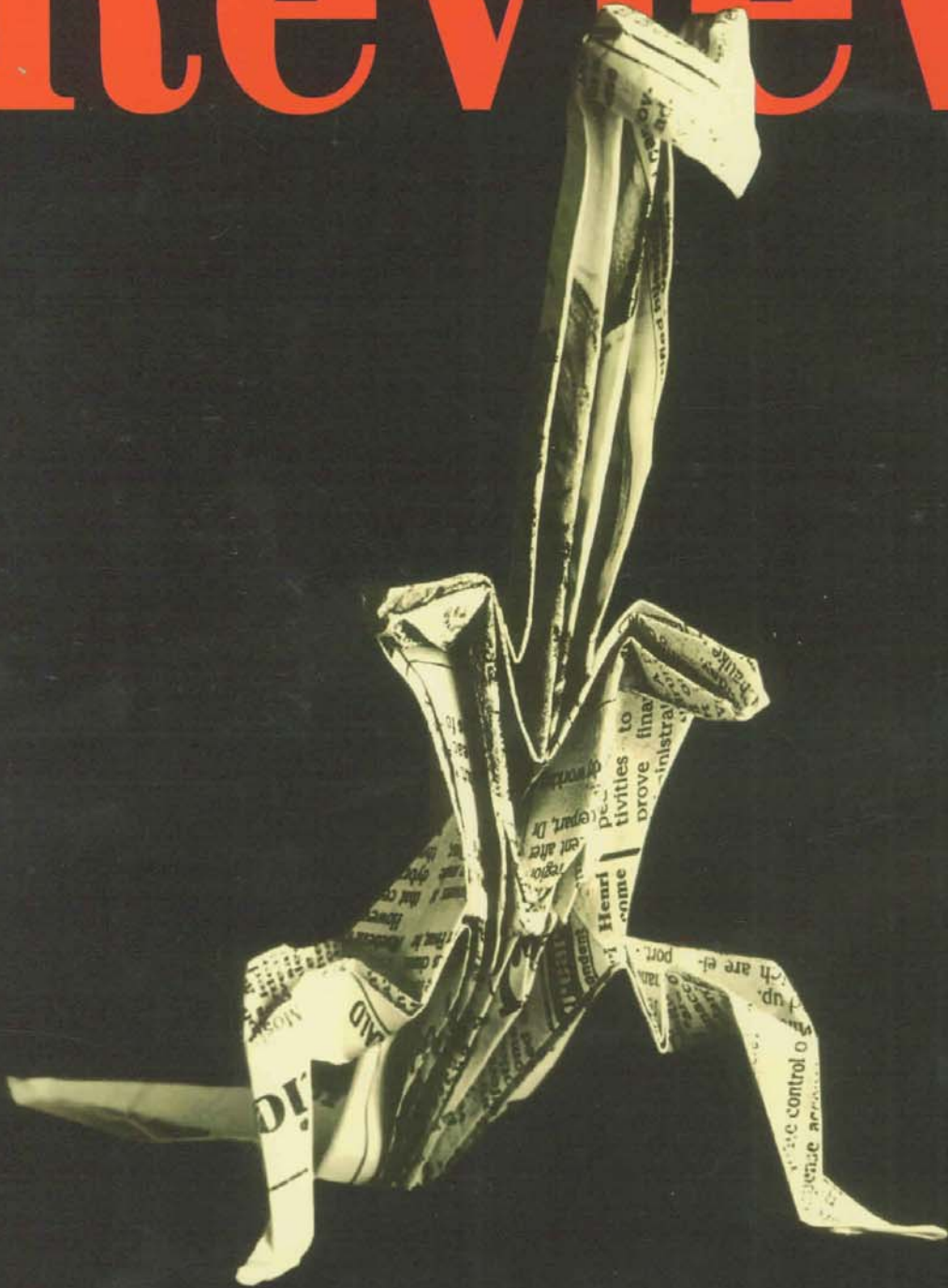


Rhodes **16** Journalism

Review



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This Issue



he T word. Transformation. That great good we're all pursuing at the moment in multiple work places all over the country. There's a great urgency here: behave like a dinosaur and you'll soon find the political landscape has mutated so much you've become an obsolete species.

But how is the great rush to be different and diverse affecting those on the receiving end? Review asked this question of journalists across the country, in TV, print and radio. The results appear in our four-page spread in this issue. It's by no means an exhaustive survey, but we hope it puts the uncertainty and anxiety on the record and stimulates discussion.

To add to the debate academic Lynette Steenveld looks at why transformation raises its head in the media as a race issue. She asks some seminal questions. Among them: what are we trying to leave behind when we transform and where do we want to go? Questions that haven't really been asked much with all that hot air being wafted about.

Change permeates this Review:

- Changes in approach: Nazeem Howa talks about being guided by a new set of journalism values; David MacGregor talks about being a mediator and not a conflict-chaser. Instead of those degrading headlines that imply women ask for it, we discuss a new language for reporting rape and domestic violence.

- While we welcome one change in the law (goodbye to the Cautionary Rule) we lobby for a change in another one – Section 205.

- We look at situations that need change: journalists jailed in African dictatorships for doing their jobs; drug cartels in Mexico targeting editors, the all-white (just about) ad-planning industry.

Finally we bring you lots of things that are fresh: new commercial radio stations; the new TV station; new books; new technology.

Enjoy the ride! (It's not always pleasant, but it's always interesting).



Anthea Garman

“ It is a newspaper’s duty to
print the news, and raise hell.”

Wilbur Stoney - Publisher



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Guest Editorial

Nazeem Howa, deputy editor of The Star, reconsiders the values of journalism

Six of the best



Getting the facts right is not the same as having the right facts

Journalistic values drive what goes on in newsrooms each day – what issues and events get covered, who journalists interview, how stories are framed and presented. These values come into play every day in our lives as professionals.

The top six are:

- Credibility
- Community connectedness
- Balance
- Accuracy/authenticity
- Leadership
- Judgement

The journalism values system works much like an ecosystem. At first glance, the elements of land, air, water and wildlife seem quite distinct. As the elements interact and function together as a whole, a much more complex and nuanced environment emerges.

We will do our craft no good by practising these values in isolation from each other. We need to look at how we can inter-relate all of them in the day-to-day activities of our journalism.

Credibility is driven by how primary stakeholders view what we do over time. Readers judge a medium's credibility by whether journalists:

- demonstrate a deep understanding of the community and are a reliable source of information;
- act as part of the community, not just as passing visitors;
- take responsibility for how their coverage might affect people.

If media and journalists lack credibility, people vote by keeping their hands in their pockets or turning off their sets – and the figures show the results of that silent protest.

Four key values lie at the heart of preserving our credible status with readers. These are: balance, accuracy, leadership and accessibility. These four values play off one another. For example, if a journalist views balance as capturing only two opposite sides when there are actually multiple dimensions to a story, then accuracy suffers and claims of bias may result.

As our country undergoes its massive transformation, we are all under increasing pressure to review our news judgements. Judgement acts as the filter through which the values of balance, accuracy, leadership and accessibility flow.

If the judgement filter is somehow off-target, if the medium does not truly understand what is important to readers, or if “official” voices exclusively drive news coverage, then the medium risks losing its relevance and meaning in people's lives. Credibility is thus undermined.

Community connectedness: We must find a way to end the sterile fashion in which we have become accustomed to reporting on the bread-and-butter issues which affect our readers. The era of media being third-party witness to history is over. Instead, we need to locate ourselves firmly within the communities we serve in order to better judge what information is relevant and meaningful to people.

Moving closer to our communities does not necessarily mean we compromise our credibility. However, it does mean we have to be very careful about watching our assumptions.

Preconceived views and assumptions can drive how we approach stories and how news is represented. A particular challenge is that our middle managers – who really run our media – don't necessarily understand the communities we serve.

Balance: It's not just both sides, it's all sides. Journalists too often approach balance as covering “both sides” of the story. This often results in an approach which delivers stories of the “he said/she said” variety, much like playing a game of table tennis.

A more appropriate approach recognises that a diversity of viewpoints exists; that there are solutions along with problems; that there is good with the bad.

We should worry less about balance and more about reflecting a sense of fairness and wholeness. We need to move in from the margins and capture the moderate perspectives – points of agreement and places where indecision, uncertainty and indifference exist.

We must look beyond the official institutions and the usual suspects to illuminate what is happening within the communities we serve.

Accuracy/authenticity: Getting the basic facts right (such as names, addresses, time and place) is non-negotiable. But getting the facts right is not the same as getting the right facts. Journalists must provide the background, context and perspective required to paint a complete picture for people. The “right facts” means reflecting the tone, language, experiences and emotions of the public – creating a bond with our communities.

We need to generate news coverage that is authentic – not just accurate. Authenticity is something that occurs over time, not just in one story.

Authenticity conveys what people

see, hear and experience living in their communities.

Leadership: The mass media exercise leadership when journalists:

- anticipate important issues that the public should consider – shedding light on issues and problems before they reach crisis point;
- play the role of explainer – clarifying what is happening on an issue and dispelling myths that may exist;
- provide news and information that help the public to form reasoned judgements rather than just superficial opinions;
- provide a place where the public can learn about and begin to examine issues in order to find, for itself, common ground for action.

Leadership means we take responsibility for how stories and news coverage might affect the public; that we think twice about stories that unnecessarily strip away people's hope, but also that we don't neglect stories that challenge people to think about important issues.

To earn and maintain the public's trust as a credible source of information, journalists must remain independent of undue influences.

Judgement: Making the right call is everyone's job. Judging how journalistic values literally play out daily and over time is becoming more challenging.

Within this context, all members of the newsroom staff – not just editors – must continually exercise judgements. This means adding value to people's lives by selecting, shaping and bringing definition to what is important and interesting, and not merely providing information.

Journalists should provide people with the information they need – context, perspective and meaning – to make their own judgements.

The era of media being third-party witness to history is over

TRANSFORMATION

SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE

by Anthea Garman

For years I've wanted to write about transformation not the high-sounding concept, the actual on-the-ground reality. Unlike affirmative action, "transformation" has a healthy ring. It sounds wholesome and good for you, it sounds inclusive. But when I was in a newsroom, which was definitely changing even if it was doing so without plan or guide, there was so much turmoil, so much emotion, that even when an official "transformation committee" was put in place as a vehicle to guide change it soon floundered.

Then I was part of an all-white editorial management team. The two highly capable, highly credible black journalists at this level were poached away to better jobs with better opportunities and better salaries. Their going left us lily-white and horribly conscious of not representing our readers or communities. In the meantime the newsroom floor was rapidly changing complexion. Young, feisty black reporters were being hired for just about every job that became available. They were coming with high expectations: they wanted career paths, recognition and upward mobility. Not a management meeting or news conference went by without the subject of race being brought up. But when a transformation forum was finally put in place, after the black reporters pressured the company management, it became clear we were all talking past each other, and had been doing so for years.

The transformation of the media From what, to what?

by Lynette Steenveld



I write this article with caution. I write too, as a formerly disenfranchised South African, Marxist, feminist, media theorist. These are some of the positions with which I identify, and which constitute my identity in this debate. This is the place from which I speak. I raise this issue at the outset, because I believe "identity politics" is at the centre of the fraught issue of transformation.

The discussion around transformation often surfaces in the media as a race debate. Race essentialism is the premise for most of the arguments about the appropriateness (or inappropriateness) of particular journalists for the task of communicating to South African audiences.

The basis of this flawed view is that only black (or white) journalists "know" what the "black (or white) experience" is. My argument is that this perspective ignores how structural conditions such as class, gender, sexual orientation, educational background, etc construct the frameworks for "making sense" of any experience.

The term "transformation" begs the question "from what, to what?" It necessarily implies a

particular understanding of the kind of society we live in, and a vision of where we want to go. The ANC government's position is clear: it supports a capitalist state that is non-discriminatory with respect to race, gender, age, sexual orientation etc, in which "affirmative action" is applied as a policy with respect to race and gender, but not to class, sexual orientation, age, etc.

South Africans have been raised on "identity politics": we were divided into "groups", with Berlin-like walls dividing us. Each group was said to have its "own identity or culture" which was deemed inherent, God-given, biological, unchanging and therefore *essential*.

There is another version: here identity is not inherent, not biological, not fixed. According to

The "problem" we all agreed was the white complexion, white culture and white management of the newsroom and the news. But when we began to talk about how we understood it, how we could change it, we started to open up a chasm between the races and between reporters and management that became very difficult to bridge.

People who had slugged it out through the 80s together in the newsroom, found themselves on opposite sides of that chasm. Young white men who had resisted the call-up and risked their lives in the townships to report on security police shenanigans found themselves lumped with the old white reactionaries. Mid-career people (all white) had to revise their expectations: they might not be the ones in the jobs they had always seen waiting there for them. In the meantime the frustration among black reporters was palpable. The company didn't have a plan to change, it was hopping from one foot to the other making ad hoc decisions depending on where the pressure was coming from.

That was two years ago. Since then some major impetuses have become reality in the media world. The SABC has undergone drastic racial and gender change. Independent Newspapers has obviously also adopted a fairly aggressive approach. And on the horizon are the Employment Equity Bill and other legislation, making other bosses nervous about quotas and government intervention.

Despite the numbers (the SABC staff is now exactly 50% black, 50% white) and the confidence (for instance evidenced by Tony O'Reilly who sees things from a very removed position) my sense from talking to people all over the country is that transformation is a very complex process with some very painful effects.

So I've come back to writing about it. Partly because writing for a writer is a way of making sense of things. Partly because I feel that if some things are talked about openly and honestly it will help clarify them. I'm incensed at the style of management that makes social engineering decisions at high level and fails firstly to consult and then secondly to communicate the plan or purpose to those on the receiving end. While a lot of the drastic change that is happening looks very impressive it has this double-edge. The numbers look great. The embittered and angry people as a result may be as numerous.

Review, because it's read by a majority of South African journalists in print, radio and TV newsrooms, can be a place to talk about these issues. With the help of two postgraduate journalism students, Lineke Moen and Françoise Gallet, I decided to try and get on record people's personal experiences of how they understand and see transformation.

We made the assumption that at this stage of our history in South Africa, and with so many obvious appointments of black people in positions of power, it would be easier to talk honestly about what's happening. Well, we don't think so.

In the space of a month Moen and Gallet phoned, faxed and emailed 24 journalists across the media spectrum from broadcasting to print media. Journalists were contacted from Times Media Limited, Independent Newspapers, Mail & Guardian, Natal Witness, the SABC and the freelance sector. The journalists interviewed ranged from reporters through lower management to editors. There was also a cross section of male, female and the races.

We found it really difficult to get people to stop mouthing their company's policies and to say: "This is what is happening to me". The reasons ranged from fear at being fired for being out of line through to anxiety that new working relationships would be jeopardised.

Some of the interviewees were happy to be named while some felt it would complicate

It's a tightrope because you're trying to change but still meet deadlines

the delicate situations they are in. What we want to see is much more debate on how transformation is brought about, what form it will take, and where it will take us, with maximum communication and minimum alienation between races in our newsrooms.

Management and communication

One editorial manager told us about his company's new hiring policies. He'd received very specific instructions: no more whites; no more coloureds; no more Indians; only blacks. And if he was going to employ women they would have to be blacks too. We asked him how he felt about his own future in the company and got a mixed and very emotional response. I asked him to write something for Review. He was terribly nervous: "At least I'll receive a written warning, at worst I'll be fired."

We were disbelieving. But, Sam Sole, working at the Sunday Tribune, told us: "The problem lies with the lack of transparency and fairness of management. There is uncertainty about how affirmative action is applied and to what extent people are automatically disqualified in terms of their skin colour and their sex. The truth is that policies are quite complicated, are often not well articulated and some of the greys have not been explored, ie how are disadvantages judged, targets met. This translates into insecurity and demotivation."

"The position taken by Independent Newspapers at a national level is that of Africanisation. There are a number of perceptions as to where they are going but we don't know if they have articulated or even thought through what their policy is on the floor. This is regarded with a degree of cynicism on the floor, which is not entirely unjustified."

"There is also a lack of clarity. Old issues and benchmarks may not be wrong but the issues haven't been clearly debated. A proper framework hasn't been laid. As a result the debate doesn't work properly. Transformation is really a meaningless concept unless you provide a framework for debate."

Another senior journalist at Independent Newspapers confirmed Sole's feeling: "There seems to be little doubt that the senior management of Independent Newspapers is quite serious about transformation. There is less certainty, however, among existing black and white staff about the company's real motive for such change. A popular view is that the main reason the company is tackling employment equity with such urgency is the need to protect foreign investment."

Lizeka Mda from the Mail & Guardian said: "The problem is that the process is driven from top down. The staff does not seem to be involved. And as far as affirmative action is concerned, many want to poach people who have been trained by others."

"None of them develop their own people so they can move them up. Especially now that there are no training programmes on the job. Of course the newspaper takes in a couple of students each year, but that is not really developing people who are already there."

Chris Vick, Independent Newspapers training manager, said: "You have to recognise that it is as much about style as about content in other words, it is about how things are done, not just what is done."

and "black" have been constructed in South Africa, what we need, in Giroux's words, is "to create a new political vocabulary and project for rethinking a politics of cultural difference predicated on broader conceptions of race and identity". This task cannot be overstated. If we fail, it seems to me that we either descend into a politics of race (racist) essentialism, or some variant of seeing whites as the victims of racial inequality.

Stuart Hall and David Held usefully link this understanding of identity politics to a broader politics of citizenship. Their argument is that the significance of the struggles over relations of power, identity and culture relate to the wider struggle over questions of membership, community and social responsibility. In South Africa we are faced with the problem

of constituting a new national identity. Who belongs? How do we belong? What are our rights and obligations? How historically do individuals see their past racial/gender/class constructions and relations to various communities? and how does this impinge on their membership of the "nation"; with what rights and responsibilities?

The media play a crucial role because, as Hall notes, they "construct for us a definition of what race is, what meaning the imagery of race carries, and what the 'problem of race' is understood to be".

The problem with race-essentialism is not only that it ignores how class, gender, sexual orientation, educational background, etc construct frameworks for making sense of experience, but it also presumes that there is a singular "black" or "white" experience which can be "objectively" represented.

However, an underlying concern within this discourse seems to be the desire for "other voices", other perspectives, other discourses, and other languages. The questions then

No one asked the colour of the alternative press of the '70s and '80s

media theorist Stuart Hall, it is being continually formed and transformed in relation to the way we are addressed by the different social, political or cultural systems which we inhabit. We may be subject to contradictory, shifting identities: woman first? working class? lesbian? free marketer? Muslim? While each of these categories could be said to represent groups of people, a single person could have a changing sense of self which crosses them all: not all women are woman-identified women; not all lesbians have the same class identity, or religious affiliations.

Hall argues in relation to race, that we need to acknowledge the "end of the essential black subject". The identity "black", cannot possibly describe the array of political, social or cultural positions that could be taken up by

'black' is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category

someone whose skin colour is black. Black feminist, gay, middle class, homeless, unemployed persons may all share a similar skin colour, but the politics these persons identify with, or articulate may be different from each other - and may have more in common with particular persons whose skin colour is white. His argument is that "'black' is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category" - as is "white". According to Henri Giroux, another media theorist, "the relationship between identity and being black is no longer fixed, static or secure".

What this suggests is that race in and of itself is not a given; it is not a thing that we can physically take hold of. Rather, what we understand "it" to be, depends on the way in which "it" is constructed and "made to mean" through a multiplicity of discourses which have changed, and are changing in different places, at different historical moments.

Given this understanding, and given the complex ways in which the categories "white"

Setting people up for failure

One new female manager said: "Everything is exacerbated because I am the visible representative of change." It's a very telling statement. She holds a position a woman has never held before, her company has put her in the vanguard of change as the embodiment of something new and when the flak comes it hits her first.

A newseditor said: "Recently we had two vacancies in our operation. We received eight applicants, two of them senior white journalists who met all the professional criteria required for the jobs (that is, years of experience and qualifications). With one exception, all the others were very junior and none of them, if we adhered strictly to the professional requirements, would have got the position.

We hired two black applicants because they showed enormous promise. They were self-motivated, talented and had a good sense of what was required of them. Clearly, they will do well and, if nothing else, will grow into their new jobs. Nevertheless, our operation like most South African newsrooms is small and there is a great deal of pressure on everybody to perform. Our only concern is that we might be setting people up to fail by promoting them too rapidly into positions that they are not able to handle."

If you scratch deeper, you hear encouraging noises from women & blacks

White anxiety black frustration

A white editor of a regional paper said: "While my immediate environment is relatively secure, the same cannot be said for an increasingly alienating industry that is transmitting some ominous sentiments. Racism is simmering and on the rise, comments about 'people who are not wanted must look elsewhere' are casually uttered within earshot of those they are aimed at, inexperienced staff are shuffled into positions they are not qualified for and experienced journalists, writers and subeditors are looking to get out.

"No newspaper, irrespective of its ownership is insulated from the forces of transformation. But, transformation is a strange being capable of endless transmutation for a host of reasons including expediency, political correctness and nationalistic affirmation."

Lerato Kojana, editor of the SABC's internal magazine, said: "The introduction of an affirmative action policy in 1994 had predictable results. White staff members suddenly saw no future for themselves in the corporation. Every post which was advertised or became vacant, they assumed, would automatically be filled by an incompetent black person just to make up the numbers. White people did not see themselves as people with a role to play. They sulked and resolved to give no co-operation to the new appointees."

Mda says: "There are no black subeditors on this paper, and I believe that is the case with other newspapers as well. Why is that? Subediting seems to be the reserve of white women. There are no black people in management either, and the advertising executives are always white."

Kojana: "The many fresh starts of the corporation were all too evident. Loss of revenue, loss of skills, loss of audiences. People didn't want to commit themselves to anything – not their jobs, not participation in organisational processes. People erected barriers around themselves. Everybody was caught in the standstill – unable to move forward, a very frustrating position for those with ambitions to further their careers despite transformation."

Now add gender...

Zubeida Jaffer, who co-ordinates a parliamentary team working for 13 Independent newspapers, said: "Coming into a male-dominated arrangement, and essentially white, I tried not to see it in these terms. I had to invest a lot of time and energy into interpersonal relationships with people coming from completely different world views.

"Their attitude is: 'Who are you?' I had to overcome that. At first I thought it was only me, until I spoke to another new manager. She is also subjected to these attitudes. You don't just have to deal with your job; you have to deal with all these issues. Sometimes I think that it is a gender issue, because when you speak to other women there is always tension in a change situation."

Another woman, anonymous, said: "Because I was one of only two women on an executive I was privy to a lot more information, expertise and key decision-making than the majority of my women counterparts. It was at times lonely and difficult working with some men who tolerated my presence, and who thought my input was marginal. They were never openly hostile, only excluding. The managing director was enormously encouraging and actively promoted my involvement, saying that I brought a unique perspective to certain matters.

"I began to make my approach to business more 'masculine'. That is, I spoke in a point-form manner, never prefaced a proposal by 'I think or I feel' which had them rolling their eyes. I kept my points brief, numbered and devoid of feminine frills.

"I was never sure whether this made them more open to my ideas or suspicious that I was behaving out of gender!

"A corporate environment can be enormously hostile to an ambitious and entrepreneurial woman. If, God help you, you are considered attractive or smart, it is even worse. If you are assertive, you are excluded. If you are a push-over, you lose out horribly."

A view from above

Vick said: "In our situation, the owners and shareholders obviously have the last word in how change happens, where it happens and why it happens. Sure, there's a moral imperative and a legal imperative (the Employment Equity Bill, the Labour Relations Act, etc) which compel business to change. But there has to be a financial imperative too – we have to show that it makes good business sense to transform.

should be: "Where could these come from? What conditions would enable these voices? What conditions constrain diversity of perspective?"

It is instructive that an "alternative press" emerged in South Africa at a time of increased government repression between the mid-70s and mid-80s. No one asked the colour of this voice. It took various forms: community newspapers; trade union newspapers and newsletters; feminist journals; magazines for children; newsletters and papers from various non-governmental organisations and political organisations. In other words, it did not have a unitary identity.

What was significant was that these media were non-commercial. They were not dependent on advertising for their economic survival. They were either funded by agencies that shared their political agenda or, where there was advertising, it came from those who supported the politics of the publication. Another aspect of these alternative publications was that some of them

experimented with organisational structure. It may be instructive to have another look at these publications, to see how they addressed the current concerns about the representation of various voices.

Nelson Mandela's critique of the media is based on a race essentialism marked by the rather disturbing phrase "our own people" (see below). As Hall has noted, race always appears as part of a historically contingent discourse, in which other issues are harnessed to the web of meaning about race that is being constructed. Mandela's discourse begs the question "who are our own people?" and relates directly to the point concerning the relationship between identity politics and citizenship.

Mandela makes the following points:

- The mass media are opposed to the ANC;

**Woman first?
working class?
lesbian?
capitalist?
Muslim?**

- they campaign against both real change and real agents of change led by the ANC;
- a history of repressive rule has suppressed a mass media genuinely representative of the voice of the majority;
- the majority of South Africans have no choice but to rely on information and communication from media representing the privileged minority;
- to protect their privileged position the media oppose transformation;
- the media use the democratic order (brought about by the sacrifices of our own people) to protect the legacy of racism;
- the legacy of racism in the media is graphically shown in ownership, editorial control, value systems, and advertiser influence;
- because the media don't give timely access to reliable information, citizens are not empowered to participate meaningfully in the process of governance, thereby limiting the frontiers of democracy.

While Mandela, correctly in my view, points to the ideological role of the media in maintaining the status quo, he wrongly attributes this to white ownership. The critique he makes of the media is one that has been made of most commercial media in liberal democratic, capitalist societies. The commercial media are capitalist enterprises, and this conditions how they operate; who their audiences "have to be", and whose interests they serve. As journalist Joe Thlooe has noted, the colour of capitalist involvement in the media has made very little difference to the diversity of voices or perspectives on offer: precisely because colour is not the all-determining factor.

The main critique of the media concerns the political and cultural impact of their "white" ownership. There are two issues here: whiteness and ownership.

We need to create a new political vocabulary

"As long as the owners and shareholders are supportive of the broad thrust of transformation, there is consistent pressure to change. But if the owners start to feel concerned about the impact of change on their bottom line, transformation may be threatened or slowed down. Managers tend to see the bottom line and transformation as two separate processes. They may also fail to see the benefits of managing people better. In addition, those threatened by change tend to make the most noise. The objectors out-shout those who are encouraged by change, so we only hear the negative.

The corporate environment can be enormously hostile to an ambitious woman

"We've heard grumbings from white men who feel their jobs are threatened. They predict a drop in standards or are unable to see the benefit of reaching new readers – young people, women and black people. But if you scratch deeper into our organisation, you hear encouraging noises from women, who currently feel marginalised but seem to believe that there are greater opportunities now for advancement. We hear encouraging sounds, too, from black people who feel the value systems and organisational culture might change, and that they may one day work in a company which provides equal opportunities for all. (We do not hear encouraging sounds from the disabled, but that is probably because we only employ a handful of disabled people. Or it could be that disabled people often can't get into our buildings to make their views heard.)

"On a personal level: transformation is a painful process. I'm really encouraged by how many people are committed to this process. The unions, too, are demonstrating a very real commitment to bringing about a better work place with better newspapers. It is clear that there remains a body of people out there who will dislike what you do and who are determined that you will fail, and will do all in their power to protect their own system."

When the reporters try to drive...

Malcolm Ray, now working at the Labour Bulletin, talks of his experience at a newspaper when the black reporters lobbied management for a transformation forum: "One fairly senior white reporter brazenly remarked: 'You want to get rid of the whites? Take the bloody newspaper to the townships! I don't care.' A subeditor commented that the workshop did not concern her because she 'had nothing to gain from it'.

"Meetings rapidly degenerated into grievance forums. Individuals felt uncomfortable with the (misleading) notion that long-awaited promotions and career paths would be prejudiced by their participation in the transformation process.

