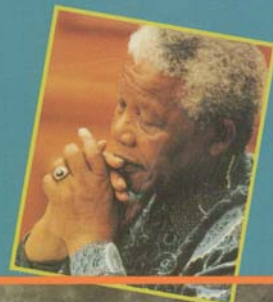


Rhodes **13** Journalism

Review



MANDELA
makes a merry
meal of the media

READY

Radio rolls out
a media charter
for politicians
by **JUDY SANDISON**

SET

Re-wind for
Independent's
fast track scheme,
by **MATHATHA TSEDU**

GO!

Brave new days
for Benny Gool
and his camera,
by **MONTY COOPER**

SANEF: the super-group has lift-off!

"Your paper reeks of youth" – Shaun Johnson redesigns the *Cape Argus*

Rhodes Journalism Review

Founding Editor Kerry Swift

Editor Guy Berger

Design and Production Jane Burnett

Design of pp20 – 23 Dave Chambers

Illustrations William Steyn

Cover photos Benny Gool. Mandela pic
by Nicolene Olckers

Administration Chloë O'Keefe

Management Board Professor Guy Berger
Professor John Grogan
Professor Ian Macdonald

Thanks to:

Ton Vosloo and Noel Coburn for sponsoring the Commonwealth Press Union conference papers, and Joe Alfors for spotting the errors.

**Rhodes Journalism Review
is published by the
Department of Journalism
and Media Studies at
Rhodes University.**

All correspondence to:

The Editor
Rhodes Journalism Review
Department of Journalism and Media Studies
Rhodes University
Box 94
Grahamstown, 6140
South Africa

Telephone:

0461 - 318336

Fax:

0461 - 28447

email:

anthea@thoth.ru.ac.za

©Department of Journalism and Media Studies,
Rhodes University.

Requests for permission to republish articles
must be directed to the editor.

13

Inside

- 2 **THIS ISSUE** ... and announcing a major conference: New Media 2000.
- 3 Guest Editorial: You can't talk about the role of the press as if journalists were independent of society, says *Sowetan* editor **MIKE SILUMA**.
- 5 SANEF signifies the South African National Editors Forum and much else besides, writes **MIKE TISSONG**.
- 7 Nelson Mandela makes a merry meal of the media, and keeps Nobel laureates waiting, at a meeting with SANEF's editors' council.
- 13 Radio has pioneered a media code of conduct for the politicians, SABC's **JUDY SANDISON** reports.
- 15 **ANNELIZE VISSER** surveys the debris left by the boom in magazines.
- 16 **ROBIN SEWLAL** marvels at the magnitude of changes in radio ... but also mourns the loss of Capital.
- 18 Thabo Mbeki should follow Comtask's advice and squeeze the trigger on the SACS information mongrel, urges **CHRIS VICK**.
- 19 Stand by for community television, calls **KAREN THORNE**.
- 20 "Your paper reeks of youth", a reader complained after **SHAUN JOHNSON** re-designed the *Cape Argus*.

FOCUS: COMMONWEALTH PRESS UNION CONFERENCE PAPERS:

- 26 Debate: editor or publisher - survival of the fittest?
TON VOSLOO and **DUGAL NISBET-SMITH**.
- 28 Newspapers, the 'Net and the online future — **GUY BERGER**.
- 31 Locating the values in newsvalues — **NEVILLE STACK**.
- 32 A case for constructive journalism — **GABU TUGWANA**.

FOCUS: TRAINING:

- 33 Participants objected when Independent dubbed its leadership programme "the fast-track", saying the rationale should be redress, rather than 'catch-up'. **MATHATHA TSEDU** dissects the programme.
- 34 Judging by the journalism students, the academies must wake up to the changes in print, argues **GRAEME ADDISON**.
- 37 There's a danger in standardising journalism education under the National Qualifications Framework, warns **JANE DUNCAN**.
- 38 Laughing at the beloved country is the work of cartoonists **NANDA SOOBEN, JUNIOR VALENTIM** and **NAPIER DUNN**.
- 41 Worldwide trends in film and publication censorship ... and South Africa's setup. **BRONWYN KEENE-YOUNG** reports.
- 43 Change by stealth, not with a bang, is **GAVIN STEWART**'s recipe for success on the *Daily Dispatch*.
- 48 **THUMBSUCK**: ... pick your dream team.

