



New Media

The Press Freedom Dimension



New Media

The Press Freedom Dimension

**Challenges and Opportunities
of New Media for Press Freedom**

The authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this book and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization. Nor do they necessarily reflect the views of the other conference sponsors, the World Press Freedom Committee or the World Association of Newspapers.

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatever by UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries.

Introduction

This book is a record of an international conference –

“New Media: The Press Freedom Dimension Challenges and Opportunities of New Media for Press Freedom”

– to explore the emerging and rapidly evolving environment of press freedom created by the new electronic media.

It took place at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris 15-16 February 2007.

With speakers from more than 30 countries, the discussions covered a wide range of topics from citizen journalism and freedom of expression, to the looming reality of censorship, as dictators, taking the cue from China, place blocks on the Internet and lock up people for expressing their views in cyberspace.

The conference was sponsored by the World Press Freedom Committee and co-sponsored by UNESCO and the World Association of Newspapers, in partnership with the other member groups of the Coordinating Committee of Press Freedom Organizations:

Committee to Protect Journalists, Commonwealth Press Union, Inter American Press Association, International Association of Broadcasting, International Association of the Periodical Press, International Press Institute, and North American Broadcasters Association.

The conference was organized by the World Press Freedom Committee, the Communication and Information Sector of UNESCO, and the World Association of Newspapers.

It was made possible by a generous grant of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

The book includes adaptations of speeches given at the conference and background papers along with reports of presentations that were made in visual formats.

Organizers

World Press Freedom Committee:

Ronald Koven, European Representative

World Association of Newspapers:

Kajsa Tornroth, Co-Director of Press Freedom and Development

Virginie Jouan, Co-Director of Press Freedom and Development

Amelie Kalinine, Press Freedom Program Manager

Bertrand Pecquerie, Director, *World Editors Forum*

UNESCO:

Mogens Schmidt, Deputy Asst. Director General, Division for Freedom of Expression, Democracy and Peace

Sylvie Coudray, Senior Program Specialist, Division for Freedom of Expression, Democracy and Peace

Brigitte L'Horty, Secretary, Division for Freedom of Expression, Democracy and Peace

Publication editor: Barry James

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

Conference Panels

New Media – Expanding Press Freedom :

Page 6

Speakers: Mogens Schmidt, Director, Freedom of Expression Unit, UNESCO
Richard Winfield, Chairman, World Press Freedom Committee, Washington, D.C.
Timothy Balding, Chief Executive Officer, World Association of Newspapers, Paris
Leslie Harris, Executive Director, Center for Democracy & Technology, Washington, D.C.
Guy Berger, Highway Africa/Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa

New Media in New Democracies :

Page 21

Moderator, Johann Fritz, International Press Institute, Vienna
Case studies:
Baltics (Pauls Raudseps, Editorial Page Editor, daily Diena, Riga)
Georgia (Levan Berdzenishvili, Member of Parliament, Internet Specialist, Tbilisi)
South Africa (Elizabeth Barratt, Executive Editor/Multimedia and Training, The Johannesburg Star/
General Secretary, African Editors Forum)
Rwanda (Albert R. Bryon, Contact FM, Kigali)
El Salvador (Fabricio Altamirano, Publisher, El Diario de Hoy/Chairman, Inter American Press Association's
Internet Committee

New Media Under Challenge :

Page 33

Moderator, Abi Wright, Committee to Protect Journalists, New York
Case studies:
Russia (Anton Nossik, Chief Blogs Officer, LiveJournal.com, SUP, Moscow)
China (Sharon Hom, Director, Human Rights in China, New York)
Iran (Karin Deutsch Karlekar, Freedom House, New York)
Somalia (Omar Faruk Osman, National Union of Somali Journalists, Mogadishu)

News Online :

Page 41

Moderator, Mogens Schmidt, UNESCO
Sankarshan Thakur, Executive Editor, Tehelka online newspaper, New Delhi
Monique Villa, Managing Director, Reuters, London
Neil Budde, General Manager, Yahoo!, USA
Rosental Calmon Alves, Director, Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, University of Texas
Nora Paul, Director, Institute for New Media Studies, University of Minnesota

Broadcasting : Direct Satellite, Public Service, Private :

Page 48

Moderator, Henrikas Yushkiavitshus, International Media Consultant
Zaid Mohseni, Director, Tolo TV, Kabul, Afghanistan
Boris Bergant, RTV Slovenia, Ljubljana
Alfonso Ruiz de Assin, President, International Association of Broadcasting

How Young People Get Their News : **Page 52**

Moderator, Aralynn McMane, Director, Young Readership Development, WAN
Chris Schuepp, Coordinator, Young People's Media Network, UNICEF
Roxana Morduchowicz, Director of Media Education, Education Ministry, Argentina
Evelyne Bevort, Associate Director CLEMI (Centre de Liaison de l'Enseignement
et des Moyens d'Information), France
Robert Barnard, President, D-Code, Toronto

Bloggers as Journalists/Citizen Media : **Page 55**

Moderator, Mary Lou Fulton, Vice President, Audience Development, The Bakersfield Californian, USA
Dr. Oh Yeon-Ho, founder, OhmyNews, Seoul, South Korea
Ehab Elzelaky, blog editor, weekly Al Dustour, Cairo
Steve Yelvington, Vice President, Morris Digital, founder citizen news site Bluffton Today, USA
Karma Tshering Bhutia, Nepal Community Multimedia (CMC) and Research Coordinator
Declan McCullagh, Chief Political Correspondent, CNET News.com, San Francisco

Circumventing the Censors : **Page 65**

Moderator, Julien Pain, Reporters Sans Frontières, Paris
David Banisar, Deputy Director, Privacy International, London
Sein Win, Managing Editor, Mizzima for Burma, New Delhi
Gerry Jackson, SW Radio Africa, for Zimbabwe, London
Leonard Sussman, Senior Scholar, Freedom House, New York

Conclusions : **Page 76**

Abdul Waheed Khan, Assistant Director General/Communication, UNESCO
Gary Kebbel, Journalism Program Officer, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Miami
Richard Winfield, Chairman, World Press Freedom Committee, Washington, D.C.

**Coordinating Committee of Press Freedom Organizations Statement :
Press Freedom in New Communication Media** **Page 80**

Conference Speakers **Page 83**

Background Papers :

New Media in the Developing World, Guy Berger, Rhodes University
Circumventing Censorship, Julien Pain, Reporters Sans Frontieres
Bloggers as Journalists, Declan McCullagh, CNET News.com
How Young People Get News, Aralynn McMane, WAN/Roxana Morduchowicz, Education Ministry, Argentina

Full texts of the papers are available at: <http://www.wan-press.org/>

New Media – Expanding Press Freedom :

International Commitments Guarantee Media Freedoms

Mogens Schmidt
Director, Freedom of Expression Unit, UNESCO

New media hold great potential as a resource for press freedom and freedom of expression. They serve as a platform for dialogue across borders and allow for innovative approaches to the distribution and acquisition of knowledge. These qualities are vital to press freedom. But they may be undercut by attempts to regulate and censor both access and content.

UNESCO, as the only UN agency with a mandate to defend press freedom, has been actively engaged in efforts to improve press freedom and its corollary, freedom of expression. Freedom of the press is, after all, an application of the individual human rights principle of freedom of expression. New media hold great potential as a resource for press freedom and freedom of expression. They serve as a platform for dialogue across borders and allow for innovative approaches to the distribution and acquisition of knowledge. These qualities are vital to press freedom. But they may be undercut by attempts to regulate and censor both access and content.

UNESCO, as the only UN agency with a mandate to defend press freedom, has been actively engaged in efforts to improve press freedom and its corollary, freedom of expression. Freedom of the press is, after all, an application of the individual human rights principle of freedom of expression.

Press freedom and freedom of expression are guiding principles of UNESCO that apply to traditional as well as new media. UNESCO recognizes that press freedom is central to building strong democracies, promoting civic participation and the rule of law, and encouraging human development and security. As such, UNESCO is committed to mobilizing efforts to promote freedom of expression and press freedom as a basic right indispensable to the exercise of democratic citizenship.

The UNESCO Constitution states a commitment to fostering “the free exchange of ideas and knowledge” and “the free flow of ideas by word and image.” This is in addition to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and

expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers.”

The Declaration of Sofia, endorsed by the UNESCO General Conference in 1997, states “The access to and the use of these new media should be afforded the same freedom of expression protections as traditional media.”

More recently, the Fourth Principle of the Declaration of Principles issued by the Geneva session of the World Summits on the Information Society in December 2003, provided a clear confirmation that new forms of communication should be afforded the same freedom of expression rights as traditional news media.

The challenge is how to turn these principled commitments into practical reality. At the heart of this issue is universality – of creating inclusive knowledge societies in which all have the opportunity to participate “regardless of frontiers.” Indeed, as the Fourth principle states, “Communication is a fundamental social process, a basic human need and the foundation of all social organization. It is central to the Information Society. Everyone, everywhere should have the opportunity to participate and no one should be excluded from the benefits the Information Society offers.”

In drawing attention to these basic principles, I am under no illusion that the complex, real world problems that we face are thereby solved. It is an unfortunate truth that, in many countries, there is a very long road ahead of us in securing press freedom.

But these principles do provide a standard by which we may measure our actions and those of others. The fuller application and implementation of these principles through concrete action is something we should all be working towards.

I believe that new media have a lot to contribute in transforming these promises into realities, and today we focus our attention on press freedom as it relates to them.

We must first secure a full understanding on the challenges that new media face with respect to press freedom. As the impact of new media increases, so do regulation techniques that limit the free flow of information. New media are subjected to restrictions such as Internet censorship that would not be accepted in traditional media. Violations of freedom of expression are growing, and the need to discuss how to prevent undesired side effects of new regulation has become urgent.

We must emphasize that free media, which are essential in upholding democratic societies, should not be hindered. Such an understanding must in turn be met with concrete efforts to affirm the place of new media alongside traditional media.

It is essential that no new restrictions on the basic principles of press freedom and freedom of expression are applied with the introduction of new media. All citizens not only have the potential but also the right to express their ideas and opinions worldwide through electronic networks.

The Internet permits an unprecedented empowerment of the individual. It is probably this feature, together with the speed and the global character of the Internet that has made many governments worry about granting Internet users the same right to freedom of expression as traditional media have in democratic societies.

This quality of new media, which is the most disturbing to some governments, is likely to prove very resilient. There are many existing measures used by governments to restrict free access to and use of the Internet. Some measures are financial, such as high taxes or tariffs; other measures are technical, such as filtering and blocking software on servers; and yet others are administrative, such as having to obtain permission from authorities to register web sites and a refusal to instal international servers.

In addition, there are sometimes legislative measures, for instance, in the form of special laws to block sites that are considered to offer ways of obtaining information contrary to certain political, sexual, or moral standards. In addition, there are legislative acts that deal with security or confidentiality laws to protect personal data.

While press freedom and freedom of expression are fundamental human rights, most countries have enacted national civil legislation limiting it in such cases such as libel, breach of privacy and pedophilia. These matters are not without controversy but, in general, such national legislation commands widespread support.

Another difficult challenge is the connection between the Internet and protection against terrorism. The balance between measures required for fighting terrorism and respect for fundamental rights is very difficult to find. There is a real risk that security measures may, directly or indirectly, undermine the very principles and rights that terrorism seeks to destroy.

UNESCO stands firmly behind the principle of press freedom in this matter. The debate must not be locked into a discussion about “good” or “bad” information. It concerns the implications and consequences of the choice of one over the other. The discussion must focus on the core issue at stake – the universal human right of freedom of expression.

It is dangerous to establish rules for the flow of information. Not only does it hinder the free flow of ideas and opinions but it may also force “unwanted” ideas to be expressed exclusively underground, making it impossible to openly counter hate speech and propaganda with informed arguments.

Furthermore, there is the risk that ideas and opinions that could enhance the open debate on controversial issues will be silenced. The real challenge is to fully exploit the potential of new media while not compromising civil liberties.

Our particular focus today, of course, is upon press freedom, which is especially important for democracy and good governance. In both developing and industrialized countries, new media have great potential to strengthen the institutions of representative government and civil society, to enable citizens to gather information and mobilize coalitions around policy issues, and to improve government efficiency and transparency through better communication with citizens.

With this in mind, it is most appropriate that this conference gives a focus to the role of new media in new democracies. We must draw attention to the crucial role that free, independent and pluralistic media play in the democratic process.

In emerging democracies, the media’s work to provide independent and trustworthy information can contribute significantly to processes of reconstruction and reconciliation. In times of upheaval and transition, people’s need for reliable information is especially great.

I am pleased to see that this conference gives special attention to diversity of new media. Too often the Internet receives the majority of attention at the expense of other forms of what is considered new media. Devoting attention to direct satellite broad-

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

casting, digital TV, and public service broadcasting encourages the diversity and openness that constitute the very essence of a free and healthy media.

It is part of UNESCO's mandate to provide a platform for open discussion and to promote the free flow of ideas. I am confident that this conference will contribute to clarifying some of the com-

plex challenges and opportunities that we have to address in order to ensure that the new media are grounded in press freedom and freedom of expression. For its part, UNESCO will continue to fulfil its mandate to promote the free flow of ideas and images, universal access to information and press freedom.

A Lesson From Victor Hugo

Richard N. Winfield
Chairman, World Press Freedom Committee, Washington, D.C.

If you ask me, the best writing on the transforming effects of a new form of communication was written here in Paris by Victor Hugo in the 1830s.

The book is "The Hunchback of Notre Dame." The scene is set in Paris in the 15th Century, a few years after the invention of the printing press. The mad priest, Claude Frollo, who is also an alchemist, is seen holding this modern miracle, a book, in his hand. He is peering from his cell window at the spires of the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Up to that point, the Church held a monopoly on dissemination of knowledge. Frollo contemplates the book and the cathedral spires in the distance. He says aloud, "Alas. This will kill that. This book will kill that building."

At this conference, we will explore some questions that Victor Hugo would find unfamiliar, such as:

Will censorship and surveillance kill the new media?

Will newer technology kill censorship and surveillance?

Will the new media kill the old media?

Will the new media kill geographical borders?

Who are the leading sponsors of censorship and surveillance. What are the major institutions that block or filter the free flow of information?

First, autocratic and repressive governments like China necessarily lead the list. China possesses the most advanced, most expensive, most extensive, sophisticated and broad-ranging external and internal controls.

Imagine, over a dozen ministries and agencies and a reported 30,000 technicians and censors are devoted to purifying the Internet. Dozens of journalists and bloggers linger in prison. The great Chinese Internet Firewall stands as a monument to a regime petrified by the prospects of political criticism, a

free and independent press, and unfiltered news from beyond its borders.

That Great Internet Firewall was largely built by bricks laid by corporate America. Household names from the information technology industry must be counted among the sponsors of censorship and surveillance. The routers, the software, the filters, the blockers, the code, which enable China to deploy its state of the art information controls, were very often made in the USA. China's new Great Leap Forward in censoring the new media owes a lot to Silicon Valley.

In addition to China, some of the other leading governmental sponsors of censorship and surveillance include Belarus, Burma, Cuba, Ethiopia, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia.

What about the democracies? Certainly the degree and lethality of their censorship pale in comparison with China's. But the democracies are not without their vulnerability. The laws of defamation and contempt in the United Kingdom often operate to inhibit the free flow of information. The New York Times last summer published a hard copy story about some terrorism suspects held pending trial in London. The Times editors feared that an online version of the story could be accessed in the UK and expose the Times to charges of contempt of court. They pulled the story off their global web site, and instead posted the story on another Times web site that could not be accessed in the UK.

Consider the role that hate speech laws play in some democracies. Two Harvard researchers found that Google in France, Google.fr, and Google in Germany, Google.de, blocked more than 100 pages that were available on the global site Google.com.

Most of the sites blocked and considered criminal in France and Germany concerned Nazism, hate

speech, white supremacy – speech that is regarded in the United States as harmful but not unlawful. This kind of speech, however, is criminalized in several democracies.

In the year 2000, Yahoo was an early target of the French courts, which ordered Yahoo to take down an auction web site offering Nazi memorabilia for sale, in violation of French law. The first instance court is just a few blocks from Notre Dame Cathedral. Yahoo argued that it was impossible to comply with the law. To do so would require Yahoo to remove the Nazi items from its servers in the United States. Then, no one in the world could buy the items. French law would trump all other laws everywhere. But Yahoo lost in the French courts.

That was in 2000. You will recall the technical solution that the New York Times adopted last summer. They successfully avoided the threat of contempt in the UK. In recent years, the information and communication technology industry has developed geographic identification technology, or geo-ID. Using geo-ID, advertisers can now target consumer audiences with greater precision. They need no longer advertise globally on the Internet. Presumably, the press can now deploy geo-ID technology to avoid legal liability abroad and to provide local news and information relevant to target audiences.

I mention geo-ID as an illustration of a larger reality, the capacity of innovations in technology either to avoid or in some cases – in Claude Frolo’s words, kill censorship. Some breakthroughs now make it possible to shield the identity of, say, a local journalist reporting online some criticism of a repressive government. Anonymizers and proxy servers are among the new evasion technologies. Other more complex evasion technologies will certainly

be developed. And just as surely, governments will adopt counter-countermeasures in an arms race of innovation. Governments will likely have the active and profitable assistance of some companies in the information technology industries.

We can safely assume that this arms race is likely to continue. The Internet and the World Wide Web are not the end of history of information technology. Some new technologies may possibly develop, to quote Claude Frolo, that will kill the Internet, the web, and Direct Broadcast Satellite television. With the passage of each successive era of the dominant means of dissemination of information – the Church, books, newspapers, etc. – a few truths remain constant, in place, like Notre Dame Cathedral itself.

One truth holds that information is like water, or mercury, which usually finds a way to get out. Another truth is that the world of journalism has time and time again produced men and women of uncommon courage who expose and attack corruption and evil using whatever technology is at hand. Think of the heroism of Emile Zola writing “J’Accuse” in 1898 and setting into motion the liberation of Captain Alfred Dreyfus.

It will take journalists with the courage of a Zola to continue to wage this struggle. The media have a special responsibility to cover the business and technology sides of the new media, not as cheerleaders or advocates, but as objective analysts. That special responsibility applies as well to probing, aggressive and careful coverage of the actions of government. As China shows us, governments play a key role in fostering or thwarting new information technologies, or using them for undemocratic ends. That kind of coverage represents an antidote to the possible loss of press freedoms.



Press Freedom: Every Citizen's Right

Timothy Balding
Chief Executive Officer, World Association of Newspapers, Paris

The World Association of Newspapers represents publishers and editors in more than 100 countries, working for 18,000 publications and, needless to say, the thousands of Internet news and information web sites and blogs that are now an integral part of the news business.

The Association periodically runs campaigns designed to remind, or re-educate, the public about the fundamental issues at stake when we talk about media freedom. Such campaigns never cease to be necessary.

The campaign slogan, which I've always liked, was: "Freedom of the Press is Freedom of the Citizen." The sense, of course, was that journalists are not a special breed with privileged rights unavailable to the common man (though as a journalist I confess we often forget to remain so humble), but simply citizens whose work it is to exercise the rights to freedom of expression available, in theory at least, to everyone.

In recent years, however, that slogan has taken on an additional sense with the explosion of a multitude of new electronic distribution channels just a keyboard away from any man, woman or child, in the industrialized world, at least.

A commentator once famously said, "Freedom of the Press is for anyone who can afford one!" That no longer holds true. Year by year, as the Internet sweeps the globe, the once-powerful monopoly of the printing press over the publication of words and texts of all kinds is in the process of being swept away.

This is, in my view, brings both great opportunities and not inconsiderable dangers that require society's vigilance. On the credit side, citizens now have much greater control over how and when they receive information. They can react to it and participate in it if they choose.

The news business is becoming, happily, more and more a dialogue between the providers and receivers of information rather than an imposition of opinions and perspectives by an elite caste.

On the negative side, the Internet has opened up extraordinary new possibilities for the widespread, damaging and sometimes dangerous manipulation

of information, which is difficult if not impossible to stem.

In my view, this phenomenon will increasingly place a heavy responsibility on professional journalists to maintain high standards of fact-checking, honesty and objectivity.

The very fundamentals of our societies and democracies will be lost if we are unable any longer to distinguish between true and false information.

The responsibility of news businesses is thus considerable. For the moment, it should be said, there remains a significant preference of the majority of readers to access their information through traditional print products, with 1.4 billion readers of daily newspapers world-wide, a figure that continues to rise, along with that of newspaper sales.

It may not ever be so, however, as news businesses multiply their digital news distribution, while endeavouring to maintain their unique characteristics and role as newspapers.

Newspapers, unlike other media forms that have emerged in the last fifty years, have almost alone, with exceptions, of course, carried the responsibility and performed the task of being the watchdog of government and other powerful forces. They have endeavoured to exercise their freedom to uncover wrongdoing at every level of society. Neither radio nor television have ever really set themselves that mission.

This freedom of the press has been fought for, bitterly, often at great human sacrifice and this continues to be the case in dozens of countries world-wide, with record numbers of journalists being killed and jailed every year.

Freedom of the press is never simply handed over by governments; it is almost always the fruit of tremendous resistance, of a titanic struggle between the desire for truth and justice, free expression and debate, and the forces of repression and obscurantism.

Very happily, a powerful new arm has appeared in this struggle over the past fifteen years and it has been taken up on the side of the good and the right, on the side of pluralism and democracy.

The Internet, without doubt, in my view, has been a tremendously positive breakthrough in overcom-

ing the monopoly of information jealously guarded by authoritarian and dictatorial regimes.

At one time, we all thought and said that the distribution of free information and opinion had become unstoppable and that revolutions would sweep the world as citizens discovered what had been hidden from them.

Unfortunately, that turned out to be too optimistic a vision, as governments armed themselves with the surveillance and technical solutions necessary to block free information and arrest those trying to distribute it. But I am sure that they are fighting a losing battle. The mere fact that so many cyber-journalists are currently languishing in prison is, paradoxically perhaps, clear evidence of this.

I have avoided getting into the question of what rules and regulations should apply with regard to the Internet. If I have not done so, it's because in truth I have so little to say about the issue.

The Internet is, in essence, just one more of a rich panoply of distribution channels available to us. As such, it must, of course, benefit from the same protections in terms of free expression and the free flow of information as any other medium. These freedoms are incarnated in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and are intended for any citizen.

Internet Benefits from a Light Touch

Leslie Harris

Executive Director, Center for Democracy and Technology, Washington, D.C.

We will soon need to come up with a new name for the “new” media, which is fast becoming simply, “the” media for many millions of people in an increasingly interconnected world.

In a few short years, the global Internet has profoundly changed how we understand and interact with the world. And more dramatic change is sure to come. Information networks have changed how we produce goods and services, create and distribute information and ideas, and participate in civic life.

In a perfect world, these changes should be embraced rather than resisted by the world's policymakers. That, of course, is not always the case.

It has been almost sixty years since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights articulated the right to free expression regardless of borders.

We have begun to fulfil that vision through a global information network that supports a diverse market place of information, ideas, knowledge and cultural products.

Yet for those who do not yet have access to this powerful technology, or who live in countries which have captured the medium for their own ends, the promise remains elusive.

We must, therefore, commit ourselves to ensuring that free expression is available to all, without restrictions that violate human rights and diminish the potential of the medium.

The Internet is a highly disruptive technology, challenging well-established legal principles, regulatory regimes and business models.

Our networked information culture favours a commons rather than a proprietary approach to knowledge and information. Production is often collaborative and distribution models are diverse.

Equally important, economic gain is often not the key motivation for content production. This poses a challenge to incumbents who benefit from limited distribution channels and legal or regulatory regimes that favor strong intellectual property protection.

The globalization of the medium has fueled legal and public policy confusion for entities operating on the Internet. Content providers entirely located in one country, may be ordered to take down or block content in several others, under a confusing array of conflicting national content laws, many democratically enacted. Strong consumer privacy laws in some countries are balanced by weak protections in others.

Global terrorism has led many democratic countries to make law enforcement access to the medium much easier, often without maintaining a balance with civil liberties. For example, broad data retention laws, lower legal standards for access to information stored in digital data bases, and legal man-

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

dates to make broadband networks more conducive to surveillance, have put privacy and ultimately free expression at risk.

The rapid convergence of media platforms and products has migrated highly conflicting regulatory regimes into the Internet space.

In the United States, for example, regulators recently held that decades of common carriage rules that govern telephony – rules that nurtured the growth of the dial-up Internet – do not apply to broadband providers.

The number of Internet service providers has since dropped significantly. Some contemplate charging a premium for enhanced quality of service, a premium that would likely be beyond the reach of most new media providers.

Authoritarian regimes are remaking the Internet into a tool of control and repression. They are exporting surveillance and censorship technology to like-minded countries, threatening to fragment the medium. These regimes are also demanding a greater role in international Internet regulatory bodies.

There is little doubt that policy makers around the world have begun to assert greater authority over the medium, and that they often approach the Internet as a problem to be solved, rather than a unique and valuable resource to be nurtured.

In the Internet's infancy, there was a widely held view that the Internet simply could not be controlled or censored. We were told that "information wants to be free," or that the Internet could not be censored. As one early Internet visionary put it, "The Internet interprets censorship as damage and routes around it."

Under that utopian vision, government efforts to exert territorial authority would fail and what little governance that may have been needed would emerge from the community of users.

The fact is that the Internet as a public-policy free zone is a myth. The Internet has not become a powerful global medium for free expression and civic dialogue in a legal vacuum.

It is fair to say that the success of the Internet, and of the new media to which it has given rise, is in no small part due to early policy choices that emphasized openness, innovation, competition, end-to-end user control and free expression.

From the very beginning, when government funded the research that yielded the protocol suite

known as TCP/IP, the Internet's development benefited from a thoughtful, light-touch regulatory regime that managed to foster its growth without artificially steering its development in any specific direction.

This is not to say there weren't missteps. Early on, the Center for Democracy and Technology and other civil liberties groups successfully challenged a US law that would have censored a vast quantity of Internet content.

A decade ago, policy makers approached the Internet with more caution. That caution is all but gone.

As the Internet has become a critical infrastructure for government, industry and interpersonal communications, it is not unexpected that governments would seek to play a greater role in its day-to-day operation. That involvement is not illegitimate.

But the Internet is not now and may never be a "finished" product. Misguided policy choices now could easily stifle the Internet's growth and diminish its value as a global platform for free expression. The question that must be asked as regulators and policy makers engage with the medium is will the essential elements of the Internet be preserved? It depends on the following factors:

The Internet must remain global.

There is only one Internet and we must oppose the actions of governments to build walled gardens that limit free expression and access to information, and to develop a separate set of standards that will surely be deployed to enclose the medium. The term "Internets" has become an amusing malapropism in the US because of its regular use by our highest ranking elected official. It should never become an accurate description of the global online environment.

The Internet must remain an open platform.

The Internet was by design a decentralized medium, with very little intelligence at its core. This permits innovation to take place at the edges of the network and ensures that no one need seek permission from anyone along the way before attaching a device, launching a new application or posting content. This key characteristic must be preserved.

We must not permit or require gatekeepers.

I noted before that business models are arising that seek to charge for gate-keeping and discriminate among users. This challenge to the Internet's neutrality must be resisted. But there is also a trend for democratic countries to require service providers to serve as gate-keepers and to police content in various ways.

In the United States, for example, there is a policy debate about whether to require social networking sites and other interactive services, including perhaps blogs to consult a data base of e-mail addresses and screen names of convicted sex offenders before permitting postings. This is, of course, a laudable aim, but the implications of such a policy approach are far reaching.

The barriers to entry must remain low.

The Internet is an abundant medium and the costs for new entrants are extraordinarily low. There would be no citizen journalism if participation required more than access to a computer and an Internet connection. Policies that limit competition, seek to license Internet content providers or register users raise the bar to entry and must be resisted. Those that favor new entrants, innovation and competition should be supported.

Users must continue to have primary control.

No other form of mass media allows users to tailor their experience to their own values and tastes. With voluntary filters, users' control tools, RSS feeds and other options for customization, Internet users are empowered to make choices for themselves and their children. Public policy must support the education and empowerment of users, rather than direct censorship or indirect restrictions, such as mandatory content blocking and filtering or government labeling of Internet content.

Notwithstanding the challenges facing the global Internet, I remain optimistic about its future. Bad public policy may be unable to defeat the powerful forces driving it forward.

Those forces are not just technical or economic. They are, above all, human.

It is human ingenuity, innovation and collaboration that have given rise to new forms of information production and distribution. It is the human desire for connection, freedom and self-expression that has created what we call new citizen media.

Together, we must work to ensure that sound policy choices at the local, national and global level continue to support the open Internet so that its promise of free expression and greater democracy can be realized everywhere.



New Media and Old: A Need to Share Common Press Freedom Interests

Guy Berger
Highway Africa/Rhodes University Grahamstown, South Africa.

To look into new media requires looking at old media, and discussing developing countries inevitably entails comparisons to developed countries. Historically, press freedom is known as such because it was printers and newspapers that fought for this right, which refers nowadays to media in general. Media freedom is a right that goes beyond an individual's freedom of expression, although it is built upon that right. In many places, it is privately owned newspapers that continue this quest or help preserve victories against powerful forces reluctant to allow certain information to become public.

The question is the extent to which the battleground of press freedom today has a new frontier that incorporates cyberspace. This entails taking stock of the main forces in the realm of new media aside from newspapers' presence there, and indeed whether old and new media are even on the same side in this new arena. There are also questions of tools, tactics and issues in the contest for and against press freedom in this non-traditional environment. What, in short, are the new battles being fought, how do they affect old media, and vice versa? And how does all this relate to developing countries?

One can safely say that contestation around press freedom in general is fundamentally around public power – and in particular about journalism, the form of communication that deals with power. In all this, press freedom is a sub-category of wider power contestations. Its parameters are largely determined by a broader balance of forces. There are often correlations between different indices of freedom, and what happens within the broad press freedom topography of struggle can have substantial repercussions in other realms. In whatever media realm, old or new, press freedom is thus a pivotal prize for power more broadly.