"Despite rigorous discussion and a remarkable degree of consensus by management, the initiative did not progress beyond the first workshop. Reporters, by nature, are not amenable to organisation. A culture of upward class mobility shatters nascent unity. Race and racism are deeply entrenched phenomena in post-apartheid South Africa. Moral diatribes about transformation, deracialisation and restructuring cannot escape the reality that race is at the core of radical change. The absence of a legislative framework puts the onus on the goodwill of management and staff to restructure the workplace."

Those hoary old standards

Jaffer: "There are two different experiences that if brought together could be rich, but are up against self-centred attitudes that say: 'everything that is new, different or other is lowering the standards'. The race issue is tough; you try for equality and team spirit, but sometimes people – the old order – feel that change is not better. It is a tightrope because you are trying to change but still meet deadlines and produce a newspaper."

An editor of a community newspaper told us: "Instituting changes wasn't simple. Much lobbying and motivating were needed to persuade and reassure certain staff members who expressed concern over the new (black) appointees. As it transpired, their progress surpassed all expectations and their pioneering courage have done much to allay the detractors' fears."

Kojoana talking about the SABC: "The challenge for the corporation was to motivate staff enough to carry on their duties and to get them to buy into the new policies which were necessary."

Something's happening!

Masheila Sewpaul, radio newseditor in Durban: "I joined the SABC in January 1992 as a radio news journalist. For a long while I didn't feel comfortable in this environment. The radio newsroom was too Afrikaans, too bureaucratic.

"But as the years progressed so did the SABC and I started to feel more comfortable and started to see the SABC as my home. Maybe it was also because I became more confident in my job. And the newsroom started changing. The older staff (whites and Afrikaners) retired or took packages. A new breed of people started coming in, younger people of all colours.

"The approach also changed with people having younger, fresher ideas. The news management team (of which I am part) also become more representative. Younger people can adjust more easily to change and this has been the case. However, there have been problems with other staff members who cannot accept that non-whites do occupy management positions.

"Retrenchment and staff changes also took place at the SABC after the McKinsey Commission. This really put people in a dark hole. People were not sure whether they were going to lose their jobs, which departments were shutting down. But that is over now and people are crawling out of the hole again.

"Sometimes people think that people of colour are incompetent but the realisation is beginning to dawn that this is not the case and work has to be done. There is a lot of cultural diversity at the SABC and one of the skills people have to learn is how to respect other people's cultures and beliefs."

Jaffer: "I am excited because I do feel that change is happening. We are able to co-ordinate work together as a team far more than before. Working as a collective and not just as individual reporters is standard practice abroad. I feel far more at ease now we can pay more attention to quality, systems and policy. I've seen a lot of progress."

Kojoana: "On the positive side, blacks and whites, and even the same race groups from different political kraals, have been forced to work for a common vision. This meant putting differences aside and tackling the task of institutional survival as a unit."

The former can be analysed in terms of theories about identity politics; the latter in terms of economics systems, in this case, capitalism. The analysis in itself begs the question of the relative merits of, and relationship between, a politics based on colour, and one based on class.

My critique of this race essentialist view of the media is that it attributes the cause of the problem to the colour identity of the media, rather than to their economic foundation. My argument is therefore that "the problem with the media" is not the "whiteness" of their ownership, but the fact that they are capitalist enterprises. My contention would further be that it is illogical to castigate the media for being capitalist enterprises when the national economy operates on this basis.

This brings us back to the issue of transformation and the nature of the "new" South African state. In my view, it begs

serious reconsideration of what is socially and politically possible, given the economic foundations of the state.

The full text and references are available from Lynette Steeveld at Rhodes University Department of Journalism and Media Studies, phone (046) 6038338 or email steenvl@thoth.ru.ac.za

UPDATE

Rhodes & Independent Newspapers create Chair of Transformation

Rhodes University is establishing a Chair of Media Transformation to be based at the Department of Journalism and Media Studies.

The chair has been underwritten for three years by Independent Newspapers. CEO Ivan Fallon said transformation was the highest priority for the media in South Africa, and Independent Newspapers was pleased to be able to make a contribution to benefit the entire industry, and therefore the country.

Prof Guy Berger, head of department of Rhodes journalism, said: "The Chair will research the successes and problems in transforming journalism and journalism training in line with our changing society."

A board representing a range of media companies will act as reference for the Chair. Its members include Aggrey Klaaste (Sowetan), Fana Titi (Kagiso Media), Shaun Johnson (Independent), Irene Charnley (TML/Johnnic), Ntombi Langa-Royds (SABC), Nomazizi Mtshothisa (Midi), Peter Matlare (Primedia), Zubeida

Jaffer (Independent), Pearl Mashabela (Penta), Anthony Sampson (writer) and Jabu Sibisi (M-Wet)

Fallon said that in the discussions preceding the sponsorship the company had insisted that the company exercise no control over the Chair. "Transformation is bigger than inter-company rivalry," he said.

The challenge to achieve properly representative and relevant media companies, producing journalism of the highest quality, is a national priority.

The aim of the Chair is to make available research, skills and human resource development to the industry. "By working closely together, the media industry and the academic world have a great deal to contribute to tackling the problems that still lie ahead."

The position is expected to be operational by August. The successful candidate will initiate high-profile research and publishing and training programmes targeted at journalism teachers, entry level journalists and mid-career professionals.



Dizzying Dizzying change and diversity diversity

A recent report described the US First Amendment rights of freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly and petition, as “under attack”. Only 11% of Americans surveyed identified press freedom as a First Amendment right. Loren Ghiglione says press freedom is directly related to newsroom diversity. Only when people feel represented will they see the value in upholding freedom of the media.

Professor Loren Ghiglione is the director of Emory University's new journalism programme in Atlanta. From 1969 to 1995 he owned and operated Worcester County Newspapers, a group of 24 community daily and weekly newspapers. During those years he wrote or edited seven journalism books, including “The American Journalist: Paradox of the Press”. During his term as president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors he inaugurated the first study of US gay and lesbian journalists, established a nation-wide network of 16 annual diversity job fairs and created a pioneering committee on people with disabilities. He is currently studying the US newspaper industry's diversity efforts.

Though not as dizzying as change in South Africa, change characterises the America that our newsrooms hope to reflect.

I would like to outline 10 major diversity issues in American newsrooms.

1 A survey of newspaper editors shows that a variety of issues needs to be addressed. Booker Izell, vice-president of community affairs and work force diversity at the Atlanta Journal Constitution, says the three topics most discussed in employee diversity workshops are race and ethnicity, gender discrimination and hostility towards gays and lesbians. I anticipate a broadened definition of diversity for the 21st century.

2 Of US editors I queried, a majority said discrimination against people of colour (usually defined as four groups: so-called Asian Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans and African Americans) should take priority. Discrimination against US blacks, with their history of slavery and segregation, appears to be of more concern than bias against other people of colour.

The mid-1960s brought sweeping change with the civil rights movement. In 1978 the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) set a goal of achieving newsroom diversity roughly equivalent to that of the nation's population by the year 2000. While newsroom diversity has risen with glacial speed to an 11% percent representation of people of colour, the US population is now 25 to 27% people of colour and expected to reach 30% by the year 2000, and 50% by the middle of the next century.

3 Since ASNE's Year 2000 Goal for newsroom diversity will not be met by 2000, what should be the news industry's diversity goal for the early 21st century? The current emphasis on the national population of the four categories of so-called minorities should give way to a more detailed, sophisticated examination of each newspaper's community, staff and the staff's knowledge of, and sensitivity to, that community.

4 At the same time, the press cannot back away from addressing the dominant diversity issue – discrimination against blacks, especially at management levels. Too few people of colour – 8.9% – hold supervising editorships.

5 Whatever group the newspaper industry chooses to target in the 21st century, the industry should continue putting forward a specific numerical goal. A fundamental shift in priorities also has to occur. The Constitution of the South African National Editors' Forum wisely calls for not only a change in newsrooms but a “transformation of culture within news organisations as a whole”.

6 School children and college students need to be targeted especially. Some 35% of student internships go to students of colour and US editors' conferences invite college students to produce daily conference papers. Newspeople also stress supporting middle and high school news media; training and encouraging

the craft of writing when students are deciding what career to pursue.

7 Whatever efforts are made, people worry that diversity committees and formal structures are not enough. Gary Pomerantz writes from his experience on the Atlanta Journal Constitution that newspeople see themselves, inaccurately, as “more open-minded, advanced, liberal” with respect to race, but what he sees in the newsroom is “no tangible improvement in the 10 years that I've been at the paper”. People of colour make up about 20% of staff, but no one is “really trying to work at newsroom integration”.

8 Much research needs to be done about diversity issues. Possibilities include:

- Coverage – overt racism and other sins of omission. Carolyn Martindale's 1994 study of 60 years of coverage by The New York Times says most people of colour, except blacks, “have been nearly invisible”. All people of colour have been portrayed as problem people “outside the mainstream of US society”.
- Job fairs – the ASNE's regional minority group job fairs have opened the doors to internships and entry-level jobs for many minority journalists still in the business.
- Higher education – faculty diversity is still an issue. Females and students who are not non-Hispanic whites have few gender or ethnic role models as teachers.
- Newsroom culture: Too many newsrooms alternate between hostility and paranoia about minorities. Whites, male and female, do feel threatened.

9 The provincialism of US media is a diversity-related issue. In 1994, 357 news and broadcast executives surveyed by Associated Press did not list South Africa's democratic elections in their top 10 stories of the year. Robert Mong of the Dallas Morning News suggests the US media stop referring to people of colour, a majority of the world population, as minorities. “We live in a world community and our phrasing should reflect that reality.”

10 In chasing “improved demographics” and “upscale readers” the media still need to serve the public, encourage diversity and unite the press and public.

We need people to recognise the press' role as the link between them and their institutions.

Will diversity prevent politicians and pooh-bahs* from pressuring journalists for fawning, fan-club coverage? Probably not. Nevertheless, we need to achieve a diversity that may not only improve coverage but also help encourage the public and its representatives to increase their support for freedom of press, not freedom of repress.

* Pooh-bah: “pompous, self-important official holding several offices at once and fulfilling none of them.” From the Mikado.

The three top topics are: race and ethnicity; gender discrimination and hostility to gays.

A young militiaman jailed in Rwanda has devised an ingenious sling to watch the outside and forbidden world.

Picture by
Francesco Zizola



A leaf in the wind

Italian photographer **Francesco Zizola**, 1996 winner of the World Press Photographer Award, has embarked on a world-wide documentary of street children called 'Heirs of 2000: Children of the new era'. Rhodes photojournalism lecturer, **Montgomery Cooper**, explores this body of work.

Zizola is a quiet person and as keynote speaker of the Second World Congress of Professional Photographers, he was almost invisible. But his documentary essay has certainly made the plight of the world's children very visible.

He has spent the last three years documenting the children of Brazil, North Korea, Kurdistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, Angola and Kenya. These children are living on the streets; they are sex slaves, labourers and casualties of war.

Zizola strives to develop a relationship with his subjects and spent nearly a year in Brazil working, living and recording street children.

A compassionate and thoughtful photojournalist, he is concerned with the images he captures, the people he is photographing and how their lives will change after his pictures.

In Brazil his photographs are peopled with little kids. Despite the horrific content of his work, his photographs evidence a concern with balance, framing and the creation of contrast. The works are, at times, almost too beautifully composed. For example, one photograph shows a child lying in the streets of Rio, lying untended, dead, with newspapers barely covering him, blood seeping away down the gutter. The amazing shot makes the child look like some tragic sculpture.

He has made
the child look
like a tragic
sculpture

His work on Thailand is about the child sex industry. He says he tries "not to capture images voyeuristically". He doesn't want to "perpetuate the visual selling" of the sex industry. One image shows a child being sold for a television set.

He describes the horrific lives of the slave children of Bangladesh through such shots as the one of a small child, aged about nine, with colossal gloves, hacking away in the monstrous sugar cane plantations. "Children do not exist in Bangladesh - they are not allowed to be kids," he says.

Zizola doesn't just portray what is in front of him, he tries to add a "second dimension to the reality", capturing the other side of the horror of war through the eyes and lives of children.

His work is reminiscent of Cartier Bresson in that he does not crop his images, and so we see all the reality that the photojournalist sees, "fit to print", to quote Zizola.

Zizola has an almost unbelievably calm response to the degradations he sees around him.

But he says: "I feel like a leaf in the wind - only talking about the results of war."

Roboreporter

By Michel Bajuk,
a Swedish
freelancer
working
in the US

A skyscraper was bombed in Oklahoma City an hour ago. Thirty minutes later I am assigned to cover the story. I board the flight as I watch the breaking news from CNN in a little square in the upper right of my sight.

I try to catch my breath before I command: "Call home!" I don't know how long I'm going to be away. The computer dials my number while I'm looking for my seat. A little symbol appears with a "pling!" that only I can hear.

The search I ordered while I was checking in is done. The search engine has already downloaded the information I requested to the memory unit in my belt.

No answer. "Hang up," I say, and switch to e-mail mode when I have fastened my seatbelt.

Crowded and tight as usual. I don't wish to bother my fellow passengers, so I use the small, wireless keyboard. I manage to send a brief note home before I have to turn off the equipment for take off. In the air I browse through the articles and newscasts on my hard drive. Four hours after the bombing I'm well-informed.

I approach the area of catastrophe. I turn on the hands-free, small 360° camera. I brief my editor back home, speaking through a discrete microphone while I park the rental car. I exchange a couple of words with our online editor. In a matter of minutes we will have a detailed story, straightening up some of the initial confusion.

In the air, above the smouldering chaos, I see the name of, what until just

recently, was a tall office building: "Alfred P Murrah". My eyes focus on the text an extra second. A menu appears. I strap the keyboard around my arm. A couple of voice commands and a couple of key-strokes later I can see a three-dimensional CAD-model of the building on top of the sirens and smoke.

I tell the terminal to list all companies leasing office space. In the list I immediately recognise a daycare centre on the second floor. I command the computer to perform a cross-referenced search using an online database provider. A couple of minutes later I have a list with names, social security numbers, addresses and phone numbers to all legal full- or part-time employees working in the building.

I start my voice-controlled word processor, make a couple of phone calls, and on-the-scene interviews. Transcriptions are produced as I speak. Five minutes later I send my first piece. The subscribers to our "breaking news service" are notified via e-mail. My story is published directly on the website together with the statistics and the already published wire reports. There is also live footage broadcast in all directions through my camera.

Science fiction? No. The scenario described above seems to be inspired by a William Gibson novel and the cult series Max Headroom. But the first model may become your preferable field tool in a not too distant future.

A wearable computer with wireless access to computer and telephone networks. A screen built into a couple of ordinary looking glasses. Journalists and



Above: Professor Steven Feiner

Left: Michel Bajuk wearing the full equipment.



other consumers demanding information will soon have cyberservision. Maybe the first models will not carry all the features mentioned above. But soon enough they will.

It's called "Augmented Reality". Information from the virtual world is used on top of the real world.

"Our goal is to create a new generation of portable computers: machines with applications making it possible to perform advanced research on the run; to do fact checking while we do an interview, for instance," says Professor John Pavlik, the director of the Centre for New Media at Columbia University in New York.

Joseph Pulitzer's respected institution is taking a giant leap into the digital millennium.

The Mobile Journalist's Terminal (MJT) is an interdisciplinary project managed by Pavlik and Steven Feiner, professor of computer science and manager of the Graphics and Users

Interfaces Laboratory.

On the edge technology in the information and communication fields developed on campus is implemented in the MJT by the two professors. Architects develop systems to visualise hidden structures in buildings. Linguists train advanced text recognition software. Programmers, mathematicians and masters in applied physics are creating search engines with the ability to search visual content in pictures. Media experts research future information and news strategies. The engineers care about the high tech, the journalists about the content. Together they are creating the dream machine.

It's raining when I'm scheduled to try it on. "What you see here is a rather ridiculous collection of stuff," smiles Feiner. He gives me a quick run through. The equipment really seems to be quite a mix of ad hoc instruments.

The team has traded the latest, lightest and most powerful technology for greater flexibility. They have used only commercially available products, thus avoiding time – and the resource – consuming development of hardware.

"We could probably manage to stuff the functionality we have today into a packet of cigarettes. But that would painfully restrict our work. Our task is to develop a high-tech, user-friendly interface. The hardware is being developed elsewhere."

The MJT is obviously not compatible with the weather. "No problem," says Feiner.

"We can show you how it works in the lab. To create the illusion of being outside we will project a picture into the headworn display shot with an Omnicamera."

Having tried a couple of virtual reality simulated games over the past ten years I think I'm prepared, though 18 kg of equipment in the back pack is rather heavy. I must confess I feel rather silly. But when Feiner's colleagues Tobias Höllerer and Blair McIntyre turn the switch on I instantly forget about worldly problems.

All of a sudden I'm standing on campus. The picture is swiftly scrolled as I move my head. The movement tracker is smooth. The projection on my semi-transparent head-worn display is impressive. It's shot with an Omnicamera, a 360° camera developed at the university.

In my left hand I'm holding a personal digital assistant (PDA). I control the LCD display with a special pen. The fingers of my right hand control the cursor in the head-worn display using a mouse pad mounted under the PDA.

The names of the buildings are projected on top of the houses. Digits in the lower right corner show the co-ordinates of the satellites currently in use to calculate my exact position.

On top there is a menu with the following choices: Columbia, Where am I?, departments and buildings. When I click on one of the options a command is sent to the web browser in my left hand. Via a high-speed radio modem a set of web pages is rapidly downloaded to the PDA.

What I am looking at is a draft version of Columbia's future information system. If I wish to perform separate searches I only have to type in the desired address. I have instant access to the Internet.

A symbol on the lower mid-section of my sight shows a flag pointing in the direction where the selected object – a building – is.

I'm looking at Low Library. I choose "Riot '68". New options spread over the screen.

I watch several newscasts on the PDA. The video clips are streamed at high speed, wireless, via the Internet. I listen to sound bites and voice-overs. I watch archive pictures and read stories directly in my headset. I'm inside an interactive documentary about the 1968 campus riot.

Journalism and computer science students



Michel Bajuk with the head-worn display.

Pictures by Anna Persson

at Columbia University have worked hard to make it work.

I'm impressed, though the prototype I'm wearing is extremely limited. But it doesn't only work – it works very well indeed.

Not only journalists will be able to use these miniature super terminals.

An Augmented Reality display can become a new interactive medium providing news, Internet access, mapping and address guide, for instance.

"I think you will be able to access all kinds of databases. Maybe you will have to pay fees for different services. Maybe some of the information can be sponsored with commercials," says John Pavlik. In two, maximum four years, he believes the first terminal will be available. After a couple of years and after a couple of refining generations he envisions the price to be somewhere around \$1 000.

The size of the equipment will be approximately the same as for an ordinary CD-player. The head-worn display will be replaced by something similar to a couple of ordinary glasses.

"One of the problems today is the limited possibility to communicate wireless. But already in 1999 there will be new cellular phone networks operated by new low altitude satellites. We will be able to access good bandwidth from anywhere in the world. We're in no hurry. We want to create a useful terminal that people really WANT to wear," Pavlik says.

The Omnicam was used by a team of Columbia graduate journalism students on St Patrick's Day parade last year when Irish gay and lesbian activists clashed with conservative paraders.

The newscasts and interviews can be downloaded from <http://www.cs.columbia.edu/CAVE/omnicam/>. The required software can be downloaded from the same page.



Professor John Pavlik

Profits, promises
and primetime
viewing
Introducing

e.TV

By Ruth Teer Tomaselli

Hospitals and media firms are favourite places for television serials. WKRP in Cincinnati, The Naked Truth, Ink and ENG – the media make for great media – full of drama, intrigue, pace, money, sex and gossip. Particularly gossip. Factor in South Africa's own IBA with its fair share of scandal and gossip about money (have those outstanding amounts ever been paid back?), corruption, and self-promotion – and it is little wonder that the latest episode in the licensing of South Africa's liberalised broadcast landscape has generated such a furor. And such gossip. Particularly gossip. Winners, Midi TV, are prepared to speak to anyone, and have not lost an opportunity to place themselves squarely in the media spotlight.

Speak to almost anyone who was not a winner, and they are immediately more coy. "Don't quote me, but ..." was the repeated response I received while researching this article. So in the end I decided to write less about what we know (we've all read that in the newspapers by now) and air some of the speculations about the issues we don't know.

The facts ...

We know that Warner Brothers, a subsidiary of the international conglomerate Time-Warner, holds 20% of the consortium equity. Apart from Warner Brothers, with their massive back-list of film, video and television programming, Time-Warner owns Home Box Office (HBO), CNN and the Cartoon Network, as well as a host of broadcast and cable channels in America. This powerful base will afford the new e-TV a huge range of first-option programming, once the existing contracts with South African channels have run their course.

Domestically, the majority of the investment equity comes from the mobilisation of trade union investment. Hosken Investment, an empowerment consortium trading on the JSE, hold 26% of shares. Hosken includes the financial arms of the National Union of Mineworkers as well as the South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union. Vula Communications includes the Communications Workers' Union and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa. Small and medi-

um black businesses are represented through the African Pioneer Investment Trust, a beneficiary network covering more than 400 small businesses based in the Eastern Cape. Three black controlled television and media management companies have been included in the form of Mopani Media, Medumo Media and RM Productions.

To add all-round political correctness to this impressive array of investors, the consortium includes the Youth Development Trust and the South African National Civics Organisation, as well as the Disabled Employment Concerns Trust, an investment vehicle for South Africa's seven national disabled people's organisations.

Underscoring the point, the official Midi briefing notes state plainly "the disabled sector is, with women and black South Africans, constitutionally defined as being previously disadvantaged".

The new channel is headed by Nomazizi Mtshotshisa of Vula Communications. The Managing Director, Jonathan Procter, we learn from an interview published

e.News: what to expect

Here's what e.TV told the IBA: "South African audiences evince a high level of interest in the world around them, demanding access to the intellectual tools to enable them to actively participate ... This trend requires a broadcaster response more in keeping with the original Reithian approach to services which simultaneously inform, educate and entertain, than with the more mechanistic interpretation favoured in recent decades by South African free-to-air television of viewing the three components as distinct programming types."

And their researchers, Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE), commented (in response to criticism): "The preferences for (the collapsed categories of) news/information/education on the one hand, and entertainment/relaxation on the other, hide deep demographic differences. Two-thirds of black viewers fall into the first preference category; two-thirds of white, Indian and coloured viewers fall into the latter category."

e.TV told the IBA it planned to have 11 hours a week of news programming during prime time. In its application, it

argued that: "The shift from television to newspapers as primary information sources is essentially a function of the inaccessible and formal forms of communication adopted by existing free-to-air broadcasters, at odds with international trends in news delivery. If television tells stories which are informative but not entertaining or interesting, audiences will inevitably do what South African audiences have been doing for the past 18 months: turning to other sources for their information."

"South Africa has a long tradition of

in the Sunday Times Business Times, is "extremely reluctant to talk about himself, preferring to let the limelight fall on chairman (sic) Nomazizi Mtshotshisa". Little wonder. Midi have punted themselves as a consortium with an 80% black shareholding (the other 20% belonging to their international partner, Time-Warner). With its emphasis on black empowerment, Procter would prefer to remain invisible. Other "invisible" players are Pierre van der Hoven and David Niddrie, who left the SABC when that organisation promised to self-destruct some time ago to join the "black-controlled television company", as financial director and head of news respectively, while Dave Stewart (ex-Bop Broadcasting) will serve as operations and technical director. Black executives, apart from the chairperson, include Richard Magau as deputy MD and Pat Thekisho heading foreign acquisitions.

The promises ...

Midi television intends to broadcast as e.TV from 1 October this year. In order to do this, they expect to invest R450 million. Technologically, they will be the most sophisticated channel in the South African media landscape, with 100% digital broadcasting.

In their bid to the IBA, they have promised two percent local content, excluding news, in their programming, thus exceeding the required hours laid down by the IBA. However, most programming will be done in English, and no provision has been made for regional broadcasting of any sort. In an innovative strategy, broadcast space will be made for independent productions. A late night slot, aimed at the 18 to 25-year-old market, will provide upbeat programming which is relatively cheap. It is hoped that new talent will be discovered through this means.

Foreign acquisitions will be headed by their entrée into the Time-Warner list. At the same time, the sentiment has been expressed that Time-Warner will act as a conduit for SA programming to be exported to the rest of the world.

The opposition ...

So who did Midi beat in the licence stakes? From the outset, it appeared that there were really only three contenders for the licence, Midi, Station for the Nation, and Free to Air. Community Television retained an outside chance, while Afrimedia (who suggested using Bop facilities), Island TV and New Channel (interestingly, with an international partnership with TF1 France), were never really considered as serious bidders.

Station for the Nation's consortium based their empowerment claims on Thebe Investments, and Moribo Investments with Kersaf. Further local capital was based in Financier Trust, who since 1997 have had interests in Kaya FM, an independent radio station in Gauteng.

The international arm was Nine Network International Limited, an Australian company. The bid was headed by Vusi Khanyile of Thebe Investments. Station for the Nation's philosophy was predicated on a regional broadcasting network with local content of 34%, increasing to an eventual 50%, plus sport.

Front runner, Free to Air, punted Sisani as their "empowerment" hopes, together with Welcome Msomi and Nedbank Investment. Part of their difficulty lay in the disqualification of Kagiso Trust, who were bound by



Midi boasted the most politically correct empowerment consortium

Ruth Teer Tomaselli

a restraining order when they defected from SFTN.

Part Primedia, the octopus-media company, which already controls Cape Talk, Radio Highveld Stereo and Radio 702, Station for the Nation was in a strong position to launch a first-class indigenous news service. The foreign partnerships boasted British United News and Media and Fox Sports, a subsidiary of Rupert Murdoch's media empire.

Free to Air was fronted by Quentin Green and Brenda Koorneef, the pair who launched the SABC into the world of commercial television in the early 1990s. Their programming philosophy included the use of four languages, an ambitious project which would be achieved through a wide physical network of 70 transmitters nationally, intended to transmit several regionally-directed programmes simultaneously. Content would show an emphasis on sport, with nearly one half of the transmission time devoted to sport.

In common with the licence-winners, Midi, Free to Air stressed that they saw themselves as a broadcaster rather than a production channel - local programming would be commissioned from independent producers.

The gossip ...

So why did Midi receive the licence? On the face of it, the consortium boasted the most politically correct empowerment consortium, which together with a powerful foreign partner and high local content, seemed to

ensure it would make a success of the venture.

The disappointed applicants are not so sanguine, however. Threats of litigation by rival bidders against the IBA's decision were voiced almost as soon as the announcement of the licence was made.

Although not the basis of any legal claim, accusations of political interference, "improper pressure" (as if pressure could ever be proper) and favouritism by the IBA towards Midi were rife. These claims were not helped by the fact that chairperson, Nomazizi Mtshotshisa, is the ex-wife of Cyril Ramaphosa, who as ex-secretary general of Cosatu, chief architect of the ANC's pre-election strategy at Codesa, and now seen by many as the ANC's commercial commissar, is a powerful figure in the political-economic landscape.

Nor is it clear why some of the IBA councillors changed sides. On the Friday before Monday's announcement, votes were 4 to 3 in favour of another consortium. Gossip and innuendo as to what happened over that fateful weekend causing the councillors to change their collective minds is richly varied. Although the final vote was not unanimous, the IBA denies any political pressure.

Unhappiness was expressed about the in-camera and confidentiality clauses concerning some of the programming arrangements with Time-Warner. Most damaging to the IBA's case are the allegations that the Midi consortium contravened the IBA Act, which requires full disclosure of business plans and share holdings at the time of the application. Rival bidders allege that Midi changed its business plan and introduced new shareholders at the hearings on its application.

A legal challenge to the decision will not necessarily result in the decision being reversed.