This Issue



ALL KINDS OF VOLCANOES are spewing forth in the new mediascape. Repression, suppression, confession — and controversy — are the heaving geology of a focus on the media by the Truth Commission.

Novel (and novice) owners have cracked the crust of commercial media, moving not only to transform their holdings, but also to expand them. Magazine mania burst out — and bust — in '96, but will erupt again in '97.

The media magma this year will certainly include commercial and community television. The coming commercial radio outlets will need to avoid the fate of Capital Radio, a beacon now gone bang. Bop will be absorbed by the SABC, while Auckland Park itself will struggle to hold its politically independent ground and resist buckling under the financial heat.

Meanwhile, unpredictable vigilante pressures on journalists still bubble and seethe. Threats of Section 205 have been pushed back below the surface — but there's no doubting that they could re-emerge.

Key streams in this fast flowing lava are assessed in contributions by Benny Gool, Monty Cooper, Robin Sewlal, Annelize Visser and Karen Thorne. They measure the velocity

and direction, the depth and dangers involved.

Cutting through the dust and gas of '96, Natal Newspaper cartoonists give a visual chronicle of current times, while Bronwyn Keene-Young gives us a position within the changing face of global censorship.

Less definitive than these two landmarks, but looming most large in this unfamiliar terrain, are the politics of journalism in '97.

Nelson Mandela tried to put the press firmly in its place when he met with SANEF soon after its launch: the transcript published here makes fascinating reading. Mike Tissong submits to the prominent place that SANEF hopes to occupy in the molten months to come. The place of the SA Communications Services (SACS) should be ten feet under, says Chris Vick, who foresees better political ventilation coming out of the Comtask report.

Looking back on at the location of journalism last year, Judy Sandison records how her radio team successfully roped Kwazulu-Natal politicians into a charter for election coverage. Mike Siluma highlights the momentum in arguing that all stakeholders should help draw up a national editorial charter. Editors, especially, should lead the flow, he says.

The role of editors, especially in relation to

fundamental forces pushing for expanded revenue streams, is discussed by former editors Ton Vosloo, Dougall Nisbet-Smith and Neville Stack. Ex-editor, Guy Berger, offers advice to practising editors who fear that cyberspace is even more dangerous than terra infirma.

The challenge entailed in redesigning a petrified paper in a fluid context is the contribution by *Cape Argus* editor, Shaun Johnson. *Daily Dispatch* editor, Gavin Stewart, tells how the change-by-stealth model has sustained increased sales in the rural Eastern Cape.

The responsibilities of today's editors, and of the generation coming up behind them, entail seismic action on that bedrock of the industry: training.

Mathatha Tsedu tackles the need for more mid-career training; Gabu Tugwana comes down on its centrality to transformation. Graeme Addison finds a lot lacking in tertiary training, while Jane Duncan warns that a narrowing track for journalism could come from the National Qualifications Framework.

All told, this is a mediascape with a very volatile surface. But it's also one with a wide and inviting horizon — something that our contributors certainly celebrate. Join them in scrutinising the shape of the media matrix.

New Media 2000 10-12 September 1997

Deliver a paper, give a demo, or imbibe the insight at New Media 2000: a conference about the Internet and the Media in Africa.

New Media 2000 is hosted by the New Media Laboratory, Department of Journalism & Media Studies at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa.

The event will examine the challenges and possibilities that information technology brings to news organisations and the practice of journalism in Africa.