To what extent, then, are new media and traditional media different creatures? And is the rise of the new media an extension of an existing battle, or a contest that also entails a qualitatively changed set of forces and fortresses? There are also the following questions:

- To what extent do the older media use new platforms to amplify the space and extend the impact of their journalism in regard to press freedom?
- Do new media, and specifically journalism in this realm, make a difference to both traditional media and to the wider political environment for generic press freedom?
- Besides the presence of traditional media, what about bloggers who do journalism, notwithstanding that only a minority of them do so? How about search engines' news offerings, and even non-media institutions' publishing journalism in various forms? Who, in short, are the direct stakeholders of press freedom in the new media terrain?
- Finally, how do all these play out on a global scale, and with particular regard to press freedom in the developing countries?

A degree of press freedom can exist without other aspects of democracy, as in Apartheid South Africa, but a democracy cannot thrive without press freedom. At its core, press freedom is about the limits of state power as regards the media both old and new as a social institution, and especially about the possibilities of critical journalistic information that bears directly on the exercise of public power.

With that understanding established, it is now possible to define what is meant by new media and developing countries. First, it needs to be recognised that much discussion of new media originates in developed countries, and that discussion mistakenly talks as if there exists a homogenous entity called today's global media environment and as if issues facing the media industry worldwide were equally universal.

This kind of thinking exists in the sweeping claim by the European Parliament recently: the fight for freedom of expression has today largely shifted online as the Internet has become a means of expression of choice for political dissidents, democracy activists, human rights defenders and independent journalists worldwide.

The digital divide that describes most people's lack of access to new media, the reality of the web, from a developing country perspective, is: It's rich, it's white, it doesn't speak the local language and it thinks it knows best. Hype and myopia about new media have to be avoided if a considered assessment is to be possible. As I show, the global unevenness in new media have significant implications for the focus of press freedom in different places.

It is often assumed firstly that developing countries mean undemocratic countries, and, further, that developing means being en route and merely at a stage behind the developed. But both assumptions are problematic.

It is wrong to lump together developing countries as if all were non-democracies with equal absences of press freedom. Likewise, not all developed countries are equal paragons of press freedom, especially online.

It is also flawed to think in a catch-up paradigm of linear advanced and backward stages on a singular trajectory. This implies that the info-poor have nothing of value and are inert as a result of their deficit. On the other hand, the info-rich are then seen to have all the answers, not to mention the only worthwhile language.

It erroneously assumes that there is an inexorable momentum in the same desirable modernist direction, with the only difference being the pace of progress. In reality, the world is not so much one of separate, discrete entities at differing stages, but an integrated and interdependent system. Thus, information industries are weak in some places at least in part because they compete on the back foot with a flood of information commodities from elsewhere. Meanwhile, the info-rich are typically poverty-stricken in regard to knowledge about the info-poor.

Even shedding these problematic assumptions, it still needs to be recognised that developing countries form a very broad category. In terms of new media, Malaysia, for instance, is a far cry from South Africa; the latter is very different from Nigeria. But I will use the phrase developing countries to refer to those places where new media are still new to most of the population, not forgetting that old mature media are themselves also fairly new and scarce to millions of people for whom traditional media means griots and other forms of oral media. Immediately, however, one has to pause and ask about cell phones – which are increasingly not so new or rare, even in poor communities and countries.

To deal with this factor requires that we interrogate the definition of new media. Not everything printed on paper is the press; and not all in the press is journalism in the power-sense defined

earlier. Instead, around the world, much is propaganda – commercial advertising and/or state messaging.

Similarly, despite the ubiquity of cell phones, not all cellular use is relevant to public life, just as not all Internet use touches on freedom of expression issues, let alone press freedom. As with cell phones, much Internet use everywhere is primarily for personal use rather than issues that test rights, freedoms and state authority

Yes, Internet does enable messages to be sent farther, faster and with fewer intermediaries than traditional media forms, while cell phones are astounding networking tools, and indeed all this is potentially significant from a media point of view. Yet, the point is that both the Internet and cell phones are far wider creatures than just media ones. Furthermore, their significance for democracy is wider than the role of journalism within such media.

Thus, not all cell phone or Internet use counts as new media in a mass-communications and public sense; and further not all new media amount to journalism as such. Still, my focus is upon press freedom as it pertains particularly to journalism as critical one-to-many i.e. public communication about public power. Other Internet or cell phone functions may be highly relevant to democracy as in the Orange Revolution protests in Ukraine, but they are not at heart matters of press freedom.

What is therefore at stake in this discussion is new ways for journalism to be channelled, and in this particular regard the specific use of cell phones as mass media platforms in many developed countries is as limited as in most developing countries. This will likely change in future, but for now, most users of cell phones around the world are barely aware that their devices can be used as media receivers, and most media have also done very little to exploit this potential for journalism.

Developing countries can be understood as the places where the journalistic use of new media is a relatively new and uncommon phenomenon for most people. Since most countries are still developing when it comes to cell phones as media, I will concentrate mainly on the Internet, and on countries where no more than a small elite can access this platform for journalistic production or consumption. Indeed, these countries, whether democratic or not,

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

are also typically societies where even the broadcast and print media industry along with general economic capacity is all comparatively very weak when examined alongside other developed countries.

Much of this discussion is about principles, rather than practices. The reason is partly because principles help us make sense of complicated phenomena. But it is also because, in this world of supposed information-overload, and on the supposedly information-rich Internet, there is remarkably little online information in English at least about new media and press freedom as regards developing countries. This in itself speaks volumes about global generalisations that are based on the hype and hopes based on a handful of developed countries.

The new in new media has the sense of better and more exciting. In contrast, new media technologies should, instead, be seen on a continuum with, rather than in any fundamental opposition to, earlier media. There is certainly value in avoiding over-radical dichotomies between old and new media, but it is also important to look at both the similar and the dissimilar, the convergences and the clashes, between the two realms.

In much of the world, there are distinctive political traditions associated with the two media realms. In the case of the press, it is a liberal/social-responsibility tradition; in the case of the Internet, a libertarian one. They are close, but not completely compatible. The key difference is that while much old media tend to acknowledge self-regulation, the spirit of new media is more of a free-for-all. This is a significant distinction, because from a libertarian point of view, self-regulation is not much different from self-censorship.

This insight helps explain why the disappointment with Google and Yahoo's censorship concessions to the Chinese authorities was probably greater than that which greeted Rupert Murdoch's parallel kowtowing to China in the field of satellite broadcasting. As the Internet ethos goes, the new media in principle are expected to be freer than old media. This can be positive for press freedom, but from a liberal perspective, the absence of self-regulation in much new media can also provide governments with an excuse to step in – with negative implications for press freedom in both old and new sectors.

For example, in 2006, the South African government decided that media, especially cell-phone con-

tent providers, that purveyed child pornography, and/or exposed children to pornography, needed regulation.

In a classic case of a bulldozer taking the place of a fly swatter, legislation was introduced to bring all media under the pre-publication scrutiny of the Film and Publications Act. Before that, statutorily self-regulating newspapers and broadcasters had been exempted from the law. Protests blocked the initiative, but the wider point is that a problem in the sphere of new media elicited a threat that could have ultimately allowed government to constrain not just pornography, but also press freedom, not just in one sphere, but across the board.

This can work the other way round – for example, with insult laws or defamation law dispensations in old media applied to online content – even where this originates in foreign jurisdictions. Many observers originally thought that the new technologies defied regulation of any type. The only way for governments to control them would be to stop their spread altogether. Although such regulation is complex, costly and personnel-intensive, it is increasingly happening.

Even countries in financial straits – like Zimbabwe apparently being aided by China in Internet control – successfully curb publication or circulation of online content. Reporters Sans Frontières lists Belarus, Burma, China, Cuba, Egypt, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Tunisia among the enemies of the Internet. In those countries, there is censorship and there are filters. There is also often blockage of listed web sites, including those like Anonymouse.com and other proxy sites offering technology for anonymous browsing. Typepad, which offers blogging technology, is blocked in some countries. Domain-name control is also exercised by some governments, such as Zimbabwe, where the banned Daily News newspaper was also made to close its web site.

Yahoo's provision to Beijing of a user's identity details is widely seen as having led to that person's being jailed as a cyber-dissident. There are fears that cell phones may lead to the continuous monitoring of people. Generally, not many press freedom advocates anywhere would quibble with the police's being able to track cell phone calls to combat serious crime, providing they operate under strict privacy safeguards. But a line would certainly be drawn at journalists' cell phone records being made avail-

able to the authorities, and there is contestation in many countries over legislation about that.

Serious dissidents can circumvent controls on press freedom in cyberspace more easily than they can with traditional media. Many valiant efforts against such constraints help to keep alive an aspiration to press freedom. But in such situations, it is simply not possible to be part of a readily accessible media mainstream, enacting and reinforcing a culture of press freedom. In turn, a populace cannot know and cherish press freedom if this is a marginal, unstable or underground phenomenon. In such cases, most citizens cannot even know what they are prevented from knowing – and even, sometimes, that they are being prevented from knowing.

Coming back to the different philosophical traditions of traditional and new media, what is noteworthy from the press freedom viewpoint is that notwithstanding some status differences around the ethos and practicalities of regulation and self-regulation, it is evident that both approaches and both media realms can be curtailed by state power, and that both of them also share an antipathy to this. Indeed, the rise and growth of a mainly free Internet owes much to the broad press freedom environment promoted and often pioneered by the press. Despite philosophical differences, there is a fundamentally shared concern between those who have journalistic interests in either new or old media.

Recognition of common interests is rare, however. In developed countries, much of the old media regard new media more as rivals than as political allies. Even amongst old media in these countries, divisive rivalries between print and broadcast are carried over into online media. In many developing countries, however, new media have so little reach, that old media hardly see them as a factor. Work is still needed for understanding and action on the shared benefits of transcending separate silo thinking in the two realms.

If this is how press freedom traditions diverge and converge between old and new media generally, one can proceed to further examine the play of these traditions between developed and developing countries. In many developing countries democratic or not, press freedom for the old media remains the primary issue simply because this is still the most extensive vehicle for journalism. This is so even in a country like Malaysia, where the Internet because of its economic significance has been relatively unconstrained, but where strong state control of the major print and broadcast media continues. In contrast, in

many developed countries, the threats to effective press freedom come not from the state but from giant media corporations like Clear Channel, which banned the songs of the anti-war singing group the Dixie Chicks. For the Internet in particular, the big telecoms operators seeking a two-tier Internet, the Intellectual Property companies and major IT empires are seen as threats to effective press freedom in cyberspace.

The Internet, to the extent that it serves as a medium, is also global. This raises the stakes of press freedom to a higher level. While press freedom is broadly relevant in both parts of the world, there are still different emphases between developed and developing countries in old and new media realms.

Local journalism and local languages may still be the key concern for press freedom in most places, but the significance of Internet's reach is that it enables local (even if elite) audiences to gain access to media content that offends opponents of press freedom in their countries. In this way, it undercuts local laws that can restrict press freedom in a given jurisdiction.

Just as the media industry has been establishing a presence in cyberspace, so, too, have others – albeit also unevenly in developing and developed countries. These newcomers are information technology and telecom companies, international organizations, business, government information apparatuses, political parties, civil society groups and individuals – all putting online not just information but also often journalistic information.

There is also the rise of stand-alone independent net-native journalists and media players, whether institutional or individual. This ends an era of exclusivity where only those who owned and operated means of mass communication could take direct advantage of press freedom. It reduces the standing and authority of the traditional gate keepers, but it also vastly extends the terrain for contestation around control of journalistic information.

It further means that where there is growing new media in a country, the direct stakeholders in press freedom become many more than the usual suspects, i.e., traditional print and broadcast media playing in the online arena. This raises the question of competition and collaboration possibilities not just amongst media operators – old and new – but between them and all kinds of other players in the new environment.

From the standpoint of many developing countries, the struggle is understandably concentrated on

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

the old media front. Yet the new media provide an area where headway can sometimes be made more easily in such countries. Thus, it can be noted that in much of the developing world, people try to use new media for objectives that cannot be met through old media. The limited reach of new media in developing countries means that many governments are not excessively bothered about their content.

Globally, a united front of those with an interest in press freedom across all platforms seems to be called for despite the differences among participants and country situations. Fortunately, new media themselves greatly extend the capacity for activism to create, defend or deepen press freedom. In this sense, web sites, e-mail lists, e-mails, and cell phones have greatly strengthened lobbies for media freedom.

Moving toward the more empirical level, one can assess some more concrete specifics of press freedom and new media forms. The comparative if exaggerated ease of entry into online electronic publishing means that new media objectively widen the environment where press freedom comes into play. This is especially important in countries with low media density, where arguably the more information on offer, the better. Better still, such international publishing at least serves the dispersed populations of many of these countries.

Old media have only embraced the online environment belatedly, and developments are still minimal in many developing countries. In the developed countries, some of this expansion into cyberspace was defensive.

In many developing countries, in contrast, setting up media web sites was idealistic in the sense of wanting to get the message out on all available platforms. It was also to serve the diasporas and the outside world, and indeed also a matter of professional pride.

Nowhere, despite some initial illusions, was it originally a matter of making serious profits – at least at first. It was an experiment to create press freedom in cyberspace. Whatever the motivation, it should be welcomed and encouraged.

Internet technologies allow for journalism deepened, enriched and empowered by interactivity, hyper-linking, peer-to-peer file exchange, enhanced content, increased depth and multi-media forms of story telling. What emerges from observation of online news in action, and from discussions with those providing

its content, is far from a revolution in media, but an expression of the cautious continuity, if not inertia. Some evidence from developed countries is also that citizen forums, offering the potential for greater interaction between journalist and audiences, have failed through lack of interest on both sides.

One reason for this phenomenon is that old styles and habits of both producers and consumers are simply transplanted from traditional media into the new media universe. And resources and investment in training and talent to exploit new media's strengths are not easily forthcoming, especially in developing countries where infrastructure is still limited, bandwidth costs exorbitant and viable business models unproven. Thus, many web sites in poorer countries consist only of a portion of re-purposed content from a parent media platform; they also lack archives and proper search capabilities, let alone multi-media or interactive journalism. This is one reason perhaps why these platforms are not treated by many governments as significant. State action against online newspapers, as in Zambia and Zimbabwe, has simply followed repression of the parent platform.

There are many cases where the participatory ethos of new media has indirectly encouraged old media to open up to their audiences, stopping short of transmuting from mainstream into community media. The main model in the developing world has been to encourage the use of cell phones for voice and text comments and votes within old media platforms. Citizen journalism input, where accepted, has added value to both on- and offline platforms of traditional media. Such audience involvement in the old media, accelerated by Internet's example, fosters a culture that values press freedom more broadly.

In recent years, new media have also influenced old media mainly in developed countries, with traditional journalists starting to produce blogs – privately, or as an add-on to their jobs. Blogging is recognised and even adopted by the traditional media as a complementary form of participatory media, although this particular strand of blogging often tends to keep to a traditional journalistic gate-keeping role by incorporating limited or no material from users.

In developing countries, the phenomenon of professional journalists blogging as part of their media work is still young, although a “Digital Indaba” – <http://dci.ru.ac.za> – organised by the Highway

Africa network put it on the agenda in Africa last year. To the extent that this form of journalism grows, it will enrich the press freedom environment. There are also many other players who are not extensions of old media. Their significance for press freedom deserves attention.

There is a range of online-only media offerings in cyberspace without any link to offline traditional media. They often broaden press freedom by offering different content than what is in the mainstream media. A prominent example is OhmyNews in South Korea, which has been a breath of fresh air in a context where most newspapers have historically been aligned with government. This model is well known for its mass of citizen reporters.

A developing country example is Malaysia's well-known Malaysiakini, a stand-alone medium providing audiences a chance to supply news and comment on local politics, in contrast with the self-censorship of the licensed broadcast and print media.

A further example is Tehelka, the famous Indian investigative journalism site. There are other cases. What all of these demonstrate is how entry into new media can use online press freedom to create media institutions with credible journalism. Also noteworthy is how these initiatives tend to go further than the mainstream in pushing the role and form of journalism. In developing countries especially, without any parent media platform to support them, their viability is flimsy, and new media journalistic ventures like www.woza.co.za and www.dispatch.co.zm have faced crippling deficits.

Bloggng is often a manifestation of press freedom on an individual basis, and can push the boundaries of this freedom, even when it is not strictly journalism. Such efforts can inspire micro-activism, which can cause big change in a small community – such as with the quasi-journalistic Mzalendo blog on Kenya's Parliament that complements the inadequate coverage of that institution in the mainstream press, <http://www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/?p=983>.

Even in developed countries, however, blogs diversify the range of journalism. In the United States, for example, when established media were less critical of government early in the Iraq war, blogs there were an outlet for dissident views, while increasing numbers of U.S. citizens turned to the web for a wider range of war news and views.

Typically, private bloggers – providing journalism content or not – differ from the gate-keeper model of mainstream journalism in that they entail linking, audience feedback and conversation. They

also inspire audiences to set up their own blog sites. Private blogs are often about communication, not just information. This enriches those that involve journalism.

Private bloggers who produce substantive journalism are only a tiny segment of the blogosphere. Personal diaries, hobbies or topics that do not bear on public power make up the bulk of blogs. They are good for pluralism, diversity and democracy, but are arguably not furthering press freedom.

Where blogs are driven by a lack of press freedom, they reveal the possibilities of creating space for critical journalism. Blogs in developing countries have sometimes been the way that word has gotten out about violations of press freedom.

Even in developing countries, the limited reach of new media can expand press freedom. For instance, Tehelka's investigations were picked up by old media platforms, even internationally. Independent bloggers creating journalistic content stand out strongly as a "Fifth Estate" watching the Fourth. Bloggers also can and do influence the news agenda by publicising ideas and events until traditional media cover them in more depth. As new media grow in strength around the world, so their frequency as agenda-setters for the wider media pack will also grow.

New media should not be seen in isolation from old media, and neither should press freedom be seen in dualistic terms. There are strong linkages between them. A violation of press freedom of old media in one country deprives persons in that country of information directly and all other countries indirectly. But when there is a lack of press freedom on the Internet, with its international reach, then the globe is directly deprived of significant knowledge. When China censors the Internet, other regimes see they can follow suit. Conversely, when a blogger reports news from a repressive country, or a Malaysiakini survives and prospers, others with an interest in press freedom take inspiration elsewhere. Press freedom is a global, not just a national, issue, and it is also essential for all journalistic platforms.

Given the higher penetration of cell phones than computers in developing countries, the potential of these devices to become the primary platforms for new media is something to watch. Next-generation phones will also enable direct wireless Internet access, introducing a mobile dimension to Internet media, thence to press freedom. It will take time to develop journalistic content tailored to exploiting this new platform. The small screen size of most portable devices is an issue. There is sometimes skepti-

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

cism about television on cell phones. Picture, however, cell phones with built-in data-projectors able to cast large-size images onto walls or other surfaces. Whether journalistic content for such communications then comes from bloggers capturing video on mobile phones or TV companies or other players is not important. Either way, the effect would certainly be to extend press freedom in developing countries in particular, especially where traditional broadcasting is tightly controlled.

A holistic approach sensitive to distinctions is called for in assessing new media and press freedom in the developing world. The pace of technology development means that the world now seems unlikely ever to reach a stage where there are no new media. Nonetheless, what remains constant is that whether old, new or futuristic, the historical achievement of press freedom is of enduring importance for all platforms, all countries, all peoples.



New Media in New Democracies :

Oxygen for Democracy

Johann P. Fritz
Director, International Press Institute, Vienna

The new communication technologies provide the much-needed oxygen for the democratization process. Conversely, democracy provides the environment for basic press freedom.

In the past decade there have been numerous examples of how advanced information flows played a central role in resisting dictatorial regimes.

Fidel Castro once said, "Socialism in Central Europe failed because people received more information than was necessary." He obviously understood very well the power of information.

And, of course, such intense use of communications technologies like fax machines, voice- or video-recording equipments, mobile phones, laptops and – above all – the Internet, frightens the authorities.

They are therefore trying to stop the flow of information and communication by passing harsh laws and fixing criminal penalties.

Scores of people have been imprisoned for the unauthorised distribution of news, articles, declarations or protests.

The installation of tapping facilities, filtering equipment for the Internet and the blocking of access to web sites are other methods of trying to make sure that no uncensored information is distributed.

When talking about new media, we should however keep in mind that what is an "old" or "traditional" media for the advanced societies may for other regions be revolutionarily new in its use – such as the community radio in India.

An expert, helping villagers to run a community station was quoted by The Washington Post: "Community radio in India is not about playing alternative rock music. It is a new source of strength for poor people because it addresses their most basic development needs." And, she continued, "Our radio is more powerful than the corrupt and inefficient village council."

This seems to define the essence of the question of how the various communications technologies can allow us to test and push the boundaries of free speech and press freedom.

The 'Delfi Effect': Ranting in the Baltics

Pauls Raudseps,
Editorial Page Editor, Diena, Riga, Latvia

To understand the relation between freedom of the press and new media in the Baltic States, we have to take a look back at recent history. The three Baltic States -- Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – may be "new democracies," as the title of this panel would have it. Nevertheless, their new democratic systems are just a bit older than "new media." This chronology has had a major influence on the place of new media in the Baltic public sphere in general, and on the influence of new media on freedom of the press in particular.

The three Baltic States all regained their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, thanks to

peaceful, democratic revolutions. Freedom of speech was not only one of the major demands of the independence movements but also the most important tool for dismantling the totalitarian Soviet system of political and social control. This experience meant that from the beginning the governments of the newly independent countries firmly believed in maintaining freedom of speech as a fundamental right.

These convictions were reinforced by the desire to get as close to the West as possible. Joining NATO and the European Union meant, among other things, having a functioning democratic system with a free

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

press. Freedom of speech became a fundamental element of the Baltic social and political landscape.

Thus, the nature of political change and a strong desire to conform to norms laid out, for instance, in the Copenhagen criteria for joining the EU, meant that freedom of the press was established and maintained at a high level very early on. The international human rights organization Freedom House started evaluating freedom of the press in the Baltic States in 1992, and since 1994 it has consistently rated the press in all three countries as “free.” For more than ten years their scores have placed them comfortably in the company of long-established democracies such as the U.S. and Great Britain.

You will note that this took place before the Internet age. As a consequence, in contrast to some other countries, in the Baltic states the Internet has played no role as a medium by which to bypass restrictions imposed on other media such as the press, TV or radio.

In the meantime, the Internet has become a part of everyday life in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. Although they are small and not especially wealthy countries by EU standards, the Baltic states enjoy a similar per capita Internet usage to that of France or Spain, and it is continuing to grow rapidly. Estonia has even made a name for itself as an Internet pioneer because the well-known Internet telephone service Skype is based in its capital, Tallinn.

Nevertheless, the very newness of it all means that the Baltic States face certain challenges.

The first is what we might call the “Delfi effect.” Again, a little history. When the Internet started to become popular in the Baltic States at the end of the nineties, one of the first web sites to attract significant traffic was an Estonian portal called Delfi. The main thing it did was simply publish articles from the wire services and let people post anonymous comments about those news stories.

It was a quick and easy way to follow the headlines. Equally important, it gave people a chance to vent their frustrations, suspicions, prejudices and to spread a few rumours, all without having to answer for the consequences.

This model became wildly popular and has been adopted by almost every other news portal in the Baltic states. Delfi itself soon founded sister companies in Latvia and Lithuania and has maintained its popularity against all comers as the Internet has continued to expand.

In all three Baltic States, it is the top news site and among the top four sites overall. To a significant

degree, Delfi has defined the new media culture in all three countries.

This has not been an unqualified boon for freedom of expression. The aggressive, not to say vituperative, tone of the anonymous commentators creates a great deal of heat but precious little light, with personal attacks the weapon of choice for the masked Delfi warriors.

As a well-known Estonian journalist recently told me, some people say that they are wary of expressing their opinion in public because they will be subject to what he calls a public stoning on the Internet. Yet attempts to limit anonymous postings have raised storms of protest. The ability to express yourself without the responsibility of attaching your name to what you say is being perceived by some people as a right.

In this context, it is significant that none of the Baltic States has developed an influential blog culture, where the virtues of the Net – its informality, speed and connectedness – are reinforced by the responsibility of actually signing what you write with your own name.

All of this raises important questions about the role of new media in ensuring democratic accountability. Given the small size of their markets, traditional news outlets in the Baltic States may find it even more difficult to sustain high-quality journalism on the web than is the case in other Western countries. Unfortunately, there is no obvious candidate to take their place. Because of the Baltic countries’ small size and readiness for rapid change, we may be facing these issues much sooner than larger countries with greater institutional inertia.

A second issue, almost inevitable in an environment where anonymous comments are given such free rein, is the issue of hate speech on the Internet.

All three Baltic States have laws forbidding hate speech and all three have pursued, tried and convicted a handful of the most egregious propagators of anti-Semitism or racism on the web.

Internet portals are not held legally responsible for comments posted on their sites, but all the major portals have a policy of screening these comments and expunging the ones likely to run afoul of the law. Lithuania and Estonia both passed laws last year regulating new media. In Estonia it was known as the “Delfi law.” But in neither case have the laws introduced fundamentally new principles.

If the purpose of all this has been to promote tolerance on the web, it has not succeeded. It is not at all difficult to find offensive material in the comments

posted on the Internet in the Baltics. Of course, as in all cases of laws limiting freedom of expression, one has to wonder: if the governments were to promote a tougher crackdown on hate speech, might not the cure be worse than the disease. The real answer, as in so many cases, would be transparency – making the anonymous commentators come out of the shadows and take responsibility for what they say. Unfortunately, nobody has found a way to do that.

A third issue regarding new media and freedom of speech in the Baltics is actually a one-off case, but I think it bears mentioning anyway. On Monday, Sept. 13, 2004, the Lithuanian ambassador to Russia was summoned to the Russian Foreign Ministry and told that if Lithuania did not close down a Chechen separatist web site (www.kavkazcenter.com), hosted on a server in a private apartment in Vilnius, the Russian government would consider this “an openly unfriendly step by the Lithuanian government to exert a negative influence on the atmosphere of our bilateral relations.” By the end of the week, the security police had shut down the site.

This was neither the first nor the last time the Russian government had gone after Kavkazcenter. In 2003, it had already been evicted from Lithuania once, moved to Estonia, then bounced back to Lithuania. At the end of 2004, it shifted to Finland, but pressure by the Finnish authorities forced another move, this time to Sweden.

In May 2006, due to demands by the Russian Embassy, a Swedish prosecutor impounded the servers hosting Kavkazcenter. However, at this point the Swedish legal system pushed back. In September 2006, a Swedish court fined the public prosecutor’s office for confiscating the servers. In October, the Swedish Chancellor of Justice, who has jurisdiction in cases regarding freedom of speech, stated, with regard to Kavkazcenter, “The content of these texts

cannot, according to my opinion, be regarded as instigation to violence or racial agitation.”

Last weekend in Munich, Russian President Putin took great umbrage at the way that the United States “imposes” its system of values on other countries. The case of Kavkazcenter is a vivid example that the world is not quite as unipolar as President Putin was complaining it was. It is also a cautionary tale about the way in which the Internet’s lack of borders can boomerang. Regimes that want to limit free speech may find it easier in some cases to shut down servers in foreign countries rather than trying to block access to them in their own.

So, you can’t have experienced the last 15 years in the Baltics without coming out an optimist. Against all odds, three countries the world had forgotten managed not only to regain their independence but to rapidly join two of the world’s most exclusive clubs – the EU and NATO.

I have to say that I love the web and I’m optimistic about the future. Nevertheless, in the Baltic States the new media in their present form have yet to prove themselves as a force for fostering democratic accountability – which is, after all, the fundamental practical argument for fostering freedom of speech. We will need new business models, perhaps new journalistic models, for that to happen. In our countries, the Internet is still like a primeval forest, full of strange whoops, screeches and chatter – an unrelenting, slightly threatening sound track accompanying the events of the day. You can hear it all, but you can’t see anything.

The challenge is to clear a public space where all that noise can be turned into the kind of speech that serves democracy and at the same time to protect that democratic space from the authoritarian challenges that lurk in the twilight.



Once in Power, Georgia's Pals Drop Press Freedom Commitments

Levan Berdzenishvili
Member of Parliament, Internet Specialist Tbilisi, Georgia

After the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union we, citizens of former communist countries, hoped that these changes would bring an age of real press freedom.

In contrast to other societies, we Georgians have thrice hoped for such freedom – first, after the Soviet communists; second, after the nationalism of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, and third, after the liberal communism of President Eduard Shevardnadze.

It means that we have had three waves of euphoria and some important new lessons. One of them is that each change of power is at first called a revolution. But after the next revolution, the one before is called a coup d'état. The true revolution is only the most recent one.

Another lesson is that successful Georgian politicians are all for press freedom, when and only when they are fighting for power. And they are much more apathetic about it once they are in power. Then, it becomes more and more difficult to receive information about governmental circles.

During the Shevardnadze period, central government in Georgia was too weak to protect journalists from violence. In the current Mikheil Saakashvili period, central government is too strong to protect journalists from violence. In both cases, central government is too intolerant of criticism. The older generation of intellectuals is getting more skeptical and the younger more cynical.

Thorough and reliable information about the state of the media does not exist. Neither government nor private institutions possess complete data because since 1995 news media must register at local courts as limited liability companies, and there is no centralized register.

It is thought that about 500 newspapers and 60 magazines are registered, but most have small circulations. Newspapers did enjoy some financial facilities from the government, but these were cancelled at the beginning of 2007.

This is in marked contrast to the past. Under Communist rule the newspaper *Comunisti* had

a daily circulation of 700,000 copies, followed by *Soplis Tskhovreba* (Rural Life) with 240,000, Tbilisi with 145,000, the Russian-language *Zaria Vostoka* (The Dawn of the Orient) with 140,000, the Armenian-language *Sovetakan Vrastan* (Soviet Georgia) with 33,000, and the Azerbaijani *Sovetan Gurjistani* (Soviet Georgia) with 35,000. The *Lelo* sports newspaper had a circulation of 120,000, while *Akhalgazrda Comunisti* (Young Communists), published 240,000 copies three days a week.

In 1981, 141 newspapers were published, including 12 national, 7 regional, 9 town-level, 66 district and 47 village newspapers. Their total circulation was 4 million copies in a population of some 5 million. Today, the situation in small cities and villages can be described as critical, and we do not have a nationwide newspaper. Television is the main source of news.