However, the courts could find that the IBA did not properly apply its mind to the application and order that the entire process be restarted. In a statement issued on 30 March, the Free to Air consortium noted that Midi tabled a new business plan on day two despite the fact that 5 September was the final day for applications (with complete and final business plans).

The revised plan, which included a new broadcast schedule, differed financially in the region of R20 million. It has been claimed that it is difficult to see how the IBA could have accepted this amount as a "minor adjustment".

The speculation ...

What happens now? Will e.TV go ahead and broadcast as promised by October? Will the whole process be stalled by a court intervention, and begin again? Will the disappointed bidders band together to buy into the SABC's Channel 3, as has been suggested?

We will have to watch our screens to find out the answers. ENG was never this good.

Ruth Teer Tomaselli works in development and teaches courses to MA students in media, democracy and development at the Centre for Cultural and Media Studies at the University of Natal, Durban. Her broadcast policy work emphasises development and public service broadcasting. She acts as consultant for international agencies concerned with the media and development in African countries. During her three and a half years on the SABC Board, her portfolio was responsibility for voter and democracy education.

environments in which large numbers of individuals, very often with a great deal of useful information to impart, are packed into studios and given very little time to address the audience.

"Equally, South African television has developed the unfortunate habit of seeking to offer audiences different perspectives on an issue by bringing together two or more individuals with conflicting views and highlighting the conflict rather than seeking to elicit the nature of the differences.

"e.TV commits itself to provide a diversity of views over time, rather than on any single bulletin, in keeping with accepted international practice. e.TV also commits itself to giving on-air access to a real diversity of opinion by allowing individuals, as far as possi-

ble, to speak for themselves, rather than through supposed experts speaking on their behalf.

"e.TV has identified four key skills shortages in the South African television sector: script writing, specific production skills, components of television news presentation, and on-air interviewing techniques.

"The channel will deliver news bulletins in the morning as the core component of a breakfast television package and as three separate packages during prime time. This will include two bulletins in languages drawn from the two major indigenous language families, Nguni and Sotho (evening news is from 7pm to 7.30pm).

"e.TV has initiated a project to simplify and contex-

tualise economic and financial news. The project will involve identifying three archetypal South African families from different social strata - a blue-collar family, a lower-middle class, white-collar family and a family with an executive level bread winner. These families will be used consistently and become familiar faces to e.TV viewers as the vehicles through which the personal relevance of important economic and financial developments are explained. The idea of bringing major decision-makers to explain and motivate their decisions into the families' living rooms offers dramatic television opportunities."

According to Midi, it will spend the equivalent of R15 000 per employee, a total of R2.7-million, in its first year, on training.



Scientists go public

Brian Garman

Brian Garman, a plant pathologist and freelance journalist, recently launched a science journalism course at Rhodes University.

**“Some unfortunate sheep had half the world’s press shoving cameras up her nose and writing all sorts of guff about how people would now clone Saddams.”
– Microbiologist Ed Rybicki**

Most of science in South Africa came of age during the apartheid era – an era of exclusivity and secrecy; a period when public accountability was a very low priority. For many scientists, this was a time when funding was relatively easily available and came with almost no requirement that research results be made accessible to an audience wider than their peers. But now with government funding dwindling, scientists are having to compete in an increasingly politically-charged funding arena. Facing a threat to their professional existence, scientists have decided to come out of the closet.

In addition, the increasing democratisation of our society requires that people be familiar with all areas of public endeavour that affect them. “In an increasingly technological world, democracy demands that the voters have an awareness of scientific issues and options, and of their limitations and consequences,” says Anthony Tucker, former science editor of the Guardian.

The development of South Africa as a whole is inextricably linked to the development of science and technology. The government’s 1996 White Paper on Science and Technology states that “innovation has become a crucial survival issue. A society that pursues well-being and prosperity for its members can no longer treat it as an option”. Dr Khotso Mokhele, president of the Foundation for Research Development (FRD) says “an increase in effective science, engineering and technology education and awareness will help make South African industry more competitive; contribute towards the sustainable development of the environment

and lead to an improved quality of life”. Pieter Cox, managing director of Sasol, concurs. “A winning nation requires the science and technology skills to make South Africa a desirable destination for investment.”

But years of isolation have created scientists who are inexperienced at having to explain the complexities of their work to a largely scientifically illiterate audience. At the same time, the public – including the media – has become alarmingly disconnected and unfamiliar with the basic tenets of science and technology, even when achievements in both areas have become essential to modern life. “What is it about the scientific enterprise that puts so many products and innovations at people’s fingertips, and yet society is so unknowing or even uncaring about it?” asks Mokhele.

Most scientists now recognise that they are going to have to take the demands for greater public accountability seriously, and that the mass media are usually the most effective way of meeting those demands. But scientists tend to find the media difficult to deal with.

One of the reasons for this is that it is only recently that popularisation of science has become an obligation. In the past, communication with the public through the media was done by scientists who felt like it – and knew how to work the media to their advantage. These Lady Di’s of the science world include respected scientists like Carl Sagan, Stephen Gould, Richard Dawkins, Oliver Sacks and Stephen Hawking. We could probably include South Africans Philip Tobias and Francis Thackeray in that group, but apart from them there are few South African scientists who cope well with media that is largely inexperienced with the intricacies of reporting science.

Scientists accuse journalists of being sensationalist, populist, misleading and cavalier with the facts. Dr Patricia Whitelock of the South African Astronomical Observatory (SAAO) cites an example of a Cape Town newspaper which headlined a story about an SAAO scientist saying that the Hale-Bopp Comet was going to crash into the sun. “What the scientist actually said was that the comet might break up as it went around the sun – the same way Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 did when it went round Jupiter.” While this is not going to radically affect the progress of science, it is highly embarrassing for

the scientist involved and damaging to his reputation.

The journalist was oblivious of the implications. Whitelock continued: “When my colleague complained to the paper he was told not to worry, they would write something the next day and he’d get his name in the paper twice. If that’s the way journalists work, it makes me dubious about stories I read in the papers on subjects I know nothing about. If journalists are cavalier about the ‘hard facts’ then they are not going to be taken seriously by scientists or anyone else.”

Dr Ed Rybicki, a microbiologist from the University of Cape Town, complains about what he calls the “science as a threat school of journalism”.

“The best example of this recently will have to be the Dolly episode, where some unfortunate sheep had half the world’s press shoving cameras up her nose and writing all sorts of guff about how people would now clone Saddams.”

And the experiences of Whitelock and Rybicki are not isolated cases. A survey involving 26 scientists at Rhodes University indicated that 81% had experience of working with the media, but only 62% had satisfactory encounters.

More than three quarters of those who were satisfied, however, said that it was either because they had written the copy themselves or had closely controlled the whole process.

While scientists are quite nervous, they are still keen to talk to journalists. But they are talking about a more controlled process – demanding that journalists be “suitably qualified” to report on science, or that they get to see the finished product before it gets on air or is printed. But this is a situation that the media is unlikely to tolerate.

As Graeme Addison of the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism says, the media is not here to do public relations for scientists. “Science is an industry,” he says, and should expect the media to play the role of a watchdog just like it should do for any other industry.

Whatever role the media see themselves playing, there is definitely room for improvement. Journalists do need to understand and respect the intricacies of scientific methodology, the influence of the peer review system and the scientific sensitivities that can be easily bruised by the shoddy and inaccurate reporting that characterises much of the science journalism in South Africa.

Entries are invited for South Africa’s first **Science & Technology Journalism Awards**, coinciding with 1998, The Year of Science and Technology. Winners in seven categories stand to win R5 000 each, while the overall winner will walk away with R15 000. The prize money and competition are sponsored by the eight science councils of South Africa and the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology.

The South African
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
Journalism
Awards

A Science Councils’ Initiative

For more information and an entry form, contact: Marina Joubert at the Foundation for Research Development, tel: (012) 481-4055, fax: (012) 481-4134, e-mail: marina@frd.ac.za
The closing date is 12 January 1999. Winners will be announced during April 1999.

In your Ear and in your Face

The new commercial radio stations

After a year in the hot seat, Radio Algoa news editor **NICK GRUBB** takes a look at the new dynamic of commercial radio newsrooms.

The first week was the worst. We're dealing with equipment that the suppliers haven't figured out yet. We have the collective experience of one day in a commercial newsroom. Cause for panic? I think so.

Radio Algoa broke from what's fashionably referred to as the "shackles" of the SABC in April last year. A clean break from the hulking monolith that has housed the Eastern Cape's regional station since 1980. What's more, a divorce from the hundreds of journalists and contributors that made up SABC Radio News.

So there we were. Three journalists with an average age of 30 and more confidence than understanding.

This story is not unique. Give or take a few years of age and possibly a Bachelors of 702, or a Masters in Capital Radio, this scene has played itself out in every major city in South Africa. Commercial radio in the true sense of the word is here, and its impact has been significant enough to raise the ire of some journalism traditionalists, and the eyebrows of its audiences.

The profession has often been criticised for the youthful naiveté that jostles for position at news conferences, sticks its bubblegum under Kader Asmal's conference table, and asks questions that dispense with high-brow analysis in favour of clarity and brevity.

Commercial broadcast journalism has nearly come of age, but in the meantime it's one that will look for Caterpillars over Hush Puppies, and Microsoft over a masters degree.

And it's not the newsrooms that are leading the revolution. Media owners have paid a premium to prise audiences away from the national broadcaster, and they want to enter the market with a bang. They want Johannesburg's urgency in Port Elizabeth. They want Cape Town's fashion in East London.

And they want news to sound as if it's new; as if it happened 10 seconds ago, and as if it might change before you've had a chance to read it.

Radio trainers in South Africa have had a

fascination with how slowly a story can be told. Students are told to halve their conversation speed when addressing a microphone, so that people can understand them. Enter, by BMW, the *mense* with the money, and they've halved the age group, and with it the way you have to attract their attention.

So how do this new breed of media moguls ensure that their audience is satisfied with the news, without having to sacrifice the bottom line?

It's no secret that radio has captured the imagination of the technology vendors. Gone are the days when you could start a radio station for a fraction of the start-up costs of a newspaper. International companies are employing their energies in pushing their boffins towards faster, better, and fully-integrated computer software.

Two of the four news staff in the Radio Algoa newsroom haven't ever had to get out the razor and splice ¼-inch tape for an on-air product. We've never needed a production assistant to prepare audio for bulletins. We do the majority of interviews by way of a telephone hybrid patched through to a digital editor.

Our two senior journalists are duty editors. They cover court stories, political stories, business developments, human interest issues, sport and crime. They edit copy. They write copy. They are sound technicians and computer trouble-shooters. They are skilled, motivated, enthusiastic. They epitomise the new profession. They are hard to come by.

One of our greatest challenges over the past 12 months has been recruitment. An obstacle made more daunting by being in a region that young people with skills deliberately avoid. But the real problem has been a lack of awareness by journalism students that the doors are wide open.

The industry has not had any tertiary institution catering for the specific styles and formats of a commercial station. And why should they? Community radio was tipped to herald the dawn of a new era in South African broadcasting not so long ago. It's certainly more in line with addressing the political and social imbalances of the past. Universities and technicians threw their weight behind community programming and left the money-makers to poach from the only stable of experienced commercial radio people – 702, Capital, and the cream of the SABC. Lured by the bucks.

What makes the new radio newsrooms

unique is that the news aspect is merely one division of many. The commercial side of the business isn't formed around the news, but instead around the entire output, of which our efforts comprise only 45 minutes of a daily 1 440.

So take staff out of the old SABC structure, or the print newsrooms, and they find that they're rubbing shoulders with presenters, music compilers, sound technicians and sales teams. They are not the focal point, and they must keep their end of the product at a sufficient standard to earn their keep.

Being commercial doesn't mean you're compromising on editorial content. You're compromising on costs, and so you need people with a maximum of skills. People who are hungry to make a name for themselves.

The editorial driving force in these new newsrooms comes from the journalists themselves. The role of news editors has changed. We no longer direct, we channel and encourage. Radio journalists are intoxicated by the medium. They are in the public ear, and their names are known.

It's no longer a matter of inputting your story and going home – leaving it in the unpredictable hands of a third party. The journalists are the news. They compile it and are accountable for it. They're in a medium that's trying to gain a foothold in a new market, and it's not their jobs on the line, but their reputations.

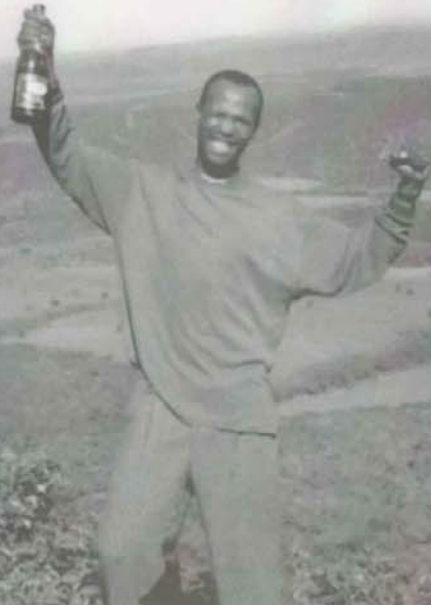
What's clear is that 10 years from now our particular species of journalist will not be as foreign. Competition is increasing and this will have an impact on the entire profession. The race to shove microphones in faces is already on in Cape Town and Johannesburg, and that will shake up press and television reporters as well.

In the 12 months since our inception Radio Algoa News has managed to make an impact on the media landscape of the Eastern Cape. The challenges we faced included changing the perceptions of our audience who traditionally have contacted the SABC and the press with news leads. They phone us with almost overwhelming regularity now and research shows we've been successful in establishing a credible and reliable regional service.

With other commercial stations waiting in the wings in the Eastern Cape, electronic news is going to get bigger and better, and with it the popularity of the medium. Maybe it's time for the journalists of an older era to reach for that software manual, and rediscover radio.



Mediation



Eastern Cape journalist David MacGregor went out in search of a conflict story and found himself mediating a happy ending.

When I first saw the newspaper headlines of a pending legal spat between a wealthy redneck farmer and a “bushman” tracker over a R50 000 reward I thought “What an awesome story”.

I had visions – after days of reading prominent headlines – of a former apartheid foot soldier who had been shunted from the army to a squalid tent town when the “new” South Africa dawned.

I had in fact written a story last year for the Sunday Tribune about how a handful of former Khoi recces in a tent town had managed to find work guarding rich white farmers’ livestock, with great success – if you were not one of the dead rustlers.

Now, against all odds, one of them had hit the big time and gone from zero to hero when he tracked a little lost boy for 15 km through the rugged Karoo bush and earned the promised R50 000 reward. At least, that is what the newspapers said.

But, a promise means nothing if you don’t have the 50 grand in your pocket and after three months of waiting the tracker went to a lawyer, who phoned the press – who then splashed out with front page headlines how the farmer had not paid the money.

A media ping-pong duel ensued over the next three weeks as the farmer called in his lawyers to cook-up counter charges against the tracker and the story seemed to be slipping into legal quicksand.

I wanted in, and began by making a few calls to both parties to try and get my own feel for the story. The “bushman’s” lawyer seemed the perfect start. He had been splashed across the papers and seemed to be lapping-up the attention the next set of headlines brought. Within minutes I had set up a meeting with the hero and his lawyer.

But, when I got to the meeting my initial angle of the “bushman” tracker who had been given a raw deal his whole life was shattered. The lawyer and I discovered that the hero was not a “bushman”, not a tracker at all, and had never even been to the army. The newspaper reporters had been informed, but they preferred the “bushman” tag and it stuck right to the end.

After speaking to the Botha family, it became apparent that the whole issue had been blown out of proportion by the negative publicity and that they were willing to pay the R50 000.

But, they had not even contacted the hero and as a result of bad press had now suddenly changed their tune. The only problem was nobody had offered to bring the hero to them.

So I began a series of phone calls and after 10 days got both parties to agree to meet. Now, I had my own request: I would bring the hero to Somerset East on one condition – the story would be my exclusive.

Racing through the scorching Karoo heat with the hero at my side and a R50 000 cheque waiting at the other end was an incentive – not knowing what to expect when we got there was the downside. The hero was nervous. I was nervous.

First stop was the kid’s grandad, who promptly handed over the R50 118, 84

cheque – including interest. Easy as pie, no bad vibes at all.

But, the big test still lay ahead. Now, I had to convince the publicity-weary family that the story was not just about the money, and that the hero would have to be re-united with the young boy and his father to put an end to the conflict.

The photosession with the youngster went well. He pounced on the hero’s knee as we sipped juice in the lounge of his grandad’s plush mansion.

But, the real test was getting the farmer father and the hero together – long enough to get some photos, and without starting a fist-fight. After all, the two had been involved in a very bitter and public feud for several weeks and getting the two together would bury the hatchet in the public’s eyes.

As we drove to the father’s farm, the hero began to squirm and sweat visibly. But, he was quickly reassured that he already had the cash – all he had to do now was keep the “mediator” happy and go for a quick picture session with the “villain”.

When we arrived, I quickly jumped out of the car and walked towards the farmer. His first words were: “I am pissed-off with the bad publicity and just want to get this all behind me. Everywhere I go people think I am an arsehole for not paying the money. Take your pictures, so I can get on with my life.”

Convincing the farmer to have a beer with the hero took some doing, but eventually he loosened up and mumbled a few words of thanks while he posed with his arm draped on the nervous hero’s shoulders.

As we left, the hero broke out into a broad smile and hugged me – now he could begin a new life. I was also over the moon. I had scooped the other journalists on the story and just had to hush up the visit until my copy appeared.

Instead of fueling the conflict, I thought a mountain was being made of a molehill and decided to see if both groups wanted to resolve the issue. Any one of the journalists on the story could have “mediated” the issue and they had had several weeks start on me.

I suppose bad news makes good news and telephone journalism is far easier than travelling to the players. With the words “don’t let the facts get in the way of a good story” still ringing in my ears, I realised how simple life really is. The problem is we journalists tend to prefer to complicate things.

You’ll probably remember the story. A “bushman” tracker found three-year-old Natie Botha, who had been missing in the Karoo bushveld for 72 hours. Great joy in the press. Then the story got more dramatic. The Afrikaans farmer was refusing to pay the R50 000 reward.

David MacGregor had not been involved in this story. He decided to take a look. Not only did he find an entirely different reality from what had been reported, he found himself playing the role of mediator.

Left: Hero Anthony Jansen and lost child Natie Botha.



A clear message

The judges and the Cautionary Rule

The half-naked woman sitting in full public view at the local charge office was a shocking reminder of the insensitive way that police treat women complaining of rape. But were the courts or the law any better? The question raised itself one Saturday afternoon a year ago.

The woman who prompted it had been sitting in the public office most of the day. She kept dialling home from a call box in the charge office, hoping to raise someone to fetch her and bring her some clothes. Each time she walked to the phone booth, she clutched pieces of her torn bra to cover her breasts from the eyes of every-

The Cautionary Rule which effectively discredited the testimony of the rape victim, is no more. CARMEL RICKARD, the Sunday Times legal editor who has been watching its use in the courts since she was a member of Rape Crisis in Durban in the early 1980s, wrote a very persuasive column in her newspaper last year arguing for its demise. Radio Today picked up the issue and had a phone-in. Then the Commission

for Gender Equality started to watch what was happening. The accumulative effect of all this attention has been that the rule has been pronounced unconstitutional. Rickard tells us how it happened.



one else in the room. She had laid a charge of attempted rape that morning but now was unable to find anyone to take her home.

That same afternoon the next term's roll for the Appeal Court in Bloemfontein arrived on my fax machine. One of the cases involved a young man convicted of serial rape. He would be arguing that he was innocent and that the magistrate who heard the case had not given enough weight to the "cautionary rule".

His appeal would be the first time that this court, with its new powers under the Constitution, might hear argument relating to the cautionary rule. Would the court use the opportunity – and its new powers – to reconsider the rule? Or would the chance pass by, as seemed likely because neither side in the case had got to grips with the issue in their written heads of argument?

The cautionary rule is a long-standing rule of evidence, responsible for many of the difficulties experienced by women trying to bring rapists to justice. It perpetuates the myth of women as lying, deceptive, irrational creatures, driven by neuroses and hormones. Under this rule, a judge or magistrate has to view the evidence of someone who claims to be the victim of a sexual offence – the overwhelming majority of whom are women – with great caution.

The rule stresses that the story told by such a

witness is "inherently, potentially unreliable". In other words, the court must start from the basis that the evidence of a woman who complains of rape is probably not true.

Over the decades, the Appeal Court consistently applied the cautionary rule. But the Chapman case came at a moment when, for a number of reasons, a different approach was suddenly possible. One of these reasons was that the new Constitution gave the Appeal Court the power to ensure that the common law (of which the cautionary rule formed part) was developed in accordance with the spirit and values of the Constitution – and that, surely, must include ensuring that women are treated with equal dignity by the law.

In addition, shortly before the Chapman case was argued, the Constitutional Court had handed down a decision which dealt in detail with the danger of continuing gender-based stereotypes and appeared to commit that court to eradicating legal props which shore up these myths.

Three judges sat to hear the Chapman case. Most senior was the new Chief Justice, Ismail Mahomed, fresh from the Constitutional Court where he had been part of the landmark judgment on gender stereotypes. Sitting with him was his deputy, Judge Hennie van Heerden, and Judge Pierre Olivier. During argument the chief justice intervened on several occasions to spell out the court's revulsion at crimes of violence against women.

"We are determined to protect the equality, dignity and freedom of all women, and we shall show no mercy to those who seek to invade those rights," he said. He added that Chapman's crime was particularly serious: his method of operating was to cruise the streets outside city night spots, pick up a woman on her own and obviously distressed after an argument with her boyfriend, then offer her a lift home and rape her on the way.

The judges said: "The courts are under a duty to send a clear message to the accused, to other potential rapists and to the community; we are determined to protect the equality, the dignity and freedom of all women, and we shall show no mercy to those who seek to invade these rights."

The judgment has since been quoted in a number of courts by other judges and by magistrates, to justify tough sentences handed down for rape. But while the words might have a satisfying ring, the court made it clear that this was not an appropriate case in which to deal with the question of the cautionary rule. The two sides had not come prepared to present full argument on the subject nor was the subject canvassed fully in their written heads of argument. The cautionary rule would have to wait until another time for evaluation.

Finally the right case arrived. Rodney Jackson, a Cape Town policeman, was convicted of the attempted rape of a schoolgirl, a friend of his younger sister.

On February 23, Jackson appealed against sentence and conviction, arguing that the girl had "consented" before suddenly running away, and that the magistrate had erred in not properly applying the cautionary rule. This time, both sides were fully prepared.

Ronel Berg from the Attorney General's staff in Cape Town specifically asked the court to make a ruling on whether the rule was valid.

This time the court was also fully prepared – five judges, a full bench, had been convened to consider the question and they included the three judges who heard the Chapman case.

During debate in court, the judges once again made their revulsion at violence against women plain. Several of the judges also indicated their disquiet about the cautionary rule. When the unanimous decision was handed down on March 20, it grasped this old nettle firmly and ripped it out.

Judge Olivier, who wrote the decision, said the notion that women were habitually inclined to lie about being raped was of ancient origin. Attempts had been made by the courts to justify the cautionary rule by relying on "collective wisdom and experience". This justification, he ruled, lacks any factual or reality-based foundation. Research had not shown that women were any more likely to lie than men, nor that they were "inherently unreliable witnesses". The Supreme Court of California had found that the rule was unwarranted "by law of reason", that it discriminates against women, "denies them equal protection of the law and assists in the brutalisation of rape victims by providing an unequal balance between their rights and those of the accused".

Judge Olivier said it was incorrect to say that it was easy to cry rape but difficult to refute the claim. "Few things may be more difficult and humiliating for a woman than to cry rape: she is often, within certain communities, considered to have lost her credibility; she may be seen as unchaste and unworthy of respect; her community may turn its back on her; she has to undergo the most harrowing cross-examination in court, where the intimate details of the crime are traversed ad nauseum."

He also found that the burden of proof was affected and that it was harder to prove a rape case than any other case. The court listed a number of other countries where the rule had been discarded, and concluded: "The cautionary rule in sexual assault cases is based on an irrational and out-dated perception. It unjustly stereotypes complainants in sexual assault cases (overwhelmingly women) as particularly unreliable." The judges said sometimes the facts of a particular case might require a cautionary approach to the evidence, but that was a far cry from starting each trial with the odds stacked against the woman.

Since the judgment was delivered, the Appeal Court has been inundated with requests for copies, and the decision has already been quoted and followed in rape cases in many parts of South Africa. Despite the general sense of jubilation among women's organisations, however, gender commissioner Cathi Albertyn believes the battle is not yet over. She says that the Appeal Court is to be congratulated for taking the lead in undermining offensive sexual stereotypes. But she predicts that defence counsel in rape cases will now try to present the evidence in a way that undermines the credibility of the woman complainant so that the presiding officer will be pushed into adopting "a cautionary approach".

The way to protect women against this, she says, is to ask the Appeal Court to issue strict guidelines on the limits of cross examination about the woman's previous sexual history, and for Parliament to be asked to consider enacting legislation on this issue.



The newly elected Sanef executive.

Sanef sets the agenda



Mike Siluma
Chairperson of
Sanef

Sanef is an imperative. Basically we do not have a choice in terms of our role during the transformation period and beyond.

One of the main weaknesses in South African journalism is that there is no credible voice. Some of the loudest voices are white and they are discredited. Black journalists have views but no clout. There is no debate going on and therefore a vacuum.

It is imperative for us to develop the capacity to make interventions on behalf of editors and media as a whole in South Africa, otherwise others – for example government – will move into the vacuum.

It is imperative for us to set the agenda on training, ethics and the role journalists should play in our country. We must get to a position where we discuss things with other stakeholders and don't just react.

And there are other issues: the standard of journalism is generally low and affects the ability of us all to act as credible interpreters. Every story in which there is inaccuracy reflects on how well we do. Generally, the criticisms of the standards of journalism are valid. Training must be a priority for us.

On transformation: it should be the duty of the media in this country to force debate. But we can't be autocratic: we must reach consensus on the role of the media in transformation. This goes beyond changing structures into changing how journalists think.

Regarding the government: our attitude must be different now that we have a legitimate government. We journalists must acknowledge its right to be heard too.

We, the delegates

at the launch conference of the SA National Editors' Forum, having noted President Nelson Mandela's remarks at the ANC's 50th conference as well as other criticism of South African media:

- remain committed to transforming our industry to represent fully the communities we serve;
- we reaffirm that South Africa's new Constitution has granted us an historic role to be the critical watchdogs, especially over those who wield power in our society. This is a responsibility which we will never shirk.

To this end we bind ourselves to:

- leading the debate on the issues affecting our industry and society as a whole;
- developing and defending the integrity and credibility of our industry and profession;
- forging links with like-minded groups in South Africa, our continent and across the world;
- representing the profession on legislative and restrictive issues;
- striving for professional excellence;
- embarking on a recruitment drive to ensure we represent the full spectrum of our segment of the industry.

Key resolutions

Media Freedom and Ethics

The Media Freedom committee of the Council is to seek with urgency the co-operation of other stakeholders such as the SAUJ, Mwasa, FXI, etc. to jointly:

- Approach government and political parties about laws restricting media freedom and election coverage.
- Plan a media freedom campaign which could include roadshows in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape.
- Facilitate coverage of media freedom issues.
- Swiftly respond to journalists under threat from whatever source.
- Liaise with regional bodies such as Misa.
- Give input on behalf of Sanef on all proposed new legislation such as the broadcasting Green Paper, the Marriage Act and the Open Democracy Bill.

Sanef condemns media restrictions in the SADC countries, including the proposed licensing of journalists in Swaziland and Botswana, and asks our government to pressurise those governments to lift such restrictions.

