Election Reflections

Newspapers are facing cutbacks and even bankruptcies but, if students at Colby are any indication, interest in the work of journalists remains high. This semester four reporters from major national outlets drew hundreds of students seeking a behind-the-scenes look at journalists’ craft and the things they cover.

Two focused on the hottest topic on campus this semester: the election.

Post-election talks by Tom Edsall, political editor of The Huffington Post and a former Washington Post political reporter, and by Jeff Zeleny, a political correspondent for the New York Times, came to very different conclusions.

Edsall cited data showing the margin of victory among voters under 30. In 2000 Democrats won in this demographic by two points. In 2004 by nine points. This year, 34 points. “These are the people who are going to be starting in the electorate now, and they’re going to last and last and last and last and sort of push all these others out,” Edsall said.

Zeleny, who spent the campaign covering Obama, presented a different picture. “For all the Democrats out there,” he said, “if you think that this is an election that was sort of reshaping the political landscape, that Democrats are going to be a permanent majority, I wouldn’t spend too much time thinking about that, because that’s not the case—at least not the way that Republicans eight years ago, and it almost certainly isn’t the case now.”

The two also presented differing perspectives on media coverage of the campaign. Zeleny, who offered behind-the-scenes accounts from his seat at the back of Obama’s airplane and from venues across America, shunned the notion that the press favored Obama. “There has been a lot of commentary about how the media was in the tank for Senator Obama, how they all loved Senator Obama, how, you know, it was this cozy relationship,” he said. “Well, if that’s true, it was a long-distance affair, because there was very little interaction with reporters and the Obama campaign.”

Edsall’s perch was more from the outside, as a Huffington Post editor and as a professor at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. Though he said the press “did an okay job,” he continued: “There were some problems. I do think that the press was quite pro-Obama—explicitly so. Much more so and more assertively so than in past elections.”

Both lectures—and one by Phil Taubman, a retired New York Times editor who, like Edsall, came to Colby as part of the Knight Foundation grant for media literacy—are online as part of the Goldfarb Center podcast series (www.colby.edu/goldfarb). Also in that series is Anne Hull, the Washington Post reporter who won this year’s Elijah Parish Lovejoy Award for courageous journalism. —Ruth Jacobs

Colby Pundits

Colby professors were quoted far and wide analyzing the 2008 election, but Colby alumni also were busy providing commentary for some of the biggest media outlets. Stuart Rothenberg ’70, editor of the nonpartisan newsletter The Rothenberg Political Report, provided regular commentary for CNN and The News Hour on PBS. Amy Walter ’91, editor-in-chief of “The Hotline,” an online feature of NationalJournal.com, writes a column titled “On the Trail,” and often teamed up with Rothenberg on The News Hour. Peter Hart ’64 regularly analyzed polling data for NBC News and The Wall Street Journal.
At least on this day, these college students defied the late-sleeper stereotype. The sun had not yet risen in Waterville Nov. 4, and Colby students were walking house to house with door hangers for Obama. “When we showed up in the street ... at four-thirty in the morning, there were over a dozen people,” said Amanda Burgess ’10, president of the Colby Democrats.

They may not have been working before dawn on other days, but scores of Colby students spent countless hours on the Obama campaign. Some started in the summer; many more when school started in September. They worked five, 10, 20 hours a week. As the election drew closer, that became 20, 30, 40 hours a week. “It was pretty much a job,” said Burgess.

They planned rallies, organized voter registration drives, knocked on doors. An estimated 150 students volunteered in some capacity, but not just once—over and over, say campus leaders.

“Inauguration’s Top Techie

In the spring of 2007, Mark Jablonowski ’10 set out to spend the summer working for the Obama campaign. He knocked on thousands of doors in New Hampshire gearing up for that state’s primary.

Then the campaign discovered Jablonowski’s technical and management skills. He soon became the Obama campaign’s information technology director for New Hampshire. Jablonowski worked all over the country, and after Obama won the Democratic primary, Jablonowski kept right on teching.

Now the Anchorage, Alaska, native is heading IT for the inauguration, responsible for “Blackberries, laptops, servers, copiers, fax machines, coffee makers—anything with an electrical cord.”