The media lacked experience in how to secure their financial independence, which would have secured their editorial freedom. Without strong, pluralistic and independent media, the gangrene of corruption tends to infect the body of the state. As in the rest of the world, less press freedom means more corruption.

Newspapers not only know about this practice, they take their share, and some experienced politicians are happy to provide such service at established (not very high) rates. This system of paid-for articles masquerading as straight news reports still has no name, but the Russians know all about it – they call it “*Zakazukba*.”

The media in Georgia are partly free. But even this semi-freedom is not homogenous. Printed media are more free than radio, radio is more free than private *Imedi TV*, *Imedi TV* is more free than the Public Broadcaster (formerly government channel one), and *Rustavi 2*, the hero of Georgian Rose Revolution, is the least independent channel of all.

As in Russia, we are witnessing a marriage of executive power with the mass media. It is no secret that there is less and less criticism of government policies on TV.

It is impossible to imagine a more cynical situation than that in the largest Georgian TV channel, where journalists patrol the streets with the police in a “zero tolerance” campaign announced by the government. It is no surprise that the Georgian language programs of Radio Liberty and even the Voice of America are regaining their lost popularity.

As the Committee to Protect Journalists has reported, television news in Georgia has suffered serious blows from government harassment, business takeovers, and, as many saw it, self-inflicted scandal. President Saakashvili’s administration took an aggressive approach in managing television coverage by pressuring and harassing critical TV reporters. One of the largest television companies, with holdings that included the influential Rustavi-2 station, changed hands in November amidst considerable intrigue.

Kibar Khalvashi, a Tbilisi businessman who spent three years building television holdings that came to include Rustavi-2 and Mze, suddenly sold his majority shares to a virtually unknown entity called Geotrans LLC.

The government’s efforts to manage television coverage were laid bare, when Eka Khoperia, the anchor of Rustavi-2’s popular political talk show “Tavisupali Tema” (Free Topic), resigned on air.

The program was to have focused on the murder of Tbilisi bank official Sandro Girgvliani, whose death was linked to Interior Ministry employees, according to news reports.

Khoperia said on the air that authorities had sought to dictate her choice of guests and the way they would appear. Saying such conditions were unacceptable, she announced her resignation as the show broke for a commercial break. It never resumed. She later told a news conference that unidentified authorities had sought in phone conversations to orchestrate the appearance of an Interior Ministry official. Rustavi-2 also made major personnel changes, subsequently dismissing station director Nickoloz Tabatadze and news chief Tamar Rukhadze.

The private national station Imedi TV became known as the most independent television news source and as an outlet for opposition leaders. Badri Patarkatsishvili, Imedi TV’s owner, said that the government launched politically motivated investigations into his business taxes after the channel aired several reports critical of the Girgvliani murder investigation, according to local and international press reports. Four junior Interior Ministry officials were arrested in the Girgvliani case.

The independent channel 202, which broadcast from Tbilisi, was mired in scandal. Shalva Ramishvili, co-owner of the station and former anchor of the tough political talk show “Debatebi” (Debates), was sentenced to four years in prison for attempted extortion, and David Kokheridze, the channel’s general director, was sentenced to three years on similar charges.

The two were arrested in 2005 after police videotaped them receiving U.S.\$30,000 from a Member of Parliament. The member, Koba Bekauri, said the two extorted the money in exchange for not airing an investigative report that would have been critical of him. Ramishvili and Kokheridze denied the accusation, claiming that they took the money as part of an undercover investigation.

Members of the parliamentary faction of the leading party received telephoned messages telling them to decline all invitations to appear on Imedi TV. Then, the President’s press secretary announced that the President, Prime Minister, head of Parliament and other politicians from the majority had nothing to debate with representatives of the political opposition. During local election campaign, we saw images of our leading politicians only in commercials.

Despite behind-the-scenes pressure and government harassment, Georgian law affords some broad protections to the news media. A landmark measure passed in 2004 decriminalized defamation, made it subject to civil action, and placed the burden of proof on the plaintiff. The law also established the right to public debate and defined the notion of a public figure who can be subject to public criticism. So we have a combination of good laws and bad actions and decisions.

For Georgia, a country with communist traditions, all media is new. So what about the real new media? Fewer than a quarter of a million people have Internet access at home or in offices, libraries or cafes. Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Batumi have cellular telephone networks. Urban telephone density is about 20 per 100 people, dropping to about 4 per 100 in rural areas.

Georgian bloggers are still asleep. The only online daily web magazine in Georgia, which is supported by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, has daily updates in three languages, English, Georgian, and Russian, and covers political, economic and society events. It includes a photo gallery showing pictures of peaceful demonstrations and the Rose Revolution and has a good archive and search engine.

New Media in South Africa: Practical Tools for Press Freedom

Elizabeth Barratt

Executive Editor for Multimedia and Training, The Johannesburg Star

South Africa is about to enter its teenage years. Our second President, Thabo Mbeki, is coming to the end of his second term, and we are not sure who will come after him. But in our nearly 13 years of democracy, we have had two presidents who have supported media freedom and interacted personally with media leaders.

South Africa is different from many other new democracies because its media was fairly well developed before democracy – although controlled by the minority white population. For example, in Johannesburg there are six big daily newspapers for one city – that’s what I am expected to read every day before I start work. These are the competition to The Star.

In 1996, South Africa adopted a progressive constitution that strongly protects media freedom, with a legal system that usually backs this up, and it has a government that does not overtly try to control content, access to information or the infrastructure.

For us, our “new” media include some traditional or “old” ones. These are the changes over the past 12 years:

TV: The state broadcaster system has changed to a public broadcaster, and we have a second free-to-air commercial television channel, as well as subscription satellite television with more than 50 channels.

RADIO: Our public radio now broadcasts in all 11 official languages and also in five Indian and two San ones. Many more transmitters have been set up, so most of the languages are now available in 80 to 90 percent of the country. There are many more commercial and community radio stations. 91 per cent of the adult population listens to radio, with 20 percent also listening to community radio. Radio dominates – as it does in Africa generally.

NEWSPAPERS: We lost the anti-Apartheid newspapers, and we now have cheap tabloids. Attempts to start up other non-tabloid newspapers have so far not had commercial success, except for those in Zulu.

So, on a day-to-day level we are not fighting for media freedom. For us, the issue is whether we can

widen media freedom and democracy, and now protect it from those who hold power and do not want to be criticised.

As journalists, we wonder whether we are really telling the new South African story – how our country is changing. And, are we giving a voice to the poor, to rural people, to the 5 million people with HIV/Aids? To women and children? to the 40 per cent unemployed? And to our many immigrant populations?

We do not have enough skilled journalists. We have little investigative journalism and few really good analytical writers. We also still have a culture in which many people do not feel free to speak out if their opinions differ from the mainstream.

So the question is: Have “new media” – the kind of media this conference is discussing – helped widen democracy? Have they introduced new threats to media freedom? And have they improved journalism?

Our new media have grown in the past decade, so we have greater access to information and a greater ability to communicate. It is estimated that there are more than 5 million personal computers for a population of about 48 million.

We have strong economic growth and a good increase in computer literacy. A few years ago, when we employed new journalists, we would ask them whether they could use a computer and the Internet – now we assume that they can.

The 5 million who use the Internet are about 1 in 10. In 2004, it was 1 in 10. So this change is happening quickly. These figures are high for Africa. We have 15.6 per cent of Africa’s users. However, many other countries in Africa are also increasing Internet access quickly.

But our Internet access is still slow and very expensive. Observers note that broadband access in South Africa is among the most expensive in the world. Even Morocco, Egypt, Botswana and Mozambique pay less.

Costs and speed influence what people use the Internet for. The primary use is for business – search-

ing for information, e-mail and banking. The online sale of plane tickets is much bigger than any other online shopping.

According to local research, 95 per cent of adults do not have Internet access from home. Access from Internet cafes and schools is growing but not yet significant – for example, some post offices have Internet cafes. This year, we are expecting a fast roll-out of broadband options and increasing competition among telecommunications service provider. Perhaps costs will come down and speed will improve.

So what about news and journalism?

Only 1.3 per cent of people regularly read newspapers or magazines on the Internet and only 0.6 per cent listen to the radio online. But for local news web sites, the numbers of people reading the news online is rising fast – although many are from outside of South Africa.

Journalists themselves are limited by costs related to bandwidth. At The Star, it was only early last year that all reporters got Internet access on their own desktops. But we have strict limitations on how much we can download, and we cannot access any multimedia – audio and video, podcast or Flash graphics – except by special request.

One of South Africa's anti-Apartheid newspapers survived after 1994: the weekly Mail & Guardian. It also started the first Internet-based news publication in Africa by launching, in 1994, an e-mail subscription service for people outside the country. Then, they set up the first news web site. At first, it was just their weekly print content; then, they brought on staff to do daily news. They have kept up with some international trends. They now even have a weekly news podcast.

The bigger media companies, which each own a number of newspapers around the country, soon put up their own web sites. They put content from their newspapers online under the different titles and set up small staffs to put fast news updates on a centralised breaking news web site, mostly relying on news agencies for stories.

The top news sites in South Africa, in terms of numbers accessing them, are the old mainstream print companies: Media 24 and Independent Newspapers. The little Mail & Guardian usually comes third. None of them yet break their own big stories online before their print editions.

Competition really started happening last year, and some media are now putting additional print content and multi-media online. Two of the top ones

are Radio 702 and the Sunday Times. On the Sunday Times web site, for example, you can listen to audio clips, play a controversial song, read a full transcript or speech, and sometimes get video clips.

Interacting with readers, is not yet a big thing. Some web sites take comments on some stories, and a few will accept photos. We have no influential bloggers. However, there are suddenly lots of polls and voting. But most of this is by mobile phone. There are about 20 million registered cell phone users. Where people do not have their own phones, there are community mobile phones available.

The pay-as-you-go (pre-paid) use of cell phones is popular. You can buy airtime everywhere. In rural areas and poorer urban areas, you find these brightly coloured businesses in small cabin containers where there are community public phones, using cell phones.

Since mobile phones are so popular, some mobile news services have been set up – both news-on-demand (pull) and news alerts (push). However, costs mean they are not widely used. 45 per cent of people spend just over 100 rands (about U.S.\$13.00) a month on air time, so they are just making personal calls and sending text messages – extremely popular because they are cheap. It is rare for people to use cell phones for Internet access.

The public broadcaster, SABC, has Internet news on SABC.com, including audio and video, but they take the view that Africa has the fastest-growing mobile market in the world, so there is huge potential in providing information via cell phone networks. They also hope the wind-up cell phone battery charger will increase this demand. They do realise all of this is price-sensitive.

In South Africa, the SABC has had a News Break service since 1999 on phones. With a small staff, they now have nine options, including breaking news, sport and stock exchange indicators. They carry news headlines in Zulu as well as English. For the 2006 local government elections, they carried election news in four languages.

They are developing some multi-skilled journalists and now have video clips available to cell phones. According to their New Media Unit, which is doing all these things, they have Africa news available in Zimbabwe and are setting up more partnerships in East and West Africa.

The item that is most popular is academic results for school leavers. Last year, there were 400,000 calls in three days for that. Second comes big news stories. For 9/11, they had 26,000 calls in a day, and for the ver-

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

dict in the rape trial of our former Deputy President, they had 30,000 calls in a day. Entertainment news is more regularly used, such as text message voting for Big Brother.

Print media in South Africa often interact with their audience through mobile phone voting. Most of the mainstream media do polls via text messages. They publicise these in their newspapers and online and publish the results on both. Radio, the biggest media, also does this – and interacts more with its audiences than other media. We have many talk shows, and most of these take phone calls, e-mails and text message comments.

Mobile phones have made another important difference to “old” journalism. Reporters can keep in close contact with their newsrooms. Some media companies issue cell phones to reporters while others, like The Star, provide monthly allowances, but reporters must have their own cell phones.

Mobile phones also threaten media freedom. By law, cell phone companies are obliged to give cell phone records to police or when there is a legal order. This has been used so far only in a couple of cases involving reporters. But it has the potential to make it very difficult for reporters to keep their contacts secret. New media make it possible to increase other surveillance, such as finding out where calls come from.

Public opinion is not likely to be on our side if we fight this, as we have a high crime rate and many crimes have been solved using cell phone records. In South Africa, only the records must be made available, unlike in other countries where contents must be revealed.

Most journalism schools teach their students some web site and multimedia skills. But for working journalists, little of this training is available, except on-the-job. Other kinds of journalism training are not yet common over the Internet using multimedia or interactive courses. Distance training just uses e-mail.

New media have made a big difference when it comes to protecting and fighting for media freedom, when journalists and editors are themselves organised. In 1996, the white and black editors united to form the South African National Editors’ Forum (SANEF), both to improve journalism and to protect media freedom. By then, some people had e-mail. Within two years, SANEF could communicate by

group e-mails and have telephone conferences. This vastly sped up communication, which means SANEF can easily mobilise its members whenever there is a media freedom issue that needs to be dealt with, and made public.

Last year, an amendment to the Film and Publication Act was proposed which would bring news media under general censorship control. Alerts went out to members, and many media quickly published stories, based on a press statement from SANEF. Opinions were canvassed, documents written up, and SANEF members went to speak at Parliament to the relevant committee. The bill is now on hold.

More recently, at the end of January, the police service issued an order stopping local police spokespersons from talking to journalists. All comments had to go through a central person in each province. In a country with a high crime rate, this is a huge problem, as it can prevent the fast reporting of news about crime. SANEF members communicated with each other quickly by e-mail and cell phone, and went public, calling for a meeting with the Police Minister. By the end of the week, the order was withdrawn.

Recently, there was a court case of media versus media, involving Internet. The SABC tried to get an interdict to have the Mail & Guardian Online remove a full report on an inquiry into allegations that it was blacklisting some political commentators from appearing on TV or radio. The SABC had not made their 78-page report public, only a 7-page summary. But the Mail & Guardian had obtained the full version and published it online. A Johannesburg High Court Judge dismissed the SABC’s application, saying the contents of the report were of extreme importance to the public since SABC is a public broadcaster.

Beyond e-mail use, SANEF also set up a web site to publicise its work, its statements and the ethics codes of media houses.

Such uses of new media are having effects on the continent beyond South Africa. SANEF has organised two meetings of African editors, in 2003 and 2005, attended by editors from 30 of Africa’s 53 countries. This probably would not have happened – at least not with such wide representation – if we couldn’t now contact editors by e-mail.

As a result, these editors have launched The African Editors’ Forum (TAEF), and are forming edi-

tors' organizations in the five regions of Africa and in individual countries. The most successful part so far is that editors are forming a web of contacts around the continent, through e-mail. This has been used a couple of times to react to the intimidation and assassination of editors. An event in one country is now reported in many. Even more importantly, editors are getting news reports from each others' reporters, instead of relying on Western news agencies.

TAEF is also using its web of contacts to get African editors to attend the WAN/WEF conference in Cape Town, in June, and to write up a dossier of laws that conflict with media freedom provisions of the African Union. TAEF has very recently set up a web site – theafricaneditors.com.

New media allow editors to organise and have a presence beyond the borders of their own countries. There is a relatively new web site run by one of the big media companies called Reporter.co.za, where you can sign up and post news.

Citizens are also starting to get involved in a different way, via cell phones. At the same time as the cell phone recording of Saddam Hussein's hanging was going around the world, we had some interesting incidents where citizens sent mobile phone photos to newspapers. Strangely, they all involved politicians or government officials abusing alcohol. Audiences are starting to have their say publicly, on web sites, on the radio and through text message voting; and citizens are starting to get involved by using their cell phones and digital cameras. Importantly, editors are using new media to mobilise and counteract threats to media freedom.

To answer my initial questions: No, new media are not yet giving a voice to the voiceless, though they are increasing the participation of the middle class. Internet publishing has not improved journalism, though there is now a bit of extra information available online.



Radio Contributes to Recovery in Rwanda

In the period leading up to and during the Rwandan genocide in 1994, a radio station called Radio des Mille Collines acquired a vile reputation for whipping up hatred and instigating mass murder.

Today, another radio station, Contact FM, is among the independent media that is attempting to heal the wounds and return Rwanda to normality.

It is a reminder that in certain circumstances, what are generally regarded as “old media” can also be regarded as belonging to the new along with the Internet, mobile phones and other devices.

“Since 1994, Rwanda is aspiring for a new life, and everything in the country is new. Even what seems old in other places is really new in Rwanda,” said Contact FM’s Albert R. Bryon.

But he said starting up the station was a real challenge after the war, when the media was mediocre and mistrusted and there were few journalists with any professional background or training.

“In Africa it is difficult to talk about freedom of the press when the problem is the level of the press,” Bryon said.

Most of the post-genocide consisted of tabloids rather than serious information newspapers, and broadcasting was a monopoly of the state, Bryon added. He praised President Paul Kagame for liberalising the air waves and appointing a media regulator.

That enabled Bryon and a group of friends to set up Contact FM. To get a broadcasting licence, “All I had to do was show a business plan and have an editor with a professional background,” he said. There was no question of self-censorship. “When I got my license, the only thing I was told to do was to be professional.”

Contact FM puts out three news bulletins a day in four languages. It seeks to foster regional integration and to be as inclusive as possible. For example, it gives time every Friday to the minority Islamic community and broadcasts reports from Mecca. It reaches out to a young listenership and supports local musicians rather than only playing records by Michael Jackson.

The station has hosted two live debates with the President, one of two hours and the other of three and half.

“We created our own web site and now suddenly we were linking to the diaspora,” Bryon said. Suddenly, the station had a large following in the United States and Belgium -- some 60,000 listeners a month.

The web site led to partnerships and joint programming with radio stations in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, introducing a regional perspective in the divided Great Lakes region.

The challenge is how to convert on-air popularity to income. “We do not want to be a non-profit,” Bryon said. “We want to find new solutions and be profitable so that we can attract valuable staff members.”

Accelerating Calendar of Change

Fabricio Altamirano
CEO, El Diario de Hoy, El Salvador
Chairman, Internet Committee, Inter American Press Association.

During a Berkeley University podcast about the history of the United States, a chapter about slavery caught my attention. The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 outlawed slavery but, Dr. Jennifer Burns noted, achieved nothing for American-born, African descendants, beyond their freedom.

The change in their economic and social condition was absolutely zero, and it would take almost 100 years and the advent of the 1960s Civil Rights movement for African-American citizens to achieve equality. Only then, did deeply established cultural biases begin to turn around, eventually to be overcome.

Developing democracies are called developing precisely because such long-established mass attitudes persist.

Abuse of power, ideological ties, corruption and plain ignorance undermine the efficient deployment and management of public institutions on behalf of citizens. Such obstacles can take decades, or a century to overcome, even after essential victories have been achieved.

The purpose of this brief reflection is to shed light on the role of new media and their contributions to the development of our immature democracies.

By making available alternative facts to the “official story,” these media are helping to collapse the calendar of change. They are creating a sort of Wiki-democracy, where the intervention of qualified “mass participants” substitutes accurate knowledge and universal values for the official version.

The new media and access to them are critical tools for democracies to correct themselves, and for citizens to become aware of their governments’ abuses and violations of human rights, including, of course, the right to be informed.

As a representative of the Inter American Press Association, which collectively represents the major newspapers of the American Continents, I assure you that we are trying to make sense of the infinite possibilities of the Internet.

Our organisations, some more than others, are in the middle of profound transformations, in the process of becoming multimedia news organisations.

Traditional newsrooms accustomed to closing editions at the end of the day, are refocusing on the concept of “continuous news” in which newspapers “close” frequently to bring fresh editions to audiences on the web and other e-devices.

In many cases, our digital audience is at least as large as our print audience, but we are struggling to make money out of it. The web sites provide only 4 or 5 per cent of the advertising revenue that we get from newspaper ad sales. The New York Times is way ahead of the curve.

Newspapers are not the only ones struggling, The television business model is certainly being challenged by technologies such as TIVO or podcasting where any episode of any TV series can be watched through the web.

It is also sobering to reflect that MTV, an organization that we in the traditional media consider to be masters of the youth audience, has had absolutely no growth in web site traffic. Instead, traffic on social networking sites such as YouTube and MySpace goes through the roof. If MTV has not been able to figure it out, it is no surprise that the traditional media have not been able to either.

We are not quite sure where this is all taking us. But, as traditional media, we are collectively certain that our role is to serve and promote the voice of the general citizenry, and become centres of gravity for their navigation and information needs on the Internet.

As traditional media, the one thing we can really control is the quality of our content, but produced instead in multimedia formats. We must learn how to close our editions continuously, or we do not stand a chance. And we must be keenly aware of the various other centres to which our audience gravitate, including sites such as Second Life.

What will happen when the online generation comes of age? The world as we know it is still con-

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

trolled by those of us who are digital immigrants and who by definition control the bulk of the gross national product of our countries.

We cannot begin to fully understand what the consequences to traditional media organizations will be when the digital natives control the bulk of the world economies.

During the “WE Media” in Miami in Feb 2006 I heard the phrase “e-mail is for old people.” It was meant to be a provocative, but it was a sober reminder of how little we understand the

world of the digital natives and the dynamic of their communication and information needs.

A few months ago, there was much discussion about budgeting for Newspapers in Education programmes, which focus on teaching young children how to read the newspaper.

I provocatively suggested that instead we should send some newspaper editors back to school to learn how to think like young people – as opposed to having them think like us.



New Media Under Challenge :

According to research by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), online journalists and editors make up the fastest growing group of journalists behind bars worldwide. The following two sessions at the conference dealt with the challenges and problems facing the new media in the new democracies and in countries where Internet journalism is under threat.

Abi Wright, the CPJ's Communications Director, who moderated the next session, said countries like China, Iran, Somalia and Russia are places where online journalists are testing the boundaries of press freedom and where the challenges are readily apparent.

"We at CPJ," she said, "see governments using national security legislation to silence new media writers and journalists in countries like China, where more than half of the 31 journalists in jail are web based; and in Iran, where the government rotates bloggers in and out of jail as punishment,; and in Russia, where security laws have also been used against writings about sensitive issues such as the war in Chechnya."

The Russian Experience: Vague Rules, Worrying Precedents

Anton Nossik
Chief Blogs Officer, LiveJournal.com, Moscow

In any society, be it a Western democracy or an Islamic theocracy, once blogs and online forums grow influential enough, they start getting unfavourable attention from all sorts of parties, including authorities, courts, individuals and corporations – all alleging some sort of wrongdoing and seeking remedies.

Both this attention and those remedies vary significantly, depending on local jurisdiction and legal tradition.

In totalitarian regimes, bloggers put themselves at risk by voicing unorthodox views, contradicting the reigning ideology, criticizing the political and/or economic system and making irreverent comments about rulers.

In Western democracies, bloggers need not worry about such risks. But they have other chal-

lenges to consider. A survey, conducted among U.S.-based bloggers by MIT researchers in 2004 revealed that 12 per cent of those surveyed personally knew other bloggers who had encountered legal or professional problems because of things they wrote in their blogs.

These problems mostly concerned such matters as copyright violations or disclosure of proprietary information, whether personal or corporate.

In Russia, by contrast, the Internet enjoys an impressive degree of freedom of speech, of which the state-controlled TV channels and the printed media can only dream these days. Regulations range from lax to nonexistent. Russia has many laws, regulating expression of certain views, which could be applied to Internet forums and blogs, but so far it has not happened.

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

Russia, therefore, has few examples of bloggers, online publishers and forum contributors or owners getting in trouble for their articles, posts or comments displayed on the Net. There have been probably not more than three dozen cases nationwide, ranging from students dismissed from colleges to mass media publications ordered shut by courts.

Given Russia's 26-million strong Internet audience (with 1,45 million blogs written in Russian) 30 cases do not seem serious. And they're definitely dwarfed by the 12 percent of bloggers mentioned in the MIT research.

Still, some of those cases do deserve examination, since any of practices already seen might become more common and widespread in the future:

- Two students were expelled from universities for posting criticism of their professors and institutions as a whole; in both cases, the wording of the criticism was quite profane.
 - A civil lawsuit was filed and lost by a journalist, whose ethics were questioned in comments in a private blog.
 - A criminal case was opened against a journalist, who used strong language to criticize the governor of his region.
 - A forum regular was sent to a mental institution for posting racially charged remarks. The prosecution accepted the suggestion to treat the defendant for schizophrenia. Several racists have been prosecuted for hate speech – punishable under Article 282 of the Russian criminal code – on their sites and forums.
 - A Ukrainian youth living in Novosibirsk is on trial for racist remarks he made in a Ukraine-based forum. It might be that his writings are punishable under Russian law, but there is no legal way to start investigation in Russia about the contents of a foreign web site, not required or expected to abide by Russian laws.
- The government ordered the closing of an information agency because of an anonymous anti-Islamic comment on its online forum; the order was challenged in court.
 - Two online media web sites, in the Komi and Altai regions, were ordered shut (and one was even “confiscated”) for lack of publishing licenses. In fact, Russian law does not require any web site or individual to obtain a license.
 - A court ordered the physical destruction of a computer after the owner was found guilty of insulting President Putin. The judge apparently did not realize, that there are easier ways to remove offending information from a hard disk, than to scrap an entire computer.
 - A consumer forum was fined 8,000,000 rubles (U.S.\$275,000) for an anonymous comment criticizing the Troika-Stal steel trading company. Being unable to establish the author of the post, the company sued the forum's owners, and won on appeal.

Legislation has been drafted with no regard to Internet specifics; carrier doctrine is not formulated anywhere; indemnity clauses are very flexible, and they get bent arbitrarily, particularly by local authorities that have a serious influence over law enforcement and the courts in various regions of Russia

There are no clear-cut criteria for defining offensive speech. Interpretation is arbitrary, as is the choice of experts supplying courts with opinions.

Judges are extremely illiterate about Internet and computer-related issues, and there is no system in place to educate them or the drafters of Internet-related laws.

Neither the Supreme Court nor appeals courts have been involved in litigation about online media, blogs or forums, meaning that lower court judges have nowhere to look for guidance.

After the 2008 Olympics in China, What Next for Press Freedom ?

Sharon Hom
Executive Director, Human Rights in China, New York

China has intensified its censorship and crackdowns on independent voices and human rights defenders, and the overall human rights situation continues to deteriorate seriously. It devotes extensive resources to maintaining its ongoing censorship and repression of the media, the Internet, NGOs, political and religious expression, and control of the courts.

The post-Tiananmen “bargain” of silence – don’t ask, get rich – never legitimate to begin with, is breaking down under the pressures of endemic corruption, growing social inequalities and unrest, and serious environmental, public health, and social welfare challenges. Yet, China’s exponential growth and the lucrative potential of its huge market, have largely shaped how international business and foreign governments often allow trade interests to trump human rights. The role of international media and the international community in maintaining attention to these issues and supporting an independent press in China has never been more critical.

What is “old media” (such as radio, telegraph, television, fixed line telephones, mail) and what is “new” (web sites, blogs, Wikis, podcasts, e-mail, mobile phones) is interrelated and the shifts from new to old are also increasing faster. In the rapid time frame of continuously developing technology, virtual worlds, hypertext fiction, interactive television; Internet telephony, and “Second Life” now compete with life outside of virtual reality. But not everyone in the world has access to the “new” media; and not everyone has access even to “old” media.

The vast majority of people in the world cannot even live a decent “first” life – one with access to clean drinking water, housing, jobs that provide a living wage, health care and education. The discussion of new media challenges and opportunities must be grounded in these material human realities – and size and scale matter. Just compare for example the population of the city of Paris of 2.15 million, or the total EU population of 493 million, the total population of France of about 61 million, with China’s population of more than 1.3 billion.

With more than 300 million people without access to clean drinking water, 700 million rural inhabitants without access to basic health care, between 120-140 million rural to urban migrants seeking jobs, housing, and education for their children, China is grappling with growing social and economic inequality that is also fueling rising social unrest and protests. Despite the spread of new media, 400 million mobile phone subscribers (2006), more than 137 million Internet users (January, 2007), 20.8 million bloggers (2006), a cavernous gap between the technology haves and have-nots also reflects the other social and economic inequalities in sharp relief in China.

The free flow of information and an independent press is critical to understand the complex human rights problems facing China, and essential to ensuring an informed, vibrant citizenry that can contribute to solving the serious health, environmental, corruption, and social problems. Yet, China has invested heavily in development of a state-of-the-art technology infrastructure of firewalls and content filtering, supported by a police and security apparatus, and a comprehensive, though not necessarily coherent nor transparent, legal regulatory framework.

The legal structure includes a broad framework of national security, criminal and state secrets laws, and media and Internet regulations. The Legal Daily (Fazhibao) reported on Feb. 14, 2007, that a number of additional new regulations would be announced this year covering publications management, receipt and dissemination of publications to individuals and organizations overseas, video games, electronic publication, and Internet regulations

China’s Internet filtering regime is the most pervasive, sophisticated, and effective in the world. With multiple levels of regulation and technical control, the system involves numerous state agencies and thousands of public and private personnel, and diverse ways of censoring content transmitted by multiple methods, including web pages, web logs, on-line discussion forums, university bulletin board systems, and e-mail messages.

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

An Open Network Initiative (ONI) report documented efforts to prevent access to a wide range of sensitive materials, from pornography to religion to political dissent. However, the majority of contents blocked were political. web sites containing content related to Taiwanese and Tibetan independence, Falun Gong, the Dalai Lama, the Tiananmen Square incident, opposition political parties, or a variety of anti-Communist movements.

In addition to information censorship and the problem of “not knowing what you don’t know,” there is a vast universe of information that most Chinese are not permitted to access under the comprehensive state secrets system. The ruling elite wields one of the most powerful tools to maintain its political and social control – information control through a comprehensive and non-transparent state secrets system. Defined as “matters that affect the security and interests of the state,” the disclosure of “state secrets” can result in criminal, administrative, and party sanctions. Specific regulations set forth specific provisions on classification, handling, and dissemination of state secrets in a wide range of areas, such as news publishing, labour issues, ethnic minorities, religion, environment, family planning, land use, social security, health, social sciences, and the judiciary.

There are three levels of classification: top secret, highly secret, and secret. Information can be classified because of projected harm if disclosed and also can be classified retroactively, based upon “consequences” (houguo). A separate category of internal information, although not within the levels of state secrets classifications, can also be treated as state secrets. Some examples of these classifications will illustrate the all-encompassing and vague nature of the state secrets system.

