Thinking Like a Storyteller: Open Lessons from Data Journalism

We often hear that our analyses should “tell a story,” but how can data scientists become better storytellers? Analytical training emphasizes technical skills. Our familiarity with the complexities of our data can discourage us from simple storylines and clear narratives. In contrast, data journalists are motivated by stories first and can model for us how to tell better stories with data.

WHAT IS THIS SESSION ALL ABOUT?
We often hear that our analyses should “tell a story,” but how can data scientists become better storytellers? Analytical training emphasizes technical skills. Our familiarity with the complexities of our data can discourage us from simple storylines and clear narratives. In contrast, data journalists are motivated by stories first and can model for us how to tell better stories with data.

During this session, we will look to cutting edge examples of data journalism and examine what makes these data stories effective. Attendees will leave with a refined understanding of what a data “product” should be and will learn how to apply this understanding to work in their context using available tools.

WHAT WILL I LEARN IN THIS SESSION?
In this session, attendees will leave with an understanding of what distinguishes an effective data story. Participants will also reconsider how they present their work by thinking differently about what a final “product” looks like.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND THIS SESSION?
This session is geared toward people who communicate analytical results to non-technical audiences. Attendees need not have any prerequisite knowledge to benefit from or contribute to the session, but the session will be targeted toward education data analysts.

HOW SHOULD I PREPARE FOR THIS SESSION?
While there is no formal pre-work for this session, attendees can begin paying closer attention to their news feeds to find examples of data storytelling that are hidden as journalism or blog posts.

Attendees will benefit from having an internet-connected device with them to follow along with slides and interact with online visualizations.