

Contact: Abby Pfeiffer  
312 445 5066  
[apfeiffer@McCormickFoundation.org](mailto:apfeiffer@McCormickFoundation.org)  
McCormickFoundation.org

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Robert R. McCormick Foundation Invests \$5 Million in News Literacy, Press Freedoms and Quality Journalism**

*Since 1993, the Foundation has invested more than \$100 million to strengthen journalism essential to informed and engaged citizenry*

**CHICAGO, October 3, 2011**— The [Robert R. McCormick Foundation](#) board of directors has approved nearly \$5 million in new grants over the next two years to 22 organizations committed to strengthening quality journalism, promoting news literacy and protecting press freedoms. These grants underscore the continuing importance of journalism in preserving a strong democracy.

The Foundation's grants reflect an increased emphasis on educating news consumers on how to navigate and filter the explosion of news and media they confront in the digital age. Today's citizens—especially youth—are immersed in a digital world, overwhelmed by a barrage of information, and often unable to distinguish fact from rumor. In an era when facts are scarce and opinions are abundant, having the tools to discern news from infotainment and fact from opinion assists students in collecting, analyzing and producing credible information. The Foundation is committed to investing in programs, such as news literacy, that educate youth on how to use critical thinking skills to better judge the reliability and credibility of news reports and news sources.

“Given the digital information overload, citizens of a democracy are challenged to sort credible information from opinion, rumor, and simple untruths,” said David Hiller, President and CEO, Robert R. McCormick Foundation. “We believe that news literacy training, youth journalism training and stronger civics education are effective tools to build critical thinking skills and generate vigorous debate so vital in maintaining a strong democracy.”

“The Foundation has increased support of stand-alone news literacy programs, while also infusing news literacy principles into youth journalism, teacher training and community news projects,” said Clark Bell, Journalism Program director, Robert R. McCormick Foundation. “Our goals are to increase the quality of news and public understanding, and make Chicago a model for news literacy programs that could be replicated nationally.”

In line with its new strategic focus on audience and improving news literacy skills among youth, the Foundation awarded \$330,000 to [Stony Brook University](#) to develop a web-based curriculum clearinghouse, design a standardized assessment tool, award mini-grants to news literacy innovators and expand its teacher training programs to Chicago. Another \$300,000 was granted to the [News Literacy Project](#) to implement news literacy curriculum in two dozen Chicago schools and community organizations.

To further our commitment to provide quality news content, the Foundation invests in specialized reporting training for journalists and has developed programs in watchdog reporting, military and national security reporting, and community news. Among the grants, the Foundation has awarded a two-year \$225,000 grant to the Center for Public Integrity's

[Investigative News Network](#) for collaborative reporting projects and to provide business development and technical support to a network of 55 watchdog reporting organizations.

As part of its focus on press freedoms, the Foundation is supporting efforts to improve government transparency and access to public information, both in Illinois and nationally. For example, the Foundation granted \$250,000 over two years to the [Better Government Association](#) (BGA) to broaden the scope and impact of its investigative journalism program. The grant will also help kick off the BGA's [Rescuing Illinois Project](#) that will concentrate on reforming the Illinois public pension system and reduce waste in Illinois government.

The full list of recently approved grants includes:

### **Grants Supporting Quality Content**

1. **Investigative News Network**, Washington, D.C.  
\$225,000 over two years  
*For joint reporting projects, training seminars and support services for the 55-member network*
2. **Investigating Reporting Workshop**, Washington, D.C.  
\$75,000  
*For support of an evaluation project of investigative news*
3. **Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc.**, Columbia, MO  
\$90,000 over 18 months  
*To expand a watchdog reporting and training program to Midwestern newsrooms*
4. **Poynter Institute for Media Studies**, St. Petersburg, FL  
\$710,000 over two years  
*For administration and evaluation of the Specialized Reporting Institutes*
5. **Aspen Institute**, Aspen, CO  
\$150,000  
*For support of the Aspen Security Forum*
6. **Center for Media and Security**, Millwood, NY  
\$200,000 over two years  
*For general operating support*
7. **Northwestern Medill School of Journalism**, Evanston, IL  
\$1,000,000 over two years  
*For continued support of the National Security Journalism Initiative*
8. **American University**, Washington, D.C.  
\$250,000 over two years  
*For continued support of the New Media Women Entrepreneurs program*
9. **Chicago Public Media.**, Chicago, IL  
\$150,000 over two years  
*To partner with media that serve youth and community audiences*

**TOTAL - \$ 2,850,000**

**Grants Supporting Youth Media and News Literacy**

10. **City Colleges of Chicago Foundation**, Chicago, IL  
\$50,000  
*For the development of news, digital and civic literacy curriculum for students of the City Colleges*
11. **Common Sense Media**, San Francisco, CA  
\$210,000 over two years  
*To continue to grow a news and digital literacy program in Chicago*
12. **News Literacy Project**, Washington, D.C.  
\$300,000 over two years  
*To implement news literacy curriculum in two dozen Chicago schools and community organizations*
13. **Research Foundation of the State University of New York**, Albany, NY  
\$330,000 over two years  
*For news literacy resources, training, evaluation and mini-grants to innovative teachers*
14. **University of Missouri**, Columbia, MO  
\$50,000  
*For the development of a news literacy assessment instrument and related research*
15. **Free Spirit Media**, Chicago, IL  
\$150,000  
*To support the expansion of its journalism programs and help develop Chicago's youth journalism field*
16. **Youth News Services Los Angeles Bureau**, Los Angeles, CA  
\$75,000  
*For general support of youth journalism training*
17. **National Museum of Mexican Art**, Chicago, IL  
\$75,000  
*For support of Difusion Media's youth journalism program*
18. **Street-Level Youth Media**, Chicago, IL  
\$90,000  
*For continued support of Street-Level's Multimedia Journalism Program and one-time support for a new community media center*
19. **Youth Communications New York Center, Inc.**, New York, NY  
\$50,000  
*To support New York Youth Communication's journalism program*

**TOTAL - \$1,380,000**

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**Grants Supporting Press Freedoms**

20. **Better Government Association**, Chicago, IL

\$250,000 over two years  
*To build the capacity of civic journalism*

21. **Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press**, Arlington, VA  
\$210,000 over two years  
*For continued support of the McCormick Legal Fellowship and regional training in First Amendment rights*

22. **Student Press Law Center**, Arlington, VA  
\$150,000 over two years  
*For continued support of the McCormick Publication Fellowship*

**TOTAL - \$610,000**

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**GRAND TOTAL - \$4,840,000**

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**About the Robert R. McCormick Foundation**

The Robert R. McCormick Foundation is committed to fostering communities of educated, informed and engaged citizens. Through philanthropic programs, Cantigny Park and museums, the Foundation helps develop citizen leaders and works to make life better in our communities. The Foundation was established as a charitable trust in 1955, upon the death of Colonel Robert R. McCormick, the longtime editor and publisher of the *Chicago Tribune*. The Robert R. McCormick Foundation is one of the nation's largest foundations, with more than \$1 billion in assets. For more information, please visit [www.McCormickFoundation.org](http://www.McCormickFoundation.org).

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