Top secret: Basic information on illegal organizations/unlawful civil organization (Ministry of Civil Affairs regulations, 2000); tactics, strategies and measures adopted in handling major incidents in foreign relations and cultural activities with foreign nations that involve our country’s reputation (Ministry of Culture, National Administration for the Protection of State Secrets, 1995 Implementing Regulation).

Highly secret: collections of maps, old books that contain information on borders in dispute between China and neighboring countries; propa-

ganda guidelines strategies and measures used in cultural work with sensitive foreign nations or regions (MOC, 1995 regulations); statistics on number of induced abortions (Ministry of Health, 1996 regulation)

Secret: compiled data on trafficking (All China Women’s Federation, 1991 regulation)

Yet, in the face of dominant media narratives about China as an economic power house and the success of information control, international and domestic observers are often misled about the full impact of this state secrets system on transparency, accountability, and human rights.

The final 2007 lead-up to the Beijing Olympics in 2008 presents a moment of opportunity and challenge. China’s Olympics host commitments include: mounting a “High-Tech Olympics” investing in information society; using the Olympics to support economic and social development; “Green Olympics”; and transparent government throughout the Olympic process. China has also stated that it will adopt tight, but friendly and peaceful, security measures; peaceful demonstrations will be permitted; and complete freedom of the press authorized.

Despite these commitments, the Chinese authorities have continued crackdowns on freedom of expression; the gap between urban and rural development continues to grow; the severe environmental challenges posed by degradation of air and water, toxic waste spills and dumping, and land erosion; and massive evictions related to Olympic site construction have been reported. No complete and open assessment of the preparations work to date has been issued.

In January 2007, Premier Wen Jiabao signed a decree that allows foreign journalists to report more freely during the Beijing Olympic Games and the preparatory period. The regulations expire on October 17, 2008, and do not apply to local Chinese journalists. The regulations allow foreign journalists to interview individuals after simply seeking their consent, no longer requiring approval by the authorities. However, the extent of this announced improvement may still be curtailed by other contradictory regulations governing emergency responses and state secrets.

Further control was exerted over the media with the imposition of a pre-approval rule on coverage of politically sensitive topics. In an internal docu-

ment released to state-run media in January 2007, the Publicity Department of the Communist Party's Central Committee said the media should seek permission to cover historic events or anniversaries involving controversial or politically sensitive revolutionary or political figures.

In January 2007, Reuters reporters were allowed to travel to Hohhot, to interview Xinna, wife of Hada, who was imprisoned in China in 1995 for his peaceful promotion of human rights and Mongolian culture, and interviewed Bao Tong, former director of the Office of Political Reform of the Communist Party Central Committee, who was arrested in Beijing for his support of the democracy movement in Tiananmen Square. But restrictions for all foreigners on travel to the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and the Tibet Autonomous Region still apply to journalists (despite new regulations). A request to interview human rights lawyer Zheng Enchong was also turned down because he has been "deprived of his political rights."

When questioned about the denial of access to foreign journalists planning to visit Tibet, Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Jiang Yu, responded at a press conference Feb. 13, 2007: "The new regulations should be abided by generally when foreign journalists conduct reporting activities in Tibet and elsewhere. Meanwhile, due to restraints in natural conditions and reception capabilities, Tibetan local authorities have some regulations for foreigners' access there, which should be abided by. Please contact the local foreign affairs office for conducting reporting activities in Tibet."

But even if the regulations open up greater space for foreign journalists, will they stay in place after 2008 or will China just reinstate its old foreign media restrictions? In a press interview in early 2007, Cai Wu, of the Information Office of the State Council, stated: "If the new regulations prove beneficial to our development and to exchanges between us and the foreign media, and if they aid communication with the international community, then I imagine there will be no need to change the policy." This leaves open what will be considered "beneficial" and who determines that. The double standard applied to Chinese journalists, subject to considerably greater restrictions, also raises concerns about the commitment to loosening controls on the media once

the pressure and international spotlight moves off Beijing after 2008.

As part of an integrated advocacy strategy, Human Rights in China is in the fourth year of an adaptive technology project focused on promoting the uncensored flow of information into and out of China. The project includes development of online resources and tools, the delivery of the Huaxiabao, a weekly e-newsletter of news and analyses and the provision of proxy links for accessing the World Wide Web from behind China's firewalls and censorship.

Internet user traffic from China to HRIC's web sites and other statistical data, as well as qualitative reader feedback, makes it clear that despite the considerable control system, individuals want to access and disseminate uncensored information. The Huaxiabao, sent to more than 280,000 China mainland subscribers each week, and articles from our monthly electronic journal, Ren Yu Ren Quan, are re-posted extensively on other Chinese web sites. Visitors to 64memo.com, HRIC's online archive project on the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, increased to more than 1.7 million in 2006, from 1.5 million in 2005 and 570,000 in 2004.

As part of our efforts to develop more multimedia online resources, HRIC also launched a podcast series of interviews with participants of the 1989 democracy and labour movements. In 2006, the podcasts were downloaded more than 28,000 times in the first seven months of the project. Despite official censorship and labeling of the 1989 democracy movement as a counterrevolutionary movement instigated by "black hand" outsiders, the stories told on these podcasts, and the discussions published in our electronic publications preserve a part of the record, contributing to a foundation for future accounting and truth-telling for past mass human rights violations.

As a new media tool, the Internet remains fluid and complex – with great potential for empowering uses and misuses. However, the virtual genie is out of the bottle – and it will be impossible to force it back. The question is who and what agenda will it serve. The answer to this challenge will depend ultimately on Chinese people themselves, but international actors, including foreign governments, corporations, and media, have important roles to play.

Internet vs. Censorship in Iran

Karin Deutsch Karlekar
Freedom House, New York

The environment for media in Iran is extremely hostile. Freedom House's annual press freedom survey for 2006 placed it in 180th place out of 194 for media independence world-wide.

Since 2000, Iranian courts have banned more than 100 newspaper and magazine publications critical of the regime, forcing reformist journalists to abandon the profession or turn to blogs and the Internet to express their views.

Most people, more than 80 per cent, receive their news from television. The government maintains a monopoly over all broadcast media, which present only official political and religious viewpoints.

However, polls conducted by the ISNA News Agency showed that Iranians trust the Internet more than any other media outlet.

Iran has experienced a dramatic growth in Internet usage: In a population of about 70 million, there were roughly 1 million users in 2001, about 7 million in 2005 (10 per cent of the population), and expected growth to 25 million by 2009.

There are estimated to be 75,000 blogs in Farsi and a myriad of news and information web sites. Persian is one of the most common languages on the Internet, after English and Chinese. The industry in Iran for catering to these many users is expanding. Iran has more than 650 different Internet Service Providers.

The increased censorship faced by traditional media outlets coupled with the growing number of Internet consumers in Iran has increased the importance of Internet journalism in providing independent news to Iranians.

There are no Internet-specific laws on content to date in Iran, but the state imposes strong controls on Internet material using the 2000 Press Law, which forbids publication of ideas contrary to Islamic principles or detrimental to public interest.

Article 500 of the penal code says, "Anyone who undertakes any form of propaganda against the state ... will be sentenced to between three months and one year in prison" and leaves "propaganda" undefined.

Current proposals would require bloggers inside Iran to register their complete information with

authorities, a measure that could radically decrease the number of citizens willing to blog openly from within the country.

The law requires Internet Service Providers to install filtering mechanisms that cover both web sites and e-mails. Iran, along with China, is among a small group of states with the most sophisticated Internet filtering system – a system that was widely expanded after the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Internet Service Providers can face legal action if they do not comply with the official filtering lists; as of 2005, more than 10 ISPs had been shut down for not installing filters. Individuals who subscribe to ISPs must promise in writing not to access "non-Islamic" sites.

Tests conducted by the OpenNet Initiative in 2005 showed that the sites most commonly blocked by the Internet filters were ones containing material on sex, religion, politics, gay / lesbian / bisexual issues, and news in Farsi. All pornography sites or sites containing sexual images were blocked. Compared to their English-language equivalents,

Farsi-language web sites are significantly more likely to be blocked by the censors.

Similarly, Internet censorship continues to be more of a problem for domestically located Iranian web sites than for international organizations.

The government has sought to limit the spread of blogs by blocking popular web sites that offer free publishing tools for blogs. In 2003, Iran became the first country to imprison a blogger for views expressed online.

According to Article 19, since this first incident, more than 28 bloggers and online journalists have been imprisoned on charges including insulting the Supreme Guide, propaganda against the regime, threatening national security, incitement to rebellion, and insulting leading political or religious figures.

This trend increased in 2004, when the judiciary (relying on unaccountable intelligence and security forces) specifically began to target online journalists, bloggers, and technical support staff in an effort to quash this flourishing new medium.

International web sites are not as frequently cen-

sored. In January 2005, however, the BBC reported that its Farsi web site, the most popular of its non-English-language sites (30 million page views a month) was blocked.

Despite considerable efforts by the government to control Internet content and access, Iranian web sites continue to express opinions that the country's print media would not be allowed to carry. But the high incidence of imprisonment for Internet dissent and blocking of web sites considered out of line with 'Iranian social values' has added self-censorship to Iranian blogs that was not present online five years ago.

With the intensification of online censorship in Iran, international news media have an increased role to play in getting independent news and information to the Iranian public.

While there are Iran-focused web sites like Iranian (www.iranian.com), Gooya (www.gooya.com) and Payvand (www.payvand.com), these serve as central portals for the Iranian diaspora, and it is doubtful that they are accessible within Iran.

In the last few years a number of projects have arisen to bring independent information into and about Iran. Among them are the Gozaar project run by Freedom House, Radio Farda run by Radio Free Europe and Voice of America, the Persian Impediment web site run by Article 19 (www.persianimpediment.org), as well as Rooz Online (www.roozonline.com) and Radio Zamaneh, both funded by the Dutch government. There are other Iran-focused projects that operate quietly and do not publicize their work.

Gozaar, meaning transition in Farsi, is a monthly online journal devoted to discussion of democracy and human rights issues in Iran. It was launched in September 2006 and has since published six full issues. Most documents published by the journal are originally written in Farsi by Iranians, both those

inside and abroad. The magazine offers all of its contents in both Farsi and English and features a diversity of political views.

Gozaar has proven successful at generating debate since its articles have been reprinted in other reputable journals, web sites, and list-serves, and the variety of ideas expressed by Gozaar's contributors have been heatedly discussed in other publications, the Iranian and international blogospheres, and in Gozaar itself. Its editors receive e-mails daily with candid views on the journal's content.

More than 35 per cent of readers live in Iran, while 31 per cent are in the United States and the rest in Canada and Europe. There are already more than 5,000 on the mailing list and the web site had more than 1 million hits within the first three months of publication. The web site is equipped with anti-blocking and anti-attack security precautions.

The Gozaar web site was first blocked in mid-December 2006 (three months after the launch) after a reference to it appeared on an Iranian blog. Now, we change domain name once a week, then send information to Gozaar subscribers on how to access the magazine from within Iran.

There was a drop in traffic after the first block, but since the new methods at evading the blocks were introduced, traffic has returned almost to previous levels.

One question raised by the Gozaar experience is whether it is better to publicize such efforts and raise awareness of them but then also have them be subjected to attempts at blocking? Or should such projects be kept underground, potentially able to function without blocking?

In such a closed media environment, international efforts remain a key element in helping to expand diverse and unfiltered channels of information and to offer solidarity and support to local journalists, bloggers, and activists.

New Media Spread in Somalia, One of World's Poorest Countries

Omar Faruk Osman
Secretary General, National Union of Somali Journalists, Mogadishu

The media first emerged in Somalia, one of the world's poorest and least developed countries, during the colonial era, when Britain established Radio Hargeisa in the north in 1948 and Italy founded Radio Mogadishu in the south in 1952.

The two radio stations, in English and Italian with a small portion of their content translated into Somali, supported the colonizers' political objectives. There were also a few newspapers in Arabic, English and Italian.

After the two parts of Somalia gained their independence and unified, the two radio stations were handed over to the Ministry of Information of the Somal Republic's first civilian government. Because of financial and other weaknesses, the media did not develop during the nine years of civilian rule. The Somalis were mostly illiterate and the script of the Somali language was not developed.

After the overthrow of the civilian government by military forces led by Mohammed Siad Barre, everything was placed under military control, including the media. Establishment of any kind of independent or privately owned media was banned. That repression lasted for 21 years.

The fall of Siad Barre led to the appearance of the first independent newspaper. Although ownership of the broadcast media in the 1990s was dominated by warlords, comparatively independent electronic media emerged in the late 1990s

Since 2000, six independent newspapers, nearly 20 private radio stations and three independent televisions have begun operating in Somalia. Online media have made a strong appearance. Somalis in the diaspora also launched various web sites.

Almost 200 Somali web sites are currently available. But most defend the interests of clans or sub-clans rather than the public in general. There are about 34 privately owned and news-oriented web sites, mostly hosted and administered in Europe, the United States, Canada, and Asia. Tens of thousands of Somalis access these sites daily.

The work of these new media significantly benefits Somali nationals in the diaspora as well as at home. A growing number of citizens in the country log onto these web sites daily. Competing Internet

Service Providers and reasonable prices in relation to local living standards have fostered this growth.

Wireless telecommunication for Internet was established in Mogadishu three years ago. The provider of this service, Wireless African Broadband Telecommunication, supplies high-speed Internet access and has attracted large numbers of Somali users.

The prolonged clan-based hostilities that have severely ravaged the Horn of Africa nation have endangered the life of the ordinary citizens and media personnel alike. Attacks on the press and impunity have created a discouraging atmosphere.

The new media are up against exceptional aggressions by individuals who fear the mounting influence of online media in Somali society and the ever-increasing use of the Internet by Somalis around the world.

Some of the top figures in Somali politics discount the new media and try to challenge its work and importance. For example, one of the ex-warlords, now in the transitional government, calls Internet media the "forum of hearsay."

Many politicians have hired monitors to watch for anything on the web that could affect their interests. Rights of online journalists are infringed not only because of what they write personally but also because of anything else on the web sites they work for.

Online journalists always have problems getting paid for their contributions and their expenses. Some have not been paid for months. The inadequate and sporadic pay of online media workers has made some of them open to corruption, fear and dishonesty. Professionalism and ethical standards are very limited since online media executives do not encourage them. Media development organizations largely concentrate on aiding and training professionals in the print and broadcast media.

If the new media are to thrive and maintain their vital role of informing the populace about news and current affairs accurately, fairly and fearlessly, then special development programmes should be designed to build their capacities, particularly in countries where there is conflict or in transition.

News Online :

Grappling with the Market

Sankarshan Thakur
Executive Editor, Tehelka, New Delhi

India is an extremely complex news and online environment. It probably has in excess of a hundred 24-hour news channels. The number of daily newspapers is even greater. The density of mobile telephony thickens by the hour. Each day, the Internet spins its web wider. The media and telecommunications are among the more insistent of the many simultaneous revolutions we live in. The market, which spurs them, is the other, perhaps greater, revolution. The one thread that binds the new world: global, connected. India is in merry embrace of that electric thread, enthralled by its energies.

Yet, when four members of a lowly, untouchable family were butchered by a mob barely an hour's journey out of Mumbai – the women raped and left to die, the men merely bludgeoned – nobody got to know about it for a whole month.

Breaking news hadn't gone out of fashion. The newspapers weren't on strike. But the terrible news of the massacre at Kherlanji was not heard. It was the silence that screamed in the face of the empowered media.

My case has always been that freedom of the press is not an issue in India. The country has had a vibrant, fiercely independent press whose recent marriage with the market has spawned a huge explosion. The issue in India is not about freedom but how it is used. It is about the intents and purposes of freedom. The media's role in democracies cannot be over-emphasized. Information is critical to liberal democracies and if the media do not or cannot bring news of the non-affluent majority to the affluent minority, it is not merely negating itself, it is posing a danger to civil society.

Most news today, and I am sorry to say this, tends to be advertisements. The new SUV on the market, the celebrity liaison, the new mobile facility – the catch-phrases are “feel good” and “news you can use.” And this happens, most of the time at the expense of items like the Kherlanji killing.

Bad news about people who are not like us does not sit well with pretty advertising in media that are too comfortable in their conspiracy of profits

with the market.

As a result, affluent Indians, or most Indians who live in the big cities, are often not aware of critical issues in their country, such as unending drought and debt-cycles that have led more than 100,000 farmers to commit suicide in the country's south over the last decade', a massive immigration overflow in the north-east or a sectarian war that has reduced hundreds of thousands of Muslims to living as second class citizens in the west. Even simple things like the fact that most Indian villages do not have electricity, drinking water and primary health and education facilities go unreported.

Some estimates have it that there are in excess of 3 million Indian bloggers today. Most of them must reside outside India. That is not to say that there isn't an active community of bloggers within India and I have to say some of them do an excellent job of keeping the news flowing. Intimations of the Kherlanji massacre, in fact, came to us through a blogger.

But while India has a fairly intense online environment, it also lacks hugely for density. 88 per cent of Indians have no access to the web. And I am very sure those who have daily access account for less than 5 per cent of the country.

The achievements that technology has brought to the media cannot be undermined, but in an economically disparate country like India, where literacy rates remain low, technology can lead to parallaxes of judgment.

An online or a television poll on a critical issue, for instance, will announce 80 per cent of Indians think this or that on such and such issue. 80 per cent? We need absolute numbers to be sure where national opinion lies, but nobody gives them to us. You may have merely a hundred people doing a phone-in or log-in poll, yet their opinions get enlarged to represent national reality. These are dangerous distortions.

We in the media need to be aware, careful and honest about whom we represent, and whom we might be misrepresenting all the time. At Tehelka,

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

we feel constantly goaded by the sense that we cannot represent or reach the large mass of people. Our on-line and print editions can only be accessed by people who know English and who belong to a certain economic class. That makes for a tiny minority.

But this minority forms opinions and makes the decisions. And this is why the free media in India are critical. They have to act as a bridge between the haves and the have-nots, and tell the affluent minority what's happening with the struggling majority.

The media must be like dogs barking to instil sense in those who occupy favoured spaces in an utterly skewed society.

Be patient with the market, we are told. Be patient with the faith that good things will come. The market has done what the government never has. It has sent mineral water into the heart of drought, it has planted phones in the wilderness, it has flown paupers into the sky, it has washed your tomatoes and

put them in cellophane with a use-by date.

The more you cede to it, we are told, the better things will get. The market has proved its prowess. It has blown barriers, mindsets, ideologies, empires. It wages on, relentless, powered by its intrinsic dynamics.

But the market is not a creature of our choosing. You never get to elect it. You cannot send it packing. It is not a democracy. It is not a welfare state. It is not an entity of selfless promise. It is an entity of profit.

It will not, and cannot, do what the State does, or should. It certainly will not do what we meant our State to do, it bears no liabilities to us as our constitution and all of our structures of State do, or are meant to.

The market will not fetch water to the last man. It will not inoculate and educate our children. It will not bother with the correction of prejudice. It will not be held to the lofty ideals of man – liberty, equality, justice, unless they serve the cause of profit.

Industry Perspectives

Representatives of two major players in the new media arena, Neil Budde, General Manager of Yahoo! News, and Monique Villa, Managing Director of Reuters, made visual presentations.

“I’ve watched with some trepidation as my fellow journalists have reported in very stark black and white terms what are clearly very nuanced issues around press freedom online and the role of different companies,” Budde said. “But I’ve been excited to watch as our corporate executives have taken a leadership position in helping foster multi-stakeholder discussions with some of the folks in this room from NGOs and human rights organizations to develop principles under which companies can and should operate.

“I’m not here, however, to represent that part of Yahoo! I do speak as the editor-in-chief of Yahoo! News, Yahoo! Finance and Yahoo! Sports in the United States. I also speak as a long-time advocate of new media, having led the team that created the Wall Street Journal Online, beginning in the mid-1990s.

“I believe that one goal of a free press is to have a multitude of voices. With the largest online news sites garnering more and more of the users’ time, it becomes more important that the large players help provide ways to surface a wider range of voices. That is why I’ve worked hard at making Yahoo! News a place where other news media will find a willing partner.

“We are not simply an aggregator crawling other sites and organizing them with machines. We strike relationships with partners. We have editorial staff. We start with real-time news wires.

Probably 90 per cent of our traffic is from that tier. So there are really only three voices from which the vast Yahoo audience is getting most of its news. We are very happy and pleased with our relationship with the agencies, but we are

looking to interact with other premium partners, other large publishers who want to reach a wider audience through Yahoo! News.”

Budde said Yahoo also is teaming up with newspapers to provide local news coverage. “What’s in it for us?” he asked. “Not a lot of page views because the links lead out. But it strengthens ties with readers.”

He said newspapers needed to work with Yahoo! “because that is where the traffic is.” Yet, he said readers truly wanted a multitude of voices and not just the views coming from the large wire services.

Reuters is one of the agencies serving Yahoo! Monique Villa said it is the world’s largest news and financial information services, with 2,400 journalists in 196 bureaus, reporting in 19 languages and with 16 million visitors to its web site, Reuters.com, every month.

She said the Internet has profoundly changed the nature of newsgathering. “Publishers today no longer decide what people see and when they see it. You can read, publish comment and pass on from your own laptop. Pass on is the key phrase here. News can be absolutely viral.”

Villa cited the example of the Danish Mohamed cartoons controversy. “This has taught us that the assumptions of yesterday cannot be applied any longer tomorrow. In the past if a small Danish

newspaper published a set of provocative cartoons, the rest of the world would see them only if distinguished editors decided to republish them. In this case, most news organizations decided to hold back on these cartoons, but it made no odds. Across the world, people who wanted to see for themselves were almost immediately doing just that on the Internet. So the Internet has completely globalized information.

“As a blog is created every second, we are now embracing the world of the bloggers, too,” *she said, adding that the company is introducing new platforms supporting blogs and citizen journalism.* “Reuters has adapted, certainly, but still holds absolutely sacrosanct straight fact-based reporting, reporting without spin and without editorializing. Reliability and trust are absolutely our principles. We have kept our standards, whether reporting a war or a corporate takeover or a film premiere...”

“Professional and amateur content combined create a better product. It no longer tells you what to think. It is a conversation...”

“We cannot restrain the march of technology and we have to constantly adapt and be engaged if we want to survive – and for Reuters it is a question of surviving. This is one of the reasons why we invested in Second Life, where we opened a bureau last summer.”

New Media Advances in Latin America

By Rosental Calmon Alves
Knight Chair in Journalism/UNESCO Chair in Communication, University of Texas

I have never seen a coup d’etat manual in Latin America. But if there were one, it would say that after or while seizing or attacking the presidential palace and other strategic points in the capital city, the military should also send troops to the broadcast towers and studios, and to the newsrooms. That was routine in Latin American coups. Censorship must be established right away for the coup to succeed. And usually it was so effective that the dictator would not relinquish it even when he was so powerful that it became useless. Censorship was only replaced by self-censorship, which is the worst form of censorship.

Covering coups and dictatorships in Latin America for years, I have always been amazed by the effectiveness of censorship. Yes, there was the word of mouth, there were some international radio stations that helped to spread what was really going on, but censorship and propaganda were very effective. People really did not know what was going on in their own countries, even when those facts had been in the headlines abroad.

When we examine the impact of new media on freedom of the press in Latin America, we should remember how traditional media in the region have been affected throughout history by those coups,

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

which brought dictatorship, censorship, self-censorship, press controls, corruption, manipulation, propaganda, monopolies and an incredible concentration of ownership in a few hands. In addition to all of that, journalists who dared to dissent would often suffer personally, by way of prison, torture, kidnapping and even assassination. We must also remember how often the media fought for democracy, but also how often the media did not fight because they were part of or in collusion with the anti-democratic forces.

The emergence of the Internet, as part of the digital revolution that is changing the world, coincided with an unprecedented wave of democracy in Latin America. When I was covering those coups, in the 70s and 80s, most of the region was suffering the consequences of dictatorships and direct or indirect censorship that contributed to prevent economic and social development. Democracy has not significantly changed the economic and social problems of the region, but the flow of information and ideas has improved a lot, despite all the problems.

The growth of Internet in the region has been slower than in the developed world, and it is usually shown as a classic example of the digital divide. The statistics indicate that only 16 per cent of the Latin Americans are Internet users. That percentage is exactly the same as the average penetration of Internet among the world population. It pales however, in comparison with the 70 per cent Internet penetration in the United States and Canada, for example.

This reduced Internet penetration can mislead the evaluation of the importance of the medium and the outreach of online journalism in the region. The 26 million users in Brazil or the 20 million users in Mexico represent only 13 per cent or 19 per cent respectively in each of those countries. The percentage could be low, but the absolute number is high and offers enough critical mass for a significant audience that is growing fast and benefiting from the new ways of disseminating and receiving news and information. In the poorest countries of the region, such as Honduras, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Paraguay, for instance, percentages of the population with access and the absolute numbers of users are very low and the infrastructure very bad.

Despite all limitations, Latin America counts on dynamic, creative and increasingly powerful online

journalism that has already extended the audience of traditional media that have ventured into the digital world. All the newspapers in the region that I know have more unique visitors per month to their web sites than the daily circulation of their print editions. And some of them have or are close to having more unique users per day than daily circulation.

In the countries with smaller Internet penetration, the real number of users is much bigger than revealed by the statistics because of the widespread use of public places that charge very little money for Internet access. Although those cyber-café or public booths, by and large, are not used for news consumption, the fact is that millions of people who do not have their own Internet access are becoming citizens of the virtual world and potential news consumers, usually by paying less than half a dollar per hour of access.

As in other parts of the world, new media in Latin America mean more freedom of expression and more freedom of the press. As in the rest of the world, Latin Americans have been experimenting with new ways to communicate, to form communities and to break with the privileges of the traditional media. There is no spectacular example that I am aware of, there is no OhmyNews.com, like the South Korean phenomenon, but there are many examples of how it has become much more difficult to stop information flowing freely.

In 1999, when a judge banned a book a young journalist had published on corruption in the courts of Chile and ordered her arrest, the only thing he achieved was to get many more readers for the book. The text rapidly found its way to the Internet and was posted abroad, out of the reach of the Chilean courts but easily available for Chileans with access. That example was followed in other instances of gag orders or when the media was not interested in publishing certain issues.

Recently, when the press in Peru was reluctant to publish a story about a son the President had out of wedlock, Peruvian bloggers spread the word so effectively that the press had no remedy but to cover the case. The President eventually came out and recognized his son's rights. The blogs may not be as important in the region as it is in other latitudes, but in some countries they are proliferating rapidly and having an impact on journalism and on public life.

In Brazil, for example, Ricardo Noblat, a former newspaper editor and political columnist, was unemployed in 2005 when he started to dedicate his time to covering politics on his blog. A few months later, during a political crisis, his audience was equivalent to the circulation of the big newspapers and the Internet provider offered to pay him a salary, since he was bringing so much audience to their portal. Noblat's blog moved eventually to the web site of one of the largest Brazilian newspapers and then moved again to another paper.

It is an interesting case that illustrates the impact of new media on the freedom of the press. First, it showed that journalism is not a monopoly of media companies anymore since one person can use his or her talent to launch a media outlet and garner an audience. It also showed that the traditional media were not sleeping or ignoring their surroundings. After an initial bout of skepticism, they were able to adopt the blog style – some of the best print columnists became bloggers – and to open their doors to absorb successful bloggers, as in Noblat's case.

Online journalism is still incipient in most of Latin America, but it is growing fast, both in news production and in building up audiences, in spite of the limitations imposed by the digital divide and the 16 per cent Internet penetration. We could just lament that the glass is 84 per cent empty and be pessimistic about the importance of new media in the hemisphere. Or you could celebrate that we already have 16 per cent of the glass full, which offers great opportunities for the dissemination of news and information – and also for new forms of civic participation.

Latin American journalists are starting to recognize that journalism is not a one-way street anymore and that people nowadays want to read but also want to be read. The openness of the media to letting their audience participate more and more by way of forums, commentaries and blogs enrich the freedom of the press as a civic value. It now encompasses not only the right to print freely what journalists want to say and inform, but also opens channels for citizens in general to do the same. Of course, it is not only text. Photos and videos from the audience are finding their way to the web sites of traditional media, creating a new dynamic that may weaken the power the press had before. But it certainly gives the press a chance to survive by becoming more inclusive, more connected with the communities it serves and more open to transforming its work into a conversation, as preached by the civic journalism movement.

This empowerment of citizens through participation in the journalistic process extends to another phenomenon growing especially in South America: the proliferation of media watchers, such as the Observatorio da Imprensa in Brazil. Traditionally, the press has talked about everything but has been reluctant to talk about itself, about its role and especially about its mistakes. The new media have made it possible for the watchdogs in the press to come more and more under the scrutiny of other watchdogs, from citizens in general, who have found new channels to communicate with the media.

There are many other new media dimensions in Latin America, including opportunities for a better coordination among press freedom advocates and opportunities for continuous education of journalists interested in improving their knowledge and the quality of their work and their contribution to the society at large.

At the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas at the University of Texas at Austin, the Internet is in the center of our activities in working with journalists from Latin America and the Caribbean. We combine professional training with organizational capacity building to help journalists interested in improving the standards of journalism in their countries to create their own organizations dedicated to that end. Our work has resulted in creation or strengthening of a new generation of journalists' organizations committed to democracy, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, and the ethical principles of independent and professional journalism.

More than 2,500 journalists from Latin America participate in e-mail discussions in several list-servs that we host at the University of Texas, Austin. It was in one of these lists that hundreds of journalists from Mexico articulated the first national protest over violence against journalists.

Another of those list-servs has been used by provincial journalists from Peru, from the Amazon region to the highlands of the Andean mountains, to organize workshops and seminars that gave them unprecedented opportunities to improve their professional skills and understand complex issues. In Brazil, the discussion led to training on how to cover issues like organized crime and money laundering and also on how to use computer-assisted reporting techniques. Recently in Argentina, the e-mail discussions we sponsor and stimulate resulted in a fascinating debate on the elaboration of a code of ethics that eventually was signed by hundreds of journalist.

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

We also use the Internet to distribute to more than 10,000 journalists a trilingual newsletter with the headlines of news on journalism in the Americas to raise awareness of issues related to press freedom and professional development of journalists.