Section 205: Sanef is to obtain the services of a legal adviser to pull together and simplify the legal opinions about why journalists should have a "just cause" defence. A concrete proposal can then be presented to the President.

Re: the Western Cape Attorney General Frank Khan's summons to Cape photographers to give evidence in their personal capacity as witnesses to the Staggie murder: Sanef regards this as unjust and an attempt to get around the problems with section 205, and calls for the withdrawal of the summons. Journalists cannot be expected to give evidence that can place their lives at risk.

Urgent attention should be given to legislation restricting freedom of expression which is in conflict with the Constitution and has no place in a democracy. Pleas made by various bodies during the past eight years have not yet been acted on. Sanef stresses this matter needs urgent attention.

Sanef welcomes the creation of the office of Press Ombudsman which gives the public free access to an independent arbiter for the speedy resolution of disputes and helps journalists maintain high ethical standards. Sanef encourages all editors regularly to publicise the office and its role and to promote an appreciation of codes of conduct among staff and the public. Sanef supports the code of conduct of the Press Ombudsman and will facilitate, with the IBA and Broadcasting Complaints Commission, the creation of one common code of principles.

Diversity

There is a need for an independent agency funded by the government and publishers to serve small radio and print media; to facili-

tate black empowerment and in particular to assist small media in rural areas.

In the interim the National Community Media Forum and the IMDT (Independent Media Diversity Trust) should facilitate skills transfer between Sanef members and small media. Sanef proposes that:

There should be tax incentives to donors and tax relief for small media.

Sanef shall assist small emerging media with guidelines on ethics and other aspects – without taking them over – and will monitor the emergence of new media to provide a helping hand and ensure their long term survival.

There should be print subsidies for small newspapers, and alternative marketing and sales and distribution systems set up to assist their development and growth.

Mainstream media groups are urged to support developing news agencies.

Sanef should monitor the media unbundling processes to establish the extent to which they result in real black empowerment; and also monitor policies and practices concerning gender, disability and training.

Corrective Action and Training

Sanef should lobby editors and journalism educators to use their influence to accelerate media transformation to ensure that the demographics of South Africa is reflected in both staff and training.

This process must include the challenges of changing attitudes, editorial direction and content.

Sanef should lobby to compile a consolidated policy on the implementation of corrective action and will arrange a workshop on this before July 1998.

An urgent workshop needs to be held with journalism educators concerning the National Qualifications Framework and the setting of standards.

Sanef should play a more active role in advisory bodies.

Sanef should lobby donors and media houses and other organisations to fund research into journalism and raise awareness of the role of the media in a democratic society.

Training and education should not only include technical skills but also awareness about class, rural/urban contexts, gender and other contextualised and researched issues.

A survey of media training budgets should be done and the results publicised.



Peter Sullivan and Sarah Crowe



Judy Sandison



Phil Molefe, Mike Siluma, Sipho Ngcobo and John Battersby.



Gavin Stewart and Jane Raphaely



Ryland Fisher



Mathata Tsedu, Tyrone August and Nazeem Howa

The newly elected executive

Chairperson: Sowetan Editor Mike Siluma

Deputy Chairperson: Cape Argus Editor Moegsien Williams

Secretary-General: SABC Radio News Regional Editor (KwaZulu-Natal) Judy Sandison

The other 17 members elected to the 20-member council are: Mary Papayya (East Coast Radio); Siphwe Magoda (SABC Radio PE); Sarah Crowe (SABC TV); Phil Molefe (SABC TV); Isak Minnaar (SABC TV); Guy Berger (Rhodes University); Arrie de Beer (Potchefstroom University); Raymond Louw (SA Report); Ebbe Dommissie (Die Burger); Tim du Plessis (Beeld); Anthea Garman (Rhodes University); Wendy Morgenrood (Readers Digest); John Battersby (Sunday Independent); Sipho Ngcobo (Business Report); Mathata Tsedu (Sowetan); Lebona Mosia (Technikon Northern Gauteng) and Mike Loewe (ECN).

Bingeing, bulimic journalism

American journalism is in trouble. All that prurient reporting is not finding favour with the American public. In fact, it's creating a distinct backlash against the Fourth Estate, says Prof Betty Medsger.

Welcome to the New American Journalism at the dawn of the new millennium. It is a frenetic, turbo-charged journalism that has given new meaning to the term "depth journalism".

This breathless journalism moves stories faster than a speeding bullet and saturates the world with its words as quickly as one can spell-check, and, too often, more quickly than one can accuracy-check.

Polls show the public is angry at the press coverage of Monica Lewinsky and Bill Clinton and supports the President. After a month of daily stories about his sex life, the public gave him his highest approval rating, 65%, ever.

This reaction must be disappointing to journalists and politicians who, even on the first day the accusations of an illicit affair were reported, speculated that impeachment was likely. American journalism has been a virtual whirlwind since the story broke in late January. It was reported first by the Washington Post, the same news organisation that brought us the Watergate reporting that shamed a President to resign more than 20 years ago.

When the Post broke the first Watergate stories, there was great scepticism among journalists, even at the Post, about the credibility of the early stories. The reaction was very cautious, a "let's not rush to judgement" attitude. Furthermore, through the two years that Bernstein and Woodward carefully built the massive Watergate epic, researched fact block

upon carefully researched fact block, with long periods of time between some stories because of the time-consuming, painstaking research required, few other journalists wanted to pursue the story. Evidence then showed that the democratic processes at the highest level of government were being criminally hijacked, but most Washington journalists were content to sit on the sidelines, many of them speculating that these two young guys might fall on their faces. The Washington journalism herd would not become engaged in full-force coverage until the accusations moved into the courts.

What a difference 20 years and access to cyberspace have made.

Now there seems to be little reluctance among Washington journalists about reporting the Monica and Bill story – quickly dubbed "Fornigate" by some talk show hosts. It seemed as though every news organisation not only wanted to cover the story, but each wanted to get its own juicy tidbit – immediately.

Most of them easily out tabloided the tabloids. A study by the Committee of Concerned Journalists of the first six days of coverage of the Bill and Monica story revealed that 30% of the reporting had no sources, only 26% was based on named sources, 21% was based on anonymous sources. Reporters also reported their own assumptions as well as the assumptions of other journalists as news,

Continued overleaf



Scoopmanship:

The rush to get the story
and fret over the accuracy later.

Rich Mkhondo reports from Washington.

For decades Americans have viewed journalists as protectors of their country's liberty, seekers of truth and justice, heroes in the truest sense. Now the media is the well-deserved object of public outrage.

A national survey conducted last December for the Centre for Media and Public Affairs, a non-profit research organisation, said 52% of Americans believe the news media abuse the First Amendment, which guarantees freedom of the press. Substantial numbers in the survey also found journalists arrogant and cynical. Seventy-five per cent of the public says the media make America's social problems worse.

American journalists are themselves painting a dismal picture of the modern journalistic landscape. Their profession is in the sewer, the standards of American journalism have not only slipped, they've disappeared over the years into a kind of muck. Indeed, there is widespread belief in the US that news organisations have slipped into the sleaze, exaggerating, race-baiting and even manufacturing news.

Journalists are so concerned, that reporters and editors are being called to nationwide regional conferences and forums sponsored by the Committee of Concerned Journalists, a soul-searching quest founded by Bill Kovach, curator of the Nieman programme at Harvard University. Recent allegations of President Bill Clinton's marital infidelity have only intensified journalists' self-examination.

For me the height of media arrogance came when journalists began speculating when President Clinton could be impeached and the likely composition of Vice President Al Gore's cabinet. Worse was when the Dallas Morning News printed a story alleging that a secret service agent witnessed President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky in a "compromising situation". The story appeared on the

newspaper's web site, and within hours it was all over the electronic media. I was appalled to see this story appear as the networks' "top story" followed by the caveat: "None of this information could be substantiated".

One could ask: So why was the story run? It's hearsay, gossip, innuendo. Whatever happened to checking and double-checking of sources? Whatever happened to the difference between "news" and "editorial" – between fact and supposition?

Eventually, to the embarrassment of many, the story was withdrawn a few hours later and the television networks had to retract. But the story had been told. To make matters worse, the paper reprinted the story two days later, saying its unnamed sources were right after all.

Then the Wall Street Journal, the country's biggest financial daily, also embarrassingly had to withdraw a story it reported on its website announcing that a White House steward had told a federal grand jury he had seen the president and Lewinsky alone in a study next to the Oval Office.

The situation in American journalism is being worsened by "scoopmanship" in the rush to get the story first – and fret over its accuracy or fairness later.

The problem is made worse by increasingly feverish competition between news organisations, the increasing popularity of Internet-based news organisations, television and cable networks, the explosion of new media and the growing sophistication of media manipulators with their carefully planted leaks.

However, at the end of the day, we in the media are no better than the politicians or criminals we scrutinise if we do not look at our own profession with the same fervour as we examine them. We need to reinstate empirical journal-

Continued overleaf

Rich Mkhondo covers the US for Independent Newspapers. He is the author of Reporting South Africa, which chronicles South Africa's transition to democracy. Mkhondo's second book will be published later this year.

revealing a level of self-confidence and/or narcissism that, if continued, would be a dangerous trend in coverage.

At times the reporting on Bill and Monica has resembled a combination of soap opera and soft porn movie more than news, sort of a joint production of Oliver Stone and Larry Flynt. Instead of unfolding and eventually building a strong scaffold of new facts and context, this story has been a series of exploding firecrackers – a little sensation popping off here, then there, then everywhere.

Taken as a whole, such coverage creates what Wired Magazine media critic Jon Katz calls a “technotragedy”. Writing a few weeks before the Bill and Monica story crashed into everyone’s life, Katz wrote that journalists feel compelled, in this New American Journalism, to place top value on the new super speeds their work can be transmitted, rather than on the overall quality and veracity of what they transmit. In the process, they sometimes wittingly, and sometimes unwittingly, submerge the most important values of journalism, including the search for the truth.

The Monica and Bill story is not the first binge story, but it is the first such story to be based on accusations of possible corruption at the highest levels of national government. Other binge coverage preceded Monica and Bill – the trials of OJ, the life and death of Princess Diana and the trial of nanny Louise Woodward. So strong is the binge pattern by now that journalists might be considered to be either victims or carriers of a rampant new syndrome, journalism bulimia.

Each one of the binge stories mentioned above qualifies for Katz’ “technotragedy” label. Such stories, he writes, begin with a dramatic event, and each has vivid images associated with it. “It helps if murder, mystery, or conspiracy are involved. When the staggering mass of old and new media technologies – print, radio, TV, video, cable, talk radio, satellites, the Net, and the Web – kicks in, these stories quickly become the information world’s equivalent of an F-5 tornado, raging out of even the most intrepid spinmeister’s control.”

Katz continues: “Broadcast instantly and globally, (these) stories ... cause different information cultures – mainstream and tabloid journalism, print and electronic, interactive and passive – to fuse and focus an unprecedented amount of attention on a single story, continuously, for days and weeks on end.”

Presented as “global sporting events” rather than as carefully researched news stories, the technotragedy story “mushrooms, sucking up everything around it and taking on a life and power of its own. Journalism, the institution charged with offering us a clear and truthful perspective, now morphs into a new kind of electronic mob, transmitting distortions instead of correcting them, pursuing revelations over truth, pathos over reason.”

Katz offers important advice: “We have to grasp the ironic reality that, in an era when stories come to us faster than ever, the truth, if it comes at all, is apt to arrive slowly.” Because slowness has become unacceptable, truth is becoming roadkill on the information highway in the New American Journalism.

Our First Amendment guarantees that journalists can be the public’s watchdog, a role we’ve long proudly claimed. Truth be told, during most of our history, journalists have acted more like lapdogs, obediently going along with what spinmeisters handed us, not asking the penetrating questions, not looking out for the public’s interest.

We awoke slowly from a deep sleep during the Vietnam War and through the Watergate years and became alert watchdogs. The public came to trust us. Now, thanks to our long-time propensity for ignoring the fact that we, not technological forces, control the processes of journalism, we have confused the values of sensationalism (fast and dirty) and the values of good reporting (accuracy, fairness, thoroughness, truth).

Consequently, we – watchdogs and lapdogs – are in the doghouse. To get out of the doghouse, we must recognise that we ourselves – not technology –

made us do it.

Technology itself has no values. If journalists embrace as their most important driving force technology’s power and speed, then they, like technology, will have no values. The public will trust us again if we make it clear that, whatever the speed with which we transmit our stories, whatever flames of competitive instinct burn within us, accuracy, fairness, and a desire to search for the truth about matters important to the public interest, are the values that drive us, that shape our work and that we cherish.

Betty Medsger is former chair of the Department of Journalism at San Francisco State University and a former Washington Post reporter. Last year she visited South Africa to evaluate South African journalism education. She is the writer of a national study of journalism education in the United States, Winds of Change: Challenges Confronting Journalism Education.

Scoopmanship

Continued from page 23

ism and the search for the best obtainable version of the truth. Many of my colleagues in the US get depressed when they think about the state of journalism in their country. I’m heartened by all this discussion. It’s like digging for information for a good story. You have to ask the hard questions.

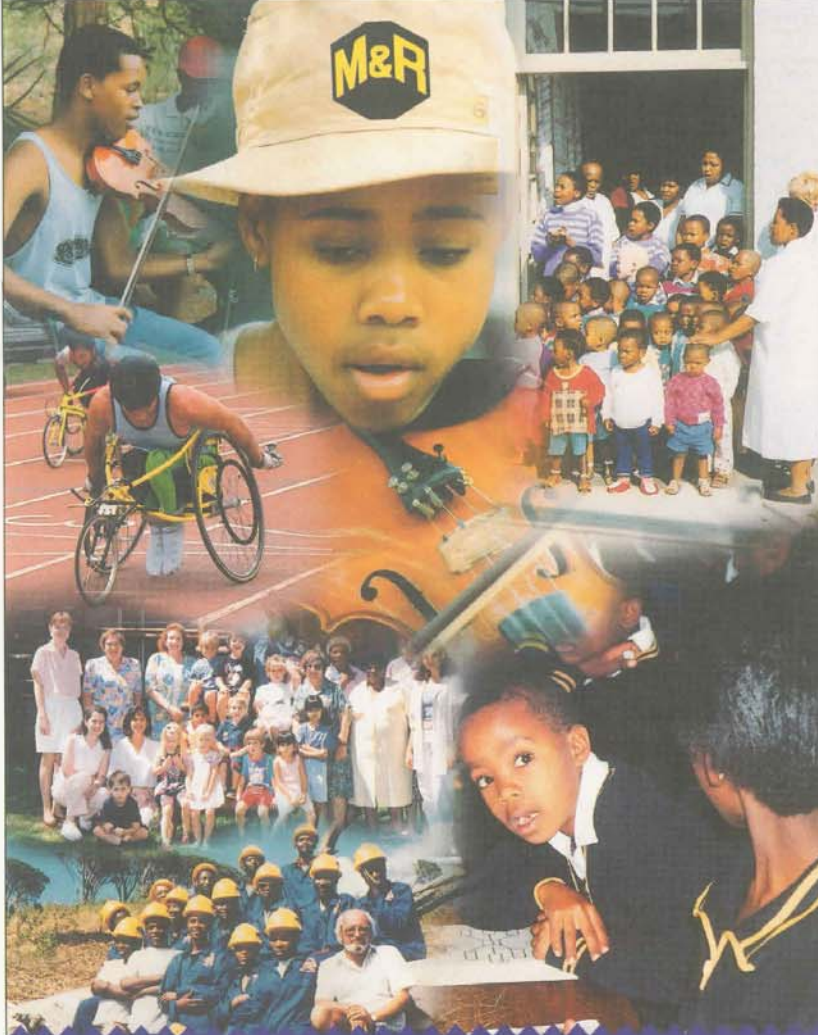
As journalists in the US, South Africa, Britain or anywhere else, we will always re-evaluate and re-examine ourselves and promise to do better next time until the next crisis emerges. We are like generals who embark on each new war using techniques we should have used in the last one.

Sometimes journalism is a messy profession. Whoever said the first casualty of war is the truth, might say the same thing about any huge breaking story, like the death of Princess Diana or the alleged sexual escapades of the president of the world’s remaining superpower.

It is difficult to come up with set rules or ethical standards that apply to every emerging situation, since fresh, increasingly juicy, exotic, sensational and unexpected situations keep on emerging. That’s one funny and exciting thing about news. It’s always, well, new.



A study by the Committee of Concerned Journalists of the first six days of coverage of the Bill and Monica story showed that 30% of the reporting had no sources, 26% was based on named sources, 21% was based on anonymous sources.



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When the watchdogs BITE!

by Montgomery Cooper



He was black, potent, reckless and HIV-positive. The court sentenced him to jail and the press sentenced him to unrequested fame. Suddenly Steven Thomas' face was everywhere.

The 36-year-old African-American part-time rapper, odd-jobber and nightclub casanova was presented as a serious threat to Finnish society.

It was the beginning of 1997 and Thomas was accused of attempted manslaughter. About four years earlier he had found out he was HIV-positive. Wild estimates claimed that since then he had had sex with hundreds of women. He had not told his partners about the virus. Neither had he been particular about using a condom. Altogether 17 women pressed charges against Thomas, five of whom were by then HIV-positive.

In old westerns a stranger rode from out of town and started terrorising the community. In Finland the threat preferably stems from abroad. If it happens to be black – all the better.

The interpretation may be mean, but it has some truth to it. We Finns tend to consider ourselves liberal. Yet it was amazing how smoothly we swallowed the publishing of Steven Thomas' photo, considering he was already imprisoned and could not possibly spread the virus any further.

"It is important to inform all the women who may have been involved with Thomas," the police argued. After the photo was published, hundreds of women contacted the police and rushed to have blood tests. Any black lover might as well have been Steven Thomas.

Before the court hearings, Thomas came out in public to apologise and defend himself. He also criticised the press: "The person created by the press is not me. It's a monster that has my name and my face. That monster has destroyed my life and that of people close to me. I was deprived of my human and legal rights because I'm black."

Thomas and his legal adviser referred to a similar HIV-case. The person accused was a Finn and his photo was not published.

"His family was protected because he was a Finn. But my family was destroyed. They wanted to make an example of me."

Steven Thomas never bothered to take his case to the Finnish media council (JSN). There was kind of a precedent: an African-born, HIV-positive man was accused and later found guilty of several rapes. His identity was made public in order to warn potential victims. The media council decided there was strong enough cause for publicly identifying the man.

It would be wrong to say the Finnish media lacked all reflection on Thomas' fate. Afterwards, comparisons were made between journalistic and medical ethics: under what circumstances should the individual's right to privacy be subordinated to the good of the community?

Just how far will an editor go today to achieve a greater good and risk damaging her paper's credibility? Beata Kasale, editor of the weekly tabloid, *The Voice*, in Francistown, Gaborone, challenges the status quo every week.

One of her classic stories was headlined: "Have you had sex with this lady?" The story continues: "Sally Modise wants everyone to know she has Aids."

Kasale justifies this invasion of Modise's privacy by saying that the greater good of teaching a whole community to pursue safe sex outweighs Modise's embarrassment.

Another story in the paper of 13 to 26 September 1996 is entitled: "WASTED, Girl, 14, dies from Aids two years after school rape ordeal." The reporter names the 32-year-old teacher (the "villain") and relates the saga of the court case to the readers. A further headline running across pages 8 and 9 shouts: "The rape of innocence: victims speak out. Was it Justice?"

In the report of the court case there is a photograph of the "criminal", but no evidence was led and the case was thrown out of court without the teacher even appearing. The "villain's" name was published several times in the article. As a result of the story, the teacher was forced out of the school by peer and community pressure.

The Voice is a curious mixture of tabloid and broadsheet intent. The paper is tabloid in design with screaming headlines.

Kasale is an intense editor who believes this controversial treatment of stories to be justified in terms of the greater good of Botswana society.

Meeting her last year during a Mass Media Ethics workshop in Gaborone, Botswana, I was struck by her passion for her work and unrepentant attitude to her banner headlines and the sometimes scandalous content of the paper.

Over 60 Botswana journalists, including Kasale and I, workshopped and produced working guidelines for ethical behaviour for the mass media (mostly print) in the country.

One of the principles that was developed was: "In pursuance of the duty to have the interests of the public at heart, journalists shall endeavour to defend the principles of freedom in the honest collection and publication of news, including respect for the rights of individual privacy, the right of fair comment and criticism ..."

At the workshop Kasale maintained that her approach is one of causing personal "harm for the greater good" following the line of Dr Bob Steele from the American Poynter Institute for Media Studies who advocates a "Green light/red light policy". "Green light" being that the journalist "goes for it" even though harm may be caused, but the aim is for the common good.

Kasale's paparazzi actions are unusual in Botswana. She does appear to have community interests at heart, but her methods are ethically unsound, if we are to go by the decisions made by the joint working group in Gaborone last year.

I await with interest her next "coup", challenging not only the community in a pro-active role, but also confronting her peers with another ethical dilemma.



He was black, potent, reckless, and HIV positive

The case was followed by the international press. Americans disapproved of publishing the photo and asked whether cases like Thomas' belonged in the courtroom in the first place. After all, the probability of getting infected in a casual relationship is relatively low.

At least the biggest Finnish newspaper (Helsingin Sanomat) gave space to these issues.

In the court Thomas' case was handled behind closed doors. He was first sentenced to 14 years. In December the Court of Appeal brought the sentence down to 11 years and 6 months.

The Court of Appeal emphasised that – probabilities aside – each unprotected intercourse includes a full risk of infection. And the disease is lethal. Thus Thomas was found guilty of 17 counts of attempted manslaughter.

The court did not consider the vast negative publicity an extra burden that should mitigate the actual sentence.

Apart from the press, who would Thomas himself accuse? Who was it that infected him?

"Maybe it was my (Finnish) ex-wife, maybe it was somebody else. It could have been any woman," he said.



Erja-Outi Heino works for KEPA, a Finnish NGO, which runs projects with handicapped people in Mozambique.

inside Antjie's head

Anthea Garman interviews Antjie Krog about her new book

Country of My Skull is NOT a book about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It's not a piece of journalism, or even a collection of pieces of journalism. It's not the long, written equivalent of the work Antjie Krog has done for SABC radio on the commission over the past two years.

And what should alert the reader to all this is the name she uses. Krog, not Samuel. This is Antjie the writer, not Antjie the journalist.

The TRC has been for Krog an emotionally wrenching experience in which she has struggled with "things that affect me, being white, being Afrikaner, being a woman".

While filing reports she has wanted to get behind the process, get into the "lots of layers", beyond the "privileged space where this doesn't happen here, but it is happening somewhere else".

"The process of the commission is so relentless. There is no time for debates on the deeper issues and the psychological issues."

She says when the commission first started up a psychiatrist suggested that a team be tasked with writing material to be disseminated through the news media to help people understand what was going on during the process of the hearings. It was a suggestion that never came to be.

But it's one that Krog has never let go. She is very conscious of how people out there are trying to make sense of what she has been sitting through daily.

When she wrote the piece for the

Mail&Guardian (the one which won her the Foreign Correspondents' Award) she was amazed at the reaction. Because of the very public honesty with which she wrote of her struggles and inabilities, people identified with her. Saying "I" (usually avoided in journalism) "opened up the TRC and took people into it". She found a huge public identification with her own self.

This "I" has become the narrator for the book. But don't confuse the "I" with Antjie. They are not always the same person. And the "I" also becomes the individual giving testimony at the commission of each personal experience transcribed here from actual recordings. This is the thread that runs through the book and which Krog is hoping will engage readers and keep them reading even when the words become gruesome and gruelling.

Krog has said publicly many times that she is more comfortable with lies than the truth. The lie can be sniffed out and identified, the truth is more difficult to pin down. This is not an "accurate" book, she says. There is a difference between accuracy (the stuff of journalism with its questions and details) and truth (the thing we approximate best by using myths to help us grasp what it is).

"I couldn't capture this process with journalism," she says. "There is no space in journalism for what is opinionated, vague and single-sourced."

So she set the story free by putting it into another "space frame", a book in which she "fabricates a truth, to deal with it and live with it".

There are people here who don't exist, or who are composite characters. There are events that never took place, there are situations out of sequence.

Why? Because that's the way the mind works.

Disparate things hover in the recesses of the brain and then suddenly they come together, gel and make sense, often provoked by something else. This is what Krog is doing, filtering through her own mind - her skull - all sorts of things that she wants to make sense of - "not to hammer but to open it up", she says.

She wants to get at "the amazing otherness of where they (the witnesses) have been and how they've dealt with it". She knows from sitting through testimony that not all of it has been "true". There are motives, there are reasons for lying to the commission. But journalism has no

place to deal with that. She can deal with this in the book.

I ask her specifically about the fabrications and the scene where the narrator's husband demands to know the details of an affair. I point out that when you're in a situation of trauma it is the details, the facts, the journalist's who-what-why-when-where-how questions that suddenly become so important to make sense of what's happening to you.

She laughs. But she doesn't share the same loyalty to the facts. Truth is much more than details. Truth has multiple faces.

And, she points out, when people have those details and facts, they want more. "Then they want to know: 'Do you feel sorry now?'"

One of the strongest criticisms of the book has been against the chapter which deals specifically with the testimony of women. Both Stephen Laufer in *Business Day* and Van Zyl Slabbert in *Insig*, have implied that she reinforces through her writing the stereotype of innocent, caring, suffering women.

"This is an interesting resistance," she says. "I think it's an inability to acknowledge that men are fucking responsible for all of this."

"The older I get the more I use the word 'female' for the capacity to see different sides and all sides, even the unimportant; and the word 'male' for seeing only one point of view and running with it."

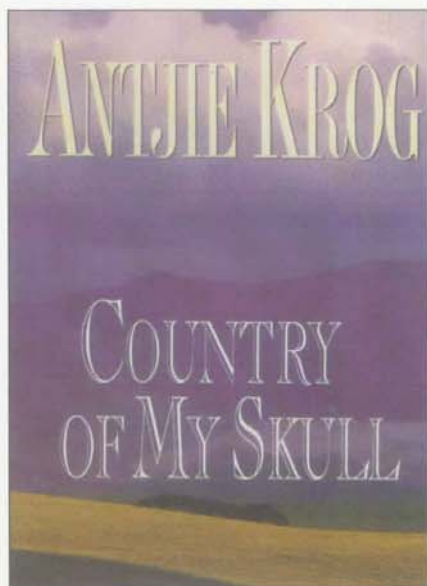
Krog is fascinated with what has happened in some of the testimony given by women. How things have become spoken and public. At a hearing in Worcester, a woman was asked exactly where she was shot. She said the word "vagina" aloud to a packed hall which gasped. Something has shifted for us all when language is used in open space for the first time, according to Krog.

Country of My Skull, I feel, is Krog, insistently insinuating into public space, a different language for dealing with one of the most traumatic public processes we as a nation will go through.

Country of My Skull is published by Random House.



Antjie Krog has published eight volumes of poetry. Reporting as Antjie Samuel, the author and her SABC team won the Pringle Award for excellence in journalism for their reporting on the TRC. Krog also won the Foreign Correspondents' Award for her Mail&Guardian articles on the TRC.



Free press speech spirit

The Forum

The Freedom Forum is a non-partisan, international foundation dedicated to free press, free speech and free spirit for all people. Its mission is to help the public and the news media understand one another better. The foundation's world headquarters are located in Arlington, Virginia in the US. It pursues its priorities through conferences, educational activities, publishing, broadcasting, online services, fellowships, partnerships, training and research.

Its establishment

The Freedom Forum was established in 1991 under the direction of founder Allen Neuharth who is the successor to the Gannet Foundation. That foundation had been established by Frank E Gannett in 1935. It is supported by income from an endowment worth more than \$900 million in diversified assets. The Freedom Forum funds only its own programmes and related partnerships. Unsolicited requests are not accepted.

