

NEW YORK 2020

LEIDA
SNOW*Freelance Journalist
& ASJA Publications Chair**Always Something*
NEWAN INTERVIEW WITH
KEYNOTE SPEAKER*SREE SREENIVASAN, TECH GURU*

Leida Snow, ASJA's Publications Chair, is a widely published, award-winning journalist, former radio news anchor (ABC/NY) and theater critic (WINS-AM/NY). As president of LS Consultants, Leida provides communications coaching to professionals in many fields. @LeidaSnow

PHOTO BY MEGAN MACK

The first time I saw tech guru Sree Sreenivasan was at an ASJA conference in 2006. Google, launched in 1998, was still something of a mystery to most of us. LinkedIn (2003) and Facebook (2004) were babies. Twitter had just been launched. Sree (everyone calls him that) made the tech world seem sexy and irresistible.

Since then, Sree has been almost constantly involved with ASJA, and I've attended several of his other workshops, consistently amazed as he makes the newest apps approachable. "Be an early tester and a late adopter," he advised, introducing me to Otter, a transcription app I then used for our talk.

I sat down for an extended interview with Sree in his Upper Westside apartment in Manhattan. The furnishings are barely noticeable because the wall of windows in the living room has a gasp-inducing view of the Hudson River. I was there in the late afternoon on a clear day: flash to a sunset bursting with crimson and gold.

"It's 17 years I've been involved with ASJA in some fashion, and it's my favorite annual workshop," he told me. "What a speaker needs is an engaged, smart, curious audience that asks lots of questions. And this was the years that we've seen how technology was something that was good to know, and now, as a writer, you absolutely need it."

Sree's presentations at ASJA moved on to blogging and podcasts, and all of the tools, platforms and other "essential parts of a writer's skill set, some of it to create content, others to research with, and yet others to share what you create with the world." Sree will bring his latest social media epiphanies to a keynote and workshop at the upcoming ASJA Annual Conference.

Asked about the changes in social media over time, how filled with racism, misogyny and anti-semitism it is, Sree – who refers to himself as "a brown person," leaned forward. "There is so much hate on the internet, that it can be disheartening and, as a minority, I am exposed to some of it," he confided. "But," he went on, "it's nothing compared to what women go through. That's been one of the eye opening things, that no matter how bad it is for people like me, for a woman to be on the internet, or on a public platform like Twitter, is a handicap."

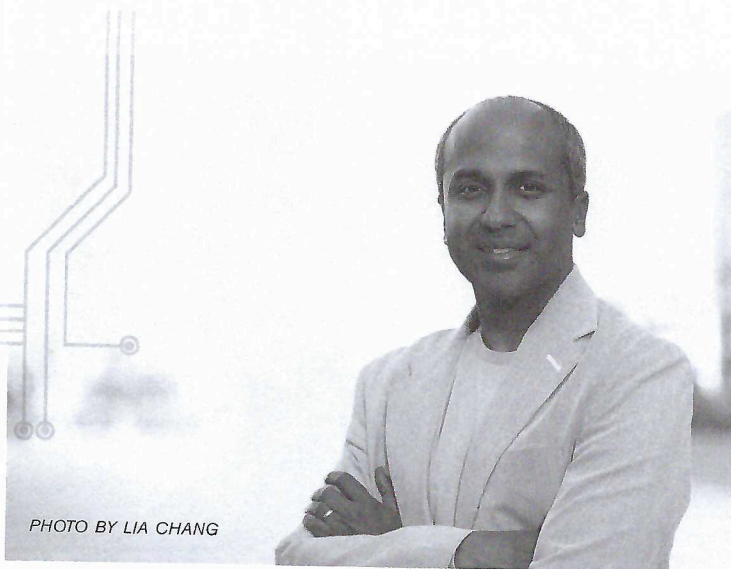


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At least today “most of us are now tech savvy to some extent,” he said. So the warning from him is simply to be careful. As journalists and authors, he said, the internet can be “a wonderful resource for research, and for reaching communities that care about what you’re doing.”

As for being overwhelmed, the pace is only going to get faster, he said. But you don’t have to be on every platform. The key is to find where you get traction: “If you post something and people respond, then you feel like there’s somebody listening.” What you’re looking to do is “low temperature networking, or connections, staying in touch without imposing until you have something that you want to get a response,” he said.

Sree uses Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Also WhatsApp (an encrypted texting platform), texting and email. Sree was a 20-plus year professor at Columbia University’s Journalism school, Chief Digital Officer for New York City and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

As writers and authors, he said, “you have to be where the editors are.” Currently, he’s building his own business, Digimentors, a consulting firm of digital and social media strategists, so he has to be “on the platforms where the clients are most comfortable.” We all “have to suck it up and just do it.”

But what’s the value of social media? What is the ROI—return on investment? “You can use it to find story ideas, trends, new sources,” Sree said. “You can use it to connect to new audiences and existing audiences in deeper ways. You can bring traffic and attention to your work. And you can use it to build and enhance your brand.” The fact is that in today’s world a freelancer is an entrepreneur, and “most of us have to hustle.”

»»»» NEW CONFERENCE SESSION INFORMATION

Sharpen your pencils and get ready to learn at this year’s conference. Organizers have created three brand new session formats that you won’t want to miss.



▶ **Quick Tips** are shortened 30-minute sessions that offer great advice on a variety of topics of interest to writers. Here’s the line up:

- How to Pitch: Client Connections
- How to Pitch: Pitch Slam
- Quick Tips: Finding Sources
- Quick Tips: Managing the Content Marketing Process
- Quick Tips: Book Marketing
- Quick Tips: How to Search Databases for Historical Articles Like a Pro

▶ **Meet the Masters** are short interview-style talks with some of ASJA’s most enlightening members. Join former ASJA presidents Randy Dotinga and Jack El-Hai for intimate one-on-one conversations with acclaimed authors about the craft of writing.

▶ **Ask the Expert** is your opportunity to learn during two brown-bag lunch sessions. **Find a Home for Your Op-Ed/Essay** with New School writing professor Candy Schulman will provide tips and handouts on developing, targeting and pitching your Op-Ed or personal essay. And **Find Your Story with the Narrative Whisperer** with acclaimed author and journalism professor Mary-Kate Mackey will help you find the story lurking within. The first six signups will receive individual story analysis, and everyone who attends will learn about the discovery process with a step-by-step handout included.