

As a journalism major, I've learned that the core of our field lies not just in words, but in what those words represent. In many ways, journalism is the modern descendant of ancient communication systems that first emerged through numbers and symbols. For this project, I propose a creative campaign and visual presentation called "Mathlines: The Ancient Roots of Journalism," which explores how civilizations like the Babylonians and Mayans laid the foundation for data-driven storytelling in today's journalism.

In the world of journalism, numbers drive everything. We use statistics to inform the public, polls to reflect opinion, and data visualizations to tell complex stories. These concepts are not new. The Babylonians, with their base-60 system, and the Mayans, with their base-20 counting and early concept of zero, were doing similar work. Using numbers to track time, forecast celestial events, organize society, and communicate important information to their people. They were, in many ways, the first data journalists.

This project connects the ancient use of numbers to express meaning with the modern journalist's use of data and statistics to communicate stories. Just as the Babylonians recorded crop cycles, debt, and astronomical patterns on clay tablets in cuneiform, journalists today report on economic trends, social movements, and election outcomes using charts, maps, and graphs. Likewise, the Mayans used math to build calendars and predict eclipses, while modern news outlets use predictive analytics to forecast election results or social shifts.

My deliverable includes a playful concept that reimagines what ancient journalism might have looked like, while drawing real comparisons to the mathematical storytelling used today. Sample "headlines" will include:

- *"Lunar Eclipse Imminent: Our Priests' Algorithm Confirms Date!"*

- *“Grain Shortage Predicted Using Babylonian Star Charts”*
- *“Calendar Reform Needed: Mayan Year Misaligned After 260-Day Cycle”*

Each article mockup will include mathematical elements from each civilization’s system and explain how those practices mirror data reporting today. I will also produce a short animated ad promoting the “Mathlines” concept as a campaign to raise awareness about how mathematics and journalism are deeply connected.

This project matters because math and journalism are seen as opposites, one analytical, the other emotional. But good journalists are also good data analysts. They must interpret numbers, recognize patterns, and present them in accessible ways.

My major superpower: the ability to tell meaningful stories with clarity and purpose allows me to translate historical mathematical achievements into modern relevance. Just as numbers helped ancient people make sense of their world, they help journalists today make sense of ours.