But maybe the most important project for the Knight Center is a distance-learning project that has already reached hundreds of journalists from virtually all Latin American and Caribbean countries, with online courses of four to six weeks. The multimedia platform we use was built on open source software and we are now transferring the knowhow to local organizations. We are, for example, conducting a course on Investigative journalism, taught by a journalist in southern Argentina and taken by 108 journalists from almost all countries of Latin America.

Journalists must take advantage of the opportunities created by new media, but it is very important that they are also able keep the values and principles of traditional journalism and live up to their responsibilities in democratic societies. At the Knight Center, we try to help journalists improve their work and keep alive independent journalism's values and principles.

We hope that the new media offer an antidote for the information blackouts, censorship and self-censorship that we experienced in Latin America during the years when I was covering coups and military dictatorships in the region. The new media pose new challenges for journalists and new problems, but I believe they expand freedom of expression and give a new dimension to press freedom.

Deep Web, Source of Untapped News

Nora Paul,
Director, Institute for New Media Studies, University of Minnesota

I have heard about the many ways in which new media are presenting challenges and opportunities for strengthening a free press. But one angle that seems to be missing is the responsibility of journalists and of journalism organizations to use the Internet to better inform themselves and their own reporting and to provide access to sometimes difficult to find information.

Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of the United States said, "Information is the currency of Democracy."

220 years later, former reporter and novelist John Katzenbach slightly edited this to read, "Information is the currency of Journalism."

It's the combination of these two notions that I want to raise. There are two important aspects.

First, how can journalists producing for any medium take advantage of the vast array of information that the Internet makes available and possibly circumvent those internal forces that would control or restrict information access?

And secondly, how can online news sites help make available information resources – documents

and data – that help citizens better understand complex or ongoing news events.

In terms of the first issue, I believe that journalists (and in this I would include "citizen journalists" and bloggers) need to become much more sophisticated in their understanding of how to search for information online, how to evaluate the information they find and, how to interpret it for their audiences.

So often, particularly those in countries where information access is as much under siege as press freedom, journalists bemoan the fact that they don't have access to information from their own governments.

What they often do not realize, or take advantage of, is the vast array of data and sources available from NGOs and foreign governments that could help them tell internal stories, using external data. And even in countries where information access is fairly free, the ease of "Googling" can have a sedative effect on journalists' curiosity and initiative.

Selecting from the top results of a simplistic search is like picking the low-hanging fruit. There is little understanding of how to craft a more targeted,

incisive search that will dig more deeply. There is little use of specialized data bases and information indexes. I continue to be surprised at the lack of understanding by many journalists that the “deep web” - that material not indexed by search sites like Google or Yahoo! - is 500 times vaster than the “surface web.”

Often the best information treasures are to be found in this deep web in the data bases and PDF files that indexes don't reach.

So, I make a plea for better training of journalists. Journalists should be the information vanguard, and, to be so, they need advanced skills in the harvesting of information online.

Journalists must fully leverage the tools the Internet makes possible to stay updated and aware of news and information from multiple sources - not just the news wires. They must become more sophisticated and efficient in their information-seeking skills.

The second issue is the opportunity and responsibility of online news organizations to help make information resources available to their publics.

Whether it is lack of time, skill, or imagination, or, cynically, a reluctance to send people off their sites to relevant external information sources, most online news sites do not routinely facilitate access to key documents, data or other supporting information that could help interested news consumers to inform themselves more deeply.

The role of hunter-gatherer has never been so important, and journalism organizations need to

step up their activities in this respect.

Here are some examples of news organizations taking on this role:

- At the Sarasota Herald Tribune, a medium-sized newspaper's web site in the state of Florida, there is a “public records” section which provides links, organized by topic, to government data bases.
- The Guardian, in London, has compiled key documents from the ongoing concerns about the conduct of the war in Iraq in one well-organized page, making it easy for people to get at the full texts of material that might only be quoted from in the news report.
- Sometimes news sites will provide direct links to documents that are relevant to the story they are reporting on - for example, a Washington Post story linking directly to the U.S. Department of Justice report about missing computers at the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

I believe that this is one of the areas where online news sites and the journalists that report for them could aggressively advance the notion of freedom of information and fulfil the important role of “information central” for a community.

By doing this, they will be truly taking advantage of the bottomless news hole and the power of linking that are among the unique characteristics of the online medium. And they will be creating a story package that combines smart reporting and access to source documents that provides reporting unique to the online space.



Broadcasting: Direct Satellite, Public Service, Private :

Henrikas Yushkiavitchus, International Media Consultant and former vice chairman of Gostelradio in Moscow, who chaired this session, said Direct Satellite Broadcasting is not becoming any less important, “in spite of the fact that the Chinese have shown that satellites can be destroyed.”

“It is playing a very important role in radio and television reporting and provides a big opportunity for diversity – maybe more for diversity than for freedom of expression,” he said.

“Satellite broadcasting also is changing and today on satellite you can receive thousands of programs. Many of them are not really independent media, but at least you can see different points of view, and absolutely different stories about the same events. There is a different war shown in Iraq by Al Jazeera, BBC, CNN or Russia Today -- it is though you were seeing different countries and different wars.

“And even the same channels are changing. For example, the NTV television channel in Russia was pretending to be independent, but now more and more it is becoming the voice of the Kremlin, just as CNN is the loudspeaker of the State Department in the United States.

“Today Mr. Nossik said the Internet has no problems in Russia. I am very glad to hear that, but I think it is because the Internet developed so rapidly and so well everywhere because governments, including the Russian government did not understand what was happening. When they did understand it was too late. But they can still catch up with the tide, and we need to consider this.”

For Afghans, TV is The New Media

Zaid Mohseni
Director, Tolo TV, Kabul, Afghanistan

Zaid Mohseni's family created Afghanistan's leading private media group five years ago. It broadcasts TV to 12 cities, along with the first FM-based commercial radio station and a monthly English-language magazine.

Mohseni said a very high illiteracy rate and lack of electricity have impeded wide adoption of the new media, although mobile phones have been a big success.

But, in Afghanistan, Mohseni said, “The new media phenomenon is called television. It has taken the country by storm.” The Taliban regime banned visual images, and music, and allowed radio only

for propaganda. Many in the predominantly young population had never seen television.

“We had the first female DJ on radio and came in for a lot of criticism,” Mohseni said. “For five or six years, people had not heard female voices on the radio. We had death threats. But because our radio was beamed by satellite to transmitters in other cities, people couldn't pressure us in Kabul.”

Nevertheless, the family's Tolo TV got into trouble for a variety of reasons: showing members of Parliament fast asleep in the assembly, interviewing Taliban personalities, calling government ministers “ex-warlords,” and exposing corruption. Trying to

report on war crimes is also a touchy issue, particularly since the introduction of a draft law to exempt everyone in the government and Parliament from prosecution.

“There have been a number of attempts to suppress free media,” Mohsen said. “We are in the line of fire, but we get a lot of support from colleagues overseas.”

Lack of electricity means that direct satellite broadcasting cannot reach rural areas. Tolo TV

uses it only to link to transmitters in other cities.

Meanwhile, the state broadcaster is increasingly coming under the control of the Ministry of Information, and, Mohseni said: “We have been going backwards for the past six months. Illegal detentions and raids by armed security services are used to keep the media in line. Locking people up and using threat of violence, this has caused a lot of concern for us.”

Plea for Public Service Broadcasting

Boris Bergant
RTV Slovenia, Ljubljana

In the beginning, the public services were hindered by expensive technology and limited frequency range. It was difficult to communicate across borders, and in Europe there was the problem of ideological division and jamming of cross-border electronic communications.

This period was followed by liberalization of the frequency range and introduction of commercial broadcasting. At the same time, some European standards for electronic communication were adopted – the Convention of the Council of Europe on cross-border TV and the directives of the European Union on cross-border electronic communication.

Both of these measures are major contributions to the standardization process, although it still faces a multitude of practical problems, such as legislation on copyright, legal differences and language barriers.

The digitalization process and the new media linked to it provide hitherto unimagined advantages for public broadcasting, although they pose problems and challenges as well.

The commercial providers are convinced that public broadcasting should be limited to classical forms – TV and radio, and, if possible, only to forms that cannot be generated by the commercial sector.

In many countries there are efforts to oust public broadcasting from the new media or restrict their access to them as much as possible. This defies not only logical consideration but also professional and empirical experience.

A division into “old” and “new” media makes no sense. Finally, there is only a difference between contents and distribution methods.

Any artificial division, or denying public broadcasters the right to access or use the new media would endanger future public communication and democratic discussion within society. This can be guaranteed only by a genuine public service.

Neither the commercial sector nor the new technologies can replace the public service, and it is essential that public broadcasters should be able to complete their offering with new media products, including the promise of interactive programming and synergies between various investments. New technology makes it very easy to offer programs appealing both to a general audience and to specialists, providing something for everyone at no extra cost.

To cut off the access to this technological achievement and artificially divide the media market, only to swell profits for the ever increasing number of commercial providers would be a fatal

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

error. There is work enough for both sectors, and an artificial limitation of the public sector would mean a decay of democratic society.

It is only the public sector that can successfully promote new technologies and make full use of them. To do this, it requires a sound financial base from public funds as well as independence from politics and other particular interests and influences.

In my opinion, public broadcasting in Europe

has come to a decisive point. It can only survive in the new technological environment by integrating “traditional” and “new” media. It therefore it requires political maturity as well as economic independence and a long view on development.

Without a successful public sector, commercial broadcasting and new technologies will not have the right perspective on the future, since everything will develop only within specific sectors and on a very limited scale.

Defense of Private Broadcasting

Alfonso Ruíz de Assín
President, International Association of Broadcasting

My first comment is about the title of this panel on “Direct Satellite Broadcasting and Digital TV.” It should also have included radio. And when “Public Service Broadcasting” was also in the title of the panel, there should also have been reference to private broadcasting since both types of broadcasting play an important role in the defence of press freedom in most countries. They provide an essential contribution to diversity of information. In the Americas, private broadcasting is a much larger presence than our public service colleagues. That said, we warmly welcome the appearance of new media based on new technologies.

Before speaking about the topic of this panel, let me say that traditional media – print or analogue broadcasting in radio and television, public or private, played an essential role in serving democracy during the 20th Century. The new technologies will multiply both the number of channels and the spread and coverage of news, entertainment and culture. In the final analysis, that is what all the media are about.

We privately owned and commercially funded broadcasters participate daily in nourishing the cultures of our countries with news, music, films and plays. Playing this social role is our vocation. Technology is indeed a very important, an essential

element for our work, but it is only a means for the spread of content.

So we welcome the emergence and development of new media, and we are already using them. We strongly believe that digital and satellite radio and television must mainly be a responsibility of broadcasters and not of any international telecom companies or carriers, no matter how rich or powerful they may be. And when I speak of broadcasters, I mean the traditional ones. Commercial broadcasters live in daily competition in the radio and television markets and are not afraid of new competitors.

We must recall that in most countries radio and TV were born as local, free over-the-air broadcasting, and they reaffirm now that original character, regardless of how large and international their reach may have become. Mainly for economic reasons, because of the limitations of small individual broadcasters, they were forced to come together in associations, joint ventures and mergers to run their stations successfully and offer their audiences the constantly improving content and audio productions that small-scale broadcasters could not offer.

We support legislation enabling satellite radio and TV, but we must take into consideration the reality that localism is the hallmark of our free-over-the-air system. So we must ensure that satellite compa-

nies are held to the standards on which traditional licenses were granted.

Local stations, alone, or in networks are the first line of response in times of emergency. They have an unparalleled record of community service.

Given today's new broadcasting realities, we favor coexistence of the traditional broadcasters along with the new digital and satellite radios and TVs in an environment of complementarity, combining in every country the big national and transnational groups, the regional medium-size operators and the strictly local stations. Such combinations in our opinion represent the best opportunities for high quality content, diversity and pluralism and local outlets close to the interests and daily lives and providing better service to our communities.

We also support the coexistence of Public Service and private broadcasting, mainly and specially in major regions with less developed broadcasting structures and where living conditions require the presence of public broadcasters. Also in Europe, Public Service Broadcasting was needed to rebuild the social architecture of our continent and for the construction of a strong European Union, after the previous centuries of political, religious and ethnic conflicts.

The coexistence we support must nevertheless be with true Public Service Broadcasting, not with government or state-controlled broadcasting. A condition is that the size of Public Service Broadcasters be what is needed to fulfil their social roles - not the creation of enormous broadcasting structures exceeding the objective needs or in response to some irresistible will to be present everywhere, even where commercial radios and televisions are already doing the job. And Public Service Broadcasters must not be unfairly financed, both with public money

and with private advertising revenues. We hold that Public Service Broadcasting must be financed with public money in systems decided upon by the citizens in every country and that they should receive all the public money they need to fill their very important social roles.

Finally, I want to insist that no matter what technology is used, analogue or digital, terrestrial or satellite, the basis of our work as broadcasters will always be content. Our problem today is still the almost irresistible inclination and will of governments and big economic interest groups to control media and information.

The most recent and very worrying example of what I say is today in Venezuela, where the government wants to stop the operation of Radio Caracas Television, a very important radio and television operator, because the state doesn't like its editorial line, which is very critical indeed of Venezuelan government policies.

We believe that radio and television licenses must be automatically renewed when their terms have elapsed - taking into account the rights of the professionals and workers, the rights of editors and managers, and, above all, the rights of the audiences to receive content and information of their free choice. The Venezuelan decision to refuse renewal on political grounds can create a very dangerous precedent in the Americas and globally.

Private commercial broadcasters, who live in strong daily competition in every country, welcome the new opportunities for diversity and pluralism represented by the new media operating in a free and open market. We reaffirm our determination to take part in this new media world, together with all the newcomers and new broadcasting vocations.



How Young People Get Their News :

A panel of the conference was devoted to how young people get their news. There was a sense on the five-member panel that many preconceptions must be abandoned.

“As far back as can be traced, older generations have chided younger generations for their apparent disengagement from public affairs,” according to **Aralynn McMane, Director of Youth Readership Development, at the World Association of Newspapers, who chaired the panel.**

“This platitudinous perception of the young has been reinforced by a sense that the information age and its technological toys have spawned a self-absorbed, plugged-in and tuned-out youth culture without comparison or precedent.”

On the contrary, she said in a background paper; “Evidence from several studies indicates that young people do not see themselves this way. The studies suggest that though young people are sometimes disenchanted, a lower interest in national or international political news is not necessarily an indication of political apathy. The young often pay more attention to local political news because they feel that this type of news content has a stronger connection to their daily life.

“Even the disenchantment may be a front. Portraying an image of indifference to issues may simply be part of the condition of being young, since young people often express interesting and informed opinions on political or social issues, regardless of whether they dismiss them as ‘boring.’

“This rebellious trait that some refer to as ‘cynical chic’ is a way the young sometimes deal with their own sense of powerlessness and what they see as inconsistency, complacency or hypocrisy on the part of adults.”

According to Evelyne Bevort, of the French monitoring organization, CLEMI, Centre de Liaison de l’Enseignement et des Moyens d’Information, a nine-nation European survey of young people between 12 and 18 years old showed that respondents were more interested in communication than in information. The survey showed a decrease in use of traditional media, especially television but an increase in mobile phone use.

The study showed that the more interest young people have in a topic, such as sports or the envi-

ronment, the more they tend to use a variety of media. The less directly affected they feel, the more they will choose a single source, saving both time and money.

The study also indicated that young people will still turn to “classical” media for information about serious subjects, such as the presidential elections in France.

Teen blogs are mostly concerned with the authors and their peers, according to the study. They want to feel connected rather than be informed. But the new media present opportunities to promote information for young people and also to give information provided by them a chance to be recognized.

A similar study in Argentina showed that the vast bulk of young people between the ages of 11 and 17 get their information from television and radio, with the Internet a distant runner up. That is probably because nearly all homes have access to traditional broadcasting.

TV and radio are the most democratic media, with no social differentiation, according to Roxana Morduchowicz, Director of Media Education at the Argentine Education Ministry, who presented the study.

In fact 100 per cent of young people have access to television and 95 per cent to radio in their own homes, compared to only 15 per cent with Internet access. There is also a large economic disparity. About three quarters of homes in higher income groups are equipped with television compared to only 10 per cent in lower income groups.

Asked which medium they would most hate to lose, three-quarters of the young people surveyed said television. Only a quarter mentioned the computer. In fact, the survey showed that the average young person spends between two and three hours a day watching TV, and one third of them spend between four and six hours, leaving little time for other forms of media.

For the great majority, television watching means movies, musicals and serials. Only 10 per cent said they got their news from TV. But young people tend

to be good at multi-tasking. While watching TV, half simultaneously get on with their homework, and others listen to music, use the PC, read and talk on the phone.

Of those who use computers, the study showed, 65 per cent are interested in chatting, 55 per cent in games and only 50 per cent in information.

Robert Barnard, President of D-Code, a Canadian market research firm that specializes in tracking behavioral trends and attitudes of youth and young adults, pointed out some of the enormous cultural changes that have affected young people since 1966. Formative technologies in 1966 included transistor radios, instant cameras and cassette tape recorders. Back then, people around the age of 20 were most affected by cable TV. The compact disk and the Walkman, home computers were coming widely into use.

Current youth formative technologies include computer games, portable phones and digital phenomena such as Myspace.com.

“This is not ‘new media,’” Barnard said. “This is their media.”

McMane referred to a report published by UNICEF in 2004, “Children, Youth and Media Around the World,” which concludes that the young particularly want to give input or seek information about policies that affect them, and help government initiatives in areas such as children’s rights and the environment.

Observations presented in this report also indicated that many young people feel that there are not enough avenues for them to voice their opinions that will actually facilitate change. Research findings of the report show that since many young people are accustomed to receiving information passively, they place high value on opportunities to participate in the communication process, which also helps them to hone their critical faculties and intellectual courage.

Traditionally, researchers have found people tend to read newspapers in the morning and watch television news at night, McMane said. By contrast, young people today tend to seek news as and when they need it. The Internet is suited for such news grazing and occupies an increasingly larger share of the total time that young people spend reading or looking at the media.

The UNICEF report and the UN World Youth Report in 2005 both stressed that portrayal of young people in the media is a critical issue. The young want to see a connection between their lives

and the stories they read in newspapers. Instead, global research indicates that they often feel alienated or ill-served by the media because they are often portrayed simplistically as superficial, apathetic or delinquent.

McMane said this problem was also reflected in a 2004 project by the World Association of Newspapers in 24 countries, which found newspaper coverage of children, more often than not, portrayed them as victims.

Research in Europe and Canada suggests that young people may be losing trust in traditional news media. They value and expect the media to be truthful, balanced and objective and are quick to sense when a medium is attempting to manipulate information. Perhaps the growing presence of blogs, “we media,” and webzines reflects the lack of trust in traditional news, she said. In developing countries, the need for more balanced coverage of issues about the young is reflected in several studies. The UNICEF report said that many young people in countries with widespread poverty, corruption and political turmoil seek realistic and meaningful content that will enable them to cope better with issues that affect their daily lives.

Like adults, young people are attracted to content that entertains them. This does not, however, eliminate their desire and need to obtain credible information on the most important news of the day.

Young people particularly appreciate media content that deals credibly with topics that they have trouble discussing with adults, such as sexuality, AIDS, drugs, and self-esteem.

McMane said numerous examples across the globe demonstrate the effectiveness of programs that give young people the opportunity to participate in media. These examples show that those who are exposed to, and engaged with, various types of news media at a young age go on to treat them as part of their intellectual environments.

Many organizations have begun to look hard at how they can make better connections with the young through online and mobile telephone channels, she said.

But few organizations treat young people as normal sources outside “school” or “youth” sections. They should, McMane said. News organizations have a number of opportunities of meaningfully connecting to the young in the new media environment and to engage them in a fight for freedom of expression and of the press. They should champion freedom of expression for all, not just the press.

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

The young can rightly feel left out of discussions that concentrate only on freedom of expression for journalists.

Chris Schuepp, Coordinator of the Young People's Media Network started by UNICEF in 2002, explained how a project called Magic is strengthening participation of children and young people in the media. Magic stands for Media Activities and Good Ideas by, with and for Children. Its main focus is on video work, including one-minute productions by children in which they tell their own stories. (www.theoneminutesjr.org)

Schuepp said the 60-second clips, which are free for use in a non-commercial context, deal with real-life situations and help young people keep up with the new technology.

In a question-and-answer session, Barnard said young people still trusted news, but "their understanding of freedom and how they might want to hold governments accountable might change." For example, he said, they might want government to loosen copyright laws.

Bevort said children are very quick to understand the reality of professional journalism that sticks by its principles. "They know the difference between blogs and professional media. Even if they are quite young."

Schuepp said it is important for children to

understand what the media are, and parents were vital in making this happen. "Children trust parents," he said. "If parents can find a way to give some early media education that would help. The demand for trust is getting bigger there is so much stuff on the Internet – even the adults don't know what to look for."

Asked about the danger of false and manipulated information on the Internet, Bevort said, "We don't have to transmit cynicism to young people. We should teach them to compare, be aware and to know that information is important to be a citizen. It is a difficult balance to achieve."

Morduchowicz said the Argentine survey showed that in terms of credibility, young people trust television most because "how can you not believe what you see? But newspapers come a close second" – way ahead of the Internet.

On the question of protecting minors in cyberspace, Schuepp said, "it should be the parents and the families deciding what access" young people should have. "If you have responsible parents then the regulators don't have to censor content."

According to Bevort, it is difficult to enforce rules because "You don't know what kids are doing on another computer. The best protection is education."



Bloggers as Journalists/Citizen Media :

Internet: Gathering Around a Table

Mary Lou Fulton,
Vice President, Audience Development, The Bakersfield Californian

I discovered the incredible power and potential of the Internet 13 years ago at graduate school. I was an intern at a research institution in California, and the goal of my summer project was to recommend new ways that education research could be made available to parents, teachers and other non-academics.

I began by thinking of creating a newsletter, or perhaps a magazine, but those ideas seemed limited. So I asked a colleague for advice, and he said, "What about a list-serv?" I was not much of a computer person at this point in my life, having just started to use e-mail the year before, so he had to explain that a list-serv was an e-mail group focused on a specific topic. Anyone could join these groups, which were free and existed to enable communication and collaboration among the participants.

I thought this sounded like a great idea, so I posted a note to several list-servs announcing the availability of this education research. All you needed to do was send me an e-mail if you were interested. And I went home.

The next day, I returned to the office and opened my e-mail. There were more than 800 responses from around the world – from Iceland, from Bolivia, from the U.K. and from the U.S. and many other places. I was overwhelmed, not only because I had to answer 800 e-mails, but because I couldn't believe that all of these people from all over the world were con-

nected to each other. And now, by simply posting a short note, I was connected to them. From that moment forward, I knew that some way, somehow, I had to get involved with this Internet thing.

Looking back, I'm grateful for this experience because it taught me that the core of the Internet is about human connections. I have always loved this quote from Internet strategist Clay Shirky, who said: "Prior to the Internet, the last technology that had any real effect on the way people sat down and talked together was the table."

The human motivation hasn't changed, but many other things have. Publishing tools are much easier to use. New devices such as digital cameras and mobile phones make it simple to create and publish content. It's easier to share content, which is really what drives all the activity on video site YouTube, and access to the Internet itself is now more widely available than ever. The result: 50 million web logs on the search engine Technorati, with a new blog born every half-second. Citizen journalists whose first-person accounts are now part of many major stories and who many times outperform local media in covering their own communities. 100 million videos served every day on YouTube.

This unprecedented activity is changing the world. It's changing journalism, politics, entertainment, education and most any topic you can imagine.

Every Citizen a Reporter

Dr. Oh Yeon-Ho
Founder, OhmyNews, Seoul, South Korea

I founded OhmyNews in 2000 with the concept that every citizen is a reporter. It is not about how we can make money but how to say goodbye to 20th Century journalism and create the new 21st-Century journalism.

It is simple: Give ordinary citizens freedom of speech. If there is a person who has no opportunity to express his views, society will not be helped.

Here is my definition of who can be a reporter: Reporters are not some exotic species, not special people. They are every citizen who has a news story to share with others.

We started with 700 citizen reporters; now we have 50,000, and we have international citizen reporters in over 100 countries.

When we opened OhmyNews, we promised our readers that we would make it the first true Internet newspaper in the world. What does a true Internet paper mean? For me it is about making true interactivity work.

What is true interactivity? To my mind there are two levels, high and low. Low-level interactivity is this: Professional reporters write and readers write e-mails or post comments on bulletin boards.

In high-level interactivity, reporters and readers are equals. They have equal opportunity. Readers can become reporters any time they want. Our motto – “Every citizen a reporter” – is not about tactics. It is about democracy in journalism.

By the way, we did not invent the concept of every citizen is a reporter. We just restored a long-forgotten concept, going back to the time when face-to-face communication was the only way to

deliver news.

Before newspapers and professional journalism, emerged, every citizen was a reporter. This was true interactivity. The Internet restored that.

And here is one important point: More participation, more information and more user-created content is not enough. It cannot automatically make the participants and audience happy. It cannot automatically guarantee democracy.

People in the new media age should go back to the old questions with which traditional journalists have been dealing for a long time – that is how to create credibility, responsibility influence and sustainability.

I would suggest a number of pre-conditions.

First, is the need to create credible and not manipulated facts. The reporter needs clear motivation about how and why he writes. The good communicator should consider audience and sources. He should not only consider his needs but those of the audience and sources he writing about.

Sustainability is about having values and usefulness. The content can be sold, and a business model created.

Citizen journalism in the Internet age is not about technology, it is about democracy. Human beings instinctively have a desire to talk about the new, and they have a desire to add value to the news by participating. Why? Because we unavoidably and inescapably live together. So spreading the citizen journalism model worldwide is for me spreading hope that we can work together to change the world for the better.

Blogs Setting Media Pace in Egypt

Ehab Elzelaky
Blog Editor, Al-Dustour, Cairo

Two years ago, Egyptian blogs were rare. Of the few million Egyptian Internet users, few had even heard of a blog. We were then preparing to republish Al-Dustour, a weekly newspaper that had been suspended for seven years by Egyptian authorities. We thought of allocating a page to selected content from different blogs. We could see that blogs, few as they were, introduced some young and fresh voices which were very different from what readers were getting from the traditional media.

I was the editor of this page, which did not last long for different reasons. However, it attracted attention to this new phenomenon, particularly since we published the web address of the selected blogs. In a few months, this led to increased traffic for the blogs and prompted some readers to launch their own sites.

In a country of 78 million, there are some 6 million Internet users, a high proportion taking into account a 40 per cent illiteracy rate and harsh economic conditions. Basically, this is because of the various state-sponsored initiatives to promote the Internet – with the aim of attracting foreign investment rather than of achieving social development goals.

The number of Egyptian blogs does not exceed 4,000, and only a few hundred can be called “active.” Nevertheless, bloggers have attracted attention by writing about and following up controversial issues that the traditional media cover briefly or in a biased manner, or even totally ignore.

The past couple of years have seen unprecedented events in the modern history of Egypt, starting with the first multi-candidate presidential elections. The Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt’s biggest opposition group despite being officially banned won nearly one fifth of the seats of the Parliament, and judges demonstrated in favor of real independence from the executive branch. There were many demonstrations, which the state, more often than not, handled with an iron grip. Throughout these events, the Egyptian bloggers were there to convey what happened in words and images.

Blogs are a new means of expression for certain social, political, and religious groups and minorities whose causes rarely or never find their way into traditional media. Blogs were the first window through which many Egyptians saw some of these groups.

An example is that of the Baha’is, who filed a lawsuit against the government demanding that their religion be recognized in official documents. While the case was in court, many Egyptian blogs supported the rights of the Baha’is, some of whom in turn started their own blogs to defend their faith and explain their viewpoints. Such material had never appeared even in the most liberal traditional media.

Gay women have started blogs to reveal their feelings, desires, and personal lives in a society too conservative to accept such relationships. Never before had such explicit bold speech appeared in an Egyptian media outlet.

Blogging has given a chance for some people to talk about, defend and discuss their secular thoughts, which are difficult to discuss in the traditional media, given the rising religious trend in politics and society.

Most Egyptian bloggers use Arabic as blogging language, limiting the effect of their blogs to Arabic-speaking audiences. But there are tens of English-language blogs run by Egyptians, which present an opportunity to communicate with wider audiences. These blogs attract visitors from all around the world and introduce an effective alternative media outlet, giving a lively image of the life of average Egyptians. One such is www.manalaa.net, which includes an aggregation of Egyptian blogs.

In a very short period, Egyptian society has witnessed the emergence of alternative media outlets that may break the set rules of language, style and subject matter but which manage to get scoops and break the taboos imposed on the traditional media.

When they first appeared, most Egyptian news blogs started by copying different reports and articles from various sources. Many bloggers wrote opinion pieces that stirred hot debates.

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

In the next step, some blogs became original sources of news that traditional media outlets later quoted, sparking debates, and sometimes shock, across society.

For example, a number of bloggers witnessed some terrible scenes in downtown Cairo in October 2006 during the Eid el-Fitr feast, in which Muslims celebrate the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

A blogger named Malek (<http://malek-x.net/node/268>) was the first to write about this incident, which later became the talk of the city:

“...We saw a girl in her twenties stumbling and falling. A number of young men surrounded her, touching different parts of her body, and tearing her clothes off. I couldn't understand what happened. But the girl stood up fast and tried to run, until she found a restaurant and went in. The young guys stood in front of the restaurant and wouldn't leave until one of them cried: 'there is another girl.' Everybody ran to the direction, and there was a girl totally surrounded by hundreds of guys trying to touch her body and tearing her clothes off. This time, the girl was saved by a taxi driver who let her in his car. Still, the guys didn't leave them. They surrounded the taxi, insisting that the girl get out...”

This was part of a long and detailed testimony that shocked Egyptian society. The shock was even greater when other blogs published some unclear photos and video clips of the incidents taken by mobile phone cameras.

This story was a scoop for the blogs. The authorities denied the incident, and traditional media did not mention it for a few days, until some independent newspapers took up the thread. This scoop led the state-owned newspapers to launch a campaign to undermine the blogs as news outlets and questioning their credibility as sources. But most people believed the blogs.

In November 2005, a group of Sudanese refugees in Cairo went on a strike in front of the offices of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, demanding an end to their precarious conditions.

