Abstract
There are numerous situations in which people depend upon reliable reportage and information exchange. In many of the instances media and informational sources fail to inform—to give shape to—opinion and belief. The panelists present some of the ways those failures occur and they urge the audience to join in the quest for alternatives that can lead to successful informing that can contribute to democracy and the public good.

Keywords
Media; capitalism; neoliberlism

INTRODUCTION
The principle objective of the workshop is examination of ways and situations in which informational acts and objects, and the media by which they are communicated have failed, especially politically. The purposes of communication and the events that are reported via various media are sometimes taken for granted by the public. That is, there may well be assumptions regarding the mechanics of informing, and a confidence may be placed in those mechanics. Print and broadcast media are relied upon by what is now taken to be “consumers” of information. The members of the panel will question key assumptions that tend to be held about the means, mechanisms, and content of reportage. By issuing the questions and suggesting responses, the panelists will create a revised assessment of success and failure.

The corollary objective is to posit the potential for the replacement of failure with success. If there are indeed some shortcomings associated with the informational world, there should be ways and structures that can replace the status quo. The panelists will address specific means of creating a corrigible system. The workshop will be divided into four parts. With each a set of particular challenges will be presented and the audience will be engaged in discussion aimed at resolving problems and creating opportunities for success.

The panelists will offer brief introductions to some particular issues and problems related to the topic to begin the program. Each panelists will then introduce key questions and invite the audience to participate actively in the pursuit of some answers that can be applied to the topic. For example, some specific recent occurrences will be described. The occurrences and, especially, reportage related to the occurrences will form the bases of the panelists' introductions and questions. Following each question the audience will be asked to present observations and commentary. After the audience has had an opportunity to respond—and to add further questions—the panel as a whole will address the question.
EXAMPLE ONE

Many matters of concern in politics and public affairs are the fodder for reporting in popular media and other informational sources. Much of popular media is owned by large corporate entities, entities that have particular interests in what is reported and how. In some cases the problem is manifest in the topics of reportage, the choices of what gets air time, column inches, etc. The first panelist will present some of the instances of selective reporting and the manners of reporting.

By way of example, in a recent article in the Nation Stephen Cohen writes that, news reports, editorials and commentaries no longer adhere rigorously to traditional journalistic standards, often failing to provide essential facts and some context; to make a clear distinction between reporting and analysis; to require at least two different political or “expert” views on major developments on their op-ed pages (p. 6). Following Cohen’s analysis, corporate media may not have truth and accuracy in mind as they report on important topics. Cohen uses Russia and Vladimir Putin to demonstrate his point, and asserts that there are profound misrepresentations about Russia that are foist upon a gullible public. Cohen’s analysis coincides with Russia’s annexation of Crimea following a putative plebiscite in Crimea concerning their political and “national” future.

The kinds of misrepresentations and distortions that Cohen speaks of need not govern new coverage (regardless of the medium). Alternatives (including community journalism, uses of social media, and other technologies) present possibilities for correction of the systemic failures that can occur. The audience will then be asked if there is indeed a set of misperceptions that follow Cohen’s analysis. The questioning will present, and will allow the audience to present, observations and any additional questions that could be pertinent to an informed assessment of the contemporary state of affairs in the world concerning coverage of Russia, that nation’s actions, and its leader’s rhetoric.

EXAMPLE TWO

There are currently problems of categories and categorization, resulting in people’s inability to locate and situate desired informing acts. Among other results, the problems can lead to failures of creation and maintenance of social epistemic mechanics and tactics which could alleviate some difficulties.

There is also a failure to incorporate the “normal;” that is, media and information science tend to concentrate on underserved (which is entirely appropriate) to the neglect of those acts and objects needed by the typical citizens who wish to participate in democratic action, thus endangering democracy.

EXAMPLE THREE

Capitalism’s reach has extended into the infrastructure of media and the institutions responsible for informing (including libraries). Related to capitalism’s actions, the difficulties of individualism (a hallmark of classical liberalism) are exacerbated, thus inhibited sharing of informing acts (formally and informally).

There has been rampant commodification of informing mechanisms, especially media, but extending to institutions like libraries. The commodification extends to the formal means and modes of informing acts (magazines, newspapers, scholarly journals, and books, as well as technological modes of communicative action.

The concept and the actuality of the “public” is diminished by the above phenomena, thus also diminishing deliberation and participation in democracy.

EXAMPLE FOUR

The aforementioned problems are addressed directly and critically; one task of this portion entails demystifying informing and demonstrating that it is a fundamental human action that must include a formal element in order to eliminate political desiderata.

Media must be relocated—not by divesting corporate control—but be adding effective participant reportage and analysis (by means of blogs that are critically undertaken and responsibly articulated) and critical citizen news groups.

Libraries can play an essential role in making the above goals a reality (requiring librarians to be critical providers of informing mechanisms
instead of being passive gateways). The existing partisan and non-informing commentary in mainstream media must be replaced by critical commentary that has truth claims as essential objectives.

The workshop leaders will present critical incidents related to each of the above matters, illustrating the points with existing examples of the failures and possible remedial means for successful communicative action. One possible source for success is Jürgen Habermas’s concept of discourse ethics, which necessitates the hearing of all voices and the critical assessment of what is said by participants in their effort to reach a fundamentally moral consensus. Another tool is provided by John Rawls by means of his idea of the “veil of ignorance” as essential to reaching the goal of justice as fairness. Individual workshop leaders will incorporate their own conceptions of the political and ethical action as well.

Underlying the purpose of this workshop is, in effect, the examination of a new “networked society,” building upon the critical work accomplished by Manuel Castells. This networked society comprises an explicit admission that critical employments of information and communication technologies (ICTs) must be integral to a solution to the above-stated problems, as well as the posited tactics for success. More specifically, ICTs now enable individuals and communities/collectives to seize audiences which were once bound to mainstream media. In short, while past use of technology has contributed to the problems, potential use of current and emerging technologies can be a vital component of a solution to the now-limited political participation of people (along and as members of groups). People have the potential to organize and communicate content according to its informing potential.

To clarify, the objective of the proposed potential is not uniformity or absolute agreement. Rather, the goal is a genuinely “agonistic” democracy of the sort Chantal Mouffe has recognized as actual and beneficial. The principle point is that disagreement is not to be cultivated simply for its own sake, but as a means to the end of critical democratic informing, leading to informed action. People’s votes can be one manifestation of the proposed process, but more important is the discursive practice that precedes formal elections. The ultimate goal might be referred to as “critically informed citizen action.”

**PANEL STYLE**
The panel presentation will last 1.5 hours. Panelists will converse, debate, and engage the audience about the challenges of disciplinary (and linguistic) differences, and how to overcome them.

**REFERENCES**