About the office in Johannesburg

The Freedom Forum opened its African centre in Rosebank, Johannesburg on 11 November 1997. The centre's mission is to serve as a resource for African journalists by supporting training and development and providing a forum for discussion of issues of relevance to the media and press freedom. The African centre includes conference space and a media library which is open to journalists. The centre in

Johannesburg is the forum's fourth international office; others are located in London, Hong Kong and Buenos Aires. In the United States, outside the world centre, the forum has centres in New York, San Francisco and at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee.

About the Africa director

Jerelyn Eddings was named director of the Freedom Forum Africa Centre in October last year. Eddings is a veteran journalist with vast experience covering US national and international affairs. She began her career as a reporter with United Press International and went on to work for the Baltimore Sun as an editorial writer and columnist, and finally as a foreign correspondent covering Africa. She was the Sun's Johannesburg bureau chief from 1990 to 1993. She later worked as a political correspondent for US News & World Report magazine and returned to South Africa to cover the 1994 elections.

Her work

"I see my work at the Africa centre as a chance to use all the skills I have acquired through my years as a journalist and, in some cases, to pass them on to another generation of journalists. The job requires people skills to work with journalists and journalism organisations. It requires the ability to gather information about the journalistic climate around the continent. It requires writing skills and organisational skills. All those are needed to be a good journalist. Much of my work here is defining what type of programmes are needed and what kinds of existing programmes we should support to be of use to the journalistic community."

The challenges in SA journalism today

"The media in South Africa are at an important moment of transition – from the old days of a divided news media serving different segments of a country split apart by apartheid, to a new, transformed news industry in which the media strive to serve a diverse and democratic society.

"It's a massive challenge. Newsrooms are being integrated, ownership is being transformed, and the job itself is changing. In the old days, a news organisation either represented apartheid or opposed it. Now, those organisations must learn to do a more traditional job of covering a society and being a watchdog rather than an opponent of government. It will take a lot of effort and a lot of time to complete such a transition, and organisations such as the Freedom Forum can help, partly by virtue of experience and partly because we have the resources that can be used for these purposes.

"The good part of the challenge is that South Africa now is a country where press freedom is guaranteed by the Constitution and is seen as an essential part of democracy. The rest of the continent is in various stages of progress, some with a lively press and others with a media under terrible threat and with journalists risking their lives and freedom to deliver the news. But today, South Africa has one of the most democratic constitutions in the world and the challenge is figuring out how best to use the new freedoms as journalists and how to protect them for the future."

The Freedom Forum opened an Africa office in Johannesburg last year as a support to journalists on this continent. What is the Freedom Forum and how does it work?



Jerelyn Eddings

What's Just got to do with it?

Violence against women and the media: some of the conclusions, recommendations and guidelines from the Commission on Gender Equality workshop held in Durban in March

Violence against women is one of the most serious violations of human rights in South Africa. A third of all South African women are battered by their partners. South Africa has among the highest rape and femicide (the killing of a woman by her partner) statistics in the world.

In its often insensitive handling of violence against women, the media are frequently more a part of the problem than the solution. Yet the media could play an enormously positive role in changing public perceptions and attitudes.

Representatives of South African NGOs and media organisations met in Durban in March to assess critically the way in which violence against women is treated by the mainstream media. The workshop was convened by the Commission on Gender Equality and sponsored by Unicef.

Presentations included an analysis of selected press coverage of violence against women during the period 1 November to 31 December 1997 by the Media Monitoring Project; and case studies on media coverage by People Against Women's Abuse (Powa), Tshwaranang, Women's Media Watch and Zoe Rathuss from the Women's Legal Service in Australia. A panel of journalists responded to these observations.

In a statement released by the participants, it was pointed out that:

- While other crimes such as bank robberies and highway shoot-outs, etc. are regularly featured on the front pages, violence against women is relegated to the back pages, and this includes rape and domestic violence resulting in death (known as intimate femicide).

- Most of the reporting focuses on sensational rapes and murders, but domestic violence (which is more difficult to cover) receives little attention. Efforts by organisations trying to draw attention to these crimes are not being reported.

- Women are not seen to have their own identities. They are often described as someone's wife, girlfriend or daughter. For example, in the widely publicised alleged

rape of Nomboniso Gasa, she was repeatedly referred to as the wife of an ANC member of parliament rather than a member of the Commission for Gender Equality.

- Stories on abuse and rape frequently imply the women "asked for it" through such references as "she was wearing revealing clothing" or that "she started an argument that led to a beating".

- The fact that the perpetrators of rape are often known to the victims is seldom documented.

- The word "love" features with disturbing frequency in headlines relating to violence against women. Love is often cited as the motive for men who kill their partners. This belies the fact that rape and battery are crimes of power and control, not lust.

- Women are frequently depicted as victims of crime who are reduced to the level of their suffering: the terrified wife, the hysterical victim, the battered woman. The media seldom carries stories of women who survive brutal attacks.

- The media focus on the event, and particularly the bizarre or unusual, rather than an analysis of the issues and trends surrounding violence against women.

- The sources of stories are frequently the courts and police and not individuals and organisations who represent the interests of women.

The workshop recommended that the media should acknowledge that violence against women is a fundamental human rights violation. The dignity of the woman is paramount. She has the right to be

depicted as a human being and not be reduced to a suffering victim or statistic.

She has the right to have her perspective reported either by herself, if she is willing, or by organisations fighting for the rights of abused women, if she is not. She is the survivor of abuse and her fight against it must be recognised. Domestic violence, rape and murder have been historically unchallenged in our society and need to be challenged now, the participants said.

Comprehensive guidelines to avoid the use of sexist language should be developed and monitored by media organisations and the Press Ombudsman, they added.

Reporting guidelines

1 Violence against women should be accorded the importance it deserves in terms of how stories are written and placed in the media.

2 Perpetrators of violence should be named wherever possible.

3 Stories should be based on a variety of sources and where possible include the views of the victims themselves in a way that does not lead to further suffering.

4 Information about support services should be made available - especially by the public broadcaster.

And here's the proof...

Woman dies after row

Headline in the Sowetan, 30 June 1997

(There is no blame allocated, it seems the "row" is the cause of death.)

Jealous husband: three are killed

Headline in the Citizen, 24 July 1997

(The husband killed three people, again no blame is apportioned.)

Suicidal cop fights for life

Headline in the Sowetan, 12 August 1997.

(The cop had killed his girlfriend by shooting her twice before he tried to kill himself. There is no mention of her murder in the headline.)

Policeman among 3 killed as lovers' tiff ends in tragedy

Headline in the Star, 25 August 1997.

(The husband came across his wife and a policeman at a braai. He shot both of them dead and then turned the gun on himself. The policeman makes it into the headline but not the wife.)

Wife killed after argument over pie

Headline. Source not known.

(The woman had objected to her husband that a pie was not a suitable meal for a six-month-old baby. He took the baby from her arms and shot her in the head.)

Word Powa

Sally Shackleton, the information officer for POWA (People Opposing Women Abuse), who supplied these examples, says in a study she did on intimate femicide, the word "tiff" (dictionary definition: "petty quarrel") comes up in newspaper copy again and again, as do "lovers' quarrel" and "love triangle" and "tragedy". All these words obscure blame and seem to imply that the woman's death came about because of the "tumbling of events", Shackleton says. In one article in the Star in which a celebrity accused her boyfriend of domestic violence the phrase describing the situation was "a bruising love battle".

By Tony O'Reilly

It is often said that newspapers are the first draft of history. This may be somewhat fanciful but in truth, newspapers are about many things, and commercially they are mostly about brands. When you buy a paper, you can find out a lot of things about yourself – your politics, your business interests, your sense of curiosity about a whole range of things from architecture through music, to health and good food.

The contrast between newspapers and TV and the Internet is quite stark. TV and the Internet tend to be instant and universal. Newspapers are avowedly about the region, the city, and the process of analysis, distillation and extended focus. They can enjoy the luxury of reflection, length and regionality. They are not dependent on the soundbite, exciting, but in truth, somewhat unsatisfying.

CNN received in Auckland or Sydney or Johannesburg or London or New York is the same. But try and give the Cape Times away in Sydney, or the New Zealand Herald away in Melbourne, or indeed, the New York Times away in London, and you become sharply aware of the uniqueness and non-transferability of newspapers from one environment to the other.

This fact nurtures the brand and yet imposes some constraints upon their immediate relevance, particularly in the face of fast-breaking news.

However, if you are the market leader in any given market – be it Bonn, Paris or Washington – you have a unique and stable point of contact with your consumer.

The marriage of good journalism, circulation and advertising can produce good cash flow and high margins if your product is attractive to the reader and provides enlightenment, entertainment and excitement.

Newspapers are also about commentary, and independent or dependent, have the right to be selective in their politics and in the various aspects of our complicated society that they wish to champion.

If we go back through history we can find a Northcliffe or a Beaverbrook, a Cudlipp or a Cecil King, a Murdoch or a Bingham, who have very determined views which are carried in their papers and magazines. On the other hand you have the contrast of the Astors, the Thompsons, Brendan Bracken at the Financial Times, the Grahams at the Washington Post and the Sulzbergers at the New York Times where the notion of proprietorial direction is not central to the enterprise.

Independent Newspapers around the world is in the latter category. In a speech to Rhodes University on 18 February I said: "We are not right wing and not left wing – we are for the people and for the country." We appoint the boards of our papers throughout the world which state what the broad policy of those papers is, the boards appoint the editors and allow the editors to get on with the job without fear of interference. If the editors work within the broad remit of the board, they remain as editors. If they do not, then it is the duty of the board to change editors. This is not a complicated concept, although it is a concept about which a great deal of nonsense has been written.

Ben Bradlee is given to say that politicians, as a group, do not like newspapers. The reason, he claims, is that they, the press, are in fact unelected critics of the political process and as such do not fully understand the pressures under which politicians work.

There may well be a grain of truth to this, but the fact is the Fourth Estate is a vital element in a democracy and were it not for the inquisitive mind of the press, a great number of critical inquiries of the past five years would not have surfaced.

Whatever the controversy and drama, I believe this is a necessary price to pay for the benefits to society and to our political systems.

In South Africa the company had an excellent year despite the fact that the economy went through a turbulent period. The potential for growth in South Africa is great, and the company, with 58% of the total English-speaking press and 11 modern presses in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban, is well-positioned to play a part in its future. The future will be more volatile than, say, New Zealand, but notwithstanding this we were one of the first companies to invest before the elections that brought Nelson Mandela to power.

The record of the company since that date has been, frankly, outstanding and the profitability of the company has tripled. We have led the way in training and the introduction of new products and no other group in South Africa comes remotely close.

Transformation and transparency are key words in the future of a peaceful South Africa and our management, editors and employees are playing their role as champions of a free and informed press in the new vibrant democracy.

● Excerpts from the Chairman's Statement to the Board of Independent Newspapers.

Anthea Garman interviews

Tony O'Reilly

What are you reading?

On my bedside table are: *A Peer Without Equal*, the story of Sir Gordon Newton, editor of the Financial Times from 1949 to 1972, and *A History of Byzantium* by John Julius Norwich.

What do you think about the future of newspapers internationally?

Papers have a much more interesting future than TV. It is a natural condition for editors to be worried. The fragmentation of media around the world, particularly in radio and TV, is going to make newspapers. TV is a long-running advert for print media, soundbites for the real information. We are moving inexorably away from fast news to the slow distillation of what the news means. Your great grandchildren will still only have 24 hours in a day and two eyeballs.

... in South Africa?

In 2005 SA will have seven million readers (up from today's 4.3 million). Newspaper titles will stay at about 22 or 24 but in TV, satellite and digital, there will be about 250 signals. Viewers will increase from four million to 20 million a day. Of all the media conditions the most favourable will be for print to increase its market. For example, Australia has 14 daily newspapers with 80% penetration. TV has a 35% to 45% penetration.

The Independent plan

Because of TV the reading public is more critical: they want colour printing, attractive newspapers with style and gossip, personal finance. They demand specialist information. Independent Newspapers is leading the rush to provide this with the Sunday Independent, Business Report, Personal Finance and Sunday Life.

Newspapers and the Internet

The problem with the Internet is: how do you collect the revenue? The great thing about newspapers is that they are intensely local and advertisers can aim at a specific geographical area. The Internet is a great advertising medium for newspapers because it excites interest.

Transformation

Independent's attitude is to be fair, decent, tough and honourable. We are determined to change all our processes.

Your special relationship with South Africa?

In my opinion Nelson Mandela saved South Africa from civil war. Poets usually define a nation (as Yeats defined the Irish revolution), but in South Africa, not a poet, but a politician defines this nation.

On your attitude to women editors

Women are the rulers of the earth. In a subtle way they control a lot more than they admit to. I have no problem with women. We've just appointed Rosie Boycott as editor of the London Independent and are watching her with fascination.

On rumours that Independent will be launching a popular SA tabloid

As my good friend Paddy says: "The question is not whether there is a gap in the market, but whether there is a market in the gap?"

● Tony O'Reilly, who has a PhD in agricultural marketing from the University of Bradford, received the degree Doctor of Laws honoris causa from Rhodes University.

Newspapers are unique

Tell it long take your time go in depth

Some newspapers are giving writers a wealth of time and space, urging them to get intimate with subjects. They call it Immersion Journalism.

The standards that guide newspapers have been updated in some newsrooms to better harmonise with the conventional wisdom of the 1990s:

1. Keep it short – readers have tiny attention spans.
2. Don't dig too deeply – libel and invasion of privacy lawsuits drain profits.
3. Stick to the time-tested definitions of news – crime, politics, sports, celebrities.
4. Keep reporting costs low. Way low.

But some reporters and editors have found an intriguing way to break free from those restraints. A significant and growing number of them are publishing in-depth narratives based on months of high-cost, high-risk immersion journalism. They are injecting real storytelling into their stories, producing memorable narratives, long ones, about the not-so-ordinary aspects of ordinary life.

A case in point is the Baltimore Sun's "A stage in their lives" written by Ken Fuson and published in June last year – a 16 000-word series covering 17 broadsheet pages over six days.

To write "A stage in their lives" he immersed himself for four months in the lives of students playing key roles in their high school's production of *West Side Story*. It was a challenge, and Fuson succeeded. On one level, his series is a tale about the production of a high school musical. On a deeper level it is a masterful story about teenagers coming of age in the complicated 1990s.

Magazines such as *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Rolling Stone* have published this brand of journalism, off and on, for decades. Book publishers in the business of depth journalism have offered outstanding examples from authors such as J Anthony Lukas, Tracy Kidder, and Nicholas Lemann.

Newspapers large enough to publish Sunday magazines occasionally encouraged this kind of writing before the 1990s. Sunday magazines are shrinking, but this form of newspaper journalism is not. These days immersion journalism is finding a safe home – along with occasional controversy – in the broadsheet pages of such papers as the *Seattle Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Newsday*, the *St. Petersburg Times*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Miami Herald*, and the *Providence Journal-Bulletin*, not to mention the *Sun*.

Newspapers are producing valuable, innovative, and sometimes beautiful examples of this against-the-grain kind of work. Writers are drawing readers into what are sometimes the equivalent of books, testing the notion that readers still like to read.

Missionaries

In 1979, at the *Evening Sun*, the morning paper's now-defunct partner, Jon Franklin won the first of two Pulitzer prizes for a work of narrative immersion journalism, "Mrs Kelly's monster".

Franklin had been working up to such an opportuni-

ty. For years at the *Evening Sun* he sought topics that would allow him to use the techniques of fiction "while observing all the journalistic niceties", as he puts it. "I went out and looked for stories that fitted that way of doing it. I practised. I did a story about a day in the life of a dog catcher. I did a day in the life of a profoundly retarded man."

"Mrs Kelly's monster" started out as a feature on a woman undergoing brain surgery. Franklin assumed the surgery would be successful, ending Kelly's 57 years of pain. He interviewed Kelly and her husband. He talked to her daughter separately and with Dr Thomas Barbee Ducker, the surgeon. That was it, he figured, except for showing up at the hospital to look for his ending. Then the surgery went wrong. Kelly died.

Franklin assumed that he had lost his story. Later he had a revelation: he would write about the surgery through Dr Ducker's eyes. The 4 000-word story that emerged opens this way:

Scenes, not just disparate facts, are necessary to write compelling narrative.

In the cold hours of a winter morning Dr Thomas Barbee Ducker, chief brain surgeon at the University of Maryland Hospital, rises before dawn. His wife serves him waffles but no coffee. Coffee makes his hands shake.

In 1985, Franklin won his second Pulitzer for another long-form piece, "The mind fixers" about the new science of molecular psychiatry. Then he left to start a teaching career at the University of Maryland and the University of Oregon. In 1986, his book *Writing for Story* (Atheneum) explained step by step how to practise the kind of journalism that had won him honours.

Donald Drake, the *Philadelphia Inquirer's* medical writer, had parlayed his interest in playwriting to develop his narrative storytelling based on immersion reporting. Five years in a row he spent almost half his time chronicling the successes and disappointments of one class at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. Eventually the *Inquirer* hired a new medical writer to cover the hard news on the beat so Drake could concentrate on long-form storytelling.

Today, Drake's title is assistant metropolitan editor, and he works with daily reporters, encouraging them to inject storytelling into their quick turnaround pieces.

Chaotic and ordinary

Fuson's "A stage in their lives" is perhaps the most counter intuitive of all the *Sun's* recent narrative immersion stories, since a high school play is by definition both chaotic and ordinary. Indeed, as he hung out

with students day after day, Fuson started worrying about how he would organise the sprawling piece. He found himself with at least 15 characters, too many for a focused narrative. He emerged from his dilemma after a conversation with Lisa Pollak, his *Sun* colleague, who suggested he concentrate on those with the most at stake.

The five students Fuson chose were pictured on each of the six days the story ran, with a soap opera-like caption under each photograph. On day one, the caption under Angie Guido's picture says, "She has a vision of herself in the starring role. But wait – another girl stands in the way". On day two: "She finds out today – is she Maria? No other role will do." And so on.

Part one of the narrative opens like this:

Spellbound she sits, her mother on one side, her boyfriend on the other, as another young woman performs the role that will some day be hers.

Since she was little, Angie Guido has dreamed of standing on stage, playing the Puerto Rican girl who falls in love with the boy named Tony.

Maria.

She will be Maria in *West Side Story*. Say it loud and there's music playing. That's me, mom, she said.

Say it soft and it's almost like praying. It won't be long, Angie thinks as she delights in a touring company production of *West Side Story* at the Lyric Opera House in Baltimore. She and 20

members of the Drama Club from North County High School in Anne Arundel County attend the December show with a few parents. This is a prelude; there is expectant talk they will stage the same show for their spring musical.

Someday soon, Angie hopes, she will own the role that is rightfully hers. She has been a loyal drama club soldier, serving on committees, singing in the chorus when she yearned for a solo, watching lead roles slip away because she didn't look the part. But Maria is short, as she is, and dark, as she is, and more than that, Angie is a senior. This will be her last spring musical. Her last chance to shine.

But on the very next night, in that very same theatre, another girl from North County High School sits spellbound, her mother on one side, her best friend on the other.

She, too, is captivated by the Puerto Rican girl with the pretty voice.

She, too, wonders: What if that were me?

Reader response was overwhelmingly positive. Fuson heard from teenagers who had read every word, from parents who had been captivated. Carroll and Marimow are so certain that their brand of long-form journalism is good business that they are building reporting and editing staffs to do more of it.

When time equals truth

For daily newspapers, with a news cycle that seems to spin ever faster, the most revolutionary of the elements

of immersion/narrative reporting is the immersion itself – the ability to take the time to get it right.

At the St. Petersburg Times, Anne Hull took six months to immerse herself in the lives of a male teenage assailant and a female Tampa police officer whose fates intertwined on 4 July 1992, when the teenager held a gun to her skull and pulled the trigger, although the gun misfired.

Walt Harrington, who left the Washington Post last year to freelance and teach at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana, says his goal is “to understand other people’s worlds from the inside out, to portray people as they understand themselves. Not the way they say they understand themselves, but the way they really understand themselves. The way, as a subject once told me, you understand yourself ‘when you say your prayers in a quiet room.’”

That kind of understanding rarely comes quickly. In journalism, time sometimes equals truth. Tom Wolfe, in a 1972 essay, called this patient, deep reporting an “essential first move” because scenes, not just disparate facts, are necessary to write compelling narrative.

“Therefore,” Wolfe wrote, “your main problem as a reporter is, simply, managing to stay with whomever you are writing about long enough for the scenes to take place before your own eyes. The initial problem is always to approach total strangers, move in on their lives in some fashion, ask questions you have no natural right to expect answers to, ask to see things you weren’t meant to see. Many journalists find it so ungentlemanly, so embarrassing, so terrifying even, that they are never able to master this.”

Leon Dash almost fell into this trap at the beginning of his work on “When children want children”, his 1986 Washington Post series (expanded into a 1989 book) on why so many urban teenagers became involved in out of wedlock births. It was 13 years ago that he rented a basement room in an economically depressed District of Columbia neighbourhood, struggling to understand a different world by living in it.

He had resisted the suggestion of his Post editor, Bob Woodward, at first, because he thought he already knew many of the answers. As he wrote in the prologue of his book: “I assumed that the high incidence of teenage pregnancy among poor, black urban youths nationwide grew out of youthful ignorance both about birth control methods and adolescent reproductive capabilities. I also thought the girls were falling victim to cynical manipulation by the boys. I was wrong on all counts.”

It was not until five weeks after moving to the Highlands that Dash realised that without immersion he would have missed the truth – that so many of these girls chose pregnancy to gain the attention and respect they were desperate for. The realisation came during an

interview with a 16-year-old girl who was beginning to trust him. It took Dash another year of immersion in the neighbourhood to fill in the gaps. Part of the process is talking to sources again and again. One young woman who told Dash the truth did so in the fifth hour of her third interview.

From 1988 to 1994 Dash spent considerable time on one family. The result was an eight-part Post series titled “Rosa Lee’s Story”, followed by a book. Dash met Rosa Lee Cunningham in 1988. At age 52 she was serving time in the District of Columbia jail for selling heroin. A mother at the age of 14, Rosa Lee had given birth to eight children by five fathers, and had more than 30 grandchildren when she and Dash started talking. Six of her children had followed her into a life of crime.

When Dash suggested that he spend time with her after her release, she agreed, saying maybe her story would help others avoid her path.

Ordinary, extraordinary

A cornerstone of this journalism trend is an emphasis on non-celebrities. They could be called ordinary people, except that journalists choosing them believe part of the job is to find the extraordinary in the ordinary.

The word ‘story’ is often misused in journalism. Not that many newspaper articles are really stories.

Several journalists who focus on non-celebrities cite this quotation from historian Will Durant: “Civilization is a stream with banks. The stream is sometimes filled with blood from people killing, stealing, shouting and doing the things historians usually record; while on the banks, unnoticed, people build homes, make love, raise children, sing songs, write poetry and even whittle statues. The story of civilization is the story of what happened on the banks. Historians are pessimists because they ignore the banks for the river.”

Walt Harrington’s focus on life along the banks is evident from the titles of the three book collections of his pieces: *American Profiles: Somebodies and Nobodies Who Matter*; *At the Heart of It: Ordinary People*, *Extraordinary Lives* (both University of Missouri Press); and *Intimate Journalism: The Art and Craft of Reporting Everyday Life* (Sage). Harrington is puzzled by journalists in general, and at many newspapers in particular, who fail to chronicle the “momentous events of everyday life”. But he recognises that it can be difficult to do. With notable exceptions, Harrington writes in *Intimate Journalism*: “What passes for everyday-life journalism is too often a mishmash of superficial stories about Aunt

Sadie cooking pies; unlikely heroes who save people from drowning or drag them from burning buildings; the nice kid next door who turns out to be a serial killer; and poor people who, against the odds, make it to the top. There’s nothing wrong with such stories, except that too often they are the end point of everyday-life coverage, reported and edited with the left hand by people unschooled and unaware of the intricate assumptions and techniques of intimate journalism, which results in stories made superficial by both accident and design.”

Telling stories

The word “story” is often misused in journalism. Not that many newspaper articles are really stories. They rarely have beginnings, middles, and ends, rarely include foreshadowing, rarely are shot through with narrative drive. That kind of storytelling technique takes years to master.

Tom Wolfe, in a 1972 essay, emphasised four devices: scene-by-scene construction, presenting each scene through the mind of a particular character, extended dialogue between characters, and inclusion of details (how they dress, how they furnish a home, how they treat superiors and subordinates) symbolic of the characters’ status lives.

Although Wolfe’s precepts are alive, it is Jon Franklin’s book *Writing for Story* that almost certainly has influenced the largest number of current newspaper writers, with Harrington’s three books further supplementing it. Franklin, in turn, looks to writers of fiction, and writers who describe fiction techniques. His own bible is Robert Meredith and John Fitzgerald’s *The Professional Story Writer and His Art* (Crowell).

How long, how deep?

Almost any topic worthy of immersion is worthy of lengthy treatment. But discipline is also key. G Wayne Miller, of the Providence Journal-Bulletin, says that without a talented, forceful editor, his stories would sometimes be too long.

Recalling his seven-part immersion series about the Hasbro toy company, he wrote recently, in the paper’s self-published *How I Wrote the Story* collection: “My initial outline was for eight parts, but my editors said ‘too much’. They were right. Thus whittled, my concerns became character development, dramatic tension, detail, and subtext – the ironies and paradoxes, that told the real story.”

The best writers say the real key is the investment of time.

• This article is reprinted with permission from the *Columbia Journalism Review* and the author Steve Weinberg. Weinberg teaches journalism at the University of Missouri. The full text can be found at <http://www.cjr.org/html/98-01-02-long.html>

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freesheets forge community

in the peninsula megacity

Like Cinderella, who eventually had her moment in the bright lights, Cape Community Newspapers is no longer the stepchild of Independent Newspapers and is carving a distinct niche for itself. Mansoor Jaffer reports.

When you have 12 titles reaching 400 000 homes each week and read by one million people, then you're in the big league, whichever way you look at it.

When you do a survey to gauge support for Cape Town's Olympic Bid and 32 000 people respond, then you know you reach deep into the communities you serve.

The 12 community papers – 11 weekly and one monthly – have distinct histories.

Four have their origin in the old Argus company and were launched to serve the burgeoning coloured working class communities in the mid 1980s. Several others were owned by companies or individuals and bought during the 1990s. About two years ago, they were brought together under one roof and three more titles, catering to the northern areas, were added.

The merger was difficult as staff came from diverse backgrounds and were thrown together in cramped offices hidden away on the fourth floor of Newspaper House.

Central team leader Trisha Bam says: "After our painful amalgamation I found myself heading a team which produced two Cape Flats papers and two southern suburbs papers. The southern papers' staff sat on one side of the office because of 'shared interests' and the Flats staff on the other. On one side aggression, the other defensiveness. We 'naturally' divided along racial lines, not knowing how to talk to each other and not knowing how to receive instructions from a white team leader without taking umbrage. And the team leader, coming from the standard white liberal tradition, did not know how to manage and maintain discipline and standards and escape accusations, however indirect, of

being racist. I spent a year tap-dancing on eggshells.

"Social differences caused practical problems. My English is more Hampstead than Hanover Park, so my puns in headlines and instinctive rewriting of copy alienated colleagues and readers. Even the simplest actions were cause for discontent. The trend is to drop honorifics but for someone on the breadline who is part of a community which has bled for the right to be recognised, to be called by your surname alone is disrespectful. In Rondebosch we have headmasters, in Athlone we have principals. In Claremont we want to keep taxis out of sidestreets. In Mitchell's Plain we want more, safer taxis to get to work...

"Slowly, we've come to know more about each other through the stories we write, through the way we respond to issues and through outpourings in the smoking room about the trials and tribulations of our personal lives. We have even reached a point where we can finally begin to celebrate our differences, collective and individual, through teasing and laughter.

"If any group of people can in some way introduce communities to each other, we can. We may be greying, stress-lined and battle-scarred, but we are living proof that it can be done."

