We don't always, you know, make that bar but we try really hard. And so I think that's the way to redefine it is not a turning but a what about this story. I'm coming at this story and what about it would in fact be better told with a visual.

MR. DICKERSON: And isn't their problem, Sarah, sometimes not just something that only enhances the story but sometimes cannibalizes it? I know some things I've seen where the video, oh, I've got the story now. I've watched a minute and a half video; I don't need to read because I pretty much know what I think I need to know.

MS. SAMPSEL: Sure. Well, if you think about it, like converting something start from the other side instead of the text and see where you get. That might be a good place to start. But, yeah, I mean what's the best way to tell a story? Like do you want to read a lot of information about something or can it be told in a 30 second clip?

MR. MAKEMBE: Henri Makembe with Beekeeper Group. This is a two part question. When writing these pieces how do you manage to stay timely? Because all of you have talked about how you write this calendar so much further ahead. So how do you manage to stay timely in a news cycle; not necessarily 24 hours but basically being relevant? And the second part is how do you go about deciding which channel to put these pieces on? For example, John, I don't read the 20 page briefing on *The Economist* every week put I listen to it on my podcast and it's 20 minutes long. So how

do you decide to make that investment that it's worth turning into a podcast or some other piece of content on another channel?

MR. MILLMAN: So there's two things there. When we talk about stories at ESPN and specifically for *The Magazine* and for digital we're looking several months ahead at what the -- you know, we have an advantage, we know what the sports calendar is. So we can be thinking, all right, the super bowl is coming up. It's the 10 year anniversary of Janet Jackson's wardrobe malfunction, you know. (Laughter) That story will be something that generates conversation. And we know we can plan for that and it falls within a particular window. And so that's how we think about it. We have the benefit of the sports calendar and sort of *The Times* and *The Post* have the benefit of election calendars and, you know, hearings or whatever else might be coming up. But that's number one.

Number two, we don't -- we have a no cannibalization policy and it's a little bit to what Hannah talked about before which is I don't care when a story comes out, I don't care if it comes out on television before it comes out on line, before it comes out in *The Magazine*. I don't care if an anecdote is tweeted before it appears in *The Magazine*. It's actually a strategy because the most successful stories for us hit every single platform. And the way something is seen in 140 characters out of context from the story is vastly different than way it's seen as a picture on ESPN.com, is incredibly different than the way it's seen when an anchor is talking about that story on Sports Center, and is just wonderfully different than way a reader gets it when it's 10 pages in a magazine that has beautiful bold pictures and headlines and graphics and sidebars. So that story, even though nuggets of it might be shared on different platforms at different times it's seen in its entirety a different way every single time it's looked at. And so this Yasiel Puig story, we put that out two weeks before *The Magazine* ever came out and no one's complaining

about. No one's saying hey, why did you waste 13 pages in *The Magazine* when I just read the story on line? Because also the truth is, you know, that story got however many page views, *The Magazine* has 2.1 million subscribers. So a huge success on line is still a third of the readers of *The Magazine*. And so the concentric circle there of the people who actually read the story on line and are reading *The Magazine*, I can imagine is pretty small. So we don't worry very much about where it's going first as long as it's out first by ESPN.

MR. DICKERSON: Any questions? Oh, my gosh. Yes, this woman. You, yes.

SPEAKER: Hi. I just wondered, I've written for *The Times* and *The Post* and I'm now managing an international magazine and I know that you kind of -- you've all somewhat answered this but assuming that management is good and people understand the no cannibalization rule, et cetera, I still see problems where -- and I'm curious how you deal with them -- where the people who send the tweets really just want to send a tweet about what Miley Cyrus said this morning and the people who do the videos want to do an Olympic athlete video, and the people who do the writing want to do a serious story about congress. And getting them to really like stop saying no, this is my -- you know, I do my thing and getting them into doing our thing, have you had any trouble with that or do the big bosses just say do it and they do? Because we sometimes find like these little agendas where the video folks don't want to work with the writers.