New Media 2000 brings together global journalists to examine the significance of the Internet for publishing and journalism research in Africa. This unprecedented gathering is expected to be a watershed in helping the continent and its media take a short-cut to the latest developments in the Information Age.

Among the organisations that have already indicated an interest are: ● Times Media Ltd, South Africa; ● Poynter Institute of Media Studies, USA; ● Freedom Forum, USA; ● University of Queensland Journalism department, Australia; ● Unit for Digital Media, Stockholm University, Sweden.

New Media 2000 conference registration fee: R300

The conference will be the culmination of a week of workshoping at the following prior events (details available on request):

- Curriculae for teaching online skills: (conference of South African journalism teachers, 7 - 8 September)
- Pj '97: (2nd annual conference of South African photo-journalists and photojournalism instructors; includes major digital component, 7 - 8 September)
- New Media Workshop: (Hands-on training in digital imaging incl Photoshop, Advanced HTML, Javascript, Search engine usage, Computer-Aided Reporting and Research, 9 Sept.)
- Teletraffic - Rhodes University Computer Science conference (8 - 10 September)

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

TUESDAY 9 Registration

WEDNESDAY 10

Session 1:

- A. African media, telecommunications and the information highway.
- B. Online media: the international experience.

Session 2:

- A. Getting wired, and getting content in Africa: who pays, who benefits?
- B. Web design for publishing in Africa.

Session 3: Panel discussion:

- A. Why go online?: Media publishers (print, broadcast and e-zine) speak.
- B. Web design for mass communication: Web designers speak.

Session 4: Demonstrations, surfing.

Session 5: Opening speech: Minister of Posts, Broadcasting and Telecommunications, Mr Jay Naidoo (to be confirmed)

THURSDAY 11

Session 1:

- A. Broadcast/narrowcast and web publishing.
- B. Search engines & intelligent agents.

Session 2:

- A. Organising online newsrooms.
- B. Ethical, legal and copyright issues in online journalism.

Session 3: Panel discussion:

- A. Using online resources for research: journalists speak.
- B. Writing about the Internet: web columnists speak.

Session 4: Demonstrations, surfing.

Session 5: Keynote speech: Neil Jacobsohn, Electronic Media Manager, TML. (to be confirmed)

FRIDAY 12

Session 1:

- A. Contextual journalism: writing and editing for online readers.
- B. Multi-media online.

Session 2:

- A. Calculators and interactivity: the shape of journalism to come.
- B. Webcasting: what do we know about the audiences?

Session 3: Panel discussion:

- A. Teaching online skills to journalists: mentors/trainers speak.
- B. Interactivity & moderating news/discussion groups: webmasters speak.

Session 4: Demonstrations, surfing.

Session 5: Concluding speech: Adam Clayton Powell III, vice president: technology programs, Freedom Forum. (to be confirmed)

CONFERENCE CONTACTS:

- email: media2000@nml.ru.ac.za or contact:
- Prof Guy Berger, head of department (Berger@thoth.ru.ac.za)
- Roland Stanbridge, director of the New Media Lab. (Roland@thoth.ru.ac.za)



Guest Editorial

Mike Siluma, editor of the *Sowetan*, says editorial independence depends on interdependence.

Journalists need an editorial charter, but more importantly, they need other groups to agree on it.

AN EDITORIAL CHARTER will become a piece of paper unless there is a broad consensus between media and civil society, press and politicians, proprietors and government, editors and journalists.

People sometimes talk about the role of the press as if journalists were independent of proprietors. It's a misconception because 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 what will be published. That's not the real world.

All media needs capital, and this has to come from someone. It's the taxpayer via the government for the SABC — or it's private money.

So, the role of the press can't be defined by journalists alone. And besides the part to be played by the owners, there are many other people who feel that media must play a role that is accountable.

The most immediate stakeholders are the owners and shareholders. There is a direct interest here, because they're putting in the money, and expecting to get a return. But government and civil society also want to be in on defining what the role of the media should be.