“In terms of the number of days I’ve had off, there have been close to zero,” said the 21-year-old special-projects and IT manager. But Jablonowski, in the thick of political history, wouldn’t have it any other way.

To read more about Jablonowski’s experiences, go to www.colby.edu/mag, keyword: political-techie

Colby students work the phones on Election Day to get out the vote.

It was worth it, they say, and they will do it again. “It’s hard not to get involved in campaigns once you already have been involved in the past, because it’s just—it’s so addicting,” said Boland.

Ala Solsvig ’11, director of on-campus services for the Colby Republicans, agrees. “It’s fun to feel that you’re contributing to something bigger,” she said. “You’re a Republican soldier, kind of.”

The Republican effort on campus was smaller than that of the Democrats, but the officers of the Colby Republicans and a couple of others volunteered consistently, especially with phone banking. Solsvig estimates she spent about 40 hours prior to Nov. 4 canvassing and working the phones. “Frankly, this year I’d say that by and large Republicans were out-organized,” said Solsvig. She attributes this to a disparity in financial resources. —RJ

Obama Victory Leaves Students Lost

CHALKINGS promote early voting in this year’s election, which was the hot topic on campus this fall.
Racial Controversy on Campus

A series of racially and culturally insensitive events stirred controversy on campus this fall, precipitating a sit-in in Pulver Pavilion and a series of demands presented to the Student Programming Board, the administration, and to students.

Early in the semester some students objected to a luau-themed party that they considered insensitive to Hawaiian culture. At Halloween, a costume depicting a Latino and another involving a noose roiled additional outrage. Most controversial was a show by the Campaign Comedy’Trail, a troupe hired for what was characterized in advance as political satire but deteriorated into jokes based on racial and religious stereotypes. A Latina student who objected was taunted by a troupe member, according to those in attendance. These incidents followed a controversial Cinco de Mayo party last spring.

On Nov. 4 dozens of students and faculty members sat in the main passageway through the student union with signs simply saying “Listen,” and participating students issued demands that student leaders take part in the Campus Conversations on Race program and that the Student Programming Board manage events to constrain “entertainment groups regarding offensive statements based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion and class.”

Written demands included one for an annual address by the president about the ways differences in race, gender, sexuality, religion, and class manifest themselves on campus. Students also demanded changes in the academic diversity requirement and funding for multicultural disciplines. They challenged students to educate themselves about difference and to be conscious of actions that are inconsiderate and offensive.

Though students set a Dec. 1 deadline for a response, the administration and the Race and Racism Committee were discussing responses to the students’ demands at the end of the semester.

—Stephen Collins ’74

Beck’s New Seat
Members of Maine’s 124th Legislature—including Henry Beck ’09—were sworn in by Gov. John Baldacci Dec. 3. Beck, who most recently served as a Waterville City Councilor, is the youngest member of the Legislature. He will represent District 76, which includes parts of Waterville and Oakland.

How is Colby Green?
It takes a whole new Web site to try to answer that question. From information about initiatives to academic programs and awards, the Green Colby site, launched in December, highlights Colby’s efforts as a leader in sustainability. Check back regularly for green news and profiles of “eco-alumni.”

Painter to Painter
American painter Alex Katz is once again contributing to the museum’s collection—and once again the work isn’t his own. The Alex Katz Foundation will give six pieces by American modernist painter Marsden Hartley to Colby. The works span the full range of Hartley’s career and include still lifes and landscapes, including a dynamic view of City Point, Vinalhaven, from 1937-38. Both Katz and Hartley have connections to Maine—Katz spends summers in Lincolnville, and Hartley was from Lewiston. Since 2004, the Alex Katz Foundation has given the Colby museum more than 100 works of art worth more than $4 million.

Marsden Hartley, American, 1877-1943
Bavarian Alps, Barmisch-Partenkirchen, c. 1933-34
Oil on board, 30” x 18”
Colby College Museum of Art
Gift of the Alex Katz Foundation
**President Gives Financial Update**

The core educational program, financial aid initiatives, and the people of the institution are Colby’s priorities as the College adjusts to a period of financial constraint that may last a number of years. That was the message President William D. Adams delivered in a year-end video posted on Colby’s Web site.