The strike attracted an increasing number of refugees day after day, until the number exceeded 1,000. It lasted for several weeks in a makeshift camp without reaching any agreement with the Commission. The situation became very embarrassing both for the UN agency and the Egyptian government, especially as the strike was in one of the most famous

squares of Cairo at the heart of a commercial hub serving Arab tourists.

On the night security forces began an operation to disperse the strike, the bloggers were there too. Nora (<http://norayounis.com/2005/12/30/74>) wrote on her blog (in English and Arabic):

“At 5 am sharp the 3 water cannons [brought by the security forces] flushed them [the refugees] again and right beside the water line security forces timely attacked the Refugees campus with batons and shields. After 1 minute the water stopped. Soldiers destroyed the rest of their makeshift homes and pulled up their front line of luggage throwing it away as other soldiers made their way in... Sounds of screams, mainly women and children, echoed... Soldiers were brutal. They were just beating anyone anywhere stepping over anyone and anything.”

This was only one quote from the detailed testimony published on the blog, supported by dozens of photos, which also constituted a scoop. The campaign ended with a large number of casualties among men, women, and children. The refugees were moved to another temporary camp until the government could find a way to get rid of them. Traditional media talked only about ending the strike “peacefully.”

For many years, there have been reports about how detainees are tortured to make confessions, especially in political cases, but this was nothing compared to the anti-torture campaign launched by Egyptian bloggers.

They posted several video clips of torture inside police stations. The clips had been made by the torturers themselves on their mobile phones to humiliate the detainees or to circulate as a “joke.” The joke became a real problem when the clips were leaked and widely published on the blogs and later in newspapers. This has embarrassed the police and forced the authorities to launch official investigations in some cases.

The boldness of the blogs in publishing the videos and maintaining the anti-torture campaign for so long inspired several citizens to send more clips to active bloggers.

An Egyptian woman started a blog documenting information about torture. In a few months, it became the chief resource for anyone interested in the issue. Her courage, though, did not go without punishment. She was finally fired from her job.

Egyptian bloggers face many problems and challenges. One prominent challenge is the attempt by the traditional media to undermine them by constantly questioning their credibility, especially when it comes to exclusives.

Another is the pressure from the State, using various freedom-restricting laws and even threatening bloggers with jail. The bloggers' campaign against torture led Interior Minister Habib Al-Adly to accuse them of being part of a non-patriotic campaign to tarnish the reputation of Egyptian police. He warned Egyptians against using the Internet in a way that could endanger national security. Such statements, for those who know how things go in Egypt, mean that everyone should be ready for harsh measures.

The government is preparing a law for e-publishing. According to press leaks, it is likely to target bloggers and seriously threaten the freedom they have enjoyed for the last couple of years.

Egyptian bloggers have introduced a practical model of alternative media in a society where they are most needed. Many bloggers may lack language skills, documentation – and sometimes the objectivity demanded of journalists – but, for sure, they are not short on courage.

In Egypt, a journalist can be jailed for a “publishing crime,” but they have the support of their union, while bloggers are left in the open without any kind of protection. The hotter the issues they tackle, of course, the greater the dangers they face.

Several bloggers have faced detention under the Emergency Law applied in Egypt since 1981. Though most of these detentions were motivated by the bloggers' political activism on the streets rather than by their blogging, what they wrote online was a top reason for focusing on them.

In a unique experience, Mohamed Al-Sharkawy

wrote about the details of the sexual abuse he experienced in a police station after a demonstration supporting the independence of the judiciary. This was a rare report – the victim is the writer without any mediator. Some active bloggers, especially those who lead the anti-torture campaign, have faced different types of harassment and pressures, from threats via mobile phones to defamation or losing their jobs. The pressures used in the past against political activists are used now against Internet activists.

Hala Al-Masry was the first blogger to be sued for something published on a blog. On her blog, Copts Without Borders, Al-Masry accused the State of being involved in assaults on Copts in the village of Al-Odaysat near Luxor.

Her husband was detained and forced to sign a pledge to bring her to the prosecution for questioning in June 2006. She was accused of “harming national security and social peace” and “circulating fake information.” Hala closed her blog, but the case is not closed yet, and might go forward at any time.

But the case which created a precedent in the violation of freedom of expression on the web is that of Karim Amer, a blogger who was a student at Al-Azhar University – a body affiliated with the Al-Azhar Sunni Muslim institution – before being dismissed last year. He was sentenced to four years by the court based on charges filed by the university over a set of articles he wrote on his blog. He was accused of insulting Islam. During the trial, the prosecutor added a charge of insulting the President.

The court gave him three years for the first charge, and another year for the second. Amer was the first person in Egypt to be jailed just for his writings in a blog. His crime was writing articles that in most other countries would do more than touch off a wide debate.



Blogs Challenge Traditional Media

Steve Yelvington
Vice President, Morris Digital, USA

The Internet has transformed the landscape by making it possible for anyone to publish online cheaply and efficiently without requiring any capital investment or any operating expenses to speak of. But what has that done to the landscape and how has it affected traditional journalism?

Traditional journalism has responded to this change in some ways that I find quite troubling.

The journalism community seems to be in a state of turmoil. The Internet is changing the economic climate in which traditional journalism operates, not merely on the economic side but also in terms of the information economy.

There is too much information available too freely and too easily for traditional journalism to work the way it has in the past. So journalists have responded in some very troubling ways by lashing out at the blogosphere and setting up a sort of adversary relation between blogs and traditional media.

Some of the things that have been written about blogs by traditional journalists range from mere dismissal on the mild end of the spectrum to outright condemnation. I think we need to keep in mind that freedom of the press is not a right that belongs to large corporations that own presses and put ink on paper, but it is rather an individual right of self expression. It is not the exclusive license of these big media companies.

At Morris, we are not fighting this change, we are embracing it. We are launching new papers and web sites built around the concept of community conversation. We are offering blogs and photo galleries and other publishing tools to everyone in our communities and asking them to come onto our sites, have their conversations and interact in our space – and then using this conversation to make our products better, our newspapers better, our journalism better.

We are recognizing that our role has expanded from reporting the news to convening the community and facilitating, sustaining and organizing these community conversations.

Citizen journalism seems to be a hot button issue. It leads to pointless and destructive debates

about whether it is journalism at all. Sometimes it is, and sometimes it isn't. It depends on what your definition of journalism is. But sometimes it is not easy to recognize because it does not follow the familiar forms or rules and yet it may fill the same social role as journalism.

By whatever name we call it, this new phenomenon exists alongside professional journalism. It is not a replacement. It is a phenomenon that may displace some traditional journalism and force us to change the way we work. But it's not a replacement. If we learn to adapt to the existence of this newly enabled community conversation, if we interact with it, it can make our journalism better and make our communities better.

This is going to happen no matter what we do. If the traditional press stands by and does absolutely nothing and fails to change in any way, this new participative personal media will thrive anyway. It will thrive through places like blogspot. The kind of self-publishing that takes place in those venues is not well integrated. It is not pulled together into a community context.

The opportunity for mainstream media is to help transform individual acts of publishing into genuine community conversation – to integrate, to pull together and to facilitate an interaction, instead of isolated acts of personal expression. If we learn to interact and facilitate, and to lead and to participate in these conversations, then we can create a virtuous circle that makes our journalism better and improves the level and quality of the conversation in the community.

We have to do this by learning to give up some of the distance and detachment that journalism traditionally practices – the arms' length relationship with the audience. Reporters have to learn to engage conversationally with the people formerly known as the audience, and that is a very uncomfortable process. It is a potentially dangerous process because it happens in an unedited and free-flowing environment.

But if we participate in this circle in which professional journalism feeds this conversation and, in

turn, community conversation feeds professional journalism, then our journalism will be better for it. We listen to the voice of the community, we understand what people really care about and are talking about. We get sources, we get tips, we get ideas and then we go out and practice our craft of reporting, digging, analysis and writing. It will be better for having engaged in that process.

Two years ago in a business climate in which American newspapers were rapidly losing readership and circulation we used these principles to launch a new free circulation daily newspaper in a small coastal community in South Carolina. In just one year, we built readership of that newspaper to levels that were typical of the 1970s. This isn't just about commercial success. It's also about building a better community, about building a positive community conversation, getting people away from TV sets and into interaction with one another – thus facilitating the construction of a local culture, and a local civic process, and a political process.

Americans are retreating from civil life. That is part of the reason why interest in newspapers and journalism is declining, because it is centered on civil life. This interest in civic life is essential to the idea of a healthy democracy. When people have good interactions with one another, the sum of little interactions turns out to have big implications. Blogging about your dog or your children turns out

to be instrumental in crafting the relationships that enable people to then have constructive conversations about more important matters, without having the conversations turn into destructive, divisive liberals-vs.-conservatives kinds of debate.

The kind of natural human conversation that we find unfolding on our community weblogs is more than just idle chatter, even though we may regard it as not being journalism – citizen or otherwise. It is nevertheless important in building strong communities.

All of the tools of the so-called social networking world turn out to be quite important and useful in constructing these social relationships and transforming our neighbourhoods from places where people live to places people know one another and interact. They turn out to be useful in bringing people out of their private homes and into public spaces.

The opportunity for the mainstream is to embrace citizen or participative media – whatever you choose to call them – rather than set up adversary relationships. When we help people join community conversation we create social capital, we raise interest in civic affairs, we provide a venue for conversation about civic issues, and we build stronger communities. That is good for all, socially and politically, and, in a business sense, for the newspaper business.

Empowering the Poor in Nepal

Karma Tshering Bhutia
Coordinator for the Community Multimedia Centres (CMC) in Nepal

The speaker began his presentation by showing a movie about the destruction of the historical Tansen Durbar (Royal Palace) in the Palpa district of western Nepal. That magnificent seat of power was burned down in January 2006, when more than 4,000 Maoists attacked Tansen. The community multimedia centre in Tansen videotaped the events that night. Today, the same video is being used as a tool to appeal and mobilize support for reconstruction of the palace.

“We have three Community Multimedia Centres in Nepal supported by UNESCO,” *Bhutia said. Their objective is “to fight poverty by empowering local youth, especially from poor and marginalized families, to impart new media and ICT skills and pro-*

vide opportunities for expression and initiative and access to information and knowledge. By marginalized I mean socially excluded people. In Nepal, the caste system is intact in practice, especially in rural areas. So they are considered to be untouchables.”

The centres combine traditional community media (radio and television) by and for local people in local languages with newer technology services such as computers with Internet and e-mail, phone, fax and photocopying. The centres are designed to bridge the gap between the global Internet and the indigenous poor.

The community media are “an interface between the new media and the rural community,” Bhutia said. “We are far behind in terms of infrastructure

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

and development, but this is how we can reach the local community.

“The new media actually enrich the traditional media, while the local media facilitate the new technology. The Internet, as we know, is a powerful tool for information, but in Nepal how many people actually have access to it? So community radio can act as an interface in obtaining this kind of information and connecting with the rest of the world.

“Before we build a digital bridge, we have a language problem in Nepal itself. The majority of the population cannot read or write English, and illiteracy is a big issue. We have problems not only of connectivity but also of language, affordability and access.”

In providing multi-media content and the chance to participate, the media centres “give voice to the voiceless.” About 60 per cent of the participants are from poor and marginalized communities. “They get the opportunity to come freely to the centre, and the centres become social spaces for them, where they can fully express their views and opinions.”

New skills and facilities allow local community participants to use a mix of technologies to create new media content and programming for a local cable TV channel. Trained volunteers are the driving force behind local TV, and new skills have enabled a handful of people to find jobs and earn income from video services, especially shooting and editing wedding footage.

Bbutia said the reaction of upper class people was originally dismissive. But, with the help of the centres and the new skills in Information Technology, the so-called untouchables are starting to break through discrimination barriers. A wealthy upper caste family, for example, asked untouchables to use their skills to videotape a

wedding – something unheard of before.

“This happened because they were professionally sound, and we can see from this example that the caste system can fade away as skills develop,” *Bbutia said.* “Actions rather than words is what we learned from this.”

Local news about everyday activities and events is the core of the centres’ programmes, and forms the backbone of TV programmes that are shown twice a week for an hour. “We also work closely with a rural newspaper, ‘Gaule Deurali,’ which has over 200 readers’ clubs in 25 districts,” Bbutia said. The clubs both consume and help produce local news. With the cooperation of the community multimedia centres, the newspaper has gone online to reach readers in the capital, Katmandu, and Nepali emigrants, particularly in the Middle East.

Twice a month, the channel also features TV Internet Browsing, which combines information and visuals from the Internet with local interviews and footage. Hosts surf the web on camera with local guest experts, simultaneously interpreting internet-sourced information for local viewers. The audience can request particular topics and web sites, allowing them to surf the Internet on TV sets at home. The programme’s twin aims are to provide viewers with web-based information and to give many their first exposure to new communication technologies.

The multimedia centres “link the global and the local in a unique way. The local centres create trust, credibility and accountability. They are well accepted and they are in the local languages, while the new media have not been easily accepted because not many people know about them. But they can go together, with the new media enriching local content.”

Bloggers as Journalists: What Rules?

Declan McCullagh
Chief Political Correspondent, CNET News.com, USA

I was asked to speak about bloggers, an important question on both the professional and legal fronts. But first I would like to suggest that the press freedom environment bloggers need in which to operate requires such developed world luxuries as independent court systems, individual and private property rights, and governments that accept limits on their powers.

I would like to suggest that complete press freedom cannot come about without economic freedom as well. Generally speaking, the countries with the least economic freedom are also those, no coincidence, with the least press freedom. If private property is not secure, if taxes are not reasonably low, if the temptation of government to control ever greater proportions of the economy is left unchecked, there cannot be true press freedom.

Entrepreneurs are not so likely to risk capital on a new media venture if they expect their profits to be taxed at a marginal rate of 80 per cent. If telecommunications regulations are not liberalized and it costs a week's average wage for someone to log onto the Internet, political bloggers with something important to say will not be heard. If air waves are owned by the government and licenses can be imperilled by offending the powerful, then aggressive reporting simply becomes less likely. If news organizations rely on government funding, they have a natural tendency to support higher taxes, more regulations and things that might work against the best interests of their own readers.

So press freedom depends on limited government, along with economic freedom. That's why I suggest that we advocates of press freedom here should also be advocates of more economic freedom. Less regulation and more economic freedom create wealth. Wealthy readers want information. Wealthy readers subscribe to our publications and become our customers.

Economic freedom also helps foster the conditions necessary to start new media organizations. I doubt, for instance, that my employers, the entrepreneurs who started CNET 12 years ago would have been so likely to risk their time, money, and careers even, on the venture had their taxes been

much higher. It just would not have made it as profitable, nor as likely.

Back when practicing journalism involved working for companies owning large and unwieldy printing presses or government broadcasting licenses, it was relatively easy to figure out who was a member of the media and who wasn't. The advent of online journalism in the mid-1990s has made that line far more hazy. And the dizzying growth in the number of bloggers over the past five years may erase it completely.

Are web loggers journalists? The question touches not just on legal arguments, such as how elastic shield laws are or should be, but also includes cultural and political overtones. If, for instance, a blogger seeks to claim the privileges of being a journalist, should we expect him to follow the same general rules – including contacting all sides to a story and verifying facts independently?

In the U.S., courts have been grappling with this topic for a few years, with mixed results.

Bloggers seeking to cover the trial of senior White House aide Lewis Libby, Vice President Dick Cheney's former chief of staff, encountered a problem. The courtroom was small, and they realized it might be impossible to cover it without standing in line outside the building every day at 6 a.m. The traditional news media, on the other hand, routinely secure reserved seats. During the Microsoft antitrust trial in the federal courthouse in Washington, D.C. in 1998, journalists were given special passes that gave them guaranteed courtroom seats by letting them skip to the front of the line. Eventually, with some prodding from the Media Bloggers Association, the court in the Libby case agreed to grant bloggers two guaranteed seats.

State shield laws and accreditation by government agencies have also become a flash point. In 2005, Apple Inc. tried to use the courts to force the independent news sites Think Secret, Apple Insider, and PowerPage to divulge their confidential sources. In legal filings, Apple claimed that the web writers had not acted as "legitimate members of the press" entitled to protect their sources, when they revealed details about forthcoming Apple products.

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

The company won initially. But, in May 2006, a California state appeals court ruled that communications between the product leaker and Apple Insider were protected by federal and state law. The court said: “We decline the implicit invitation to embroil ourselves in questions of what constitutes ‘legitimate journalism.’... Beyond casting aspersions on the legitimacy of petitioners’ enterprise, Apple offers no cogent reason to conclude that they fall outside the shield law’s protection.”

Exact wording is important. California’s shield law, like similar laws in some 30 other U.S. states, was written long before the Internet became popular. It protects anyone currently or previously employed by “a newspaper, magazine or other periodical publication, or by a press association or wire service.” The court held that the intent of the California legislature was to be generous in that definition – and concluded that “petitioners’ web sites are highly analogous to printed publications” and should enjoy the same legal protections against divulging their sources.

Exact wording matters, especially because other courts may not be as permissive. In 2004, a judge ruled that Alabama’s shield law does not protect the magazine *Sports Illustrated* because the statute mentions only newspapers and broadcasters. Trying to squeeze a magazine into that definition, the court concluded, “strains the commonly understood meanings of those words.”

One blogger who lost his case is Josh Wolf, a video blogger and freelance journalist jailed on Aug. 1, 2006 on contempt charges for refusing to turn over unpublished recordings. The recordings include footage of anti-G8 protesters in San Francisco. He may remain in jail until the Grand Jury finishes its term in July 2007. Another journal-

ist recently jailed for months was Vanessa Leggett, who refused to turn over her book-writing notes to a Grand Jury.

Because Wolf was prosecuted by the federal government, California’s state shield law did not protect him. But efforts in the U.S. Congress to enact a nationwide shield law on the federal level have been sluggish and subject to quibbling over definitions. Politicians are in something of a quandary. They are being lobbied by professional news organizations and the American Bar Association to approve some kind of journalists’ shield law, while being urged by prosecutors to leave out bloggers.

The U.S. Department of Justice has criticized one leading shield proposal, saying it would let criminals pose as bloggers. Republican Senator John Cornyn, seemed to agree. He said: “The relative anonymity afforded to bloggers, coupled with a certain lack of accountability, as they are not your traditional brick-and-mortar reporters who answer to an editor or publisher, also has the risk of creating a certain irresponsibility when it comes to accurately reporting information.”

Quarrels over bloggers and regulation are not limited to the United States, of course. The Pakistan Communications Authority reportedly blocked access to *blogger.com* – which hosts millions of sites – on grounds that a handful of blogs ostensibly were distributing false information. Saudi Arabia has been known to block *blogger.com* as well. In Italy, one blogger was fined more than 13,000 euros (almost U.S.\$18,000) for allowing readers to post uncensored and unmoderated comments, some of which were allegedly libelous.

The question of whether bloggers should legally be regarded as journalists seems bound to be with us for a good while.

Circumventing the Censors :

Dictators on Web 2.0

Julien Pain,
Head of Internet Freedom Desk, Reporters Sans Frontières, Paris

In introductory remarks as panel moderator, Julien Pain of Reporters Sans Frontières called China “the superpower of Internet control” with an army of cyber-police patrolling the Internet and the most advanced technology to impede access. The Chinese have the technology and the material and human resources, he said.

The Chinese have their emulators, starting with Tunisia, where you can be jailed for criticising the president, or Cuba, which has no independent press and allows no independent access to the Internet. It even has pop-up programmes that scan e-mails, he said.

Pain also mentioned Vietnam, Thailand - a democracy that nevertheless censored foreign Internet sites after last year’s military coup - and Belarus, where the government decreed that owners of cyber cafes must ensure that clients cannot have access to information considered subversive.

The Internet is not a tool intended to protect privacy, Pain said. “As soon as you click, it is possible to know what you do. Generalized surveillance is not here yet. But if the cyber-police want to spy on your e-mails and prevent you accessing the Internet, now it is possible.”

The following is a background paper that Pain prepared for the conference.

A decade ago, regime opponents in Vietnam or Tunisia were still printing leaflets in their basements and handing them out to fellow militants at clandestine meetings. Independent newspapers were no more than a few hastily stapled photocopies distributed secretly.

These days, “subversive” or “counter-revolutionary” material goes on the Internet and political dissidents and journalists have become “cyber-dissidents” and “online journalists.”

Most of them know how to create a blog, organize a chat group, make phone calls through a computer and use a proxy to get around censorship.

New technology allows them to receive and share news out of sight of the authorities. The web is also a blessing for human rights groups, which can

now build a file on a political prisoner with a few mouse clicks instead of over weeks and sometimes months. The web makes networking much easier for political activists as well as teenagers. Unfortunately, this progress and use of new tools by activists is now being matched by the efforts of dictatorships to fight them. Dictators, too, have entered the world of web 2.0.

Sixty persons are currently in jail for posting criticism of governments online, with China’s 50 making it by far the world’s largest prison for cyber-dissidents. The Chinese have been imitated by other countries – four such dissidents are in jail in Vietnam, three in Syria and one each in Tunisia, Libya and Iran.

Parliaments in these countries, along with the local cyber-police, closely follow the latest technological developments. When instant messaging, such as MSN Messenger, became all the rage, China asked the firms that made these programmes to automatically block some key words, making it impossible for Chinese users to talk about the Dalai Lama and Taiwanese independence, for example.

And with the success of YouTube, China and Iran are keen to filter the videos that appear there. They contain too much “subversive” content for China and too much “immorality” for Iran. In Vietnam, police and dissidents play cat-and-mouse in “chat rooms” and three persons were arrested there in October 2005 for discussing democracy on Paltalk, a U.S. web site that organises remote meetings. One of them, Truong Quoc Huy, was still in prison at the end of 2006.

The Internet was not designed to protect message confidentiality. It is fast and fairly reliable but also easy to spy on and censor. From the first mouse-click, users leave a trail and reveal information about themselves and what their tastes and habits are. This data is very valuable to commercial firms, who sort through it the better to target their advertising.

The police also use it. The best way to spy on journalists a few years ago was still to send a plain-clothes officer to stand outside their houses. This can

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

be done more cheaply and efficiently now because machines can spy, report back and automatically prevent subversive conversations.

Cuba has installed spyware in cyber café computers, so that when users type “banned” words in an e-mail, such as the name of a known political dissident, they see a warning that they are writing things considered a “threat to state security” and the web navigator then immediately shuts down.

China keeps a tight grip on what is written and downloaded by users and spends an enormous amount on Internet surveillance equipment while hiring armies of informants and cyber-police.

It also has the political weight to force the major companies in the sector – such as Yahoo!, Google, Microsoft and Cisco Systems – to do what it wants them to, and all have agreed to censor their search engines to filter out web sites critical of the authorities.

This makes the regime’s job very much easier because these firms are the main entry points to the Internet. If a web site is not listed by these search engines, material posted on them has about as much chance of being found as a message in a bottle thrown into the sea.

Not all countries are strong enough to make the U.S. multinational Internet firms bend to their will, but all authoritarian regimes are now working to censor the web, even countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Ethiopian regime of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has blocked openly critical web sites and blogs since May 2006 and Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe is considering a law allowing security forces to intercept online messages without

reference to the courts. One of the first moves by Thailand’s military rulers after their September coup was to censor news web sites, even foreign ones, that criticised the takeover.

When a dictator cannot effectively censor the Internet, he can take a more radical approach – barring Internet access to virtually everyone, as in North Korea and Turkmenistan. And when a tyrant dies, as Turkmenistan’s “President-for-Life” Separmurad Nyazov did in December, his successor starts work by declaring his policy towards the Internet. These days, dictators talk about the web when they want to show their regime is progressive.

Internet users are organising themselves and conjuring up new solutions to tackle these dictatorships, get around the filters and protect their anonymity. They use and create new technology, encrypt their e-mail and use other tools that are still not detected by cyber-police.

The web phone service Skype, for example, has made it much easier for journalists – and Reporters Without Borders – to communicate with their sources. It works especially well because it is encrypted and so conversations are hard to tap. But China has already signed an agreement with Skype to block key words, so how can we be sure our conversations are not being listened to? How do we know if Skype will not also allow (or already has allowed) the Chinese police to spy on its customers?

It has become vital to examine new technology from a moral standpoint and understand the secondary effects of it. If firms and democratic countries continue to duck the issue and pass off ethical responsibility on others, we shall soon be in a world where all our communications are spied on.



Surveillance and Free Media

David Banisar
Deputy Director, Privacy International, London

It goes without saying that the new media makes information access and dissemination far easier but it also can make it easier to monitor who is saying what and who is reading it. The Internet opens a window to the world but that window lets to world look in also.

So who is affected why is it important? There are three affected groups: journalists and publishers, sources, and readers.

This is an area where free speech and privacy go hand in hand and complement each other. There is a chilling effect on journalists, sources and readers when their activities are put under surveillance.

The surveillance scares sources from being able to communicate information with journalists or journalists who for one reason or another need to post anonymously. Readers, who wish to enforce their basic human right “to seek information” are scared away when they know Big-Brother or Big Mama is watching them.

There are real consequences, as the many bloggers in jail in China and elsewhere know.

There has been a global trend towards increasing surveillance, both technically and legally. The laws and policies that once limited surveillance have been weakened or ignored. Since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks there have been many new laws adopted to allow surveillance of communications in the name of the war on terror. Often these are part of larger anti-terrorism laws that have profound effects on freedom of expression. In Sweden, the new Conservative government has proposed authorizing the Defense Ministry to intercept all international communications in or out of the country. In the United States, the National Security Agency has been caught illegally spying on international communications and obtaining phone records. In Bangladesh, the government has proposed that mobile phone companies record all phone calls.

Journalists are often the subject of these easier taps. Journalists across Europe have been subjected to surveillance and searches to identify their sources. In the Netherlands, an appeals court recently authorized surveillance of journalists in a controversial case of leaked “state secrets” that

revealed how incompetent the intelligence service was. In Germany, the government has apologized for conducting surveillance on journalists for more than ten years. In Latvia, the police and judge who authorized wiretapping of a journalist have been sanctioned, and the journalist was recently awarded more than U.S. \$40,000 in compensation.

There has been a second line of attack where many countries have introduced laws that “update” national wiretapping laws to mandate built-in surveillance, such as the U.S. Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act, the U.K. Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, and the Interception of Communications Bill in Zimbabwe.

The United States has been leading a campaign for world-wide adoption of these requirements through international organizations such as the G-8, the International Telecommunication Union and the Council of Europe, which adopted a cyber-crime convention incorporating these into international law for the first time.

The requirements make it easier for anyone to be able to conduct wiretapping. In Greece, it was discovered that the Vodafone mobile phone network had been hacked and built-in surveillance technologies were used to monitor the communications of the Prime Minister and other officials and prominent persons, including journalists. In Italy, dozens were arrested recently after large-scale illegal wiretapping and blackmail of officials and businessman was revealed.

In addition to the laws making wiretapping easier, many countries are also adopting laws to facilitate surveillance in new ways. For example, they are considering legislation requiring telecommunications providers automatically to collect all information on their users’ activities including web sites visited, e-mails, instant messages, and mobile use, including the location of phones when used.

The European Union adopted a legal rule on data retention in 2006. It requires that companies keep user information for between six months and two years. It goes into effect in September 2007, and, by March 2009, all EU countries must have capacity to retain data on Internet access, telephony and e-mail.

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

Some countries, like Poland, are demanding the right to keep the information for 15 years. In the United States, there is no current law on data retention. President Bush personally pushed the EU to adopt its directive. A bill was recently introduced in the United States, but the new Democratic majority in Congress is less likely to adopt it.

This transactional data can be very important in identifying journalists' activities. Yahoo! China provided a reporter's information to the government which resulted in his being sentenced to a 10 year prison term. In the United States, an appeals court has agreed that the government may obtain New York Times phone records to see who its sources are. Companies including Hewlett-Packard, Wal-Mart and Sonora have been found to be obtaining employee and journalists' phone records to identify sources.

There is also a growing number of countries adopting laws to require tracking of the activities of cyber cafe users. These often require that users show identification, and logs must be kept of their activities. In Tibet, users must obtain an "Internet Browsing Registration Card" before they may surf the Net at cyber-cafes or at home. Belarus adopted a law in February 2007 that requires that cafe owners must report users who look at illegal web sites. A number of countries, including Japan and China, have also been adopting "Real Names laws" requiring users to register before they can post on web sites.

Not all recent trends are negative. Many nations have adopted laws on protection of confidential media sources. The laws limit the ability of governments to find out who has provided information of public interest to journalists. A project Privacy International is currently working on for the Open Society Institute found that more than 70 countries have adopted such laws, and important institutions, including the UN, Organisation of American States and the Council of Europe have all recognised their

importance. As controversy grows over illegal surveillance, searches and imprisonments, more countries are adopting such laws or strengthening them.

Important questions arise in relation to the new media – how well do such laws limiting government interference apply? Unfortunately, most of the time, they only apply to limited categories of media. They are specific to broadcasting or television or print and are silent on other types of media. Internet journalists are often not included.

Even Council of Europe guidelines say they only protect persons "regularly or professionally engaged in the collection and dissemination of information to the public." But as the Internet is more recognised as a form of news media, application of those laws should be extended.

In Belgium, the national law was recently amended to cover more broadly persons involved in media, following a court decision that found that the law was too narrow.

In California, a court found that the local law does include Internet journalists. Questions about bloggers and others remain. Blogger Josh Wolf has been in jail for longer than any other American journalist in recent history.

Another protection for sources is whistle-blowing laws. Only a few countries have adopted comprehensive laws – including the United Kingdom, United States, South Africa, Japan and, most recently, Ghana. Their usefulness has proved to be limited in practice.

Pervasive surveillance is becoming commonplace in the name of fighting terrorism and crime. This will have profound effects on the abilities of the media to continue to access and provide information. Current laws are being rewritten with little or no consideration to the effects on free speech. Increased efforts are needed to resist these laws and to promote laws and rules to protect the free expression rights of media and the public.

On Internet, Burma's Diaspora Journalism Challenges Myanmar's News Blackouts

Sein Win

Managing Editor, Mizzima News, New Delhi

Burma under military rule remains one of the most dangerous places for journalists. At least seven journalists are imprisoned, including the renowned 76-year old U Win Tin, whose incarceration has now exceeded his sentence by more than 16 years. So, it will come as no surprise that the government has also imposed strict limits on Internet access and usage.