Until, and unless, we define what this role is, and define it jointly, all our different propositions are going to be problematic. And friction between government and the media in particular is going to increase — without even the new constitution being able to resolve this contradiction.

The result could be a drift into a situation where government and legislators are hostile to the media and a move to control the media will become irresistible.

Journalists, editors and proprietors need to get together first to resolve internal tensions amongst themselves about the role of the press. Advertisers don't have a direct stake in the information side of media, but in trading money for audiences. If their interest was in democracy, a paper like *New Nation* would not have had a problem in securing ads.

But once consensus is reached with journalists, editors and owners, then the media needs to go out to civil society and government.

What needs to be discussed?

If we accept that the press must have a role in a democracy, it should be to facilitate the acquisition of information by people so they can make informed decisions about their lives.

In a democracy like ours, with 40 million people, only a tiny proportion have access to print. Even television is not accessible to the majority. Whose job is it then to make sure that they get the information that will allow them to participate in this democracy?

Where the majority of the media leans towards the "have's", how can you have a fully participative democracy? You need more media, and more diversity of voices. In the same way the government supports the Human Rights Commission, it should consider the possibility, together with the media, to set up a fund to be run independently, to help support as many diverse media as possible.

Tension is not necessarily a bad thing — in fact it is inherent in a democracy — as between political parties, the judiciary and other branches of the state, administration and the media, and so on. The challenge is to manage these relationships.

In calling for government involvement in agreeing a charter, I am not talking about politicians dictating what the press should do. The present government is tolerant, but a number of incidents indicate that there is a lack of understanding about the role of the press. As times change, one could get people in government who are not sympathetic, and who will change the rules.

There is an element of self-preservation in engaging with stakeholders, but there is also a bigger issue at stake. It is in the interests of democracy to build a kind of social compact on the role of the press. Control by government is not a threat to the media as an institution per se, but to the people who need information about where the country is going.

The problem at present is that when a section 205 subpoena is issued, editors make a fuss and the Attorney-General retreats. Then no one thinks of it again, until it happens once more. Editors need to recognise the state has an interest in this issue, because law and order should be maintained: thus the state is a stakeholder in the issue of journalists as witnesses. At the same time, the state should not seek to use journalists as its informants. That's not their job.

We need a national charter that states clearly the rights and obligations of the media. There is an expectation that the press must have a role to play, but this is not elaborated upon. And it is not only a question of the politicians, but also of the proprietors.

If you take away the proprietor, you have no

press. We need to address this reality. There is a tension between the need to make money and to inform the public. Media organisations are not charities. But at the same time, we are not in business solely and exclusively to make money.

Whoever buys a paper, sees a particular role for it in society. Newspapers are not money-spinners, even though they may make money. There has to be some kind of obligation on people who own media to do certain things, especially when some people have access to ownership of communications and not others.

We know that editors and journalists are not free agents. They act within a structure and are appointed by the board, or in a few cases by a committee of civil society. A board should set broad parameters. Accordingly, a left-leaning board will not appoint a right-wing editor.

It is not coincidental that, historically, owners of the English press appointed liberal editors supporting the Democratic Party and its predecessors. Editors are appointed to run certain kinds of newspapers.

Yet owners are human. Even if there are general parameters, they may try to wield influence within them. Which is why we need an editorial charter setting out all our obligations.

This is an insurance for editors, because it means one disagreement does not have to result in dismissal. It also means there must be a transparent process.

The alternative is a prospect of editors and owners locked in endless disputes. A charter could at least regulate differences.

The critical question that needs to be resolved is profit versus a political/moral role in a democracy. If there is a choice, what would we choose? At present, we're walking a tightrope in the midst of much confusion.

Consensus is also needed between editors and our editorial staffs.