CCN's biggest titles are the Athlone News and Plainsman serving the densely populated Athlone and Mitchells Plain areas. They are followed by the Southern Mail and Constantiaberg Bulletin which serve the areas in the southern suburbs of Cape Town; the False Bay Echo which goes to homes surrounding the famous Bay; the Southern Suburbs Tatler, mainly distributed in affluent, predominantly white suburbs; the Atlantic Sun for the Atlantic Seaboard area; Tabletalk in Milnerton and surrounds, and three Tyger talks in the

northern areas. A monthly paper, the Sentinel, is distributed in Hout Bay.

During 1997, the Northern Echo was closed as a result of poor advertising income and the Helderberg Sun ceased publication due to a legal wrangle between the Independent Group and Caxton.

Following the merger CCN has slowly emerged as a powerful vehicle for information and a platform for debate. The papers appear to have struck significant chords with their respective communities, finding a special place in people's lives each week.

Their strong emergence follows similar patterns around the world where community papers are rising to prominence while mainstream dailies and weeklies are battling to boost sagging circulations. Severely under-resourced, the 30-member CCN staff has set about improving the quality of the different titles, building a profile for the group and improving levels of organisation.

The appointment of editor David Hill gave great impetus to this process. The Argus stalwart brought years of experience in editorial and production and through his easy-going style encouraged new levels of unity.

Assistant editor Brian Josselowitz has been an integral part of shaping the new CCN. "In the three years I have been at Cape Community Newspapers the newspapers have improved immensely both in layout and quality of reporting, although we still have some way to go," he says. "I joined Unicorn Publishing to launch a bilingual newspaper for the north, the first in the stable, just months before Unicorn merged with Argus which became the Independent group. We used a lot of council

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One million readers in the Peninsula make Cape Community Newspapers a force to be reckoned with. Author Mansoor Jaffer is at bottom left.

Continued from page 37

stories, not too many human interest stories and of course the public relations officers loved Unicorn because whatever garbage they dished up was used unquestioningly in many of the titles.

"A lot of stories were done by fax and phone. Now things have changed, the reporters go out looking for stories all the time and it shows in the copy we have been using. The reporting has improved a lot mainly because we coach the reporters before they go out and when they come back. We have regular feedback sessions and the reporters are generally motivated."

Josselowitz says there is a growing trend by mainstream newspapers to follow up on stories which first appear in the community papers.

Hill says: "Let's not beat about the bush, Cape Community Newspapers is a commercial enterprise. But we also have a responsibility to do more than just fill the space around the adverts."

"Our family of 12 tabloids reaches diverse communities right across the Cape Peninsula and we have a wonderful opportunity to bridge racial and cultural barriers. We believe we can play a role in increasing understanding between people who have been artificially separated for decades. We also offer a platform for those who do

not have a voice. With a readership of a million, we have an obligation to use our clout sensitively and responsibly.

"Our decision last year to ask our readers to vote on whether they supported Cape Town's Olympic Bid exercised the minds of people of all sections of our community. No one had ever asked them whether they wanted the Games and they were delighted just to be asked.

"This was an issue that leapt across geographical and social barriers and everyone had a point of view. More than 32 000 readers took part in our ballot which, by the way, gave the Games a big thumbsdown.

"More recently we launched our Cape Community Cares project. It was a CCN initiative bringing together a unique partnership: the media (us), our readers, the Community Chest, big business – Old Mutual, Safmarine, Woolworths, Sanlam – and the people of Langa, a township near Cape Town.

"We focused on the 'Golden Girls' (as the women involved call themselves) who were caring for 60 mentally and physically handicapped children living in poor conditions in two containers in Langa.

"Driving the campaign through our 12 community papers, we set out to raise R100 000 before Christmas. The response from all quarters was amazing. We managed to achieve R130 000 in cash and about R20 000 in goods, and the children will soon be moving into a new building. And the beauty of it is that each week we have been able to share this happy, inspiring story with our readers."

Southern team leader Sally Jones says that community newspapers, unlike their daily counterparts, "appear to have arisen out of a need for areas to feel a common bond in the vast, impersonal metropolis that has come to characterise cities world-wide.

"By its very nature, a daily newspaper has to focus on generalities and report news that covers a broad geographical area. Through this process the 'smaller', though often in no way less significant, news items fall through the cracks.

"Community newspapers attempt to fill these cracks by remaining locally focused – giving priority to stories that, in their news or personality content, reflect the changing face of the suburbs in which readers live.

"From report-backs it would seem that these family papers are held in high regard within the community. They afford the opportunity to announce local events, cover stories that may be deemed too small for the dailies as well as offering the opportunity to give public recognition to achievers from all walks of life. Judging by the type of stories that reporters are covering, the various community newspapers are now challenging established traits and reporting on debatable issues."

And what about the future of community newspapers? Former Northern team leader Neil Scott, now with the Cape Argus, believes that community papers will play an increasingly prominent role in the years ahead.

"Before, community papers were seen as a nursery for journalists. That has changed. Reporters now see them as a place to ply their craft and follow their careers."

One of the critical challenges for Cape Community Newspapers is to expand its operations into the Cape's African townships. Sadly, the company did not serve this constituency in the past.

On the whole, CCN must continue its quest for journalistic excellence, intensify its attempts to transform its newspapers into credible sources of quality information, and powerful vehicles of unity and development.

Selling yourself to the sellers

by Caroline Creasy & Lisa Terlecki

The media planners who work for ad agencies can make or break your media business by considering you (or not) in the placement of advertising for their clients. The Mail & Guardian and Marketing Mix decided to find out just who these very powerful people in the advertising industry are and what media they consume in order to inform their decisions.

The media environment in South Africa has been experiencing rapid growth and transformation over the last few years: the SABC has sold off radio stations, the IBA has issued numerous radio licences, there is now a new television player in the market, in print we have seen the sale and unbundling of newspaper groups and the launch of a number of new titles. This means the industry has become increasingly fragmented, more competitive and far more diverse. This has created an enormous challenge for marketers and advertisers to keep up with media consumption trends.

In this rapidly growing market, the big question is how, and which of, the existing and new media groups are going to survive. This will largely depend on their commercial viability, and makes it one of the most important issues in the industry. Can they attract the audience they want, and are they able to sell their products to advertising decision makers?

The bottom line for media owners is that if they have not got the "buy-in" from the advertising industry, they cannot survive – and it is not only the battle for audience but more importantly the battle for adspend which will determine their future.

The onus is thus on media owners to endear themselves to the advertising industry – sometimes through very persuasive courting, wooing with corporate gifts and lavish entertainment, or by convincing the client with a solid argument about the value and benefits of advertising in a particular medium.

Over R5 billion worth of advertising spend is forked out across the classic media in South Africa every year. The question is: who decides where this advertising money goes? The bulk of the adspend is placed by media planners and media buyers – parties which represent media shops or advertising agencies.

Working in the industry, one discovers that there appears to be a lack of common knowledge about the media industry on the part of both the media owner and the advertising industry. This may not be obvious to the marketer, whose budget is at stake and who is ultimately responsible for the company's market share, sales and profits.

Given this, Marketing Mix and Mail & Guardian decided to find out more about exactly who the people are who bear the weighty responsibility of placing advertising.

The research was conducted by Market Intelligence Resource Group (MIRG) and set out to ascertain how much knowledge there is in the industry as a whole. At present this entails a survey of media planners and will later extend to representatives working for the media.

The first phase of this research was to construct a profile of a media planner. What has just been released reveals that there is a range of people within agencies making decisions, who have considerably varying amounts of experience and knowledge of media. Indications are that many of the people who handle accounts do not appear to have the knowledge to properly assist them to do so in a professional and informed manner.

The results of the initial survey would appear to support two assertions:

Assertion 1:

Representation of the media planning universe is not rep-

resentative of the social demographics of the country. In other words, there seems to be little affirmative action in this sector of the advertising industry. Although many agencies are working to correct this, there have been claims that "there is not enough time or a large enough talent pool from which to select people who could make a career of media planning".

Assertion 2:

Media placement (the allocation of adspend in particular media) would appear to be influenced by the planner's personal preferences. For example, planners listed radio stations most often listened to as 94.7 Highveld and 5FM, and when placing advertising over the last 30 days, both 94.7 Highveld and 5FM emerged as the most frequently placed stations.

The advertising industry needs to consider addressing these problems sooner rather than later. More time and energy needs to be expended educating school and university leavers about the career choices to be made in the ad industry, and media planning should be given the importance it deserves. It has previously been considered the least glamorous aspect of advertising, and this perception has to be changed.

Similar media planning debates have been addressed in a number of industry titles. However, the issue is whether too much of the planning role has been left to computers. Telmar media modelling programs churn out research data on frequency and reach estimates and are often regarded as the final word on a media schedule. This debate has focused on whether media planning has become a number-crunching exercise rather than a process requiring creativity, lateral thinking, strategic analysis, insight and experience. For a lot of new radio stations this has meant that they have had to fight an even tougher battle to get

onto the media schedules, as they have not had established research figures to support them.

Media are dynamic. Does the onus for the flow of information lie with the media owners? Are they ensuring that crucial information concerning their media is being effectively disseminated to media planners who should continually keep up to date with what is happening in the marketplace?

The following questions are being researched as part of phase two:

- Are media owners ensuring that sufficient information is being given to planners to equip them to make the informed decisions?
- Are media salespeople effective and professional about presenting proposals based on a client's marketing objectives?
- Should marketing divisions of media owners be more proactive in disclosing information on the changing profiles of their audiences?
- Are they service orientated?

The decisions of media planners and media salespeople can mean life or death for media owners. It is an issue which the industry cannot afford to ignore.

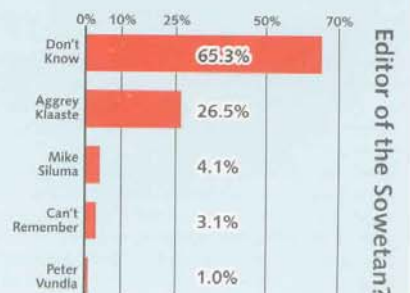
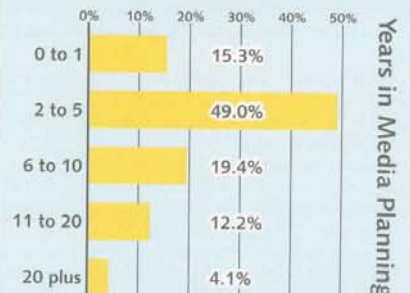
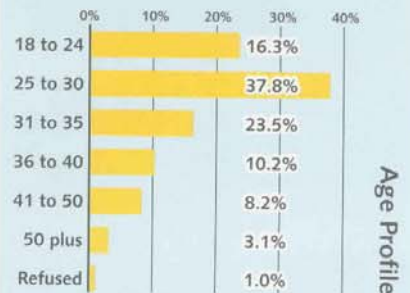
Caroline Creasy is the Marketing and Circulation Manager for the Mail & Guardian. Lisa Terlecki is Deputy Editor of Marketing Mix.

Found out

The survey was done by conducting a total of 98 interviews nationally by using MIRG's Computer-Aided Telephone Interviewing System. The fieldwork was done on January 26, 1998.

Some of the findings:

- 54% of the media planners are in the age group 18 to 30.
- 80% of these people are women.
- 49% have two to five years in media planning; 19% have six to 10 years; 12% have 11 to 20 and 4% had 20 plus.
- The radio station most listened to within the last 30 days was Radio Highveld (25%) followed by 5FM (16%) and 702 (7%). All African language stations together scored 9%.
- The TV channel watched most was M-Net (scoring between 55% and 61%) while SABC 3 scored 24%, SABC 1, 11% and DSTV, 5%.
- The favourite TV programme was Friends (18%) followed by Mad about you (15%). Carte Blanche and the News were favoured by 4% of planners each.
- The favourite reading material is Fair Lady (16%), Femina (10%), Cosmopolitan (9%) and You (8%).
- 43% said they did not know what the most popular black youth TV programme was.
- 65% said they did not know who the editor of the Sowetan was.





René Blanco Villallon, who took this picture, is the 26-year-old son of Zeta editor Jesús Blancornelas. He heard the trembling voice of his father on the two-way radio: "We are shot..." He ran towards the bullet-riddled car, feeding film into his camera. He arrived to find the assassin slumped against the wall, dead, and his father wounded in the car.

Targeting the Editors

By Michel Bajuk

Hheavy gunfire meets the editor-in-chief as he's heading to the newsroom. Kneeling in the crossfire, Jesús Blancornelas squats on the passenger seat. The bodyguard is already dead. One hit. Two. Three. Four ... the spine stops a bullet. The 62-year-old Zeta editor prays for his life.

The shotgun turns silent. A ricochet from an AK47 hits the lead assassin, David "CH" Barron Corona, in the left eye. He drops dead before he can finish the job. The rest of the killer squad hurries away.

Tijuana, Mexico, 27 November 1997. The bloody battle against drugs goes on. The war is mirrored, examined and printed in a weekly magazine with 55 000 readers.

"Ya basta!" Enough is enough!

Threats, abuses, kidnappings and blood-stained attacks make up part of everyday life. Some of Mexico's most prominent editors have lost their patience.

"We aren't going to spend our time publishing the obituaries of fallen colleagues. We are going to prevent them from ever having to be written," says Jesús Blancornelas to the gathered press.

The expectant reporters are cautiously sceptical. In front of them sits a marked colleague. A role model with a guardian angel. A colleague on overtime. Thirty-one murders in Tijuana - this year. Today's date: 14 February.

Yesterday in Mexico City a journalist was shot in the head, repeatedly, at point blank range. But he was said to have been corrupt. Or was he? You get paranoid very quickly here. Who can you really trust?

For 20 years Blancornelas has scrutinised corruption and narcotics syndicates through Zeta, his weekly paper. A month before the attack, the governor dis-

missed Blancornelas' two federal bodyguards. The same day the main news in Zeta was an emotional and detailed letter from a grieving mother. It was addressed to Ramón Arrelano-Félix, leader of one of the most violent drug cartels, and one of the FBI's 10 most wanted criminals.

The assassin "CH" was responsible for the security of Arrelano-Félix. He was wanted for a great number of crimes and several murders, among them the murder of a Catholic cardinal in Guadalajara in 1993. The meaning of his nickname "CH"...? "Caballero Honorable" - honorable knight.

The hotel is surrounded by undercover policemen and soldiers. The famous publisher is now protected by the President. With a steady gaze and a slightly trembling voice he again challenges the drug lords, this time through television.

"If we don't stop the drug cartels now we may never be able to do so. Politicians, the police force, the army and the FBI cannot do it. How will journalists be able to stand up to heavily armed and economically well-fed narcotics syndicates?"

"In the only way we know of - with good journalism and well-prepared research. When the 'capo' of an international drug cartel tries to get back at the editor of one of the leading weeklies of the country, we have to hit back. If they get away with this they can get away with anything," says Jorge Zepeda. He is the editor-in-chief of *Publico* in Guadalajara. This city of four million is the "third Medellín" of Mexico, home to a number of rival cartels.

Just like the other editors on the panel he lives under death threats. They have lost patience with the incompetence of the government. That is why they have just

formed a Mexican branch of the Committee to Protect Journalists.

They are now organising a special aid force, with the help of *Periodistas de Investigación*, an organisation for investigative journalists with sister associations in the US and Scandinavia.

If one reporter is silenced, at least 20 others will rise up to finish the story. What they find will be published simultaneously in all participating media.

The inspiration comes from the Arizona Project. Don Bolles, an investigative journalist in Phoenix, Arizona, was killed by a car bomb in 1976. He was one of the founders of the organisation, *Investigative Reporters and Editors*. The attack shocked and upset the press. Bob Greene, the legendary double Pulitzer Prize Winner at *Newsweek*, led a thorough investigation in Phoenix with participating journalists and newsrooms from all over the country. Organised crime and corruption was scrutinised and exposed systematically and minutely. The murderers were arrested and convicted. However, the intention was never that the journalists should do police work. The goal was to write those articles that Bolles could not finish.



Zeta editor Jesús Blancornelas ... wounded but not broken.

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Dial "M" for Media

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The service has millions of clients demanding correct, cutting-edge, and far-reaching intelligence about the world – daily. Comprehensive and qualified in-depth analysis is presented with graphics, statistics and footage. The intelligence often leads to political implications and sometimes it causes governmental crisis.

"We have managed to do our job using open sources for 200 years. I'm an investigative journalist, and the bureau I talk about is my newspaper. Welcome to the club!"

The reporter continues. He describes how he participated in writing a book that some of the audience remember well. It shocked the intelligence community world-wide when it was published. The book was about a fanatic, rich and well-organised sect with access to weapons of mass destruction. Through their world-wide network they planned to wipe out Earth. The authors describe how advanced their plans were, and how far they had actually come. The authors also describe how little the intelligence community knew about the sect.

It took the international team of journalists four months to complete the "intelligence operation" with a budget of \$150 000. Oh – and the majority of the information was acquired through open sources such as public records.

Agents, police and the military scribble plenty of notes. The reporter has their full attention. Someone asks: what could he do with a million dollars? The journalist answers with a smile: "A lot of damage!"

Code name: Michel Bajuk
Field operator for Rhodes Journalism Review

Rich history

Continued from page 51

press (1830s – 1880s); protest press (1880s to 1930s); early resistance (1930s – 1960) and the later resistance (1970s – 1980s). The turning point, he credibly argues, is in the 1940s, when exclusive "petty bourgeois politics" fade in a crusade for the rights of all (1997:35).

If Switzer gives us analysis, it would probably require a different

book to delve into the colour, texture and flavour – in short, the "story" of the black press. This is not to belittle the value in his book, which sadly has had very little exposure in South Africa. A sneering review by former Rand Daily Mail editor Benjamin Pogrand did appear in the Mail&Guardian in 1997. Pogrand has his particular axe to grind. But it may be that journalists *per se* are not necessarily the best reviewers of books about journalism. They should, per-

haps, stick to what they do best: ie, researching and writing in an accessible way.

Switzer's book calls out for journalists to do their kind of story-telling about the fascinating history of black journalism in South Africa. Any volunteers out there?

South Africa's Alternative Press: Voices of Protest and Resistance 1880 – 1960 edited by Les Switzer. Published by Cambridge University Press.

Targeting the Editors

Continued from page 40

"Silence is for the drug lords what water is for the fish," says a visiting Colombian editor. We are going to raise some hell. Maybe we can make them think twice before they try to shoot one of us next," says Rossana Fuentes, chief of the special assignment staff at Reforma in Mexico City.

Contraband from South America crosses the 3 000 km long border of Mexico on its way to the biggest drug market in the world – the US. With Juárez, Tijuana with its population of two million is the largest metropolis in Mexico for drug traffickers.

If you are a serious, critical, investigating journalist you must sooner or later write about the wide-spread corruption. A pair of interfering traffic police costs 20 pesos. The brother of the ex-president costs more than a \$100 million.

If you start digging you will inevitably embark on a collision course with the narcotics business. Still alive? Then you have nine lives, luck, a bullet-proof vest and military protection. Or else you're not too strict about the truth – out of the will to survive – or in for the money. If you're untouchable you're probably already dead.

"Some say I'm crazy. But I have to go on," says Jesús Blancornelas who is healing from the bullet wounds that almost put an end to his ability to walk for ever.

Crazy or not, he is a source of inspiration for a new generation of Mexican journalists who distance themselves from

bribes, self censorship and blind loyalty to the government.

Twenty heavily-armed elite troop soldiers and special force policemen guard Blancornelas' humble middle class villa. The security police and military secret service have confirmed that one of the drug syndicates still has a hit order on the editor.

Blancornelas sold his house to start Zeta in 1980 with his best friend, the columnist Hector "el Gato" Félix Miranda.

They wrote in-depth stories about drugs and corruption, issues that the government-controlled press didn't dare write about.

Félix was murdered in his car in April 1988. Thousands of people demonstrated against the attack and against the careless way in which the authorities handled the case. Journalists who criticised the investigation through other media were fired or put under pressure.

Zeta's examination of the murder led to the arrest and imprisonment of two killers. They worked on a race track owned by the son of a powerful politician. The police were never able to clarify any motives for the crime.

Even today Zeta is printed on the American side of the border to make sure it comes out every Friday.

Behind the newly-built 10-foot tall brick wall Blancornelas is planning "Proyecto Tijuana". The idea is that Blancornelas will lead about 20 Mexican and foreign reporters on an intense investigation into the drug mob and corruption. Blancornelas slowly massages one of his large bright red scars. Mexican journalists need to create their own life insurance. "If I don't do it someone else has to take over. It is extremely important to speak and write about the truth in this country. There are many newspapers, but very few are truly independent."

His spine is damaged, but not broken.

Hendrick & Drieka



We asked Cape Town photographer Eric Miller to share with us one of his favourite pictures...

The picture chosen is unlike most that I shoot. It shows people in a simple, peaceful state of being. No drama, no war, no bloodshed. No major transformation of their social fabric. Just a tranquil moment in their ongoing life.

The couple are Hendrick and Drieka van Workum, the parents of close friends of mine in Holland. I met and photographed them in 1991 when I was still living in Holland.

Hendrick died about two years ago. They lived in the small rural village of Herveld for their entire lives and were married for over 50 years.

I met them only once but they made a deep impression on me. They reflected a fundamentally honest and pure way of life that I saw echoed in their children's lives.

Hendrick was quiet and solid, Drieka was the emotional heart of the family. The image reflects this, with Drieka being the one connected to the outside world via the phone.

It is a quiet and gentle picture. There are many pictures I like because they are made for a particular purpose and fit that purpose. This one is pleasing to me because I didn't have to take it. It was a reaction to the moment. The family were very pleased with it.

Eric Miller is a Cape Town-based freelance photojournalist. He works for several overseas publications and agencies on assignment in South Africa and around Africa. His work in South Africa in the 1980s focused on the struggle against apartheid, and now draws largely on the transformation processes that characterise the "new South Africa". The last few years have also seen him travelling widely and working in Rwanda, Liberia, Zaire, and a host of other African countries, as well as Denmark, Cuba, Vietnam and the US. He is co-owner of the i-Afrika Photo Agency in Cape Town which distributes photojournalists' work nationally and internationally.



Eric Miller in Rwanda at a UN supply base, 1994

The right to write

A letter to my colleagues

(Excerpts from a letter by Pius Njawé smuggled out of Douala prison)

You are certainly already aware of the renewed persecution of me by the authorities. On 24 December they took me away from my family and threw me in prison, then sentenced me later to two years' imprisonment and a fine of 500 000 Central African Francs for "spreading false news".

On 21 December 1997 the final of the Cameroon Cup football tournament was played in Yaounde. Originally set for November, that most important sports event of the year was rescheduled to allow the President of the Republic, Mr Paul Biya, to preside, as is the tradition here. The President arrived at the stadium 20 minutes late, disappeared from the official tribune at half-time and only regained his seat five minutes before the end of the match, just in time to award the trophy to the winners and to leave the stadium.

This astonishing and discourteous behaviour prompted the journalists of *Le Messenger* to investigate. That is how they came to discover he had suffered a cardiac incident during the half-time break.

This information was immediately reported to me. I personally undertook the normal double-checking. Three different sources, all of whom had witnessed the scene, confirmed it to me. Each, however, expressed surprise that I was aware of the incident and begged me not to publish. But as a journalist I consider that a piece of news is publishable, unless it can be shown that it will threaten people's lives. In this case, it was just a malaise suffered by the chief of state and revealing it, in my opinion, represented no danger for the Cameroonian people.

The article appeared on 22 December as an exclusive in *Le Messenger*. It was picked up by some foreign colleagues. For reasons I do not understand, the government panicked and tripped all over itself issuing denials. First, there was a communiqué by the presidential staff, communicated to all the press except for *Le Messenger*, but which *Le Messenger* published nevertheless.

There followed an insidious press campaign in the columns of our colleagues, called to the rescue of the government, in an attempt to discredit *Le Messenger*.

On 23 December someone came to my office to inform me that orders had been given for the police to arrest me. The person suggested that I leave the city to escape arrest. Having committed no crime, I did not consider it necessary to take flight. So I returned to my office on 24 December where I was arrested at midday. After 48 hours of detention by the judiciary police, I was transferred to the prosecutor's office, where I was indicted for "spreading false news". This followed



A clandestine photograph of Pius Njawé, publisher of *Le Messenger* in Cameroon, during a previous jail sentence. He is behind bars again.

a well-muscled interrogation. My imprisonment order was signed on 26 December when I was incarcerated in the Douala Central Prison at first as an accused person.

On 13 January I was sentenced after a mockery of a trial.

This is the second time within a year that I have been jailed. In October and November of 1996 many of you expressed support for me when I was thrown into prison for "insult to the President of the Republic and to the members of Parliament", for having denounced an anti-democratic constitutional plan. This time, my tormentors seem determined to get me. Evidence of this is the terrible and humiliating prison conditions, as well as the physical and mental cruelties which my jailers inflict upon my family, my collaborators and me.

The tone was set upon my arrival in prison on 26 December. My wife, who was late into pregnancy, was physically abused in my presence by a prison administrator when she brought bed linen for me. My complaint to the public prosecutor had no effect upon this inhuman treatment. It was repeated on subsequent visits. Thus, my wife miscarried our child on 9 January.

My collaborators were subjected to the same brutal treatment in their attempts to communicate with me. My messages are filtered by prison authorities. My wife is allowed to bring me food once a day, but my collaborators are practically forbidden to visit me. I must work all kinds of angles to maintain contact with them. As for my children, they were so traumatised by the prison environment

and the behaviour of the prison guards that I decided it would be better that they stop coming to see me.

My treatment in prison is highly humiliating. The objective is surely to

break my morale, if I cannot be eliminated physically. I share cell number 15 with about 100 other prisoners, almost all of whom are criminals convicted of murders, assassinations, hold-ups, thefts, armed robberies, etc.

While I may receive newspapers and books, I don't have the right to write. The prison director called me into his office to forbid it. "Don't lift your pencil for as long as you are in jail," he told me. So, I have stopped writing the "Convict's Notebook" that I had been publishing in *Le Messenger* since my imprisonment. I now write in secret. I must get up at 3am to write by flashlight and I must pay off my neighbours not to turn me in. This is how I am composing this letter for you. I will send it to my office secretly to be typed into a computer.

Nevertheless, my spirits are good, even though I do have some health problems. I have nothing to reproach myself for, so my conscience is clear. I know that I'm paying for my stubbornness in my struggle for the past 18 years to broaden democratic freedom in Cameroon and in Africa. I'm paying for having refused to work with a political party. I'm paying for having refused to plunge into the trough. I'm paying for having preferred my independence to compromise. I'm paying because every choice must be paid for. But I'm proud of my choice, and I don't regret it because I'm convinced that it is the best path.

My only regret is that we still have so many colleagues who think that compromise with the powers that be is the way out.

Freed

When Unesco awarded the World Press Freedom Prize in February, the prize winner and one of the jurors were missing. Their absence on presentation day, 3rd May, World Press Freedom Day was even more conspicuous. Both Christina Anyanwu (the winner) and Pius Njawé (the juror) were in jail – in Nigeria and Cameroon.

In June, after the death of Nigerian leader General Sani Abacha, Anyanwu was released. But according to the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (which campaigned vigorously for Anyanwu's release) there are still 16 journalists in jail in Nigeria.

Anyanwu is the editor-in-chief of the Nigerian news weekly the *Sunday Magazine*. She was sentenced to 15 years in solitary confinement for exposing a government ploy to round up political opponents.



Free! With the death of Nigerian leader Sani Abacha journalist Christina Anyanwu was released.

Pius Njawé, director of the Cameroon newspaper *Le Messenger*, was charged with disseminating false news.