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: I'm happy to speak to that because I feel like it really has been a process and one of the reasons why it may have taken certainly our newsroom certainly this amount of time to get to the point where we're able to put together these big longform features. Where every piece seems to -- you're taking the best of each piece in fact where video isn't off kind of doing its own thing, it's either

duplicating exactly what the story is or is off doing some kind of sidebar that doesn't even go well with the story. I know exactly what you're speaking about. And some of that really comes from strong editors in the newsroom where now I thing perhaps differently than five or ten years ago editors who traditionally felt like they were more words editors are much more confident in editing projects, that feel like projects that have all these other elements and understanding that those elements need to work together really well. All the projects that we talked about and that I think we're out there and that sort of the best of the ones that come from our organizations are ones that are highly, highly edited. We really haven't talked about that here but it's a crucial role. IF something isn't sculpted then it's going to look rough. And it took us a while to get to that point, to understand that that role was so important. You know, editors are -- we all know are really important in writing. The first draft is never polished and glorious; it takes an editor to elevate it in the same way it takes an editor to elevate this kind of project.

MR. NASSAR: I just want to touch on that because that's something that's unique about the Brookings Essay at Brookings is that we have an outside editor who actually edits the piece. And Strobe also has a very strong hand in terms of the editing, being a former editor himself. So I mean all of our pieces are of course -- go through a process internally. The scholars handle it internally within their departments. But this is the only piece that sort of goes out to a professional editor and is looked at in quite that way. So that's been a first for us with the Essay here at Brookings.

MS. SAMPSEL: I would also say that the first one you do is always really hard and you build momentum with people after they kind of see and establish what you can possibly do and that excited people in way. And I think to Hannah's point these aren't stories, that they are projects and I think if people really understand the goals of these things, the audience, where we want to take something like this. If all of that is

really clear to people throughout the process I think it's a lot easier to sort of build consensus around that.

MR. MILLMAN: It's just a fail if you don't do it that way. It's like one of the measurable metrics for success that I judge things by and I know my bosses judge things by is what kind of impact did it have on all of ESPN. And if a story comes out in a magazine and lives nowhere else and is talked about nowhere else then it doesn't really exist, you know what I mean? It's not that extreme but -- and the writers of the stories, you k now, they want to see the stories shared on line, they want to have it talked about on the radio, they want to appear on Sports Center and have people sort of engage with it and get it that attention. And so it's part, you know, your responsibility as a manager to make people recognize that these are valuable pieces and that content is king and this is what is driving the bus. But it's also incumbent upon them to recognize that oh, I'm going to get more of an audience for whatever I'm doing if I engage in the entire process.

MR. DICKERSON: Can you guys do a few extra minutes? Is that all right? Okay.

MR. NASSAR: A couple more minutes.

MR. DICKERSON: Okay. So we'll take a couple more questions. Yes.

MS. TIMKO: I have a question kind of coming from the other side of the equation. I don't need a mic. Catherine Timko and I do economic development and marketing. And a portion of my work is actually getting media coverage for cities or for corporations that are tied to economic development and my life in the media world has gone from writing a three page press release where you've got the sound bit right up front to a basically if I can't get it on one page and if it's not in the first three sentences I can't get it placed. And we have started pitching stories, whether it's -- I mean I get -- I just counted them, I have 48 publications that I got today that I have to read from technology

to, you know, university type publications. A lot of them are industry based publications and I do read *The Economist* and I do read *The Post* on line and I read it on my phone and I read it in paper at the gym. So my question is for you all in building your own storytelling, if somebody like me who was a storyteller would it be helpful if I give it and pitch it to you, here's your video concept, here's your Twitter concept, here's your longform and here's what I can get you on your website today. Is that helpful in helping you build your story?

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: I think it's helpful in marketing your stories. Like all of those are different, right. Like the social media strategy is very different than the strategy for what we're going to do in print. So understanding those differences is the first step. Like understanding the different audiences that deal in -- where that stuff resonates is really important. But, yeah, I mean I think having that sort of outlined in your head really does need to be something to think about and you just -- you can experiment and fail a little bit. Like I think you can see stuff that you might be really excited about that doesn't work, right, but then you're surprised by other things. And I think if you take those situations and you really understand maybe what that was, you know, it just, it sort of adds to what you're doing in the future.