This should not be confused with total partnership. An editor doesn't have to be dictatorial: he or she can be consultative without being paralysed by consultation. There has to be leadership; the question is the style of leadership. Either way, reporters need to have their say in drawing up a charter.

Editors should take responsibility to lead this process. It is they who are in the eye of the storm — under pressure to meet social, political and commercial demands.

BEF+COE=SANEF

It took a long time coming, but 30 months after South Africa's top politicians formed a coalition government, senior journalists have united across race, region and medium. Sowetan Night Editor and Black Editors Forum secretary, MIKE TISSONG, assesses the prospects of the South African National Editors Forum (SANEF).

THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE of the unity between the Black Editors' Forum (BEF) and the Conference of Editors (COE) was not lost on the majority of participants at the meeting to form the South African National Editors' Forum (SANEF) in a basement room of a former prison on the docks in Cape Town in October 1996.

Firstly, it was the first gathering of editors of newspapers, magazines, radio and television as well as journalism trainers at universities and technicians with the common purpose to form a representative organisation.

Secondly, the three-day unity conference signalled the intention to change the media industry significantly from its apartheid hangup of being a white-dominated industry

servicing a white minority to being an industry with a responsibility to the South African public as a whole.

The meeting was the culmination of about 10 months work by committees set up jointly by the COE and the BEF. The COE is a forum of mainly white editors of the mainstream newspapers. The BEF came into being to represent black editors' interests in the media particularly regarding affirmative action and training, media ownership and the promotion of media freedom. Neither the COE nor the BEF could make its voice heard significantly loudly enough among media owners or the government and it was felt that unity would give that voice strength.

Unity meant bringing together a wide spectrum of editors from newspapers to magazines

and the broadcast media. It also meant including journalism trainers because their work had a direct bearing on recruits into media organisations.

After days of debate and frank exchanges among participants — most notably between the stalwarts of free enterprise who should not have had any differences of opinion, former *Financial Mail* editor Nigel Bruce (now *Finance Week* editor) and *Enterprise* editor Thami Mazwai — SANEF emerged with a commitment from editors to a programme of action to overcome injustices of the past and defend and promote media freedom and independence.

The editors also committed themselves to address and redress inappropriate racial and gender imbalances prevalent in journalism and news organisations and encourage corrective action and a transformation of culture within

► continued on next page

Pic: Benny Gool
Cape Times



THE EDITORS' COUNCIL

that emerged from the conference reflected the different groupings that brought Sanef together — five BEF representatives, five COE, five broadcast and five from magazines and journalism institutions. Thami Mazwai was elected chairperson, *Sunday Times* editor Brian Pottinger deputy chairperson and *Tribute* magazine editor S'bu Mngadi secretary. Others on the 20-person Editors' Council are Guy Berger of Rhodes University, Arrie de Beer of Potchefstroom University, Ebbe Dommissie of *Die Burger*, Dennis Cruywagen of the *Pretoria News*, Anton Harber of the *Mail & Guardian*, Shaun Johnson of *Cape Argus*, Raymond Louw of *Southern Africa Report*, Latiefa Mobarra of *The Star*, Wendy Morgenroodt of *Readers' Digest*, Deborah Patta of *702 Talk Radio*, Jane Raphaely of *Cosmopolitan*, Mike Tissing of *Sowetan*, Moegsien Williams of the *Cape Times* and from the SABC: Pippa Green, Phil Molefe, Joe Thloloe and Judy Sandison.

This "government of national unity"-style executive will be an interim structure for a year. At the next annual meeting, the structure of the Council will be changed and the executive will be elected from anyone present at that meeting.

the industry.

The full statement of SANEF's mission, as agreed by the editors, is presented below.

The editors also said they would establish channels of communication with the government, judiciary and other statutory groups. And the first meeting of the Editors' Council of SANEF had been with President Nelson Mandela at the Union Buildings on November 1, 1996. It was not a meeting in which Mandela patted the editors on the back for forming a single organisation, but one in which strong differences of opinion were expressed on several matters, particularly the provisions of Section 205 of the Criminal Procedure Act which force journalists to reveal their sources.