Since December, Unesco has been talking to the authorities of Cameroon to secure his release. In March former South African editor Raymond Louw travelled to Cameroon to meet with the government to appeal for Njawé's release. Louw represented the International Press Institute (IPI), the South African Committee of the IPI, the South African National Editors' Forum, the Freedom of Expression Institute and the Media Institute of Southern Africa.

Louw met with the Communications Minister and the Foreign Affairs Minister of Cameroon and attended a hearing at which he shook Njawé's hand and pledged the support of South African journalists. At the hearing Njawé's sentence was reduced to a year.

30 tips

for top-rate newspapers

Compiled from reports by: Steve Matthewson, Saturday Star; Philani Mgwaba, Mercury; Mansoor Jaffer, Cape Newspapers; Vivienne Horler, Cape Argus; Patrick Bulger, the Star; Carolyn McGibbon, the Saturday Paper; Bafana Shezi, the Star; Charmaine Pillay, Post; Cheryl Hunter, the Star, Brendon Seery, Saturday Star.

Story ideas

- 1 Mission:** Reinvent the paper each day.
- 2 Brainstorming:** Paint the editor's office turquoise, purple and yellow and turn it into an ideas room. (The editor may need some convincing on this one.) Bring non-editorial staff into brainstorming.
- 3 Contacts:** Get the newsroom to make a mandatory six extra contacts per week – and check up on it. Set up readers' forums and open days.
- 4 Difference:** Take reporters out of their boxes. Sit with each one, find out what interests them, and then sell them something different.
- 5 Context:** We are still focusing on events and not underlying processes, so we write a story that says there is a gang warfare again and three people have been killed, without explaining why there are gangs or what is being done about police corruption. We need background, context and the local angle. We need to add value.
- 6 Select:** Instead of doing 20 stories badly, we'll do 10 that are relevant to readers and do them well. We pay for Sapa, we don't have to compete with them.
- 7 Mix the grill:** Bad news comes unbidden and cheap. Stockpile good news stories to offset the big, purely negative stories.

Transformation

- 24 Match, point:** Reporters need to realise they don't necessarily represent the target market. Try to see stories through the eyes of a person of a different sex, age or race.
- 25 Making it simple can be stupid:** Reporters with little experience of a community run the risk of contenting themselves with easy labels that obscure complexity – like the term Muslim fundamentalist in regard to the Cape Flats Pagad movement.
- 26 New horizons:** Try visits to informal settlements, mosques, and police stations, and attending lectures and reading selected materials about various communities. Bus trips for white reporters to the townships may smack of trips to the zoo, but it is better than nothing.
- 27 Making the effort:** In many cases, blacks make a daily effort to fit into a white world – whites have to try too.
- 28 Necessary, not sufficient:** Newsrooms need to be representative, but that is not enough. Having a diversity of staff backgrounds helps, but it does not automatically get a newspaper in touch with the communities it serves. If we aren't relevant to our readers, they're not going to buy the newspaper.
- 29 Cross boundaries:** We have to encourage communities to take an interest in each other. When a child is raped in Sandton, let's call an NGO or school teacher from Alexandra to comment. Make people see their common problems instead of unwittingly emphasizing the divide.
- 30 Meditate on this mantra:** there's a virtuous circle where great news by great journalists grows circulation.

Readers

- 8 It's the reporters, dummy:** Sensitise journalists to potential markets by analysing and debating market research. Too often, such surveys have not gone beyond the editor's desk.
- 9 Circulation:** Lazy readers are not to blame for falling sales. We're boring! If people are going to pay for us, they have to want us.
- 10 Tune in:** Not only do reporters not read their own and other newspapers, they don't watch television news or read news magazines or other publications. The first half hour of work should be designated for reading the papers.
- 11 Shooting for new ideas:** Assign someone to trawl through publications aimed at the opposite markets and pull out useful ideas.

Reporters

- 12 Listen up and liberate:** News-editors tend to dominate a discussion with a reporter. We need to listen more and hold back a bit before trying to shake the story into the form that is taking shape in our heads. Allow reporters more of their own voices.
- 13 Coaching:** A coach doesn't kick the ball himself, (nor does he kick the players!). He does what he can to get the best out of each member of the team. Coaching is not to be confused with critique, debrief, an edit or a re-write. It's a distinct and additional strategy.

- 14 Catch'em all:** Some reporters either need very little coaching, or they are very resistant to it. But no writer or sub is too experienced or old not to benefit from coaching.

- 15 Pay back:** We need systems of rewards for reporters.

Internet

- 21 Access:** Persuade, argue, nag and scream to get Internet access.
- 22 New angles:** Journalists can use the Net to help localise international stories and globalise the local.
- 23 Local is lekker:** The Internet means we can't compete with the Jerusalem Post on Israel, but you should see the job we can do on our own country and locality.

Story styles

- 16 Just the facts:** If media consumers prize entertainment and emotional fulfillment above information and intellectual satisfaction, then the most important facts of a story are not always the most important facts. Using more impressionistic first-person copy generates more feedback than when we reveal startling new information.
- 17 Great cliché hunt:** Get reporters to pore over papers hunting the overdone, share the humour and raise awareness.
- 18 South Africanise:** Stimulate reporters' interests in black literature and evolving SA idioms.
- 19 Tell the subs:** More creative writing is needed to capture the reader and keep interest. Subs and editors must accept and understand new styles of writing.
- 20 Visualise:** Reporters must be encouraged to think of stories in terms of graphics and pictures and to develop a strong visual sense of how a story can be presented.

The international situation

Sweden

Chapter 3, Article 1 of the Freedom of the Press Act, which has constitutional status provides broadly for protection of journalists' sources. A journalist who reveals his sources without consent may be prosecuted at the source's behest. These provisions extend to state and municipal employees who may thus give information to the press without fear of repercussion. "Messenger freedom" is a deeply rooted and highly valued legal tradition in Sweden.

Norway

Journalists have a qualified right not to answer questions concerning the identity of their sources. Courts may only order disclosure where the information is of particular importance and they must take into account the conflicting interests at stake.

The Netherlands

The Dutch Press Council has long maintained that journalists are entitled to withhold information provided they can prove that they exercise prudence in their use of sources. The Supreme Court, however, has held "that the position that a journalist has a right to protect his sources cannot be accepted as a general rule".

Germany

The press laws of most of the German states include a provision granting journalists a right to refuse to divulge the identity of their confidential sources. Paragraph 24(1) of North Rhine Westphalia's Press Law is typical and provides absolute privilege admitting no exceptions.

France

In 1993 the Code of Criminal Procedure was amended. Article 109(2) says: "Any journalist who appears as a witness concerning information gathered by him in the course of his journalistic activity is free not to disclose its source." The right not to reveal is absolute.

Austria

Article 31 of the Media Act 1981 provides strong protection for the confidentiality of journalists' sources. Publishers, editors, journalists and other employees of a media enterprise have the right to refuse to answer questions about sources of information disclosed in the course of their professional duties.

United States

In the leading case on this issue (*Branzburg v Hayes*) the US Supreme Court held that the First Amendment of the US Constitution did not grant journalist the privilege to refuse to divulge the names of confidential sources in the context of a grand jury trial. However, laws providing protection for journalistic confidentiality have been adopted by a large number of states.

Canada

Some protection may be found in both the common law and under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantee of freedom of expression. The common law provides only limited protection and has rarely been applied. The extent to which the Charter prevents judges from ordering journalists to disclose the identity of their sources remains unclear.

England

English law offers statutory protection to writers who do not wish to divulge confidential sources in Section 10 of the Contempt of Court Act 1981.

Mozambique

The Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique enshrines the right of journalists to protect their sources. In Article 30 on professional secrecy, the constitution says:

1. Journalists shall enjoy the right to professional secrecy concerning the origins of the information they publish or transmit, and their silence may not lead to any form of punishment.
2. Where the origin of the information is not indicated, it shall be presumed that it was obtained by the author.
3. The right referred to in this article shall also extend to the directors of the mass media, and to journalistic companies when these are aware of the sources of information.

South Africa

Section 205 of the Criminal Procedure Act says: "A magistrate may, upon the request of the attorney-general, require the attendance before him or any other magistrate, for examination by the attorney-general or a public prosecutor ... of any person who is likely to give material or relevant information as to any alleged offence ..."

Testing 205

By Moegsien Williams

Photographer Benny Gool took the shocking pictures of Cape Flats gangster Rashaad Staggie who was shot and burnt to death by People Against Gangsterism And Drugs. When the police demanded his pictures for their investigation, Gool refused. They then served Section 205 warrants on him and his editor Moegsien Williams. After pressure on Western-Cape Attorney-General Frank Kahn and meetings with the President and the Commissioner of Police, the subpoenas were temporarily withdrawn.



Our quest to entrench media freedom in South Africa will mean testing vigorously in our courts Section 205 and all other existing and future legislation which we believe to be contrary to the letter and spirit of Section 16 of our Constitution.

We must operate on the assumption that the authorities, with all their good intentions, really have no interest in removing legislation from the statutes which in their view can be used to do their job more effectively.

Our approach has been to fight the subpoenas like 205 all the way to the Constitutional Court to obtain a definitive legal position on it.

The law in South Africa is not settled yet as far as it relates to a journalist's rights regarding

the confidentiality of his/her sources. As it stands at present there is no privilege for a journalist and a journalist must always testify when called upon to do so.

However, a serious conflict exists. The constitution of the South African Union of Journalists states emphatically that a journalist shall protect confidential sources of information. These principles are also enshrined in the Declaration of Principles of the Conduct of Journalists which is published by the International Federation of Journalists.

Even our pro-Constitution courts have been sensitive to this issue.

Generally the law as it stands, without reference to the Constitution, does not afford journalists any protection. There are serious consequences for journalists who fail to appear in court. Until 1993 extreme penalties were available to make journalists talk.

There is no general privilege for journalists in our pre-Constitution law. Privilege can only be claimed under the "just excuse" banner. However, according to a lawyer I consulted, our courts have never extended any privilege *per se* to journalists, especially not before 1994.

In our post-Constitution period there is no

clarity on the issue. The matter has not yet been fully tested by our courts.

The argument could be made that a journalist, when called upon to testify and reveal sources, would be able to raise fear of reprisal, fear of being ostracised in his profession as just excuses why he should not reveal his sources. However, until 1994 this argument was not accepted until the case of the State v Cornelisen.

The question must be asked why a journalist should not be compelled to give evidence about a murder when a doctor or psychiatrist in the same situation would be compelled to do so. Is the confidentiality of the journalist's source so much more sacred than the public interest in getting a criminal convicted?

In the Cornelisen case the journalist was sentenced to a year in prison for not testifying. This caused outrage and changes were made to Section 205. Cornelisen appealed and the court held that he had a just excuse to refuse to testify. The excuse involved the argument that he and his newspaper needed to maintain a confidential relationship with the public, that there could be a perception that he was a police informer and that the information could have been obtained from hundreds of other people (the audience at a meeting at which Peter Mokaba chanted "kill the boer, kill the farmer").

This case extended the meaning of the words "just excuse" and was a small step forward, although it was pre-Constitution.

There is no test of Section 16 of the Constitution. In Cape Town we believe that our approach has demonstrated our impartiality under hostile conditions, has safeguarded our credibility and, in spite of the death threats and other forms of

intimidation, saved our staff from physical harm. Now we are just waiting for somebody like Frank Kahn to make it possible for us to have our day in court.

Section 16 of Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights: Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes:

- freedom of the press and other media
- freedom to receive and impart information and ideas
- freedom of artistic creativity
- academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.

Sanele Dube engages in a KwaZulu-Natal Newspapers in Education project.

Picture by Nash Narrandes of *The Natal Witness*



Nearly 300 publishers, editors and Newspapers in Education (NIE) specialists from 34 countries world-wide met in Sao Paulo, Brazil, recently to explore "Reading in the electronic age: the challenge for newspapers". The delegates examined successful NIE projects that have captured the interest of young readers, debated whether Internet represents "hope or damnation" for the young, and looked at new editorial strategies and projects for young readers. Randal Allan, Editor of the *Evening Gazette*, UK reports on a few of the dozens of NIE projects from around the world.

Reading in the electronic age

A **Brazilian** newspaper has introduced theatre, cultural and environmental packages for children through sponsorship. The newspaper produces special NIE teaching guides for the schools and the sponsors give appropriate support. Special openings of museum exhibitions and morning and afternoon theatre performances are exclusively linked to the paper's NIE programme.

A **Korean** newspaper runs joint workshops for parents and children at the paper. But courses have become so popular – they are booked for a year ahead – that they have been set a limit.

In **Thailand**, a national newspaper set up a foundation and uses the interest from \$100 million capital to build schools in rural areas of the country. In 28 years the foundation has built, and now services, 101 schools. Many other big businesses support the fund.

In **Japan**, the Department of Education and the Japanese Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association are working together to create a newspaper museum in Yokohama for the Millennium. This will be the ultimate NIE facility and will host national teacher training seminars, research facilities and various other attractions for schools and for the public. It is being called a News Park.

A **Stockholm** newspaper has opened a news centre where groups of children become reporters for a day. Various locations are set up which the "reporters" visit to get information. The whole operation is computer controlled (with a virtual reality editor) and run by a staff of four. The centre has been amazingly popular with schools and is fully booked. There are a number of story scenarios so that the pupils can come back again and again. It is now being copied in other countries. A similar concept in Denmark signed up 16 000 pupils in three weeks. It is called the Mediarium and uses the same software package as the Stockholm centre.

"Elect to connect" was the title given to an **American** project linked to the last American elections. Supplements were produced as invaluable teaching and learning aids, with activities to get the pupils involved in understanding the issues and results.

A newspaper in **Uganda** has launched a writers' club to encourage reading and writing in primary schools – 35 schools are now signed up. One teacher champions the idea at each school. The paper publishes the best of the material and there is payment

in goods for every item published. The scheme has raised the levels of interest and the quality of writing among the pupils.

A **Belgian** newspaper has launched a Cyberbus – a converted bus equipped with 10 PCs, printers and educational software. The bus goes round schools and spends a week at each location. It is fully booked beyond the year 2000! The whole project has been sponsored – including the maintenance of the bus.

"Stay at School" is a new reward scheme being used at some **American** newspapers to encourage children not to play truant. A certificate is presented after six weeks of perfect attendance.

Mon Quotidien is a children's newspaper in **France**. It sells 40 000 copies a day, mainly by subscription. The paper covers the day's news selected and written for youngsters. Each page has a dictionary panel to explain more complex words. The paper boasts "news for kids", not a youth version of adult news.

The *Evening Gazette* in **Great Britain** has opened a Community Classroom in a converted schoolhouse. It features a state-of-the-art classroom with 16 computers, scanning equipment and digital camera. The unit is a self-contained newspaper production system. The classroom is expected to generate a revenue of around 100 000 pounds in 1998: sixty percent of the production costs were covered by sponsorship.

While many newspapers (and schools) are encouraging use of the Internet it is still at an early stage of development. Penetration of computers in schools remains very low – even in America there is only one computer for every 33 pupils.

According to a World Association of Newspapers 1997 survey, at least 35 countries have NIE programmes, three times as many as picked up by the survey in 1995. Jan Vincens Steen who conducted the survey defined the objectives of NIE as: aiding critical reading, helping strengthen democratic attitudes and familiarising the young with newspapers. The full survey is available from Dr Aralynn McMane, WAN director of educational programmes. Email: mcmene@wan.assoc.france.

The second international NIE conference was organised by the World Association of Newspapers and the Brazilian Association of Newspapers, in co-operation with the Inter-American Press Association. This report is reproduced with permission from WAN.

Dial “M” for Media

9 times out of 10
a good journalist can
tell us as much about a
situation as the spies can.

So why not scrap the spies
and subsidise the newspapers?
— George Smiley

By Michel Bajuk

Sources of information which can be obtained legally, ethically and at low cost – that’s the mindblowing theme when European spies, police and other intelligence professionals gather for a conference.

The language-gifted charlatans, frosty robots and smooth diplomats are all here to discuss matters they can’t actually discuss. They are well-dressed, articulate and politically correct. They speak discreetly and thoughtfully. The European championships in verbal judo is being fought between spies, police chiefs, mafia hunters and former members of several governments. I see Fleming’s 007, I hear Guillou’s Hamilton and I sense Le Carré’s Smiley. The jargon, characters and the atmosphere – everything is familiar.

The main question of the conference is: “How can we make better use of open sources of information?” It is an important question, however odd that may be.

“Nine times out of 10 a good journalist can tell us quite as much about a situation as the spies can. Very often they’re sharing the same sources anyway,” the spy legend Smiley declares in *Secret Pilgrim*.

The assertion may be true. A good 90% of all existing information is estimated to be available through open sources. So, that is where the intelligence agencies acquire most of their rough material?

No. Some. Fact is, a lot of rivers are crossed to requisition water. It just so happens that spies traditionally have a certain reluctance to use open sources.

There is a “bias among some in the intelligence and policy communities against open sources, stemming from the erroneous belief that no information that is valuable is likely to be easily accessible or unclassified”, a US Congressional study concludes. The presidential Brown Commission Report finds that “the information obtained from open sources was substantial and on some points more detailed than that provided by the intelligence community”.

“Can it really be this bad?” I ask an influential manager working for a big secret service. My name badge is carefully inspected. I’m a cat among the foxes.

“I can’t remember one single occasion when we thoroughly examined the most easily accessible sources before we started an operation – and I have worked quite a while for the service. It’s all about prestige. Our management is rather... hmmm... conservative.

“We have an excellent organisation, but in the field of information technology our staff is, uhummm... eight years behind. I would guess.”

“You know, as soon as cops get a desk they sit on their butts. There kind of isn’t much information being gathered,” an executive police officer says. I’m stunned.

“The Internet is covered by one person in our organisation,” says a representative of an important international police force. They should be glad to have anyone at all,” I hear a couple of other participants comment.

Isn’t there anybody who is smart enough to use the cheapest and most accessible resources first? Yes, luckily enough. Swedish military intelligence, Italian mafia hunters and the London Metropolitan Police are considered to be role models of European intelligence.

I greet a delegation from one of our new democracies. No titles, no employers – their name badges aren’t particularly informative. I learn that they “recognise” my name. So I ask what “bureau” they work for.

“No name” is the brief answer. After several failures to start a conversation I politely ask if they intend to continue the night out on the town.

Their eyes glow and gaze intensely at me in the following silence. There is a twitch in the corner of the mouth of a well-trained young man in the background. I forget to breathe. “Yes...we have zome... bizniz to take care of.”

I shiver and seek shelter in a group of ex-spies. It occurs to me that one of the charming and distinguished gentlemen is the former head of a big counter-intelligence agency. I count the years back to a rather disturbing “incident” and wash down my memories with a Scotch. It has a peculiar scent of vodka/martini.

The Cold War is over. For most of us, anyway. The world is opening up. The information revolution is celebrating an increasing number of victories without bloodshed.

Obviously it’s not easy to be a spy today.

“The Chinese panda is too cute and cuddly to supplant the Russian bear, besides he has nearly a quarter of the world’s population and can produce gobs of cheap consumer goods at unbelievable prices,” an official snaps ironically.

Someone hints about coming reductions. A former CIA-agent, now “security consultant”, emboldens the audience:

“Don’t worry about the retirement plans. Your services and knowledge are desired in the private sector.”

Oh no, they need not worry. Terrorists, drug cartels and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have successfully been used to sustain intelligence fund-

ing levels so that sound sleeping can be guaranteed. In this “new, more dangerous world” the CIA is the unquestioned world champion in counter-intelligence with an annual budget of \$26.6 billion – 10% of the US defence budget, considerably more than most countries spend

In this new, more dangerous world, the CIA is the unquestioned champion with a budget of \$27 000 000 000

on their entire defence. A reduction of the US, and any other nation’s, secret intelligence budget is not likely.

So, how much of the budget is used for open source activities? “Less than two percent.” That’s a qualified guess from a, uhum, not open source.

The bias in the spread of resources is not only a US problem. Some of the participants seem to be rather frustrated. They talk about competition from mass media and information providers in areas where classic clandestine operations are ungraceful, ineffective and extremely expensive. “Governments trust what they pay for,” the legend Smiley tells his young spy recruits in Le Carré’s new novel. So true.

The conference proceeds. There are speeches about military networks, economic counter spying and electronic security. Intelligence strategies, surveillance tactics and secret agents are discussed. I miss “Q”.

Finally it’s time for the highlight of the conference: a rare open source expert. In his nameless bureau 10 or so specialists work specifically with open sources: statistical databases, information services and public archives. Using computer assisted analysing tools they serve the rest of the bureau’s 200 agents with raw facts. These are then refined with the help of informers, human sources and leaks from all levels of society. The bureau is represented globally with contracted field operators.



Governments trust what they pay for...

There is a bias in the intelligence community against open sources, stemming from the erroneous belief that no information that is valuable is likely to be easily accessible or unclassified. - U.S. Congressional study.

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Dial "M" for Media

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The service has millions of clients demanding correct, cutting-edge, and far-reaching intelligence about the world – daily. Comprehensive and qualified in-depth analysis is presented with graphics, statistics and footage. The intelligence often leads to political implications and sometimes it causes governmental crisis.

"We have managed to do our job using open sources for 200 years. I'm an investigative journalist, and the bureau I talk about is my newspaper. Welcome to the club!"

The reporter continues. He describes how he participated in writing a book that some of the audience remember well. It shocked the intelligence community world-wide when it was published. The book was about a fanatic, rich and well-organised sect with access to weapons of mass destruction. Through their world-wide network they planned to wipe out Earth. The authors describe how advanced their plans were, and how far they had actually come. The authors also describe how little the intelligence community knew about the sect.

It took the international team of journalists four months to complete the "intelligence operation" with a budget of \$150 000. Oh – and the majority of the information was acquired through open sources such as public records.

Agents, police and the military scribble plenty of notes. The reporter has their full attention. Someone asks: what could he do with a million dollars? The journalist answers with a smile: "A lot of damage!"

Code name: Michel Bajuk
Field operator for Rhodes Journalism Review

Rich history

Continued from page 51

press (1830s – 1880s); protest press (1880s to 1930s); early resistance (1930s – 1960) and the later resistance (1970s – 1980s). The turning point, he credibly argues, is in the 1940s, when exclusive "petty bourgeois politics" fade in a crusade for the rights of all (1997:35).

If Switzer gives us analysis, it would probably require a different

book to delve into the colour, texture and flavour – in short, the "story" of the black press. This is not to belittle the value in his book, which sadly has had very little exposure in South Africa. A sneering review by former Rand Daily Mail editor Benjamin Pogrand did appear in the Mail&Guardian in 1997. Pogrand has his particular axe to grind. But it may be that journalists *per se* are not necessarily the best reviewers of books about journalism. They should, per-

haps, stick to what they do best: ie, researching and writing in an accessible way.

Switzer's book calls out for journalists to do their kind of story-telling about the fascinating history of black journalism in South Africa. Any volunteers out there?

South Africa's Alternative Press: Voices of Protest and Resistance 1880 – 1960 edited by Les Switzer. Published by Cambridge University Press.

Targeting the Editors

Continued from page 40

"Silence is for the drug lords what water is for the fish," says a visiting Colombian editor. We are going to raise some hell. Maybe we can make them think twice before they try to shoot one of us next," says Rossana Fuentes, chief of the special assignment staff at Reforma in Mexico City.

Contraband from South America crosses the 3 000 km long border of Mexico on its way to the biggest drug market in the world – the US. With Juárez, Tijuana with its population of two million is the largest metropolis in Mexico for drug traffickers.

If you are a serious, critical, investigating journalist you must sooner or later write about the wide-spread corruption. A pair of interfering traffic police costs 20 pesos. The brother of the ex-president costs more than a \$100 million.

If you start digging you will inevitably embark on a collision course with the narcotics business. Still alive? Then you have nine lives, luck, a bullet-proof vest and military protection. Or else you're not too strict about the truth – out of the will to survive – or in for the money. If you're untouchable you're probably already dead.

"Some say I'm crazy. But I have to go on," says Jesús Blancornelas who is healing from the bullet wounds that almost put an end to his ability to walk for ever.

Crazy or not, he is a source of inspiration for a new generation of Mexican journalists who distance themselves from

bribes, self censorship and blind loyalty to the government.

Twenty heavily-armed elite troop soldiers and special force policemen guard Blancornelas' humble middle class villa. The security police and military secret service have confirmed that one of the drug syndicates still has a hit order on the editor.

Blancornelas sold his house to start Zeta in 1980 with his best friend, the columnist Hector "el Gato" Félix Miranda.

They wrote in-depth stories about drugs and corruption, issues that the government-controlled press didn't dare write about.

Félix was murdered in his car in April 1988. Thousands of people demonstrated against the attack and against the careless way in which the authorities handled the case. Journalists who criticised the investigation through other media were fired or put under pressure.

Zeta's examination of the murder led to the arrest and imprisonment of two killers. They worked on a race track owned by the son of a powerful politician. The police were never able to clarify any motives for the crime.

Even today Zeta is printed on the American side of the border to make sure it comes out every Friday.

Behind the newly-built 10-foot tall brick wall Blancornelas is planning "Proyecto Tijuana". The idea is that Blancornelas will lead about 20 Mexican and foreign reporters on an intense investigation into the drug mob and corruption. Blancornelas slowly massages one of his large bright red scars. Mexican journalists need to create their own life insurance. "If I don't do it someone else has to take over. It is extremely important to speak and write about the truth in this country. There are many newspapers, but very few are truly independent."

His spine is damaged, but not broken.

The future is female or not at all

Conferences ... I am embarrassed that I find it so hard to be inspired by these events. It's the same with workshops, seminars and meetings. Perhaps I'm a closet despot.

So, I always overprepare. Clothes fly out of the suitcase as I stuff my stressed luggage with papers pulled off the Internet, copied from the archives, snipped out of newspapers – a frantic gathering of hard copy to fill the uncomfortable void and assuage the guilt brought on by spending other people's money to go to exotic destinations, eat wonderful foreign food and reiterate the problems of the world.

But this time it was different. Perhaps it was the steamy sensuality of Africa's West Coast or perhaps it was the thrill of going to Dakar for the first time. But once I forgot the obstacle course that is Air Afrique, the African Women's Media Centre's (AWMC) inaugural conference in Senegal filled me with passion.

As I look at my notes, it is hard to mould it all into a tidy lump of useful info. The pages are scribbled with quotes:

"African media cannot go into the 21st century hopping on one leg – women must be partners in the future of Africa," Janet Karim, *The Independent*, Malawi.

"The future is female or not at all," Clara Olsen, *the Botswana Gazette*.

"Women entering male space are constantly hounded in the media," Mary Okurut, *Action for Development*, Uganda.

"There will be equality between men and women when incompetence in a woman is compensated," Mademba Ndiaye, Senegalese journalist.

Somewhere in the middle of all of this somebody said: "If you only have one tooth it's easier to keep it white."

I have gratefully forgotten the context.

But what has remained is the energy with which the women went about their work at this conference:

"Women in the African media: breaking gender barriers."

Sometimes the women flung the agenda out the window and put unexpected issues on the table. On the second day of the conference I was moderator for a discussion titled: Strengthening women's voices in the debate on freedom of the press." With Nigerian, Beninise and Ethiopian panelists we set the scene for the discussion. But at question time it was clear that most women wanted to talk about the problems they had as journalists with dress codes, especially in the Islamic countries.

Some of us objected that this was not the topic under discussion and hinted that perhaps it was too trivial a matter for it to command so much time. A delegate reminded us that people had fought a war in Chad about whether or not Muslim women should wear veils. A Senegalese journalist spoke about the fighting that broke out in her family because she would not wear a headdress on TV.

I felt tired and dispirited for a while as I thought about the long, hard road towards "strengthening women's voices" in Africa when we had to spend so much time and energy fighting the basics. But I cheered up when I reflected on the role the first African Women's Media Centre could play.