It liberally uses filtering software to limit access. Free e-mail services such as Yahoo! and Google mail are banned in Burma (which the military regime has renamed Myanmar). Instead, users are forced to use authorized e-mail with a password given by the local Internet Service Provider, itself under direct government control.

This attempt to restrict the Internet has resulted in a cat and mouse game. There is extensive blocking of web sites, Internet telephony access and chat services, while clever users have sought to bypass the filters and restrictions with the help of proxy servers. However, since June, the government has blocked the best-known proxies, requiring users to search for and discover alternatives servers.

While much of the world is excited about globalisation in this age of information, the digital revolution has clearly bypassed Burma. The average per capita income hovers around U.S.\$225, but the cost of broadband Internet connection costs more than \$1,300. So, possession of a computer with an Internet connection is itself a symbol of wealth. According to government officials, in a population of about 50 million in 2006, there were 78,000 Internet users.

External and internal Burmese communities have come to epitomize the rich/poor information divide. While 5th Grade school children in New Delhi have a working knowledge of tools such as Google Search for educational purposes, college-graduated youth from Rangoon do not have personal e-mail accounts and need help just to surf the Internet. This backwardness in technology knowhow is a big worry for Burma's future development.

Even though the media are heavily censored and function with tight restrictions inside Burma,

and the situation looks bleak, there is a ray of hope for Burmese media advocates. With the help of the international community, Burmese media outlets are proliferating rapidly and learning fast, displaying impressive growth in professionalism and the collection of news – while reporting in a more focused, fair and balanced way.

Mizzima is a good example. It was formed in 1988 by three young activists interested in journalism. They had only a single computer without Internet connection. They did not even have a telephone line. All they then had was the will to fight for democracy and to deliver true and real news to Burmese people. None had professional journalism training. They started to gather any news and events related to Burma and wrote reports and opinions. They would then go to a public phone booth to distribute their reporting. Now, Mizzima employs more than 20 persons and produces a publication in Burmese, online publications in both English and Burmese, and even online TV.

Mizzima has become one of the leading Burmese media outlets. Similarly, Irrawady, New Era (Khit Pyaing), Shan Herald and many other smaller outlets have become important sources of information. They greatly supplement Burmese service radio stations such as Voice of America, BBC, Radio Free Asia, and the Democratic Voice of Burma, based in Norway.

The young journalists and others flocking to these media outlets will some day become important members of the media community inside Burma. They are poised to report on and help maintain democracy, if and when Burma returns to democratic practices, but they also need help from the international media community.

Things have only worsened since a recent U.S. – endorsed draft resolution in the UN Security Council condemning the Burmese government as a threat to regional and international peace and security. The draft was vetoed by China and Russia and rejected by South Africa. Since then, the military junta has stepped up its propaganda against “neo-colonialists” and “destructive elements.” This has brought

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

escalating harassment and threats, compounded by increasingly vigilant censorship, effectively tightening the space in which journalists can practice.

For Burmese inside the country, foreign-based radio and TV stations are the primary sources of information, along with web sites like Mizzima and Irrawaddy. Many in the 2 million-strong Burmese diaspora rely on exile-based web sites and publications for news of their country.

Systematic media censorship and repression can be traced to the 1962 coup led by General Ne Win, who replaced the democratically elected government with a military dictatorship.

From the start, initiatives such as the Printers and Publishers Registration Law and the State Protection Law were enacted, in addition to more thorough enforcement of the Official Secret Act and Emergency Provision Act.

After the 1988 popular uprising, the new men in power – currently known as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) – further restricted the mobility of the independent media by passing several restrictive measures, including: the Television Act, the Motion Picture Law, the Computer Science Development Law and the oddly named Responsibility and the Successful Performance of the Functions of the National Convention Against Disturbances and Opposition. The Unlawful Association Act and the Burma Wireless Telegraphy Act were also amended.

Owning a fax machine or a computer modem is illegal without official registration. Anyone caught talking with a foreign journalist is at risk since that invites suspicion and can lead to interrogation and possibly jail. Many writers, journalists, opposition politicians, religious persons, students and labour unionists have been questioned. The Burmese media in exile, with international support, is trying to fill the information gap and have assumed responsibility to report on significant events inside Burma.

Here is what they are up against.

Any communication inside Burma must be submitted to the Press Scrutiny Board before publication. Examples of information censored by the Board include: the naming of opposition figures and political parties, including Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy, unless they are mentioned in an attack on the opposition; debating

government policies; describing the poverty of the Burmese people; discussing the merits of democracy; condemning the regime's foreign friends; and, in general, any news that might cause the government unease.

Instances of government crackdowns on the media are frequent:

- An article on malpractice by traffic police was banned and the author warned for allowing it to appear on the Mizzima web site.
- A journalist who raised difficult questions in a government press conference last December was asked to submit his background and biography. On the orders of the Press Scrutiny Board, the journalist was banned from further press conferences.
- Two journalists who took unauthorized pictures and film of the mysterious new capital of Naypyitaw were sentenced to three years in prison. The new city itself has no mobile phone connections, while its main roads are designed to land small aircraft.
- Zar Ga Nar, a popular comedian and political satirist, previously jailed several times, was banned from public artistic activity by the Motion Picture and Video Censor Board. This came after BBC aired an interview in which he joked about Burma's ultra-conservative culture – an issue the government found too sensitive for public consumption.
- Major Wanna, Chief of the military's Aviation Maintenance department and a writer under the pseudonym 'Mar j', was fired in January 2006 after contributing two satirical articles to a private journal. His crime was making fun of the government's new capital and of its attempt to hold a National Convention for a new constitution.
- Ne Min, a lawyer, was sentenced to 15 years in prison for passing “anti-government” information to organizations outside Burma.

Although people are denied, and many are even unaware of their basic “rights,” many brave citizens are fighting for their freedom despite draconian regulations. This, in turn, is creating fear within the government, which knows that if it is overthrown, things could turn ugly.

Political illegitimacy is the military junta's

Achilles' Heel. The military rulers are trying to legitimize their rule by writing a new constitution. Such a document may establish a civilian government, but it would in fact be run by military men who would mask as civilians. A key goal is to weaken the opposition, step up propaganda against so-called neo-colonialist interests, discredit Western media, and link opposition forces to foreign elements, stig-

matizing them and arousing nationalist sentiments.

To avoid intellectuals turning toward the opposition, the government has made it easier to obtain publication licenses, and it allows more journalists at government press conferences. But private publications must run articles by government agents, officials are severely restricted in dealing with the press and phone-tapping has been stepped up.

Skirmishing with Zimbabwe's Censors

Gerry Jackson
Founder and Station Manager, SW Radio Africa, London

My media experience is purely Zimbabwean, but I'm sure that it is common to many countries. What I know for sure is that it is possible to circumvent censors, to some degree, but you have to be incredibly determined and it helps to be extremely well-funded. Without money you are not going to be that effective.

Zimbabwe is one of the most repressive media environments in the world - a regime that has the support of the army and the police, is totally determined to hold on to power, and it can print as much money as it needs.

We're not talking about censors as the West imagines censorship - this is censorship to deny you the right even to show any curiosity for another political party. This is censorship that leads to mass human rights abuses, murder, torture, rape and general human misery on a grand scale.

But before I go on, let me just put Zimbabwe into some context.

It has the highest inflation in the world - officially 1,593 per cent, so unofficially it's probably closer to 3,000 per cent. It has the fastest shrinking economy in the world for a country not at war. It has the lowest life expectancy - 34 for women and 36 for men - but these were figures compiled by the World Health Organization two years ago, and since then there has been a massive decline in the health delivery system. It's estimated now that if you're a woman you won't live much past 30. It has the highest number of AIDS orphans for a country of its size - 1.5 million children. And this is all due to bad governance, corruption and plunder.

So how do you fight the bad guys?

You need to use a combination of old and new media. You couldn't do it just with new media because we are talking about a country that's being dragged back into the Stone Age. But there is still much that can be done.

In 2000, I challenged the government's broadcasting monopoly in the Supreme Court and won the right to open the first independent radio station. It was shut down at gunpoint after just six days. So this was clearly not the way to go. We had to move offshore.

So, we started off five years ago broadcasting on short wave into Zimbabwe. Sadly, the regional countries were not amenable to hosting us in the neighborhood, so we had to set up in the United Kingdom. That was a little reminder that repressive governments continue to exist because they often have external support.

We were very successful in reaching a wide audience in Zimbabwe for the first three years. We also streamed live through our web site, specifically set up to cater to the estimated 4-5 million Zimbabweans who have fled the country and are living outside the footprint of the short wave signal. Programs are archived for two weeks to cater for listeners in different time zones.

The web site was created with the knowledge that hardly anyone in Zimbabwe has broadband and connections are extremely slow. It hasn't changed from when I left in 2001, when I would connect to the BBC web site and go and run a bath, wash my hair, have supper and then maybe the first page would have downloaded.

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

Although our web site is created primarily for the diaspora, it does have reduced image files for easy download. We also stream at two different speeds, so that in Zimbabwe it is possible to listen without too much of a buffering problem.

And the site is used in the country. We had reports of a woman who ran a bed and breakfast facility in the capital, Harare. When you came down to breakfast you found the daily state-controlled Herald newspaper, plus our web site stories, printed out and stapled together like a newspaper.

We also transcribe key interviews and these are widely circulated by us, and by others who send them on to their mailing lists.

We obviously have very good software protecting our site, so we don't know if it's been deliberately targeted by the regime.

One of the many repressive laws promulgated in Zimbabwe a few years ago was to do with the Internet. Internet Service Providers must give the CIO, Mugabe's secret police, access to an individual's e-mails if requested. The penalty for non-compliance is two years jail. It's impossible to know if e-mail observation is done on a regular basis, but it does mean that people e-mailing in Zimbabwe are quite paranoid, and fear is the most effective means of control.

In 2005, we had our first problem with our short wave broadcasts, courtesy of Mugabe's friends the Chinese. They supplied him with rather expensive jamming equipment and we believe personnel were sent to China for training. It effectively blew us completely out of the water. But the jamming is focused on the main cities. We are still clearly heard in many rural areas.

At first, the jammers took their week ends off, which was very useful for us. Unfortunately, just recently, they had a lesson in improving their work ethic or just hired more badly paid personnel – and now the jamming continues throughout the week ends. Last year, the jamming equipment was also upgraded and now targets us and Voice of America, which broadcast a daily Zimbabwe focused program on medium wave and three short wave frequencies. A radio ham friend in Zimbabwe sends us jamming reports, and he swears you can hear the jammer being cranked up and, as it hits full power, the lights dim!

We could circumvent this jamming by broadcasting on multiple frequencies – but that would

require a serious amount of money that we can't get our hands on.

So, to get around the problem we recently started providing a new service by sending news headlines into Zimbabwe, via SMS.

As in so many other countries, a government intent on stealing resources puts nothing back, meaning that there are few telephone land lines. This has created a huge boom in the mobile industry. Zimbabweans truly love their mobile phones. Even in poor rural areas there are many people with mobiles.

As we already generate news headlines for short wave and Internet broadcast, it made sense to find other ways to spread this information. And it's a nice easy model for an additional donor.

The challenge is of course, what is the financial model for this? People are desperately poor and becoming poorer by the minute. They can't subscribe to an SMS service – especially since the government, which controls the gateway, doubled the charges for the messages. It was targeting an independent mobile phone company, by the way, not us.

For now, we're building our free subscription list and sending SMS messages to about 1,800 persons a day – and growing at the rate of about 50 persons a day. As long as someone wants to give us chunks of money we can grow this to as big as we like.

Another challenge is to reduce the complexity of Zimbabwe's news stories to 160 characters, including spaces. It's an incredibly popular service, and as Zimbabwe goes into complete meltdown, it couldn't be more important.

We've also just started podcasting. This has been something of an experiment and we could only do it because an old friend is providing the service for free. It has been surprisingly popular, with about 2,000 downloads in the past two weeks.

I think the moral of the story is to try absolutely everything possible to circumvent the censors and not give up.

It has been interesting to see the large number of news web sites created by Zimbabweans in the diaspora. The problem is that few of them generate their own news. Many are excellent, but some do a cut-and-paste job or create stories out of rumours, and we have found that we must be very careful with information from those sites.

We've spent five long years building our credibility and making sure our listeners trust what we tell them. As the regime begins to collapse and the infighting in the ruling party becomes more intense, deliberate misinformation is often fed to the media by various political factions, and it can be quite easy to get things horribly wrong.

You have to travel the high road. There are so many people who work hard for press freedom and to bring information to people who are denied it.

And there are so many different ways of doing this now.

I get very disheartened when I read that Google has caved into China, that Yahoo! is responsible for a political activist being jailed, that Microsoft and Cisco Systems gave into pressure and that China has signed an agreement with Skype to block key words.

The issues are too important, and people can die in this war. So when the 'good guys' do this, then I want to find another planet, in a galaxy far, far away.

20 Years in the Fight on Censorship

Leonard R. Sussman
Freedom House, New York

Twenty years ago, I wrote a book on the theme of this conference—the correlation of three elements: state power (particularly censorship), the role of the press in all its forms, and the influence of the new communication technologies on all aspects of life. The book was titled “Power, the Press and the Technologies of Freedom.” It was largely optimistic but warned that all so-called new technologies – through the ages – held potential dangers as well as great opportunities for free expression.

Freedom House has 66 years of experience in linking press freedom to democratic governance. Only democratic systems of state power enable the press to serve as free reporter, free analyst, and free channel of expression for the individual citizen. For, the citizen in society – any society, anywhere – should be the ultimate source of state power.

The proliferation of new communication technologies, these past 20 years, has produced limitless opportunities for communication, including interactive communication, accompanied by threats by newly minted censors. We should place both opportunities and threats in some historic perspective.

Recognizing that freedom of the press depends on the degree of political freedom in any nation, Freedom House began the first regular, comparative recording of dangers to the journalist and to press freedom.

We discovered in 1988, for example, that 62 nations owned their national or international news agencies, and only 28 countries had independent

news systems. Censorship was all-pervasive in a country that controlled all the print or broadcast news.

That same year, 115 countries or 72.4 per cent had some of these restrictive practices: The government owned the media outright, the independent press was subject to censorship, the State licensed the press or journalists, or guided the news media in the choice of content. Not surprisingly, in the 1980s, press-control countries clamored for a so-called “new world information and communication order,” starting with State control or supervision of news media.

Ironically, such past statistics may be viewed today as reflecting movement toward defeat of censors. For, today, State-owned media are a small minority. To be sure, government pressures on independent journalists on all continents has recently increased.

Yet, there are major differences today. UNESCO, for example, is no longer the venue for bitter debates over some “new order,” but is a primary defender internationally of the free press. When Freedom House began monitoring press freedom everywhere, there were no other such monitors. Now, there are great press freedom institutions represented here. They speak out globally to defend free expression. Then, the major news media generally ignored harm to journalists; that was considered an in-house problem. Not any longer. Oppression of journalists is now properly regarded as an attack on the rights of citizens themselves.

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

Now, the number of practicing journalists (not to mention bloggers) has skyrocketed. Inevitably, more journalists armed with new technologies and expanded transportation can appear and report instantly from scenes of controversy or danger. And, drawn by the vastly more and more diversified communication networks, censors also turn their attention to the new technologies. Ironically, that new challenge facing today's censors — and their response — also reflects the movement toward greater freedom of expression.

In my “Power” book, written before the Soviet Union imploded, I wrote that Mikhail Gorbachev's Glasnost policy of greater openness was desperately essential to jump-start the nation's economic development. But, I added, the limited freeing of Russia's news media, welcome as it was, would not necessarily guarantee future freedom of the press. One Soviet journalist wrote then, “They watch all of us who speak out today ... and make lists of our names, for when their day comes around again.” Today in Russia, State control of the media is rampant once again.

That is proof that the present communications revolution is not a panacea, though it is already altering every form of human, as well as international, relationship. As with all older forms of communications technology, this one has the potential to enhance or constrain human freedom. But there is a major difference. The new technologies are of greater scale and diversity. Their very speed and variety defy the controller who would ban or censor from a central point.

The new technologies need no “center” where control can be mounted. They are linked to the periphery as well as to the center, often bypassing the center. Networks of information join other networks at a speed beyond the capacity of the human mind to monitor before a message has been delivered, though the same tech can enable a censor to determine that the message has arrived. To be sure, nations are already limiting uses of the Internet — as our first monitoring of Internet abuses showed ten years ago — but the new technologies also provide their own mechanisms to bypass the controller. That is a hope for the future.

What of the future?

In all countries moving toward greater democratic governance, broadly supported civil society is needed before the press can be defended and, in turn, can properly defend citizen rights.

Many years ago, John Dewey, perhaps the most distinguished American philosopher, debated Walter Lippmann, then the most prominent Washington columnist and confidant of presidents. Lippmann's column in the New York Herald Tribune often swayed public opinion. He argued that world events had become too complex for the average citizen. Consequently, he held, democratic governance should depend on a few experts who would determine public policy and the journalistic coverage of policies.

Dewey disagreed. He said that democracy was too vital a process to be limited because technology was advancing rapidly. Dewey insisted that both government and journalism had not adequately involved citizens in the continuing process of democratic decision-making.

Dewey agreed, however, that to educate American citizens, journalists should be well trained in the complexities of modern societies. This would apply to bloggers as well as mainline journalists. Today, both Lippmann and Dewey might be appalled to observe the dumbing-down of popular journalism, in print, broadcasting or on the web.

Today's interactive technologies are a clear response to Dewey's democratization and a rejection of Lippmann's elitism.

The challenge is to maintain the independence of the democratizing technologies — independence from statist controls and the monopolistic tendencies of commercial competition. Specifically, the Internet must be protected from some new authority that would monitor and influence the web's global flows, no matter what the high-sounding rationale.

Have heart!

Twenty years ago, there were 61 states considered “free”; today, there are 90.

Twenty years ago, there were 40 countries where the press was relatively free; today, there are 73 — this despite the fact that both political and press freedoms have stagnated in recent years, and killing of journalists is at a record level.

Futurists know there is no straight-line course to progress; only zigs and zags.

And, as on the ski run, there is no inevitably disastrous slippery slope; no unstoppable glide to press control.

Constant monitoring is therefore needed to reject even small restrictions on free expression.

Thomas Carlyle, the British historian, put it well more than 100 years ago. "Printing," said Carlyle, "is equivalent to democracy: Invent writing, democracy is inevitable." For us, print, broadcasting, and blogging are democratizing. Invent the independent Internet, democracy is inevitable. Let us act on that hope and promise.



Conclusions :

The Same Principles Apply to the New and Old Media

Abdul Waheed Khan
Assistant Director General, UNESCO

The potential of the new media is ambivalent. They hold a hitherto unseen potential to empower the individual by providing greater freedom of information that can lead to innovative courses of practical action. But they also contain possibilities for widespread manipulation of information and governmental censorship. A central challenge is to fully exploit the potential of the new media without compromising the fundamental right of freedom of expression.

The same principles apply to the new media as to the traditional media. The free flow of ideas by word and image is a prerequisite for any social and economic development.

However, while what we often call “new media” technologies always imply the fundamental right to freedom of expression for the individual, they do not necessarily imply freedom of the press.

Efforts to support new communication technologies, therefore, must be placed alongside efforts to support press freedom. Efforts to support press freedom must be complemented with capacity-building efforts to strengthen professional standards and socio-economic programs to combat poverty. The impact of new media is, after all, dependent on quality of journalism and accessibility.

The issue of curbing free speech has been a central theme at this conference. We must continue to draw attention to the crucial role that free, independent and pluralistic media play in the democratic process.

We must emphasize that all citizens have the right to express their ideas and opinions worldwide, yet there is a problem with governments that use new technologies to censor information and with corporations that knowingly sell this technology to governments.

The media’s work in providing independent and trustworthy information has contributed significantly to processes of reconstruction and reconciliation.

At a recent forum in Bali, media and communications professionals from more than 30 countries pledged to create a “Power of Peace Network” committed to building mechanisms through which media and information technologies can contribute to enhancing mutual understanding and peace.

The greatest role that new media can play is to foster peace and understanding, for mutual understanding can only be achieved through a continuous exchange of information and knowledge.

Rooted in Newspapering, Branching Out to Internet

Gary Kebbel

Journalism Program Officer, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Miami

The issues under review – most notably the expansion of press freedom in an Internet-driven world and the threats to that freedom that an insecure world make inevitable – are of primary concern to us.

I'm not speaking here to summarize the conference, but I will mention a few of the many points that struck me as important. I thought Leslie Harris's reminding us that it's one Internet, and that we need to act as if it were was very important. Because of our interconnectedness a successful prior restraint on Internet communication in Cuba or Burma or Belarus has a greater potential to affect us all than a restraint on a newspaper, for instance, in any of those countries.

We've learned that having a medium that can defeat geographic borders is only a precondition for the communication that can connect us, enrich our freedom and make us stronger as a people. But it's not a prescription. We have much work to do and many fights ahead. For example, Zaid Mohseni from Afghanistan reminded us that for many people, there's still a lack of understanding about the link between free media and democracy. In other words, the free flow of ideas on the Internet first needs us to make sure everyone understands the value of the free flow of ideas.

We also were starkly reminded by several speakers that the new media in their country are the old media in other countries. The restrictions they face are the restrictions we had hoped would be in the past. But they aren't.

Our hope for the future is that as we fight for open Internet, digital and mobile access, we are building upon open access to the previous media.

Knight Foundation is sponsoring this conference because we believe in the potential and the promise of the Internet's ability to break down barriers, ignore geographic borders and permit open communication between people who have never been exposed to one another before. It is what Time Magazine, in its much maligned Person of the Year issue, meant when it said we now have "an opportunity to build a new kind of international understanding, not politician to politician, or great

man to great man, but citizen to citizen, person to person."

Two years ago, I had the good fortune to travel to Tunisia to talk to local Internet editors about strengthening their sites with the goal of making them economically viable. My sponsors, the U.S. Embassy and Internews, had come to see the Internet as a way to combat the abuses of authoritarian government, and now argued that if we could find ways to make Internet sites self-sustaining, we'd have more freedom of speech. In other words, financial independence would lead to political independence.

My mission took metaphorical form as I traveled briefly in that beautiful and historic country. In Carthage, I saw the ancient Roman amphitheater with its near-perfect acoustics, and the irony of standing there, nearly 2,000 years later, still trying to send out messages unimpeded, was dramatic. It became even more so just a few months later when, with a dateline of Tunis, the human rights organization Human Rights Watch issued a 144-page report on online censorship in the Middle East and North Africa. It documented scores of online censorship cases in which Internet users had been detained for online activities in countries across the region, including Tunisia, Iran, Syria and Egypt.

There are other examples – many others, unfortunately – but even so, they are not going to prevail. The Internet will swallow its censors. It is only a matter of time. Much as the "many to many" model of Internet communication is changing the way we get information, the Internet's ubiquity makes the spread of that information inevitable.

Knight Foundation's roots are in newspapers; so our focus on press freedom extends back to our founding more than 50 years ago. In that time, nothing has been more important to us than advancing the vitality of journalism: training its practitioners, protecting and enhancing its watchdog role and, perhaps most of all, ensuring that its relevance endures in our rapidly changing society.

Recognizing that the Internet advances our freedom by allowing messages to ignore boundaries, Knight Foundation nonetheless sees the value in people

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

working for their common good in geographic communities where communication remains free and open. The tasks of citizenship and self-governance are based on geography.

In that spirit, last year we started The Knight Brothers 21st Century News Challenge, a funding offer of up to \$5 million a year – and up to \$25 million over the next five years – to explore whether and how the digital world can be used to connect people in the real-life places where they live and work.

Our thinking was that throughout the 20th Century, newspapers were the glue – the “informational” glue – that connected states, cities, towns and suburbs. Now, as cyber-information becomes more pervasive, newspapers might become less effective in that role. So we are asking, Is there a replacement? Can someone in digital space perform the community-defining function of newspapers?

The 21st Century News Challenge proposes nothing less than turning the web inside out to help people connect in real life, not virtual life. It is a contest for great community news experiments, using any kind of digital method or device. It brings technology to the arena of journalism values, and it brings journalistic values to technology. We were

very excited about it when we announced it in September, and we are even more excited now that we have seen the response.

In three months, we received 1,650 proposals for our challenge. 15 per cent of those came from outside the United States. That’s not bad for the first year, but we are working hard to increase the number of international applications this year.

We will advertise the News Challenge in six or seven languages, but the message will be the same. We want to fund ideas that use digital news and information to create a sense of community in a given geographic area. We believe that the role good newspapers played in uniting people around common problems and helping them to seek solutions that benefit their daily lives is a role that needs to continue with digital media. We hope to receive applications this year from each of you.

How all of this eventually plays out should be fascinating. This conference on New Media and the Press Freedom Dimension has given us all a wonderful opportunity to contemplate the changes taking place in a most constructive way. We are so grateful that we were able to play a role in making it possible.

Summing Up

Richard Winfield
Chairman, World Press Freedom Committee, Washington, D.C.

To capture the spirit of the past two days I think the themes of innovation and optimism seem to prevail. I recall the words of Oh Yeon-Ho of OhmyNews of South Korea, whose goal is spreading hope, and Anton Nossik describing the Russian government’s surprising inactivity thus far in seeking control and regulation of the Internet. And Leonard Sussman commenting upon the relative increase in the number of nations classified as “free” when it comes to press freedom.

We heard him say that the hope and promise of the new media is ever present, reflecting the theme

of optimism and innovation during this conference. We recognize that the age of technological change is accelerating and that the overall effect is one of liberation. We accept the inevitability of change, and the result of this ceaseless innovation is further democratization of the exchange of information.

So I would say that most of us believe that the glass is probably more than half full. Like some of the fine French food we have enjoyed the last couple of days, I would say that the speakers’ presentations were rich and varied and different and well-prepared. They were international and attractively

presented and for the most part the service was on time.

But I don't want to be a Pangloss about this. It struck me there that there was also pervasive a view that this is not the best of all possible journalistic and technological worlds. The arms race between the architects and designers and the users and the journalists of the web and the Internet continue to seek a perfect vacuum of regulation and ultimate freedom, using evasive technology where necessary.

On the other hand, there are policy makers, regulators, governments in repressive and also non-repressive regimes who seek controls, who seek to filter, who seek to block, who seek surveillance for a variety of reasons – some legitimate some illegitimate: national security or avoiding embarrassment to the government, protection of children, combatting terrorism, combatting crime, preservation of the regime. A variety of motives propel counter measures against evasive technology.

That's the first concern – the arms race, or cat and mouse game, between the press of the new media and the would-be regulators

Then, there is the problem of exports. Both Guy Berger and Sharon Hom raised the prospect that China may become a model for other nations. The panoply of external and internal information control deployed by China will be exported. Guy Berger said that when China censors the Internet other regimes see that they can follow suit. Gerry Jackson provided the example that Chinese jamming equipment was exported to Zimbabwe. It is for old media short wave radio, yet quite effective.

The problem of defending press freedom persists, regardless of the platform, regardless of what technology is developed and used. So eternal vigilance is ever the price of liberty. That applies whether we are speaking of books, or newspapers or blogs or chat rooms, or any other new media.

I was struck by a colloquy between Tunisian journalist Sihem Bensedrine and Julien Pain over the need to develop evasive software to overcome or circumvent the blocking and filtering used by her government in Tunisia. And Julien came up with satellite phones and foreign proxies as evasion techniques and technologies. We concluded with David Banisar's bleak survey of surveillance advances in

Western democracies, endorsed notably by the European Union – eavesdropping, wire tapping, retention of records by telecoms and, presumably, Internet Service Providers.

What are the open questions? I would think a theme first mentioned by Declan McCullagh, who introduced the link between the new media and economic development. He provided some persuasive data that I think needs development. The dialogue in the past has focused on the role of free, independent and pluralistic media. That dialogue has focused on self-governing democratic institutions flowing out of and also interdependent with free media. Declan suggested that we develop the notion that there is a cause and effect relationship, a close link between the explosion of new media and the development of economic vitality.

It was James Wolfensohn of the World Bank who said that a free press is not a luxury. He held that a free press is indispensable for equitable economic development. So I suggest that we develop the data to underpin the argument that there is a link between new media and economic development. This is needed because we think that information is the oxygen for development of markets, particularly in developing nations.

The second open question is how it is possible that we can contain the outsourcing of blocking filtering, censorship and surveillance by China to other repressive regimes.

The Coordinating Committee of Press Freedom Organizations, whose members have co-sponsored this conference, issued a statement back in 2002 calling for the full extension of freedom of the press to the Internet. In anticipation of this meeting, they have now joined to update that appeal to include all the new media using modern technologies in the enjoyment of the same freedom of expression protections as the traditional print and broadcast press. This text has been distributed to you. May I ask that all those here at this conference on press freedom and the new media now join in endorsing that statement as a fitting conclusion to our discussions.

[The statement, which follows, was unanimously endorsed by acclamation.]

PRESS FREEDOM IN NEW COMMUNICATION MEDIA

**COMMITTEE TO PROTECT JOURNALISTS
COMMONWEALTH PRESS UNION
INTER AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTING
INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE PERIODICAL PRESS
INTERNATIONAL PRESS INSTITUTE
NORTH AMERICAN BROADCASTERS ASSOCIATION
WORLD ASSOCIATION OF NEWSPAPERS
WORLD PRESS FREEDOM COMMITTEE**

14 February 2007

The members of the Coordinating Committee of Press Freedom Organizations issued the following statement defending and promoting press freedom on the Internet and other new forms of communication.

They recalled their Statement of Vienna of November 2002, issued in advance of the World Summits on the Information Society. They reaffirmed its principles in the following terms:

1. News media in cyberspace, via international satellite broadcasts, and using other new forms of communication should be afforded the same freedom of expression rights as traditional news media. The texts adopted by the World Summits on the Information Society reflected that view. A free press means a free people. Press freedom on the Internet must be a fundamental characteristic of this and of any new communication system.
2. This principle was embodied in UNESCO's 1997 Declaration of Sofia: "The access to and the use of these new media should be afforded the same freedom of expression protections as traditional media."

This declaration, adopted by a broad cross-section of journalists from both East and West Europe, was formally endorsed by the member states of UNESCO at its General Conference in 1997.

3. A major priority must be implementation of Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

That pledge, made by the international community in 1948, must be a living reality everywhere.