MR. DICKERSON: In the back; the gentlemen with the bag and the hand raised and the waving. (Laughter)

MR. ALLMAN: Hi, I'm Bill Allman from Smithsonian.com. I believe it was the fellow who was the president of Sony who said that since the dawn of ancient human history and I'm obliged as an employee of Smithsonian to tell you that it's about 200,000 years ago (laughter), since the dawn of human history there have only been two basic activities. One is dancing and singing around a fire, and that's social media and gaming, and sitting around the fire and listening to stories. And I think probably that hasn't

changed any since the beginning of time. And I think longform has always been with us. I mean the same people who have such short attention spans will watch Captain America for two hours. They seem to like it. So I think one of the panelists said it's all about quality. If we can get some engaging stuff they'll read it and all depends on platform. So my question actually has to do with not such much with platform but with narrative. The new platform allows you perhaps to do a different kind of narrative. And what's the potential for -- right now we're all talking about magazines which is one narrative all the way through. What about a Rashomon type approach where you can actually blend narratives, especially I remember someone from policy; wouldn't you want to hear three different points of view simultaneously? So how does longform change in a world where you can actually flip between narratives and combine them? Anybody? (Laughter)

MR. NASSAR: I mean it's a really good question. I mean I think it's sort of -- if I followed it correctly I think it sort of goes to what Hannah was saying earlier, that we don't know what the second version of Snow Fall looks like because we haven't seen it yet.

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: But -- if you don't mind me taking -- but we're building all these kind of interesting tools that are getting close to that. So, you know, for debate season which I'm sure you all just love debate season, you know, we've built all these interesting tools where you can actually watch, you know, presidential debates and any kind of debates you want to see, and there's a transcript right there and you can search the transcript for the part that you want, and you can scrub the video to get right to the -- I mean we've sort of redefined watching debates, right. You can watch them live and then you can go back and do highlights and figure out exactly what you want to see and you can -- we've created games/tools where you make your own debates. What would -- you know, write your own inauguration speech. So we've been

playing with those kind of tools. I wouldn't call that longform, but what I would not be surprised at all is if we see a lot of those tools and those kind of ways of storytelling moving much more into the sort of longform realm that we're talking about. So you can imagine like what you just explained where you have sort of three voices telling the story, some of might be narrative, some of it might be video. You might be reading and then all of the sudden the person, you know, who sort of -- whether it's a debate or an opposite side of the argument instead of reading that you hear their voice. I can imagine something like that. It's really interesting. It's very frontier right now and it's fun.

MR. NASSAR: And I can imagine also whenever they get back to actually passing legislation (laughter) following a piece of legislation at, you know, the book, "The dance of Legislation" has, you know, if you were -- if any of you read that, following a piece of legislation can be quite interesting and various people and the choices you make at various times for the political and policy reasons. If you could be an actor in that drama. Well, there's also a strong narrative structure that you can also latch back onto. Because sometimes in games or choice things you can find yourself into a rabbit hole. But I should -- I could think you could do that on policy.

MR. MILLMAN: There are some sites that are starting to do stuff like that now. You know, there's a site like Vocativ that you sort of -- you can -- there's highlighted text that immediately pops up with different ideas and counterpoints and definitions and, you know, Vox is doing a little bit of that too so there's some interesting sort of V1 concepts that are happening.

MS. FAIRFIELD WALLANDER: I think you can find a lot of examples and inspiration outside of media completely. Like video games, the way that people used to sit on a couch and use a controller, now they're using their bodies to control things. Like think about the first like television broadcasts with the guy reading the newspaper

basically to you. And now it's something completely different. So it's all evolving.

MR. NASSAR: All right. Well, I just want to -- I think unfortunately we need to end so we can let our -- we promised that we would end at 7:00 o'clock. But I want to thank everybody for coming. I do want to take one second selfishly and just ask the members of the Brookings Essay Team if they would just to stand up because I want to publicly thank them for their work. (Applause) They really worked tirelessly on this document. They and also Mark Erwin who's been a consultant. He's with us here tonight. He's been a consultant on the project as well, worked tirelessly on it. And I really appreciate their efforts.

And I want to thank the panel, all of you, including John, our moderator, for making the time out of your busy schedules to be able to do this. It was a pleasure to have you here at Brookings and we really feel honored to be a part of this prestigious club that is sort of going forward into the new age of digital publishing. And I look forward to seeing what happens with all of your projects and with ours.

MR. DICKERSON: Thanks, Dave.

MR. NASSAR: Thanks a lot. (Applause)

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