The 44 delegates from 24 sub-Saharan countries – representing print, radio and television – made their way through a rigorous agenda that included panel discussions on the employment status of African women in the media; debated harassment in the workplace; tackled the problems surrounding press freedom and highlighted the role of women's media organisations in Africa.

The liveliest session came at the end of the conference when women were asked what they expected from the AWMC. The 1998 agenda of the centre reflects the ideas and needs outlined by the participants for training



By Sylvia Vollenhoven

and skills-building in such areas as computers and specialised reporting; for building and supporting women's media institutions; helping women journalists in crisis and researching and publicising the status of women in the media in Africa.

In addition to this ambitious list of goals the participants agreed that if women were to become a more powerful voice within the African news media they would have to work to formulate strategies around which the AWMC and other organisations could mobilise.

Some of the strategies discussed for changing the image of women in the news media, included:

- Increasing women's visibility
- Encouraging women to tell their stories and letting them know their stories have value.
- Facilitating networking

Women on the web

Womensnet.org.za is South Africa's first Internet training, support and information programme designed by and for women. WomensNet is the online home of an initiative where women can network in more ways than one.

A project of SANGONeT and the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE), WomensNet aims to get more women using the information superhighway in meaningful ways. For the commission, this innovation offers a new way for women to get involved with gender policy-making and monitoring.

The WomensNet launch in Durban on March 5 coincided with a Southern Africa Development Community conference on preventing violence against women. With contributions from organisations across the country, WomensNet has put together an online information centre on violence against women, the only one of its kind in the region. It will be a clearing-house of policy initiatives, resources and statistics, as well as a place for women to lobby for better legislation and safer communities.

It has taken less than a year-and-a-half for

- Rejecting degrading cultural norms that keep women's voices out of the media or that present caricatures of women.

The idea for the AWMC grew out of an exciting process started by the Washington-based International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF) in July 1993 in Harare – with the "African voices: strengthening the media" conference.

The clear message from this conference was that women were unable to reach decision-making levels in the media in Africa due to lack of support systems and training opportunities.

The AWMC will eventually be independent of the IWMF – a non-profit organisation founded in 1990 with the mission to strengthen the role of women in the media based on the belief that no press is truly free unless women share an equal voice.

At the opening of the Women's Media Centre in Dakar, IWMF Board Member Carole Simpson – senior correspondent and anchor for America's ABC News – made a financial donation that established an annual leadership training seminar for African women journalists.

The Carole Simpson Leadership Institute for African Women in the Media was created out of an awareness that the media would not change until there was a critical mass of women in leadership positions. The Leadership Institute programmes will help them understand the subtle and overt techniques for becoming a leader, the expectations of leadership, and the rewards of using their positions to help others. Starting this year, the institute will hold annual seminars in different regions of Africa.

There is a saying in seTswana: "The woman holds the knife on the sharp side."

Thank heavens this was one of the conferences where the delegates displayed a rare dexterity in coming to grips with some tough issues.

Sylvia Vollenhoven is a member of the advisory committee for the African Women's Media Centre and a specialist producer for SABC TV current affairs. For more information on the AWMC programmes contact her on: (011) 7146991, fax (011) 7146420, email vollenhovense@sabc.co.za

WomensNet to move from idea to reality. With two full-time staff, training, outreach and information development will move into high gear.

SANGONeT, which for the past 10 years has been supplying electronic communication services to the country's NGO community, is providing technical assistance.

Critical to the WomensNet mission is increasing the number of women with web access. And while not many women have access to computers and even fewer to the web, this could change in the future. WomensNet plans to work with the Universal Service Agency, the statutory body mandated to provide telecommunications access to all South Africans, to make sure that women are centrally involved in the planning of telecentres – multi-purpose communication centres being built in areas with limited telecommunications. But WomensNet is not only meant for women in front of keyboards. The project managers are quite happy for the material available on WomensNet to be circulated on community radio and via newsletters, and will work with those that are connected to reach out to those that aren't.

For further information contact Maureen James at (011) 838-6943 or 083-465-3224.

- <http://womensnet.org.za>

Shifting the reference point to SA

By Patrick Burnett

When Francois Nel returned from the US in 1992 and got a job teaching media studies in Cape Town, he was shocked to find that there was no material to teach with. In desperation he phoned Gavin Stewart (then head of the Rhodes University journalism department) and asked: "What the heck do you guys do?"

Nel thought it was "crazy" that no local material had been developed and immediately began compiling material for his own classes.

By 1994, his compilations had evolved into *Writing for the Media*, and this year a second edition of the book was released entitled *Writing for the Media in South Africa*.

Based on five years' reporting experience with the *Charlotte Observer* in South Carolina, the second edition follows on the success of the first, containing chapters dealing with the nature of news, the news writing process, story ideas and sources, interviewing and note taking, newspaper style, editing, feature articles, public relations and ethics.

It also provides a link to everyday journalism – bridging the gap between the practical and academic – through the contributions of journalists such as Denis Beckett, Chene Blignaut, Ryland Fisher, Les Aupiais and Charles Mogale.

Kerry Swift, founding editor of the *Rhodes Journalism Review* and contributing editor to *Writing for the Media*, calls it a "brave book", saying, "the need for journalism training in South Africa has never been greater".

Nel is more modest: "I think I was probably

foolish attempting to write something for writers and would-be writers about how to write.

"I was simply trying to contribute to a documentation of the basic body of knowledge necessary for our profession, which is not only about how-to information, but also about building a frame of reference."

As a lecturer in media studies at Cape Technikon, Nel believes the greatest challenge facing journalism educators in South Africa is to break out of the "them" and "us" mentality, and move closer to the industry.

Part of this involves "taking the next step" and becoming industry leaders rather than industry followers, while at the same time catering to the needs of the industry, he says.

"Journalism has been viewed as a trade for too long, much like your corner tailor who makes suits the way his father made suits, in the way he learned from his grandfather.

"In professions such as medicine the local GP turns to the academics, who gather data and analyse it to find out how to do things better. It's a symbiotic relationship, built on mutual respect and an understanding of the roles played by everyone."

Nel also believes newspapers have a strong social duty to perform.

In *Writing for the Media* he says: "The mission of newspapers should not just be to deliver information but rather to bring people together. For journalists this means stories need to help people relate to their neighbours, help foster a sense of community, help bring the political process within the reach of the individual and the control of the electorate."

South African journalists have yet to fulfil this function, says Nel.

"I think we're trying. But good intentions alone are not always enough. We still have a long way to go towards articulating a news paradigm that is appropriate for our society."

Part of the problem is that journalists still see themselves as information providers in a time when information is plentiful. And widely available things are cheap, says Nel.

Francois Nel obtained a BA at North Park College in Chicago, and an MA from Winthrop University in South Carolina. He worked as a public relations writer and editor as well as in television and radio production before becoming a reporter on the *Charlotte Observer*. His recent awards include the Specialist Press Association's 1995 Asom/Prisa Award for Consumer Journalism and a fellowship to the Poynter

Institute for Media Studies. In 1996 he was named the Public Relations Institute of South Africa's Educator of the Year. He is a senior lecturer in media studies at Cape Technikon, and head of the Department of Tourism Management.



"Only things that are rare, such as diamonds and caviar, are considered to be of high value. We need to tie what we do to what is rare in our society – knowledge."

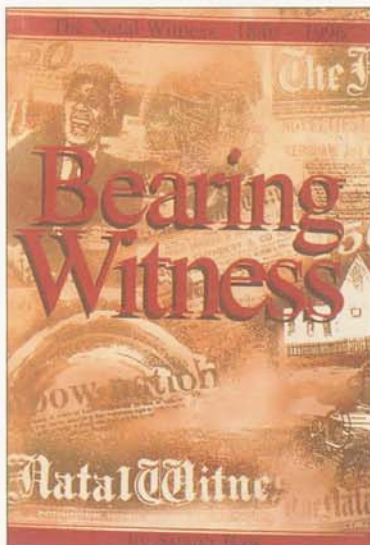
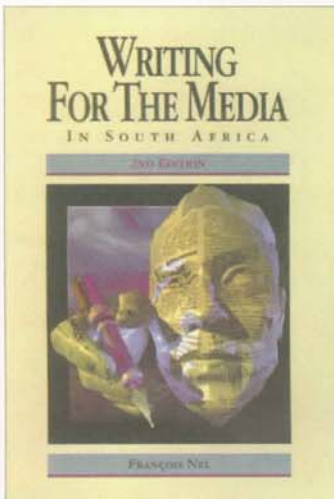
To do this journalists need to go beyond "he said she said reporting" and assist the reader in understanding what things mean, he says.

"It's a helluva responsibility. And we can't do that until we have a clue ourselves."

Another problem is what Nel refers to as the "complex" facing South African journalism, a result of the constant reference to overseas standards.

"The most obvious effect is that we end up imitating rather than creating, and transposing values into a South African context which are not necessarily appropriate," says Nel.

As a result, you don't pick up a newspaper and recognise a truly South African style. We



150 years of the Witness – warts and all

The writing of company histories is beset with pitfalls. The most common temptation, perhaps, is to keep the skeletons locked away in the cupboard. The result is often an essay in hagiography, lacking credibility, attracting few readers, and doing the company no good at all.

The Craib family of Pietermaritzburg, proprietors of South Africa's last newspaper to stand outside the big corporations, has done well not to fall into this trap. In the newspaper business, credibility is all. The Craibs have acted in the best traditions in commissioning Simon Haw and giving him a free hand to tell the story.

The result is a frank and always readable account. As three of the first five editors of the *Witness* served prison sentences – one was given to bar room brawling – there is no shortage of skeletons. The paper's internal battles and personality clashes, inevitable in a history of 150 years, have not been glossed over.

The dilemma in writing a newspaper history is whether to make it a social history of the times, as reflected in the newspaper, as much as an account of the newspaper's own fortunes. Inevitably it is both and a political history as well. A good newspaper – and the *Witness* is one of South Africa's best – is so deeply involved in the community that its story would make little sense otherwise.

Simon Haw, an educationist, succeeds in writing a reasonably coherent narrative, albeit in a style at times rather more chatty and verbose than a newspaper sub-editor would approve.

The narrative is held together by the course of South African history from the pioneer days in Natal, the Zulu War, the Boer wars, the rebellion, the First and Second World wars, the surge of black nationalist resistance and finally liberation. Haw builds his story around the key people – the editors and proprietors – and the relations between them.

David Buchanan, founder and first editor in 1846, was an upright and straightfor-

Rich history

have not sourced our rich local traditions, he says.

For Nel, getting newsrooms to be demographically representative is a start towards fixing the problem.

"The key is to get people to tap into the zeitgeist of our society and that goes beyond colour, gender, age and sexual orientation," he says.

While training and affirmative action programmes can assist in this task, Nel argues that people on these programmes also have to be treated well so that they stay.

"Time will tell if media managers are capable of this – or if they're investing lots

'Journalism has been viewed as a trade for too long, much like your corner tailor who makes suits.'

of energy and money in the public relations practitioners of the future," he says.

Still, training programmes are a sign of good things because it shows that "the folk at Independent, Times Media Limited and elsewhere are keen to make things better and know that pretty design is not enough."

But industry training programmes are also an indictment of academic institutions, warns Nel.

"When media houses have to move away from their core business maybe we're not training the right people, or offering training in the right format."

"Ideally," he says, "we who are in the business of training should be market driven and so responsive to industry that when they itch, we scratch."

Nel believes his book is a small step towards the development of South African journalism. "There are a lot of people who should add to it. I hope it is a small contribution," he says.

Writing for the Media in South Africa by Francois Nel, R125.95. Published by International Thomson.

It is almost 115 years since John Tengo Jabavu founded the paper *Imvo Zabantsundu*, drawing on the financial backing of white Eastern Cape English-speaking settlers. His publication subsequently faced stiff competition from *Izwi Labantu*, set up in 1897 and bankrolled by Cecil Rhodes and supporters. With these opposing white influences, it was not surprising that when the South African war broke out, *Imvo* urged the British to reconcile with the Afrikaners, while *Izwi* slammed the Afrikaner insurgents.

If white interests were critical in both the dawn and the direction of these two papers, they also determined their demise as well. *Izwi* editor Alan Kirkland Soga developed an anti-capitalist tone to the paper, as a result of which his backers fell away and the paper collapsed in 1909. Jabavu, and later his son, ran *Imvo* as a personal political mouthpiece with an ever-falling circulation (just 2000 in the 1920s). The decline culminated eventually in a full-scale sellout to Afrikaner capital in the form of *Perskor*.

In Les Switzer's book, one can also read how talented black journalist Sol Plaatje helped build up the *Koranta ea Becoana*, founded in 1901 by the white editor of the *Mafeking Mail* by, for example, setting up news

exchanges with 61 publications across the world. But when the boss went bankrupt in 1907, the paper staggered on for two years before dying.

The book also tells of the *Bantu World* (predecessor of the *Sowetan*). Founded by a white man, Bertram Paver, in 1932, more than half the initial shareholders were from the African community. But after 14 months the paper was bought up by the *Argus* company. A partial

exception to the pattern of white finance was Natal newspaper *Inkundla ya Bantu*, founded in 1938 by African entrepreneurs Paul Knox Bonga and Phillip Goduka Katamzi, owners of the *Verulam* press. The paper had Govan Mbeki as its effective editor in the early years, and was run by the (then) outspoken Jordan K Ngubane between 1944 to 1951. It succumbed to market pressures after publishing for 13 years.

Today no South African journalist can be oblivious to the issues of black ownership, black audiences, black editors and black reporters. But very few of us know that there exists a rich history to these questions, selections of which are given by Switzer and other contributors to his book.

However, for the reader who wants to sample the language and style of journalism entailed, or chew on meaty details on circulation, readership and finances, Switzer's book is somewhat sparse. One reason is that his concern has been analysis, rather than narrative description.

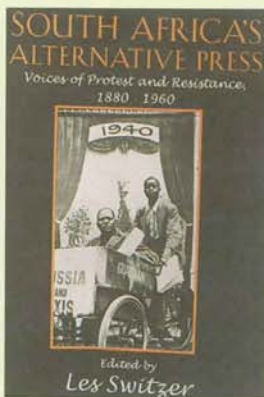
Certainly, it is of interest (and not only historical interest) that the content of the black press reflected not only the interests of white financiers, but also – and increasingly – those of the urban black middle class. There was the corresponding absence of rural or working class concerns. This was evident not only in *Imvo* and the others, but also in the *Industrial and Commercial Workers Union* paper, the *Workers Herald*, and publications like *Drum* and *Ghandi's Indian Opinion*.

It is of further analytical interest that – as Switzer's content analyses reveal – the gradual construction of a multi-class African nationalism has been reflected in the black press over the past century. The papers became less exclusively middle-class in character as African, Indian and Coloured middle classes were compelled to reach downwards and sideways in search of allies. Switzer himself periodizes the "alternative press" as the mission

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By Guy Berger



ward man, according to his contemporary Saul Solomon. As Haw notes, the *Witness* under Buchanan could be described as a liberal paper, by colonial standards at least. It says something about those standards that Buchanan also advocated shooting "bushmen", if all else failed, and condemned the colony's recruitment of indentured labourers from India "in terms strident with racial animus". As a paternalist Natalian of his time, Buchanan had a regard for the Zulus, though, and he opposed those who would keep them hewers of wood and drawers of water.

P Davis and Co took over the *Witness* in 1862 and thus began a dynasty that endured into the 20th century. Peter Davis junior was at the head of the company for 41 years. A brusque man of sarcastic manner and outwardly rather cynical, Davis' contribution to the *Witness* was immense.

From an editor's point of view, he was a model proprietor. Horace Rose, editor from 1904 to 1925, said that Davis recognised that continuity of policy was the basis of all journalistic influence. Having selected a man as editor and discussed with him the broad policy of the paper, he would allow that man a free hand until his confidence in him waned.

Most of the editors – the outspoken liberal Desmond Young (1926-1928), Barnett Potter (1930-1935), GH Calpin (1936-45) and Mark Prestwich (1953-1956) among them – have been distinctive and powerful personalities.

Calpin fell out with James Craib and was summarily dismissed in 1943. Craib, as managing director, had become the power on the *Witness* board. The editor and MD did not get on, an untenable situation in any newspaper office. Calpin's successor, Robert Johnston found Craib's style intolerable, and concluded that he was constitutionally incapable of getting on with any editor. He soon left.

In 1946 the *Witness* turned 100 and in the following years the Craib family became the second *Witness* dynasty, presiding at the newspaper's 150th anniversary in 1996.

Perhaps the most significant editorial voice in the post-war years was the academic Mark Prestwich who contributed beautifully-crafted leaders throughout, and in 1953 he was persuaded to take the editorial chair for the next three years. The *Witness* became an eloquent and outspoken voice denouncing injustice and defending human rights. Prestwich continued writing leaders until 1961.

Desmond Craib came increasingly to the fore as his father's health failed. He expanded the company's operations and in 1974 appointed Richard Steyn, a barrister with no newspaper experience, as editor of the *Witness*. It was an inspired choice. Steyn's editorship steered the paper through years of economic stringency and unremitting political tension. As Haw notes, in conditions of great difficulty the *Witness* not only survived, but prospered. Steyn's short-lived successor, David Willers, did not do as well.

Steyn's record at the *Witness* attracted the interest of the *Argus* company who recruited him as editor of their flagship, *The Star*. When the international Independent chain bought *Argus*, Steyn soon resigned. This was hardly surprising, considering the difference in corporate culture between a multi-national giant and a family-owned independent.

In a newspaper era of increasing domination by big corporations, the story of the *Witness* is an important one. Simon Haw has told it well.

Bearing Witness by Simon Haw is published by *The Natal Witness*.



By Gerald Shaw

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The service has millions of clients demanding correct, cutting-edge, and far-reaching intelligence about the world – daily. Comprehensive and qualified in-depth analysis is presented with graphics, statistics and footage. The intelligence often leads to political implications and sometimes it causes governmental crisis.

"We have managed to do our job using open sources for 200 years. I'm an investigative journalist, and the bureau I talk about is my newspaper. Welcome to the club!"

The reporter continues. He describes how he participated in writing a book that some of the audience remember well. It shocked the intelligence community world-wide when it was published. The book was about a fanatic, rich and well-organised sect with access to weapons of mass destruction. Through their world-wide network they planned to wipe out Earth. The authors describe how advanced their plans were, and how far they had actually come. The authors also describe how little the intelligence community knew about the sect.

It took the international team of journalists four months to complete the "intelligence operation" with a budget of \$150 000. Oh – and the majority of the information was acquired through open sources such as public records.

Agents, police and the military scribble plenty of notes. The reporter has their full attention. Someone asks: what could he do with a million dollars? The journalist answers with a smile: "A lot of damage!"

Code name: Michel Bajuk
Field operator for Rhodes Journalism Review

Rich history

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press (1830s – 1880s); protest press (1880s to 1930s); early resistance (1930s – 1960) and the later resistance (1970s – 1980s). The turning point, he credibly argues, is in the 1940s, when exclusive "petty bourgeois politics" fade in a crusade for the rights of all (1997:35).

If Switzer gives us analysis, it would probably require a different

book to delve into the colour, texture and flavour – in short, the "story" of the black press. This is not to belittle the value in his book, which sadly has had very little exposure in South Africa. A sneering review by former Rand Daily Mail editor Benjamin Pogrand did appear in the Mail&Guardian in 1997. Pogrand has his particular axe to grind. But it may be that journalists *per se* are not necessarily the best reviewers of books about journalism. They should, per-

haps, stick to what they do best: ie, researching and writing in an accessible way.

Switzer's book calls out for journalists to do their kind of story-telling about the fascinating history of black journalism in South Africa. Any volunteers out there?

South Africa's Alternative Press: Voices of Protest and Resistance 1880 – 1960 edited by Les Switzer. Published by Cambridge University Press.

Targeting the Editors

Continued from page 40

"Silence is for the drug lords what water is for the fish," says a visiting Colombian editor. We are going to raise some hell. Maybe we can make them think twice before they try to shoot one of us next," says Rossana Fuentes, chief of the special assignment staff at Reforma in Mexico City.

Contraband from South America crosses the 3 000 km long border of Mexico on its way to the biggest drug market in the world – the US. With Juárez, Tijuana with its population of two million is the largest metropolis in Mexico for drug traffickers.

If you are a serious, critical, investigating journalist you must sooner or later write about the wide-spread corruption. A pair of interfering traffic police costs 20 pesos. The brother of the ex-president costs more than a \$100 million.

If you start digging you will inevitably embark on a collision course with the narcotics business. Still alive? Then you have nine lives, luck, a bullet-proof vest and military protection. Or else you're not too strict about the truth – out of the will to survive – or in for the money. If you're untouchable you're probably already dead.

"Some say I'm crazy. But I have to go on," says Jesús Blancornelas who is healing from the bullet wounds that almost put an end to his ability to walk for ever.

Crazy or not, he is a source of inspiration for a new generation of Mexican journalists who distance themselves from

bribes, self censorship and blind loyalty to the government.

Twenty heavily-armed elite troop soldiers and special force policemen guard Blancornelas' humble middle class villa. The security police and military secret service have confirmed that one of the drug syndicates still has a hit order on the editor.

Blancornelas sold his house to start Zeta in 1980 with his best friend, the columnist Hector "el Gato" Félix Miranda. They wrote in-depth stories about drugs and corruption, issues that the government-controlled press didn't dare write about.

Félix was murdered in his car in April 1988. Thousands of people demonstrated against the attack and against the careless way in which the authorities handled the case. Journalists who criticised the investigation through other media were fired or put under pressure.

Zeta's examination of the murder led to the arrest and imprisonment of two killers. They worked on a race track owned by the son of a powerful politician. The police were never able to clarify any motives for the crime.

Even today Zeta is printed on the American side of the border to make sure it comes out every Friday.

Behind the newly-built 10-foot tall brick wall Blancornelas is planning "Proyecto Tijuana". The idea is that Blancornelas will lead about 20 Mexican and foreign reporters on an intense investigation into the drug mob and corruption. Blancornelas slowly massages one of his large bright red scars. Mexican journalists need to create their own life insurance. "If I don't do it someone else has to take over. It is extremely important to speak and write about the truth in this country. There are many newspapers, but very few are truly independent."

His spine is damaged, but not broken.

Feeding the infostarved

The State's responsibility

It was part of the 1995 conference of communicators that gave birth to Comtask and subsequently the new Government Communication and Information Service. It was a very useful forum that saw an exchange of views on a wide variety of issues – media ownership and the need for diversity; the role of the media in a changing South Africa and relationships between government and the media.

What government was told repeatedly by various speakers, prominent among them Ken Owen, former Sunday Times editor, and Patrick Bulger of the Star who stood in for Kaizer Nyatumba, was essentially that government must leave the business of communication to the media. The argument was that people are likely to regard information from the media as more credible than that from government sources.

Whether the media want to play the role of a conduit, carrying the flow of information between government and the people, is a moot point. But even if the media were keen to play such a role, chances are that they would simply find it extremely difficult to do so.

There is merit in the argument that if government finances institutions such as the SABC, the danger of some control is real. What surprises me, though, is the inconsistency with which opponents of state ownership pursue this logic, as they contend that current media owners do not necessarily influence editorial content and the policies of the news media they own.

I have been impressed by senior journalists in the recent past, who are making contributions to the debate by admitting to the ideological divide prevalent in the Fourth Estate. We have pretended long enough that journalists in our country are neutral and impartial observers of our socio-political developments, that they operate in a political vacuum, and their outlook on life is not influenced by historical and social factors.

The role of the media in facilitating meaningful dialogue between the government and the people is complicated by other interests, and the ideological leanings of either the owners or journalists themselves. Sowetan editor Mike Siluma says: "You can't have journalists operating outside the economics of journalism. You can't expect someone to bankroll a publication and then walk away without worrying about what will be published. That is not the real world."

SABC programming manager Mandla Langa puts it more crudely: "The truth itself is packaged, sanitised and made palatable if only to sell newspapers and maintain the continued interest of advertisers."

The other contributing factor is simply that of capacity and infrastructure. The reality is that no single major commercial newspaper reaches more than 1,5 million

South African readers, while SABC television reaches only 14 million of the estimated 40 million South Africans. The collective reach of both newspapers and television is probably not even half the total population of our country and is concentrated in the urban and peri-urban areas.

Even when the information reaches its audience, one cannot guarantee that it will be quality, factual, balanced and reliable.

The other factor to be considered is that during apartheid the relationship between the media was either adversarial or collusive. To some journalists the battle continues – there is no paradigm shift. To be an award winning journalist you have to be hostile to government and should not be seen to be singing praises to it even in deserving circumstances.

Independent parliamentary editor Zubeida Jaffer says to her own peers: "We are failing in our duty to record one of the greatest experiments in recent world history. While foreigners travel here to marvel at our achievements, we South Africans take it all for granted."

The key question for me is: can the media meet the challenge of the 1990s and become what Gabu Tugwana calls "journalists to strengthen democracy ... constructive foot soldiers who will be good custodians of transformation"?

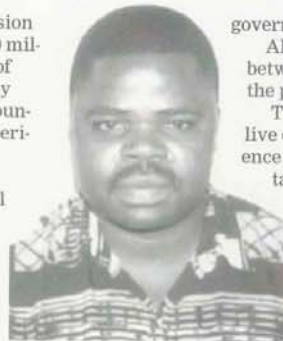
Given all the above, can journalists expect to be taken seriously when they say to governments "leave the job of communication to us experts"? Do we consider these practical questions? Or are we only motivated by a desire to retain a monopoly in deciding who gets information, where and when they get it, and what kind of information they get?

Most provinces have official external publications. Rural provinces, in particular, can tell of the stampede for these newsletters at distribution points. People starved for information risk limb

to lay hands on the newsletters.

It is very easy for John Citizen sitting in an office in Sandton, receiving all the newspapers at eight in the morning, having access to a Sapa modem and the Internet, DSTV, and many other sophisticated sources of information, to say news from government sources is not credible and must be regarded as cheap propaganda.

Besides the advertising imperatives driving the newspaper business, there is a fundamental difference between what newspapers want to publish, and what



By Jack Mokobi

government needs to communicate.

Also closely linked to this is the difference between definitions of what information is in the public interest.

The recent row sparked by the SABC TV live coverage of the ANC Mafikeng conference brings this out. We ask: if the decisions taken at this conference were to determine

the policies and programme of government, is it not in the public interest to know what goes on in that conference? It seems we are far from reaching a national consensus on what constitutes a public mandate.

Reporters who dare to capture the transformation of society are labelled supporters of the new ANC establishment, as if you need to be a supporter

of the ANC to see, for instance, that water has been supplied to more than a million people who were previously denied it.

The basic constitutional requirement that all South Africans have a right to information that empowers them to make a meaningful contribution to the transformation of our society, puts specific obligations on the government to ensure as best as it can, that all people are able to communicate with the government they put in power.

The point I am making is that government must be allowed to set up machinery and enhance its capacity to disseminate information to all the people of South Africa. In some instances this will be done with and through the media and in some cases directly by the government to the people. Where the truth is not being told, the media will still have the right to point this out and take the government to task.

The new Government Communication and Information Service (GCIS) has a major task ahead – to foster dynamic interaction between the people and the government. In an ideal democratic social order, people's experiences, views, ideas and feelings must inform government policies and programmes. This cannot happen without information dissemination.

The truth is the South African media not only lack the will, but also the capacity to discharge this function. Where possible the government should do it on its own and the media should assist and not encourage South Africans to disbelieve everything the government says.

Fundamental media transformation will be required before we can see the emergence of an appreciation of the new South African story in our newsrooms.

As long as these disparities exist, the government must do everything possible – in the words of the new CEO of the GCIS, Joel Netshitenzhe – "to ensure that those who do not have the resources to access the media, will be afforded the opportunity to do so".

Jack Mokobi is a former freelance political journalist and was until recently a communications researcher in the Office of the President. He is now Communications Director in the Office of the Premier of the Northern Province, but writes here in his personal capacity.