4. There are many types of communication over the Internet and other new media, and it is important not to confuse them. News, for example, differs from such activities as pornography, pedophilia, fraud, conspiracy for terrorism, incitement to violence, hate

speech, etc., although there may be news stories about such problems. Such matters as those listed are normally covered in existing national general legislation and can, if appropriate and necessary, be prosecuted on the national level in the country of origin. No new legislation or international treaty is necessary.

5. Some countries that have advocated controls over the free flow of information across national frontiers have tried to justify such controls on political grounds, regional value systems or national information sovereignty. Such controls are clearly in violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
6. Over the years, developing countries have complained of being unequal partners in world communication ability. The new information technologies afford just the opportunity for interactive and multi-way communication that these developing world critics have said they want.

For those in many countries, Article 19 is still a promise rather than a reality. The new communication technologies could go a very long way toward fulfilling the promise.

7. Those who seek answers to the so-called “digital divide” neglect to recall that previous communication technologies such as printing, radio and television also started in advanced, more developed countries and spread virtually throughout the world, largely thanks to natural market processes.

The rate of spread of each successive new communication technology accelerated radically. According to the International Telecommunication Union, it took 38 years for the first 50 million radio sets to be in place worldwide, 13 years for the first 50 million television sets, and just four years for the first 50 million Internet connections. More than a billion persons are now said to have access to Internet worldwide.

8. Because general principles are at stake, there is concern that controls instituted for new communication technologies could “wash back” into controls over traditional news media. This would be regressive and tragic. Nothing that could work in this manner should be permitted.
9. A number of proposals for regulation and controls now being made were rejected during the now-discredited campaign for a “new world information and communication order.” There are clearly those at work who seek to revive and assert for their own purposes such restrictive proposals in the new guise of countering alleged threats and dangers posed by new communication technologies. These proposals must again be successfully resisted, just as they were earlier.
10. Many of the fears over the new communication technologies expressed by officials and politicians seem to reflect anxieties about the new and unfamiliar, which they do not control. Such anxieties often reflect ignorance on what the new communication technologies really are and of how they work. They can also reflect a fear of freedom.

Discussions of many alleged problems are often conducted on the basis of unproved assertions and speculations. Rigorously researched, hard data is missing to describe the supposed threats posed by the new communication technologies, with these unproven dangers used to justify the calls for controls.

11. If successful, proposals to control content and its dissemination through new information technologies would severely constrain their rapid spread and development.

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

12. In the broader freedom of expression context, existing international copyright regimes and intellectual property rights agreements are, generally speaking, an indispensable encouragement to creation and innovation. Those who seek to undermine such existing conventions on the grounds of free access would, in fact, succeed only in drastically reducing incentives for developing and distributing information.
13. Most people in the world continue to receive their news and information through traditional broadcast and print media and are likely to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.
14. The various follow-ups to the World Summits on the Information Society provide both opportunities to broaden the reach of freedom of expression as well as dangers from those who would narrow it – unthinkingly or deliberately.
15. Everyone involved in following up on the unfinished business of those Summits should bear firmly in mind the need to maximize opportunities for extending press freedom and to resist the threats to restrict it.

To that end, civil society and all those engaged in news flows over the Internet and other new media must continue to be an integral part of the deliberations at every stage. The future of new and evolving forms of communication cannot be left to governments and technocrats alone.

16. The Coordinating Committee of Press Freedom Organizations calls for concerted effort to make preserving and extending the free flow of news and information in cyberspace and elsewhere an ongoing basic concern. News on the Internet and other new forms of communication is the same as news everywhere. New technology does not require any reconsideration of fundamental rights such as freedom of the press.

We call on those involved in deliberations on the future of new forms of communication to:

- a) reject any proposal aimed at restricting news content or media operations,
- b) work for inclusion of clear statements of unqualified support for press freedom on the Internet and other new forms of communication in any new agreements or declarations of principle on the subject, and
- c) stipulate in any text that could be used restrictively a clear statement that the particular provision involved is not intended to limit freedom of expression or press freedom.

There must be press freedom in all the new spaces created for communication.

Conference Speakers

Fabricio Altamirano, Publisher, El Diario de Hoy, El Salvador Chairman, Inter American Press Association's Internet Committee

In 1992, he became Executive Director of the daily El Diario de Hoy of San Salvador. In 1994, the U.S.-educated Altamirano founded -elsalvador.com- portal, now the largest web site in Central America in both reader traffic and advertising sales, with an average of 45 million page views monthly. In 1998, he inaugurated "Mas!" a morning newspaper now the third largest circulation daily in El Salvador. In 1994, he co-founded the "Monica Herrera" Communications University and was elected its President in 1999. He was Vice Chairman for El Salvador of the Inter American Press Association's Freedom of Information Committee for eight years. In 2005, he became Chairman of the IAPA's Internet Committee.

Rosental Calmon Alves, Director, Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, Austin, Texas

Prof. Alves holds the Knight Chair in Journalism and the UNESCO Chair in Communication at the School of Journalism at the University of Texas at Austin. He is also the founding director of the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas.

He began his academic career in the United States in March 1996, after 27 years as a professional journalist, including seven as a journalism professor in Brazil. He moved to Austin from Rio de Janeiro, where he was the managing editor and member of the board of directors of Jornal do Brasil. In 1991, Alves created the first Brazilian online news service, which served the network of Rio's Stock Market. In early 1995, he managed the launching of the first online edition of a newspaper in Brazil, Jornal do Brasil Online. He created the first class on online journalism at the University of Texas in 1997, and since 1999, he hosts the annual International Symposium on Online Journalism at the university, gathering professionals and scholars worldwide

Alfonso Ruíz de Assín, President, International Broadcasting Association

He is the Secretary General of the Spanish Association of Commercial Radio Broadcasters, which represents 1.150 Spanish private commercial radio stations in Spain. He also is the Director of the Spanish Digital Radio Forum. He is President of the International Broadcasting Association and President of its European Chapter. The IAB represents more than 17.000 radio and TV stations in the Americas and Europe. He is the first Vice President of the Association of European Radio, which represents more than 5.000 radio stations in 13 European countries.

Timothy Balding, CEO, World Association of Newspapers, Paris

He became Chief Executive Officer of WAN, the global trade organization for the press industry, in November 2005. He had been Director General since 1987, after joining WAN as Deputy Director and Editor of its magazine in 1985. Balding, a Briton, is a former journalist. He worked for several newspapers in Britain, including the Oxford Mail, and was a political correspondent for Press Association, the news agency, before joining WAN in France in the early 1980s. WAN groups 18,000 publications in 102 countries and has consultative status with the UN system.

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

David Banisar, Deputy Director, Privacy International, London

He is Director of the Freedom of Information Project of Privacy International in London and a Visiting Research Fellow at the School of Law, University of Leeds, UK. Previously, he was a Research Fellow at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and co-founder and Policy Director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center in Washington, D.C. He has also served as an advisor and consultant to numerous organizations including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Justice Canada, the Open Society Institute, Article 19, and Consumers International. He has worked in information policy for more than 15 years and is the author of numerous books and publications on freedom of information, freedom of expression and privacy.

Robert Barnard, Founder and Partner, D-Code, Toronto

In 1994, he co-founded D-Code – experts on the Information Age Generations (12-34 years). Barnard, along with an international network of emerging thought leaders known as “D-Coders,” has worked across multiple industries and the public and private sectors to help organizations better attract and retain the Information Age generations.

He has always been an entrepreneur. At 19, he started Osprey Reef, a company producing beachwear clothing that he designed and manufactured. In 1991, he founded Generation 2000, a national youth organization with the mission to get young people involved in determining the future. Barnard was named one of 100 Canadians to watch by Maclean’s Magazine in 1993 and one of Canada’s Top 40 Under 40 in 1997. In 1998, he co-authored the bestselling book “Chips & Pop: Decoding the Nexus Generation.” He has served on several charity boards including United Way, St. Steven’s Community House, and, currently, Street Kids International. He is developing a new multinational youth research project with WAN.

Elizabeth Barratt, Executive Editor/Multimedia and Training, The Star, Johannesburg, South Africa

In 25 years at South Africa’s largest quality newspaper, she has been a reporter, news editor, layout editor, editorial systems director and editorial trainer. She was Secretary General of the South African National Editors Forum for three years, its deputy chair for two years and is now Secretary General of The African Editors Forum. She recently earned a Masters in journalism from Stellenbosch University.

Levan Berdzenishvili, Member of Parliament, Internet Specialist, Tbilisi, Georgia

Levan Berdzenishvili 53, philologist, MP, Chairman of Civic Development International Center, an NGO for civic education and raising public awareness. He has long experience in media, print and electronic. As a member of Georgian Delegation to the Council of Europe, he belonged to its media sub-committee. As a chairman of CDIC, he has been involved in projects for professional journalists, including those of WPFC.

Boris Bergant, RTV Slovenia, Ljubljana, Slovenia

He is Adviser to the Director General of RTV Slovenia for International Relations and Projects. A member of the Administrative Council of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) since 1990, Bergant has been Vice President of EBU since 1998. Representative of Slovenia in different media committees of the Council of Europe, Bergant is currently Chairman of the Standing Committee on Transfrontier Television. A former President of Circom Regional, he is a member of the World Committee ISAS for standardization of broadcasting, Internet and press.

Guy Berger, Head, Journalism & Media Studies School, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa

Prof. Berger was deputy Chair of the SA National Editors Forum 2003-4, and writes "Converse" - a fortnightly column for the Mail & Guardian online (www.mg.co.za/converse), where he frequently writes about ICT and press freedom issues. He is involved in Highway Africa, the largest annual meeting of African journalists. Berger was named one of "50 people to know in New Media" by the U.S.-based Online Journalism Review in 1998. In 2003, he was made an Associate Member of the World Technology Network in recognition of his work on Highway Africa over seven years. Berger has himself been involved in various multi-media Web site productions, including <http://journ.ru.ac.za/egazini>, www.alivingstage.org, and <http://au.ru.ac.za>. He teaches journalism and media policy, including Information Society and convergence issues, at MA level.

Evelyne Bevort, Associate Director, Centre de Liaison de l'Enseignement et des Moyens d'Information (CLEMI), Paris

CLEMI is the French Education Ministry's Liaison Center for Teaching and Media. Its mission is to promote - especially through training - the multiple use of news media in teaching, to encourage better understanding by pupils of the world, while developing critical understanding. More at: <http://www.clemi.org/organisme/anglais.html>

Karma Tshering Bhutia, Research Coordinator, Nepal Community Multimedia (CMC), Nepal

He has more than four and half years experience in developing and coordinating community, new media, ICT and development projects. The program aims to innovate combinations of new and traditional media technologies to increase access to information, knowledge and opportunities for freedom of expression.

Albert Rudatsimbura Bryon, Contact FM, Kigali, Rwanda

Born in 1960 in Rwanda, his family fled to Europe after the first signs of genocide in 1962. He grew up and was schooled in Belgium, including university studies at The VUB (Brussels) and film school in St. Lukas Instituut. He became a professional in music production in 1985 and started his own audio and video production company, "Human Mix," in 1990. After the war in Rwanda (1996), he was assigned to cover most of the historical news events in the Great Lakes region by international TV networks such as Reuters, WTN, etc.

"I had only one ambition in mind and this was to prove how media could contribute to better development, especially in a region where 'hate media' had done their part in destroying and smashing the society apart." In 2004, he received a license to broadcast and started Contact FM - "the most incredible journey of my life." The station links the motherland and the diaspora. "In a culture of 'self-censorship,' our way of speaking out for everybody is a factor in boosting cultural enterprise and democracy."

Neil Budde, Gen. Manager, Yahoo!, Vice President/Editor in Chief, Yahoo! News, Sports and Finance, USA

He joined Yahoo! News in November 2004 as General Manager and helped build it into the world's most visited online news site. In January 2007, he was promoted Editor-in-Chief of Yahoo! News, Yahoo! Sports and Yahoo! Finance, and now focuses on the content and editorial operations of these three sites. In 2005, Budde's team launched Yahoo!'s first foray into original multimedia news coverage with Kevin Sites in the Hot Zone, for which Sites received the 2006 Daniel Pearl Awards for Courage and Integrity in Journalism.

Before joining Yahoo!, Budde was the founding editor and publisher of The Wall Street Journal Online. Budde's career began with a decade of experience as an editor and reporter at The Richmond Times-Dispatch, The Courier-Journal in Louisville, Ky., and USA Today. He earned a BA in journalism from Western Kentucky University and an MBA from the University of Louisville. He is on the board of directors of the Online News Association and is now its treasurer. He recently joined the board of the California First Amendment Coalition.

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

Ehab Elzelaky, Blog Editor, Al Dustour weekly, Cairo

He is Deputy Editor in Chief of the Egyptian weekly Al-Dustour. He's also Editor of Blogs Page in Al-Dustour (the first page dedicated to Egyptian bloggers in the Egyptian media) and the author of "Implacable Adversaries: Arab Governments and the Internet," describing the situation of Internet usage and freedom in 18 Arab countries, including the blogosphere in those countries (read the report at <http://www.openarab.net/en/reports/net2006/>).

Johann Fritz, Director, International Press Institute, Vienna

Educated in Austria and the United States, Prof. Fritz's early career was with an Austrian youth organization. In 1970, he joined the Austrian Economic League, where his duties included co-founding the Management Club and editing its magazine. From 1975-91, he managed the daily paper Die Presse and from 1975-83 was also Managing Director of Vienna Cable Television. In 1977 he co-founded Radio Adria, a radio station for German-speaking tourists in Northern Italy, with his wife, Brigitte. He became the Director of the International Press Institute (IPI) in 1992. In March 2000, he was awarded the title of Professor by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science & Research and in 2003 he was awarded the Gold Medal for Meritorious Service to Vienna.

Mary Lou Fulton, Vice President of Audience Development, The Bakersfield Californian newspaper, USA

She is Vice President of Audience Development for The Bakersfield Californian, an independently owned U.S. local media company in central California. Fulton is the founder of The Northwest Voice, one of the first citizen journalism publications in the U.S. newspaper industry. Her new products group at The Californian also created the award-winning social media software that provides tools for blogging, profiles and social networking for nine local web sites.

Fulton's background spans both newspapers and technology. She started out at the Associated Press and later moved to the Los Angeles Times. Fulton shifted to the online world in 1995 when she joined The Washington Post's new media division and later became Managing Editor of washingtonpost.com. Fulton also held senior management positions at a number of online companies, including America Online, GeoCities and HomePage.com. Fulton has a BA in journalism from Arizona State University and a Master of Public Administration from Harvard's Kennedy School.

Leslie Harris, Executive Director, Center for Democracy & Technology, Washington, D.C.

She heads CDT, a non-profit public policy organization dedicated to promoting the democratic potential of an open, decentralized global Internet. www.cdt.org. CDT seeks to enhance privacy and free expression in global communications technologies and to forge consensus on public policy among all those involved in the Internet and new communications technologies. In 2001, CDT launched the Global Internet Policy Initiative (GIPI) in partnership with Internews. GIPI fosters growth of the Internet with training and assistance to Internet advocates in developing countries.

Harris is a civil liberties and communications lawyer who has been involved in a wide range of civil liberties issues and the Internet in the United States. She played a key role in the successful opposition to the Communications Decency Act, seeking to censor the Internet in the U.S., helped to launch a program to bring the Internet into U.S. schools and libraries, and more recently was involved in efforts to stop illegal wiretapping. For CDT, she is co-facilitating a multi-stakeholder process with Business for Social Responsibility to draft principles to guide the responses of the Internet industry to government measures that compromise user privacy and free expression rights.

Sharon K. Hom, Executive Director, Human Rights in China, New York

Hom is emerita professor of law at the City University of New York School of Law. An international human rights lawyer, she writes on links between trade, technology, and human rights. She has been a judge at the Global Tribunal on Violence Against Women of the 4th World Conference on Women and the NGO Forum 95. She has more than 14 years' experience teaching in and developing legal exchange and training programs for Chinese lawyers, judges, and law teachers. Among her publications are: English-Chinese Lexicon of Women and "Law and the forthcoming, "Challenging China: Struggle and Hope in an era of Change."

Gerry Jackson, Founder/Station Manager, SW Radio Africa for Zimbabwe, London

She is the founder and station manager of SW Radio Africa – Zimbabwe's only independent radio station. The station broadcasts from near London to Zimbabwe and southern Africa on short wave and over the Internet. Its web site also allows the estimated 4-5 million Zimbabwean exiles to access programming through live-streaming and archives. With the Zimbabwe government now jamming its short wave broadcasts, SWRA has begun an SMS campaign of news headlines.

Karin Deutsch Karlekar, Managing Editor, Freedom of the Press Survey, Freedom House, New York

Dr. Karlekar manages Freedom House's Freedom of the Press project. It focuses on producing an annual survey that tracks trends in media freedom worldwide. As well as coordinating the survey and writing a number of the country reports, she also serves as spokesperson for Freedom House on media and press freedom issues. She has conducted research and assessment missions to Nigeria, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, and has traveled extensively in Asia and Africa. She also represents Freedom House on the governing council of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) network, and in February 2006 was elected as IFEX Convenor.

Gary Kebbel, Journalism Program Officer, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Miami

He focuses on developing grants that advance digital media and citizen journalism. He was news director at America Online, where he trained and directed the team that built AOL News into one of the world's largest online news sites. He is a Fulbright Senior specialist in online journalism and has helped train U.S. public affairs and public information officers at the U.S. State Department's Foreign Service Institute. He helped create USA Today.com and Newsweek.com, and was a home page editor at washingtonpost.com. He has served as the graphics editor at USA Today and taught online journalism at the University of Maryland's Philip Merrill College of Journalism.

Abdul Waheed Khan, Assistant Director General/Communication, UNESCO, Paris

He has held his post at UNESCO since July 2001. Dr. Khan is responsible for UNESCO's programs and activities in communication and information, strategic planning for ICT interventions in development, providing leadership at global level in fostering digital opportunities for social and economic inclusion, representing UNESCO at major international meetings on information and communication, building alliances between public and private sector initiatives in ICT, and mobilizing resources to enhance the scope the Communication and Information Sector.

Declan McCullagh, Senior Writer, CNET News.com, San Francisco

He has been a new media technology correspondent for Time and Wired magazines. He founded and edits Politech, an online new media news service.

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

Aralynn McMane, Director, Young Readership Development, WAN, Paris

She is director of youth readership development for the World Association of Newspapers. Dr. McMane coordinates newspaper activities involving the young around the world. These activities range from the Newspapers in Education Development Project (supported by Norske Skog paper company) introducing newspapers as classroom tools in emerging democracies, to an assessment of how newspapers can use cutting-edge technology to build brand loyalty of youth. She joined WAN in 1995 to deal with youth activities and develop newspaper associations and newspapers themselves, after working in the press and in journalism education.

Zaid Mohseni, Tolo TV, Kabul, Afghanistan

He is a Director and shareholder of Moby Media Group (MMG). He graduated in law and economics from Monash University, Melbourne, in 1992 and worked for 12 years as a lawyer, eventually becoming the Department Head and Partner of the boutique Melbourne law firm, Wilmoth Field Warne. He left it in 2004 to join MMG fulltime. It is a media group established by the Mohseni family in late 2002 after the fall of the Taliban.

It owns and operates a number of media outlets in Afghanistan, including: ARMAN FM, the country's first commercial radio network, with FM transmitters in 12 Afghan cities; Tolo TV, Afghanistan's most popular station with free-to-air transmission in 12 Afghan cities and satellite coverage in Central Asia; Lemar TV, Afghanistan's most popular Pashto language station with free-to-air coverage in eight cities and satellite coverage in Central Asia; Afghan Scene Magazine, an English-language news color magazine for expats; Barbud Music, a music recording company in Kabul, plus various other media interests, including Aria Production, involved in feature and documentary films, serials, dubbing, music video clips and advertising production.

Roxana Morduchowicz, Director of Media Education, Education Ministry, Buenos Aires

Before joining the Ministry, she directed newspapers in education programs for an association representing the eight newspapers of Buenos Aires. She has written several books and articles in that field. She has been a consultant for WAN on introducing Newspapers in Education (NIE) to publishers and teachers in Macedonia and Francophone Africa. She has been associated with UNESCO in Latin America, working with governments and newspaper associations on NIE programs in new democracies there. She is a Professor of Communication and Education at Buenos Aires University and a visiting professor at the University of Paris. Her research, with the late Steven Chaffee of Stanford University, is a reference for testing effects of NIE on children's civic values.

Anton Nossik, Chief Blogs Officer, LiveJournal.com, SUP, Moscow

Dr. Nossik, 40, is a Moscow-born journalist, editor and Internet media manager. In 1996, he created Vecherni Internet, one of the first Russian-language stand-alone Weblogs worldwide. In 1998-2000, Nossik created Gazeta.Ru, Lenta.Ru, Vesti.Ru and NTV.Ru (now NewsRU.Com) - Russia's leading online media Web sites. Joining the new LiveJournal.com Russian community as a blogger in early 2001, six years later he became Chief Blogging Officer with SUP Fabrik - a Moscow-based Web 2.0 startup, now in charge of the 820,000-strong LiveJournal Cyrillic community.

Oh Yeon-Ho, Founder, OhmyNews online newspaper, Seoul, South Korea

He was born in 1964 in Gokseong, in southern South Korea. Dr. Oh graduated from Yonsei University in Korean literature in 1988. Fresh out of school, he joined Mahl, a liberal Korean monthly magazine as a staff reporter. He continued there until 1999 as a chief of staff. In 1995-1997, he was Mahl's correspondent in

Washington, D.C. Oh has published a number of books and collections of his experience in journalism in South Korea for the past 10 years. His latest book, "OhmyNews Story" talks about his personal journey for the past five years in launching OhmyNews and earning international recognition for his citizen reporter concept.

Oh launched his long-envisioned media experiment in February 2000. OhmyNews has since rapidly grown to more than 42,000 "citizen reporters" worldwide and 65 fulltime staff reporters, as of March 2006. It was named by the annual Sisa Journal survey in 2000 as the 10th most influential media in Korea, steadily moving up, to be ranked as the 6th most influential media by the same survey in 2004 and 2005. Oh earned a doctoral degree in journalism from Sogang University in 2005.

Omar Faruk Osman, General Secretary, National Union of Somali Journalists, Mogadishu, Somalia

Osman was born and raised in Mogadishu. He studied Management Science at Mogadishu University. He became a journalist in early 1990s as a district reporter. He worked for both old and new media. He was chosen in 2002 as Secretary General of the independent Somali Journalists Network, a professional association that advocates press freedom since the Somali transitional government enacted a restrictive media law. He also led the transformation of the Somali Journalists Network from a professional association into a trade union, the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) in 2005. He has conducted a number of media development projects and press freedom advocacy activities. In 2006, he was re-elected Secretary General of NUSOJ to a second term.

Julien Pain, Head of the Internet Freedom Desk, Reporters Sans Frontières, Paris

Pain, 31, a journalist specialized in new media, has headed the Internet and Freedom Desk at Reporters Without Borders since September 2003. He heads the organization's lobbying and ad campaigns on online free expression. He wrote a report, "Internet Under Surveillance" in 2004 and was editor of the "Handbook for Bloggers and Cyber-Dissidents," which has been translated into seven languages. He is also the editor of www.rsfblog.org, a Web site that offers a weekly international review of blogs.

Nora Paul, Director, Institute for New Media Studies, University of Minnesota, USA

She was previously (1991-2000) at the Poynter Institute (Florida) teaching news library management, computer-assisted research, and new media leadership. She was editor for information services at the Miami Herald from 1979-1991. She is the author of "Computer Assisted Research" and co-author of "Great Scouts," cyber-guides for subject searching and "Behind the Message: Information Strategies for Communicators." Her work at the New Media Institute focuses on evolving digital story-telling forms.

Pauls Raudseps, Editor of the Editorial Page, Diena daily, Riga, Latvia

He is editorial page editor of Diena, the largest and most respected daily in Latvia. He was one of the newspaper's founders and was its Managing Editor. Born in the United States to Latvian parents, moved to Riga in 1990 to work for the Latvian independence movement. He helped create Diena's on-line version, and the editorial page cooperates closely with the paper's Internet edition.

Mogens Schmidt, Director, Freedom of Expression Unit, UNESCO, Paris

He studied Scandinavian Literature and Languages at the University of Aarhus 1968-1974. From 1974-1981, he taught literature and mass communication at Aarhus. In 1981, he became Head of the unit for development of curricula at the Humanistic Faculty at Aarhus. He became head of the Danish School of Journalism in 1988. He was an initiator of the European Journalism Training Association in 1989.

He was involved in media aid projects of the Danish School of Journalism, primarily in Central/Eastern Europe as well as Mongolia and southern Africa. In 1995, he became Director of the European Journalism Centre in

New Media – The Press Freedom Dimension

Maastricht, Netherlands and ran that further-training center for six years. In 2001, he joined WAN as Assistant Director General with responsibility for WAN's press freedom work and its World Editors Forum. He joined UNESCO in early 2003.

Chris Schuepp, Coordinator, Young People's Media Network, UNICEF

He works as youth media consultant for the UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Formerly a radio and TV journalist in Germany, Schuepp worked as Country Director for Internews Network in the Kyrgyz Republic in 2000-2001, before joining UNICEF as coordinator of the Young People's Media Network. He holds a degree from the Journalism Faculty of the University of Dortmund, Germany.

Leonard Sussman, Senior Scholar, Freedom House, New York

He was for 21 years Executive Director of Freedom House and then for 18 years its Senior Scholar for international communications. He has written extensively in newspapers and magazines. His ten books include "Power, the Press and the Technologies of Freedom: The Coming Age of ISDN" (Freedom House 1989), "Press Freedom in Our Genes: A Human Need" (WPFC 2001), and "A Passion for Freedom: My Encounters with Extraordinary People" (Prometheus 2004). His articles on "The New World Information and Communication Order" and "Historic Aspects of Freedom of the Press" appear in the 4-vol. Encyclopedia of International Media and Communication (Routledge 2003). His article on "Freedom House" is forthcoming in the Encyclopedia of Human Rights (Routledge 2008).

Sankarshan Thakur, Executive Editor, Tehelka online newspaper, New Delhi

Thakur, 44, is Executive Editor of Tehelka. He began his career as Delhi correspondent for The Telegraph in 1984. He was previously Associate Editor of The Indian Express and of The Telegraph. Thakur is author of "Subaltern Saheb: Bihar and the Making of Laloo Yadav" and several monographs on contemporary issues like the Kargil War, Indo-Pakistan relations and rural poverty. Thakur has covered key events home and abroad. He has focused on Bihar, Kashmir and the rise of right-wing politics in India. He won the Prem Bhatia award for excellence in political journalism in 2001. In 2003, he won the Appan Menon Fellowship to work on a book he is currently writing on Kashmir.

Monique Villa, Managing Director, Reuters, London

She heads Reuters text, pictures and graphics services, which transmit daily around 8 million words and 1,000 photographs globally. She is also Chairman of Action Images, a specialist sports photography agency acquired by Reuters in September 2005. A French national, she joined Reuters in 2000, from Agence France Presse, where she held a number of senior journalism and management positions. As a correspondent at AFP, she reported for a number of years from Paris and Rome,

Sein Win, Managing Editor, Mizzima online news service, New Delhi

Sein Win is Managing Editor of the India-based Mizzima News (www.mizzima.com), a Burma-related news and multimedia outlet formed by a group of journalists in exile. A civil engineer, who graduated in Burma, he became a full-time journalist in 2002. He has been conducting training for Burmese journalists in India.

Richard Winfield, Chairman, World Press Freedom Committee, Washington, D.C.

He was elected chairman of WPFC in April 2006. His involvement in press freedom includes his volunteer work, his law school teaching and his previous law practice. Since 2002, Winfield has taught comparative mass media law and American mass media and Internet law at Columbia and Fordham Law Schools.

Since the mid-1990s, Mr. Winfield has led the media law reform programs of the American Bar Association/Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative in numerous former Soviet bloc nations. More recently, the International Senior Lawyers Project, which he co-founded in 2000, has expanded this work to Algeria, China, Japan, Jordan and Turkey. He was general counsel of The Associated Press for more than 30 years while a partner in the firm of Rogers & Wells, now Clifford Chance US LLP. He defended AP and other media clients in hundreds of press freedom cases.

Abi Wright, Communications Director, Committee to Protect Journalists, New York

She was formerly CPJ's Asia program coordinator. She traveled across Asia documenting press freedom abuses, meeting journalists and government officials, and reporting news. She has worked as a TV news producer, including two years as a producer in the NBC News Moscow bureau. She reported in Iran for an ABC News documentary, traveled through the former Soviet republic of Georgia as an Internews consultant, and spent several months aiding Memorial, one of the earliest Russian civic organizations, dedicated to exposing Goudayev's crimes. She graduated from Barnard College in Russian studies.

Steve Yelvington, Vice Pres., Morris Digital and Founder, Bluffton Today citizen news site, USA

A longtime newspaper journalist, he was founding editor of Star Tribune Online (later rebranded startribune.com) in Minneapolis in 1994 and built it into one of the top-ranked newspaper sites in the world. As executive editor and network content director for Cox Interactive Media, he supervised a nationwide network of city sites.

At Morris Communications, he led site design and development operations that yielded more Digital Edge and EPPY awards than those of any other newspaper. Editor & Publisher magazine presented him with the 2001 EPPY Award for Individual Achievement and the Newspaper Association of America gave him with the 2007 Online Innovator Award. He concentrates on long-term strategy and innovation for Morris Digital Works. Yelvington has been a featured speaker at online news gatherings in the United States, Britain, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Sweden, Russia and China.

Henrikas Yushkiavitchus, International Media Consultant, Paris

A Lithuanian-born broadcast engineer, he was Vice Chairman of Gostelradio, the Soviet Union's TV and radio directorate, with ministerial rank, for 19 years. As such, he played a key role in implementing the Gorbachev-era "Glasnost" policies. He joined UNESCO as Assistant Director General for Communication in 1990, and led the application of the Organization's shift to a New Strategy to defend and promote press freedom, until his retirement in 2001. He continues as a special advisor on communications issues to the UNESCO Director General. In 1990, he won an annual "Emmy" award of the U.S. National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for his role in expanding East-West TV broadcast exchanges.