Andrew Kramer of The New York Times skyped in from Afghanistan to discuss how to be a better reporter and answer questions. He touched on treating every story like a basic news story, having fun with your leads and ways a reporter can utilize social media. Here are a few key points for those that couldn’t attend. Treat every story like a basic news story:

• Even normal occurrences to a reporter can be things that other people don’t normally see.
• A reporter’s task should always be writing a story that is easy to understand.
• Some stories are big, and others are small, but all stories take the same basic approach.

Their structure is the same and you need to get the most important information up front to start.

• You don’t need to invent the wheel every time in your articles.
• When writing, focus on the Initial development and then context.
• Make sure the article holds the reader’s hand and walks them through.
• Always ask, “who is this story relevant to?”

Have fun with your leads:

• When writing a larger story, it’s okay to tell the story in the first paragraphs and get into the details later, but for standard stories always start with the lead and details.
• Start the lead very narrow and then open up as wide as the scope needs to be.
• Look at different lead to start since you can always go back and revisit your decisions.
• Figures and numbers give clear ideas.
• Engaging readers from the beginning is more important now than ever.

How to use social media:

• Promote your own work through social media.
• Build your twitter audience so when you have stuff to share people are eager to hear about it.
• Just as you would write an article, every word posted to social media should be carefully chosen.
• Be conscious about how public social media is.