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A new approach for profitable foreign news reporting

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[Introduction](#)

As news consumers become more engaged with immigration, travel, business and trade, pollution, poverty, terrorism, and other important issues facing our societies around the world, it is virtually certain that a higher market demand will rapidly arise for accurate and reliable in-depth international news reports and analysis. At the same time, the news industry has an urgent need to find a business model that will not only maintain its traditional values, but also discover and meet new consumer needs and provide continually enhanced services.

Here we propose the establishment of various online “clubs” as an effective approach for news providers to turn expensive foreign news reporting into a financial asset while helping Americans improve their education and job skills in an increasingly competitive global society.

[Concept of “Online Bilingual News Clubs” and “Online Academic Clubs”](#)

Journalists can target potential subscribers within a variety of specific languages and academic fields. For instance, online clubs that specialize in Spanish, Chinese, French, Arabic, architecture, international business, and national security will likely attract different groups of people. Those who have strong interests in certain fields are likely willing to pay small fees to join one or more of these online clubs. The news clubs can be divided into two major categories.

* The proposed *online bilingual clubs* should contain important foreign news topics and information on popular culture, religion, and ideologies. Professional articles and analyses as well as a variety of open forums for public participation will be available. With strong emphasis on music, video, and other modern multi-media technologies, these bilingual clubs can help subscribers learn foreign languages, traditions, culture, and current events in a more comprehensive, coherent, and systematic manner.

** The proposed *online academic clubs* mostly contain news stories that describe how people connect academic knowledge to their work and how they use different technologies, methods, or approaches to advance their career and improve the quality of their lives. Comprehensive reviews on new research trends and academic literature will make up only a small portion of the content. The focus will be on providing broad access to a large selection of academic and job-

related contents from bilingual online communities and from domestic newspapers. Many news organizations can benefit by licensing their content to the clubs for a syndication fee. A rich international collection of interesting and informative educational news stories from various types of media outlets will help inspire Americans to find more creative and productive directions in their education or career paths.

An online club would be a forum for a community of subscribers to access information that interests them and to exchange ideas and opinions among themselves and the providers of that information. It would be a valuable and diverse learning opportunity, offering a high level of reliability and accuracy not now readily available online. The clubs may also contain a list of ongoing or future projects, job openings, funding opportunities, etc, that are sponsored by different organizations or corporations.

Both journalists and subscribers can benefit from the exchange of ideas. Journalists' ability to verify news stories from reliable domestic and foreign sources will play an important role. Their investigative and communicative skills will become a unique and valuable attraction to consumers. Subscribers would provide the journalists with valuable feedback about their reporting as well as stimulating them to investigate new and important topics.

These online clubs are mainly designed for Americans to learn more efficiently from online educational-related content; however, revenues may also come from international subscribers. The proposed online clubs can help provide platforms for journalists to charge the content and generate revenues needed in order to support high-quality journalism.

[Individual Consumer Subscription](#)

The current prices for newspaper subscriptions are already quite low. Yet people are becoming increasingly unlikely to subscribe to newspapers simply because they have nearly unlimited access to existing online materials free of charge. Online technologies deliver an unprecedented amount of reading material to consumers with excellent speed, good quality, and high flexibility at little or no cost. However, when faced with critical questions of whether online information is accurate and reliable, especially under the constraints of a limited amount of time and with the vast amount of online information, it becomes impossible for individuals to examine online materials carefully and systematically. It is thus extremely challenging to make a correct assessment of the usefulness of online information.

In addition, there are 192 other countries and a large number of languages worldwide [1, 2]. Compared with the common practices of American journalism, many foreign societies apply completely different journalism standards regarding fair, accurate, independent, and in-depth news reporting. It is important and helpful to understand the other side of the stories and viewpoints; however, foreign news stories may be false, altered, and misleading because of culture differences, government propaganda, or hidden special interests. Yet the high expense of foreign news coverage often requires news organizations to rely primarily on translations of existing foreign news articles. Therefore, they can not produce balanced coverage and thus fail to meet many important criteria for journalism today.

Hence, American journalists may be able to make a profit if they can use their expertise to verify and consolidate useful academic or occupational related content from many different domestic and foreign sources. Many people will be willing to pay for and subscribe to the proposed online news clubs if these clubs can reliably help them improve their education and job skills while saving money.

