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## **148<sup>th</sup> Annual California Journalism Symposium Explores AI, Innovation & Collaboration**

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**MONTEREY, CA** — Journalists, students, educators and nonprofit leaders from across the state gathered Dec. 4 in Monterey for the California Press Foundation's 148th annual convening, the California Journalism Symposium, to explore artificial intelligence, innovation and collaboration in journalism.

The daylong event opened with a keynote address from [Benjamin Mullin](#), a media reporter for The New York Times. Before becoming a national reporter, Mullin was a student journalist. [Mullin received a Cal Press internship grant in 2013.](#)

Cal Press Chair [Eric Johnston](#) moderated a discussion examining the impact of AI in newsrooms and classrooms. Panelists included [Ethan Toven-Lindsey](#), KQED; [Kat Rowlands](#), Bay City News; and journalism educator [Yumi Wilson](#), San Francisco State University. Speakers discussed how AI tools are being integrated into reporting and editing workflows, as well as the ethical challenges accompanying emerging technologies.

Attendees took a deep dive into media literacy with a moderated discussion led by Cal Press Director [Jim Boren](#). The panelists were [Dave Kellogg](#), Monterey Herald; [Julia Satterthwaite](#), master journalism educator; and [Susan Meister](#), Monterey Media Literacy Coalition. Speakers explored the challenges that AI poses in spreading misinformation.

A session on investing in scholastic journalism was moderated by [Danielle McKinney](#), executive director of Cal Press. The panelists were [Bruce Koon](#), Contra Costa Youth Journalism; [Sharon Noguchi](#), MOSAIC Journalism; and [Victoria Mejicanos](#), 2025 Cal Press internship grant recipient and recent graduate from Cal Poly Pomona. Speakers shared perspectives on sustaining student journalism programs and expanding access to mentorship, funding and early newsroom experience.

Cal Press Director [Linda Bowen](#) and McKinney shared an update on the [Journalism Education Collaborative](#), a Cal Press-funded initiative designed to connect journalism educators and students with industry opportunities and newsroom resources. Highlights for 2025 included the launch of a Digital Resource Library featuring full-semester instructional materials across four foundational journalism courses. Plans for 2026 include the launch of a searchable Media Outlet Directory of California news organizations open to working with students.

[Priscilla Enriquez](#), president and CEO of the James B. McClatchy Foundation, moderated a discussion on sustaining community news. The panelists were [Joe Kieta](#), Central Valley Journalism Collaborative; [Keiona Williamson](#), James B. McClatchy Foundation; [Lucy Flores](#), Latino Media Consortium; and [Ryan Lillis](#), Abridged. The conversation focused on collaborative models strengthening local journalism, particularly in California's Central Valley.

During the event, Cal Press presented its annual awards for exemplary service to former and legendary California news executives.

Cal Press Director Jim Ewert presented the Jack Bates Award for distinguished service to the California Press to Linda Bowen, educator, California State University Northridge. The award honors an individual for distinguished service to the California Press through effective leadership in addressing newspaper challenges and assisting journalism education. Cal Press has presented the Jack Bates Award since 2007.

The Mark Twain Award for Journalism Excellence in California recognized the late Al Martinez, a Pulitzer Prize-winning Los Angeles Times columnist who chronicled life in Southern California for more than three decades. Presented since 2010, the Mark Twain Award honors those from the writerly world: editors, writers, cartoonists whose journalistic work, either regional or statewide in nature, challenged the status quo.

Lowell Clark Pratt was inducted into the California Newspaper Hall of Fame. Pratt published the Selma Enterprise from 1926 to 1947. Pratt was a journalist, educator and publisher whose editorials and lifelong commitment to press freedom shaped California journalism.

McKinney inducted the late William H. Lee into the Hall of Fame. Lee was a longtime advocate for Black journalists and co-founder and publisher of The Sacramento Observer. Under his leadership, The Observer was named the nation's No. 1 Black newspaper at least six times. His son, Larry Lee, the newspaper's current publisher, accepted the induction on his late father's behalf.

The Hall of Fame inducts two each year: one who has died within the past decade and one who passed more than a decade ago. The Hall of Fame inductions began in 1957.

The event was sponsored by the Google News Initiative, the Fresno State Institute for Media and Public Trust and the James Irvine Foundation.

**ABOUT CAL PRESS:** The California Press Foundation enriches and grows California's news gathering ecosystem by encouraging inclusivity, collaboration and the ongoing support of quality journalism education. By investing in education and empowering emerging journalists, we sustain career pathways into local newsrooms and ensure the future and integrity of California journalism. Learn more at [cal-press.org](http://cal-press.org).

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