In order to support those commitments, Adams said, “We are trying to understand how we can reshape the expense base of the institution and to reduce the size of that expense base.”

In the 11-minute-long video, Adams reassures parents and students that the College is “very attentive to the pressures” they face due to the recession and says Colby will be “reserved and very careful” in setting next year’s comprehensive fee.

The no-loan initiative in financial aid is “one of the highest priorities of the College,” and Adams says he believes Colby will be able continue that program next year and will do everything it can “to maintain it in future years as well.”

Adams hopes that through this financial situation Colby will find ways to come out stronger. “I don’t think that’s an impossible task, and I think it’s one of the ways we have to be thinking about this—in addition to trying to understand how we do more with less.”

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**Alumni Trustees Nominated**

John B. Devine Jr. ’78, P ’06, and Todd W. Halloran ’84 have each been nominated to serve a second three-year term as alumni trustees.

Devine, of Phoenix, Md., is vice president of business development at Cartwheel LLC, of Morristown, N.J., which provides specialized marketing services to retailers.

The Massachusetts native was an English major who edited *The Oracle* and *The Echo*. A former president of Delta Upsilon, Devine has also been an alumni club officer, class agent, and chair of the Alumni Council. He served as a Colby Overseer (1994-2002) and was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2006.

Halloran, of Darien, Conn., is a partner at Freeman Spogli & Co., a privately owned investment firm that has more than $2 billion invested in 37 portfolio companies. An economics major at Colby, he was elected a trustee in 2006 and currently chairs the Nominating Committee. As an overseer he was a member of the College Relations Visiting Committee (2005) and the President’s Advisory Committee.

According to the Alumni Association bylaws, other nominations may be made by petition to the executive secretary of the Alumni Council with signatures of one percent of the members of the association. If there are no nominations before Feb. 15, 2009, Devine and Halloran will be declared elected by the chair of the Alumni Council.

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**Terror Strikes Home**

Darshini Mahadevia ’10 is one of three Colby students from Mumbai, India. She wrote a reflection on the November terrorist attacks for the *Morning Sentinel*. Excerpts are below, and the full essay is online at www.colby.edu/mag, keyword: mumbai-attacks.

After reading the roll call of the dead and injured, I remain haunted by names and faces I grew up with. These were people who innocently went to the VT train station, the grandest of all Mumbai’s heritage buildings, to travel—and were killed. These were people who went out to dine in cafés and hotels, only to be shot by ruthless terrorists.

My mother was supposed to be at the Taj Mahal hotel for dinner that night. It was just a matter of fate that she changed her mind about going out to dinner because she was too tired after a day of hard work. I write this with tears in my eyes, because I cannot stop myself from imagining the worst.

The attacks put a face on terror for my community which, until now, was largely insulated from it. Yes, there were the 1993 bomb blasts in my part of the city, but I was too young to form any connection with that event.

It is only now, after the bombings of places so connected to my heart, that I awaken and begin to understand the unfathomable evil that terrorism represents in our world. I have always wanted to understand that evil and I thought I did.

But the reality is that I have actually “awakened” and gotten a closer perspective on it only because it affected my life. I see this as a rather self-indulgent realization in a world where millions of others are also victims of terror.
Anyone who has been following Qiamuddin Amiry’s story knows the Colby senior has big dreams. Now those dreams are coming true.

In his sophomore year at Colby, Amiry ’09, who is from Kabul, Afghanistan, began laying the groundwork for the Afghan Scholars Program. The program was formed to bring selected Afghan students to attend private American high schools for their junior and senior years on full scholarships.

In September the pioneer Afghan scholars, Meetra Ameni and Sikander Ahmadi, began their junior year at Gould Academy in Bethel, Maine. While Amiry is confident that the students will be on par with the rest of their classmates by the end of their first semester, he is aware of the tough adjustments they face. “The whole system is new [to them], so they have to get used to the style of teaching and teachers’ demands,” Amiry said.

Despite the challenges of a new culture, Ameni and Ahmadi realize they have been granted a tremendous opportunity. “I feel it is challenging when I focus on trying to get good grades, taking TOEFL [an English proficiency test], taking the SAT, doing extra activities, looking for colleges, and finally wondering how I can achieve another scholarship for my higher studies,” Ahmadi wrote in an e-mail. “But meanwhile, I am so proud of having all these opportunities.” Read more of this story, by Lauren Pongan ’09, at www.colby.edu/mag, keyword: afghan-scholarships.