The proposed bilingual online clubs can also provide convenient access for individuals who are interested in learning foreign languages along with in-depth analysis of international events. These bilingual clubs will become a major attraction if they can help subscribers save time and money while exploring different cultures and foreign societies without having to physically travel there. Considering that we live in an increasingly extended global society, the potential demand for these kinds of media products, which are currently not available, could be very high.

School and Business Subscriptions

1) These bilingual clubs can help improve our foreign language study systems since they could be used as complementary tools to support our current language-learning methodologies. People are typically limited to some certain ways of learning a language. They spend many years learning one particular language in a middle or high school or college; then after graduation most of them do not have opportunities to practice their foreign language skills and their knowledge quickly fades away.

One of the primary purposes of studying a language is for us to learn the best values and wisdom of different cultures, to learn how other people make their decisions and live their lives, and to learn different ways to solve existing problems. The bilingual clubs will provide an engaging and active forum for subscribers and a lifelong learning experience about other languages and cultures.

2) Revenues could also come from multi-national corporations, since the proposed bilingual clubs will help U.S. businesses to identify potential opportunities, make comprehensive product designs, and determine the best strategies to access different foreign markets. These are all essential parts of international business operations, yet to accomplish these tasks can be prohibitively expensive and difficult for individual companies. However, the newspaper industry should have the necessary expertise and be able to provide a competitive advantage in this field because journalists are able to verify, consolidate, and provide accurate and reliable foreign news information to different business industries at a minimum cost. Therefore, multi-national company executives and managers may be willing to sponsor and encourage their employees to subscribe to and participate in these bilingual clubs. National surveys indicated that employers are the leading providers for adult worker training, and U.S. corporations spent \$48.2 billion in 2009 on employee training, with an average of \$714 per learner [3, 4].

Overall, these bilingual clubs should help provide easy and low-cost online consulting tools for both multi-national corporations and small business owners, enabling them to access different foreign markets and expand their enterprise. The clubs could help create long-term advantages for the U.S. economy if they can help promote U.S. export and provide a competitive margin for

Research & Development types of high wage jobs. By creating collective opinions and voices on certain issues and documenting mistakes made from different companies, these bilingual clubs have the potential to help protect America's business interests overseas.

Potential Social Benefits

The proposed bilingual clubs may be able to attract government contracts, grants, and public donations because they have the potential to create a deeper understanding and timely insights of many different foreign societies. For instance, the proposed bilingual clubs could have a strong positive impact to the war on terrorism. They can provide immediate feedback and opinions that help check and balance what Americans might have done wrong in other foreign nations, and reduce the hard feelings or hatred towards America among foreign societies.

Advanced modern technologies will make any future terrorist attacks more destructive than ever [5-7]. Therefore, it is important to understand what is going on within foreign societies and find out what has caused strong disagreement with or even hatred of the U.S. People act according to their perceptions and their beliefs; hence, it is necessary to learn what other foreigners think of the U.S. and what makes them think that way.

Some of us have learned from the 9-11 tragedy that what happens in immigrants' home countries sometimes affects immigrants' feelings about the U.S., especially if the U.S. is directly involved in those incidents. The proposed bilingual clubs can help elicit and highlight statements or incidents that are highly influential in terms of affecting foreigners' opinions and future actions on the U.S.

Americans should know that there could be correlations between some foreign internet contents and home-grown terrorism. For example, it is extremely devastating and overwhelming to watch YouTube and see foreigners being killed apparently by American troops, even if I cannot understand the particular foreign language on the video. Images and languages can be used to create a strong emotional impact, but can also be used to mislead. Unfortunately, these online messages sometimes play a large role in influencing people to do horrible deeds. By allowing subscribers to vote and indicate what news stories concern them the most, these bilingual clubs can help increase customer satisfaction and gain support when journalists help investigate the important issues and find the best ways to compensate the victims.

By providing and encouraging positive approaches instead of destructive means for bringing about social changes, these online clubs can help create new visions for the future. Ideas that arise out of this intercultural exchange can demonstrate that there is an alternative to terrorism and fundamental radicalism. In 2010 fiscal year, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security alone had to spend \$42.7 billion for national security while the proposed bilingual clubs would require only a very small fraction of this cost [8]. Surely this nearly negligible scale of expense can be justified in view of the long-term benefits in the improvement of international understandings that they provide.