The level of commitment at the Cape conference was high, but how this commitment will be translated into reality at media organisations, only time will tell. If Sanef does not get its act together in less than a year, both the COE and BEF will have reason to exist for a long time to come.

Editors are typically individualistic people with strong opinions so uniform responses to the commitments can be excluded. And that will probably be the source of a lot of infighting in the future. Sanef will not be able to sanction editors that do not stick to the spirit in which Sanef was formed, but peer pressure and lobbying of media owners will contribute to unity.

The question of dissolution of Sanef's founding organisations was raised by BEF member Thloloe. Some members of the COE saw no future for the COE after the October meeting, but the BEF has strict constitutional provisions governing dissolution. In addition, the BEF is represented on the Black Business Council and interacts with a large number of black organisations because of their common history and aims. Talk of dissolution while South Africa is going through the tough process of transformation might not be appropriate for the BEF at the moment.

If SANEF succeeds in its aims, it will have a significant impact on the media industry. The most notable gains will be an industry reflective of a democratic South Africa:

- ✦ in which people are judged on merit;
- ✦ in which people from disadvantaged groups get opportunities they were previously denied;
- ✦ in which journalists will be highly trained;
- ✦ in which there will be greater equity holding among disadvantaged groups in media companies; and
- ✦ in which there will be maximum freedom of expression.

Its success should also influence the unions — the Media Workers Association of SA and the SA Union of Journalists — to speak in one voice to media management.

SANEF cannot be allowed to fail. If it does, editors will have failed to meet the challenges of a changing South Africa, and the media as a whole will not deserve respect from the community it is supposed to serve.

Editors at the conference conducted themselves with openness not experienced among leaders in the industry before and the hidden agendas that were feared in the run-up to the meeting did not materialise. There were tensions and strong words exchanged, but they were done in the spirit of keeping all eyes on the prize of leaving Cape Town's Breakwater Lodge with an organisation that will express the interests of South African editors.

The former prison, which now houses the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business, has a treadmill on its premises. At the start of the conference Harber warned delegates that if they did not reach agreement by the end of the weekend, they would have to get on the treadmill. But by the end of the last day, things had gone so well that they forgot it even existed.

● *Membership of SANEF is drawn from editors, senior departmental editors like news editors and political editors in newspapers and TV and journalism trainers. Membership is by individual affiliation and a membership committee will screen applicants.*

SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL EDITORS' FORUM

Preamble, declaration of intent, organisation and programme of action.

PREAMBLE

We, South Africa's most senior print and broadcast editors and journalism educators and trainers, gathered at the Breakwater Lodge in Cape Town for the historic unity conference of the Black Editors' Forum and the Conference of Editors from October 18 to 20, 1996, to launch the South African National Editors' Forum. Recognising past injustices in the media, we commit ourselves to a programme of action to overcome these injustices and to defend and promote media freedom and independence.

BELIEF

It is our belief and understanding that:

- ✦ Public and media scrutiny of the exercise of political and economic power is essential;
- ✦ The law related to the operation of media should be consistent with South Africa's Bill of Rights in its protection of freedom of expression;
- ✦ Journalists and media owners have a duty to work to the highest professional standards and ethics;
- ✦ Journalists and journalism teachers should embrace a learning culture by committing themselves to on-going education and training.

DECLARATION OF INTENT

- ✦ To nurture and deepen media freedom as a democratic value in all our communities and at all levels of our society;
- ✦ To foster solidarity among journalists and to promote co-operation in all matters of common concern;
- ✦ To address and redress inappropriate racial and gender imbalances prevalent in journalism and news organisations and encourage corrective action and a transformation of culture within the industry;
- ✦ To promote media diversity in the interests of fostering maximum expression of opinion;
- ✦ To promote the process of media education and to help aspirant and practising journalists acquire or develop skills;
- ✦ To promote professional freedom and independence in broadcast media and all media funded by public authorities;
- ✦ To encourage government to ensure transparency and openness in administration and to pass laws ensuring maximum freedom of information;
- ✦ To use all available institutions to defend media freedom.