INVESTMENT ADVICE

Alexandra Clegg ’09 and All Things Considered host Michele Norris spoke on NPR Dec. 10 about the Colby Student Investment Association’s relative success in the stock market this fall. The club has significantly outperformed the Dow, NASDAQ, and S&P 500. Here’s how Norris introduced the story: “If you’ve been watching your retirement savings disappear over the last few months, we have some advice for you. Go to college. Not just any college, though, Colby College in Waterville, Maine.” Clegg, vice president of the club, which manages $100,000 donated by Todger Anderson ’67 (see related story, page 26), explained the investment strategy. Hear it at www.colby.edu/mag, keyword: csia

WIT AND WISDOM

“Either you’ve lived a hell of a lot longer than you thought you might or the world has changed more than you ever thought it would.”

Joe Atkins, coordinator of multicultural programs and support, on witnessing the election of an African American to the presidency of the United States—something he thought he would never see in his lifetime.

“They said, ‘You got old, you’re wearing glasses, you’re fat, you don’t look anything like the Catherine we knew.’ That had been the moment of connection. It was amazing.”

Professor of Anthropology Catherine Besteman, quoted in the Bangor Daily News, on reconnecting with Somali Bantu people in Lewiston, Maine, decades after living in their village in Africa.

“Long underwear? It was like an oxymoron to me. And then, by December, I was very, very grateful.”

Pedzisayi Makumbe ’02, in a talk at the international students’ host family dinner in October, thanking Associate Dean of Students Sue McDougal for helping him get oriented when he arrived from Zimbabwe for his first year at Colby.

“You have to add a zero to make a difference.”

Michael Klare, writer and Hampshire College professor, reacting to Barack Obama’s proposal to spend $150 billion dollars on renewable energy over 10 years. Klare advocated for $150 billion each year.

“We can’t expect the administration to fix this from the top down. ... This is our community, and we have to be accountable to each other.”

Associate Professor of American Studies Margaret McFadden, addressing a forum on building a better, stronger, more inclusive community in the wake of racially inflammatory incidents and broad campus discourse on race.
Study-Abroad Leader
No NESCAC school has higher participation in the total number of students who study abroad than Colby. The Institute of International Education’s annual Open Doors survey, which lists schools by the numbers of students who study abroad, put Colby at seventh nationally among baccalaureate institutions for 2006-07 in its recently released “top 40” list.

Nothing Wrong With Being Muslim
The campaign rhetoric surrounding Barack Obama’s religious affiliation stung Muslims at Colby and elsewhere. Obama’s critics said (erroneously) that he was a Muslim, and played on some Americans’ association of that religion with terrorism. “It’s always linked to terrorism or the Taliban, jihadi movements all around the world,” said Aqsa Mahmood ’10, of Astoria, N.Y., head of the Colby Muslim Group. “You’ll never see someone baking cookies.” Hear more in Colby online (www.colby.edu/mag, keyword: muslim-campaign) from Mahmood and others in the group, some of whom appear (left) attending Friday prayers in the Rose Chapel in Lorimer Chapel.

ANOTHER FILM FEST
For more than a decade the annual Maine International Film Festival has attracted thousands of indy film-goers but few Colby students since it happens in July. But the same people who present MIFF recently announced that another film festival is coming to town—this one during the school year.

Waterville will be the first New England community ever chosen as a host city for the American Film Institute’s (AFI) Project 20/20, a festival that uses film to enhance cultural exchange and understanding. Other cities chosen for 2009 are St. Louis, Honolulu, New Orleans, Dallas, Santa Fe, and Silver Spring, Md. “Waterville has become recognized … as a hub for film exhibition,” said Shannon Haines, executive director of the Waterville Main Street organization and MIFF.

Details are still coming together, but the four-day festival will occur in April and will include multiple films (at Railroad Square Cinema, whose founding partners include Ken Eisen ’73 and Gail Chase ’74), visiting filmmakers, and a gala event at Colby. “We’re hoping to really involve a lot of Colby students,” Haines said. —R.J.