The Mexican Drug War is another example that has raised serious concern in the U.S. Many Americans worry that the drug violence in Mexico could spread across the border to the U.S. They are willing to contribute their ideas, thoughts, and wealth to prevent this from happening. The proposed bilingual clubs would provide an easy access to reliable and relevant information, as well as providing users with the possibility of checking whether their ideas or contributions would be compatible with the Mexican culture, traditions, and social realities, and whether they would lead to sustainable positive results. By providing the relevant social background and underlying reasons for major foreign events, the media's in-depth reports may help solve problems and attract many more potential subscribers.

There are still many major linguistic and cultural barriers between different populations that often cause confusion, misunderstanding, and major conflicts. The proposed bilingual clubs could help provide a channel where immigrants can participate as a part of the group and become mediators between different cultures. Throughout history, the U.S. has always been a country with a significant immigrant population. According to the Center for Immigration Studies, there were approximately 38.2 million immigrants living in the U.S. in March 2010, and "Some 671,616 international students attended U.S. institutions in 2008-2009" [9, 10].

[Educational Benefits for Individuals](#)

A network of online bilingual news clubs can produce a huge amount of interesting, informative, accurate, and practical material. It would be time-consuming to have subscribers explore each individual bilingual club and search for information that they are interested in having, such as content that would help improve their education and job skills. Therefore, the establishments of special online clubs that are based on a large selection of both foreign and domestic education-related news articles may help create a valuable short-cut and open up sales categories which would attract different groups of potential subscribers.

The creation of these academic clubs would be based on the assumption that producers would not have any copyright issues nor pay user fees while using the information from the selected group of bilingual clubs. In contrast, news organizations that are not part of the chain of clubs may use content according to the principle of "fair use" [11]. Furthermore, organizations may acquire permission for extensive use of material produced by the clubs. Depending on whether a particular company can find sufficient resources to support its independent operation, these academic clubs could either be charged separately or be bundled with those bilingual clubs for many added values.

Instead of emphasizing difficult theories, these online clubs would likely become more successful if they combine both academic and occupational-related contents from all over the world. For example, combining architecture, drafting, engineering, construction, interior design, home improvement, construction trade, and other related content would help provide the best value for those who are already or plan to be in a construction-related industry.

These academic clubs are not designed to undermine or replace post-secondary education, but to make a strong connection between academics and practical daily experiences. These online

clubs could help motivate young students to explore different academic fields and plan for their future, as well as help people save money on education or occupational training. In addition, these clubs can help small businesses improve and reinvent their products and services, and help institutions promote the latest technologies and examine hidden problems in the field.

1) According to Congressman George Miller, Chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor, “nationwide, 7,000 students drop out every day and only about 70 percent of students graduate from high school with a regular high school diploma..., [this] high school dropout crisis threatens U.S. economic growth and competitiveness” [12]. It is indeed a serious social problem when so many students lose interest in school and quit at such an early stage of their lives.

Yet people learn things differently. A rich collection of interesting and informative academic stories from all over the world would help inspire some American youth to become more curious and involved with studies and remain attracted to higher education, improved career paths, and fulfilling the dreams of becoming our society’s next innovators.

2) America’s university education system is doing very well overall. In 2010, 72 American institutions were ranked as one of the top 200 best universities in the world, a remarkable testament to the excellence of higher educations in the U.S. [13]. However, the cost for higher education nationwide has been rising sharply in recent years. In 2010, the average tuition for four-year public universities was \$6,393, a 46% increase over the past ten years, while the average tuition cost for four-year non-profit private institutions was close to \$21,050 [14]. In addition, the average college student spent more than \$600 on textbooks last school year, according to a consumer research group, Student Monitor [15, 16].

The U.S. government and institutions are doing as much as they can afford to motivate students to pursue higher education and help them finance tuition costs by offering scholarships, grants, subsidized loans, etc. Still, expensive college tuitions create financial burdens, especially for those from low-income or middle-income families, as well as families who recently lost their jobs. The establishment of these academic online clubs may provide opportunities to those unable to afford college tuition by allowing them to receive adequate job training for both academic and technical skills, and preparing them for higher-paying jobs.

