

# BEN CONNORS

CREATIVE PRODUCER // TECHNOLOGIST

## // CONTACT ME

🏠 554 E. Nelson Ave.  
Alexandria, VA 22301  
☎ 202-213-0674  
✉ BenJConnors@gmail.com  
🌐 Ben-Connors.com

## // PROFESSIONAL STATEMENT

Ben is an experienced visual journalist and documentary editor with a rich background in mastering new technologies and leveraging them to create award-winning formats, narratives, and experiences. His goals are to lead collaborative interdisciplinary teams and to create unforgettable non-fiction experiences that inform and empower audiences.

## // AWARDS

SMITHSONIAN FUTURES:

MOONWALK

**2023 Webby Nom:** Science & Education, Best VR Experience

CSIS EXTERNAL RELATIONS

**2020 Lauder Think Tank Index:** Best External Relations Public Engagement Program

ACTUAL REALITY

**2019 Online Journalism Assn.:**

Innovation In Visual Digital Storytelling

TITLETOWN TX

**2017 Regional Murrow Award:**

Excellence in Innovation

**2016 Online Journalism Assn.:**

Innovation in Visual Digital Storytelling

VOTERS MAKE THE CALL

**2018 Webby:** Honoree for Best Interactive Video

BIG RED VR EXPERIENCE

**2016 DigiDay:** Best Use VR/AR

**2016 MARCOM:** Platinum Award

LAST GRAPH

**2015 Media Rise :** Pitch Contest

**2014 Knight Prototype Grant:** July Cohort

## // WORK EXPERIENCE

**Dir. Product & Technology - Head Set Immersive Ltd - 10/22 - 07/24**

Directed technology and product strategy for a training company focused on preparing journalists and humanitarians for hostile environments. Oversaw product strategy, daily development, and design operations. Led UX design, co-developed proposals, and contributed to interactive training modules and back-end services. Key projects included building licensing and analytics stacks, unifying four products into a single framework, and producing an MR product to train civilians for active shooter scenarios.

**Creative Technologist - Subcontracted to Meta, Smithsonian & Innovate UK - 10/21 - 10/22**

Highlights: integrated a heart rate monitor into training, composited 3D lunar-lander scans into VR, and produced AR experiences (200k+ downloads) for the Smithsonian & Meta's Moonwalk. Filed a provisional patent for HMD peripheral.

**Dir. and Dracopoulos Chair Innovation & Creativity - CSIS iDeas Lab - 10/20 - 10/21**

Directed in-house media lab for premier think tank. Managed team of 18 full-time employees including: producers, designers & developers. In 2020 the team's output grew to 180% of its 2019 deliverables. Served as creative director across a variety of audio, video, digital and print products. In 2021 we produced 23 podcast series (1.8 million downloads), added the "Data Unpacked" video series to our YouTube channel (29K subs), created a new satellite imagery analysis series, managed 19 microsites, adopted DataWrapper for more efficient dataviz production, adopted "ON24" for interactive streaming products and launched a new graphics package for our live hybrid event series (hosted 41 members of congress). Revenue from 2020 FY projects exceeded \$1.2M.

**Lead Strategist - McClatchy, New Ventures Lab - 01/18 - 10/20**

Launched McClatchy's "New Ventures Lab," a creator hub for advancing nonfiction storytelling. Led a team of 6 technologists exploring emerging mediums (AR/VR). Managed product development of "Actual Reality" (OJA-winning AR app using ARCore). Secured \$200k Google grant for voice assistant prototype with CMS. Partnered with Branded Content for AR sales & oversaw 3D content for a \$10k McClatchy-Yahoo deal. Trained mid-career journalists in AR

**Lead, Emerging Video Products - McClatchy - 04/16 - 01/18**

Expanded McClatchy's AV production capabilities through research, rapid prototyping, workflow design, training and partnership. Disciplines supported included: 360° video, voice assistant briefings, Cinematic VR (stereoscopic 360 + spatial audio), reality capture, Interactive non-linear video, volumetric video.

## // AWARDS CONT.

### POSTTV

**2013 National Murrow:** Overall Excellence Online News Category

### THE STREAM

**2013 Gracie:** Award for Outstanding News Talk Show

**2013 Emmy Nom.:** Nomination New Approaches to News & Documentary

**2012 Webby:** People's Choice Award for News And Politics

**2012 Royal Television Society:** Most Innovative Programme

## // PROFICIENCIES

Ben is a polymath who draws on a wide range of skills to problem solve and lead diverse teams.

**Generative AI:** Eleven Labs, ChatGPT, Gemini, Mid Journey.

**Physical Prototyping:** Raspberry Pi, 3D printing.

**Backend / Sysadmin:** AWS, Apache, Command Line.

**Game Dev:** Unity.

**Version Control:** GIT.

**Packages & Frameworks:** ARCore, FFMPEG, D3.js, AR.js, Three.js.

**Development:** Python, C#, PHP, Javascript.

**Project Management:** Monday, Notion, Agile Methodology, RASCI, Jira.

**Production Equipment:** Ambisonic Mics, Stereoscopic 360, DSLR & ENG Cameras.

**2D Design:** Adobe Photoshop.

**3D Design:** Gravity Sketch, Blender.

**Motion Graphics:** After Effects.

**Video & Audio Editing:** FCP, Adobe Premiere.

**And More.**

## // WORK EXPERIENCE CONTINUED

### Founder - Last Graph LLC - 09/14 - 04/16

Bootstrapped a digital platform for impact journalists and their audiences. The Last Graph was a database of embeddable 'actions' related to news and current events. Journalists and nonprofits could use a CMS to create and embed these interactive actions in their stories.

### Executive Producer - Al Jazeera AJ+ - 05/14 - 09/14

Served as product owner for the AJ+ mobile app during pre-launch ideation and development. Designed the "atomized" interactive news app. Developed low and high-res working prototypes of the app and developed prototype CMS to test and harden the workflow. Advised on the development of production CMS. Recruited and trained production team.

### Graphics Developer - Al Jazeera Network - 06/13 - 05/14

Developed production software for Al Jazeera's "The Stream." Designed and developed web apps to render graphics highlighting audience engagement on demand for live show. Created archival system to record live engagement data and provide tools for replaying, and analyzing engagement.

### Innovation Editor, Video - Washington Post - 04/12 - 06/13

Spearheaded "The Fold," PostTV's flagship nightly newscast, project managed a team of 4 video journalists. Produced segments, created branding, and developed motion graphics templates/formats. Collaborated with engineers to integrate OTT CMS with video CMS. Launched personalities Chris Cillizza, Nia Malika Henderson, and Jackie Kucinich.

### Creative Strategist - The Stream, on Al Jazeera - 01/11 - 04/12

Co-created "The Stream," a pioneering social media community with a daily TV show on Al Jazeera English. Established a hybrid TV/web workflow, developed an interactive platform for piloting. Pioneered Skype for live interviews, dramatically increasing guest diversity and saving tens of thousands annually in studio fees. This practice became industry-wide. Designed new user experiences and segments for "The Stream," developed a methodology for rendering real-time audience engagement graphics. Served as lead video editor and asset manager.

### Multiple Positions - Al Jazeera English - 01/11 - 04/16

As program assistant, provided clerical and production support for documentary unit. As non-linear editor, edited breaking news, feature and documentary video packages. Work included color-correction, mixing music and audio effects, and designing original motion graphics. As senior non-linear editor, coordinated daily interdepartmental workflow, field editing assignments, broadcast engineering.

## // SOCIAL



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