3) The proposed online academic clubs can also function as a part of our continuing education for adult workers. In recent years, fast-changing scientific discoveries and technologies sometimes make it difficult for many people to keep pace. And yet, our modern lives depend on these new scientific and technological developments. To stay competitive, the work force must not only gain actual work experience, but also be able to quickly learn and adapt to constantly evolving technologies.

While the U.S. government, institutions, and corporations spend billions of dollars each year on scientific research and advanced technologies, the proposed online academic clubs can help raise the awareness of U.S. workers about the newly created technologies and how to implement them for increased productivity. Workers who are constantly in touch with new technologies will become a much more competitive workforce in general.

4) According to the U.S. Small Business Administration in April, 2011, small firms pay 44% of total U.S. private payroll and have generated 64% of net new jobs over the past 15 years. [17] However, small businesses and self-employed workers often have a major disadvantage when trying to compete against large companies because they usually have limited access to capital, research, and new technologies. Therefore, it is helpful to find an easy and affordable alternative that could keep them informed about relevant developments within a particular industry for cost-effective career training.

By including a valuable selection of foreign and domestic news stories that describe how people apply academic knowledge for the improvement of their careers and quality of lives, as well as how people use different methods, technologies, or team collaboration to solve challenging problems, the proposed online clubs could help inspire small business owners and employees to find innovative ways to improve their products and services and help reinvigorate their businesses. Therefore, these clubs may potentially help stimulate and maintain job growth within the small business sector.

5) These online clubs can also help detect and foresee potential problems in the future. For example, prior to the recession of 2008-2009, there were many Chinese articles and analyses discussing a number of serious problems in the U.S. that led to today's economic meltdown. However, although I am Chinese immigrant who studied economics and who cares deeply about this country, I found it extremely difficult to deliver these warning messages to the general American public. The existence of these online clubs would provide a platform for discussing such topics. I believe Americans would find it interesting and helpful to observe problems and weaknesses through the eyes of foreigners.

These academic clubs can provide a platform where the grassroots journalism and a watchdog function can both grow by connecting journalists' investigative and communicational expertise with consumers who share similar interests or backgrounds in the field. People who join such clubs could perform as our society's watchdogs when they interact with each other and push good ideas and solutions forward much more efficiently. This could be an important way to define productive investigative journalism in a modern society.

In general, the creation of these online clubs would help make the learning experiences of all people more interesting and diversified by providing easy and affordable access to basic knowledge, practical experiences, relevant stories and expert opinions from an array of different fields and from all over the world. These clubs could also help inspire and encourage subscribers to "think outside the box," and become more creative and productive in their education or career path. A major strength of the U.S. educational system is creativity. By having academic-related ideas and practical solutions together, these online clubs can greatly aid Americans in using new approaches to solve existing problems more efficiently.

[Business Model](#)

There are two main options for the business model: low-profit (or for-profit) and non-profit. Before deciding which option is best for this project, American journalists should conduct a market research survey to determine what school teachers, students, and other individual news consumers might expect from the proposed online clubs. The proposed clubs would have the potential to become part of students' online enrichment programs for after-school and during the summer. Therefore, journalists may want to find out whether some school districts and private schools would consider ordering group subscriptions or incorporating online clubs in their curriculum if these clubs are seen to be valuable, highly educational, and cost-effective.

The market research survey should include a sample of companies of different sizes and from different industries in order to discover how these news clubs could potentially help companies benefit from their strategic planning, research and development, employee training, product design, manufacturing, marketing and advertising, or distribution of services. Based on the survey results and feedback from potential consumers, journalists should be able to figure out what is the best way to combine foreign news reporting with potential consumer needs.

The survey should also include a special section to help discover whether computer companies would be interested in becoming partners and what kind of technologies they can help provide. It could become a good opportunity for computer companies to expand their businesses and increase their market share, while also helping journalism companies to save money and gain a competitive advantage. Journalists would have access to some of the most advanced digital technologies available. However, this part of the survey results should not be released to the public until deals are finalized.

For-profit and non-profit business models each have their advantages and disadvantages. If a for-profit business model is chosen, it would be ideal if there are several large news companies competing in the field since competition brings creativity and large news clubs usually provide better value for consumers. However, it is going to be difficult to gather enough revenue support if there are too many companies competing in the same field since many of the proposed social benefits and revenue streams will likely remain finite.

Since for-profit companies typically cannot take organization grants or public donations, it is therefore important for us to find a business model that has a vital mix of revenues, grants, and donations. A possible alternative is a "Low-profit Limited Liability Corporation," known as an L3C, with both for-profit and nonprofit investments to perform work with socially useful purposes. Both private investors and foundations could invest in an L3C, with private investors able to realize a limited profit [18, 19].

If the survey shows that it is optimal to launch a non-profit business model, the social advantage is obvious. For example, it is in the best interest of the U.S. government to promote quality education because better educated taxpayers typically become more productive and less likely rely on future welfare. However, according to a survey by the Project for Excellence in Journalism, 75% of all news executives surveyed stated that they had "serious reservations," or the highest concern about direct subsidies from the government. This is understandable in light of keeping journalism independent of government influences [20].

The government subsidies would be useful primarily in the initial stages of establishing these news clubs while some investment money may also come from other organizations. Once established, the news clubs should be able to generate their own revenue to cover operating expenses. Therefore, these clubs could actually help create an effective partition between government educational subsidies and individual newspapers to avoid direct and excessive government influences.

Most news companies or organizations currently cannot afford to pay when using content created by other providers under the principle of “fair use.” Yet it is expensive and takes an awful lot of resources to produce high-quality news reports. Therefore, it is helpful to find a way to compensate news organizations that are committed to producing interesting and accurate education-related news contents. These news clubs could potentially help create an additional revenue stream to some national newspapers that consistently produce high-quality investigative reports, as well as regional newspapers that would otherwise have limited revenue to reporting on the innovation of citizens within local communities.

In principle, it would be advantageous to either establish a few large-scale competing news clubs or adopt educational non-profit organizations with some level of government subsidy. However, it is important to have various and consistent revenue streams to help these online clubs remain financially stable and independent. With the current unpredictable political and economic climate and more than \$14 trillion in government debt, it is not realistic for these online news clubs to be established free of charge to consumers by simply relying on tax dollars and organization donations [21]. Americans must take collective responsibility to help pay and support these news clubs if these clubs are helpful and valuable for them.

[Effect on State & Local Community](#)

The state of Colorado has a \$1.2 billion deficit and a 23.8% gap in general funds in the 2010 fiscal year. According to the Center on Budget & Policy priorities, “the worst recession since the 1930s has caused the steepest decline in state tax receipts on record”, and Colorado was already struggling with fiscal budget shortfalls [22]. The matter will likely get worse if the unemployment rate remains high. As a result, “Colorado colleges and universities are proposing possible tuition increases for the next year ranging from 9% to 21% -- all made necessary by deep cuts to the state’s contribution to higher education.” Colorado is ranked 48th in per capita spending on higher education, a really dismal showing for a state like Colorado [23].

At the primary and secondary education level, our local public schools are considering the option of either reducing in-school hours or increasing class sizes due to a severe decline in state funding support. Meanwhile, year after year, there has been persistently a wide achievement gap between Free and Reduced Lunch students and their non-qualifying classmates [24]. The measures under consideration, if adopted, will no doubt further constrain our school systems. We need to develop creative ideas so that educations for our kids are not falling behind.

The proposed online news clubs would help provide an access to interesting, valuable, and affordable learning where consumers can enrich their lives as well as improve their education

and careers. Better education and adequate adult job training is the key to reducing unemployment, poverty, and crime, as well as low-income families' reliance on social welfare. Therefore, education is really the best investment one can make.

Conclusion:

The proposed online news clubs would provide an easily accessible platform where American youth and adult workers can learn about valuable aspects of many different cultures and become more competitive for the future global job market. As American Baby Boomers start to retire and the U.S. slowly turns into an aging society, it will be necessary to find new ways to help American workers become more productive so as to maintain high living standards and America's leadership in the 21st Century.

This proposal intends to create various and sufficient revenue streams to help support an independent and viable digital media. During the past centuries, American journalists have always been the watchdogs helping to detect and reveal hidden problems in society. Compared to many profit-driven corporations, traditional journalism companies tend to also look at the social benefits and responsibilities rather than just the profits.

With American journalists' expertise and input, these online news clubs can help promote the public interest and help find solutions for many emerging and challenging problems in the future. Along with the digital age, these online clubs will represent a new era of open forum, where many different voices from across society can be heard. Ideas and expertise will be exchanged, and solutions will be collectively found. The best use of the technology in the digital age will indeed help make a better and a more prosperous society for all of us.

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