ORGANISATION

To give effect to the above intent, we commit ourselves to establishing an organisation with the following structure:

The organisation is called the South African National Editors' Forum.

The executive body is called the Editors' Council. It is made up of 20 members. The interim agreement for one year is that the 20 members consist of five BEF, five COE, five broadcast editors and five representatives of magazines, interest groups and journalism educators. After the interim period, the Council would be elected from the general membership. The Editors' Council shall have a chairperson and a deputy chairperson. They shall be voted into position by the Editors' Council. This Council should endeavour to meet at least four times a year.

PROGRAMME OF ACTION

This conference instructs the Editors' Council to:

- ✦ Draft a constitution so as to accurately reflect the spirit and intent of this founding conference.
- ✦ Prepare an annual report on corrective action in the industry and actively lobby media employers for the implementation thereof.
- ✦ Draft a charter to protect editorial independence and seek the endorsement of stakeholders including Government, political parties and media owners. Such charter will include a code of journalistic ethics and conduct.
- ✦ Promote and defend media freedom by:
 - establishing channels of communication with Government, judiciary and relevant statutory bodies.
 - using all available institutions to defend media freedom including the Constitutional Court, parliamentary bodies and the Public Protector. This should include the repeal of all restrictive legislation.
 - promoting a culture of a freedom of expression in the community by means of a public education programme.
- ✦ Together with other bodies such as the Print Media Association, Independent Media Diversity Trust and major media owners investigate means of promoting media diversity to further the free flow of information and give support to news organisations owned and controlled by people from disadvantaged communities.
- ✦ Together with other relevant training bodies, investigate the promotion of media education and training.

20 October 1996, Cape Town

media on the menu

For once, the editors were all on time. After all, you can't task the politicians with being tardy if you arrive late for a breakfast with the president



HEAR YE... *The State President addresses the SA National Editors Forum.*
Pic: Nicolene Olckers, Beeld.

NELSON MANDELA: **T**HE MASS MEDIA are one of the pillars of democracy. We would like an independent and robust press which can criticise freely and without fear — and be prepared if we criticise it.

The press has made mistakes, some very serious. The government too has equally made mistakes. We have joint responsibility to address the problems of the country.

There is a perception among the population that the mass media is controlled by a minority section of the population. You can make that observation without questioning the integrity and honesty of that minority that owns and

controls the media. But it is a totally unacceptable situation in terms of our vision. Even those who have committed themselves to democratic values, some who have fought for transformation and suffered, cannot accurately portray the aspirations of the majority because they do not live among them. Therefore, with the best will in the world, they are unable to express their aspirations. So it is a great concern that ownership and control is vested in a minority.

There are 20 members on the council of your forum, and I find that 12 — the majority — belong to a minority. Our objective as a new democracy is to ensure that our institutions of government in particular, and those of opinion makers too, must accurately reflect the aspirations of the country. A forum like this is intended to reflect this, but the majority reflect privileged members, and this can affect the orientation of the forum itself.

You may have had some reason for this. From the point of view of democracy, you can defend such a result in terms of merit. But you must also accommodate the views of the majority in the long term in a forum of this nature which will have a major role in shaping attitudes. If you are perceived as being controlled by a minority, it can undermine the good work you are doing.

Government has this problem too, where its institutions are dominated by a minority. We have to transform this, but it is a process which can't be done overnight. We want to do this without disruption and without lowering standards. When I go abroad, I find we are represented by members of the minority, not the majority. When I went to Mozambique recently, the majority of the delegation was white. I had to say to president Chissano that this is the situation I have inherited. These are men and women with integrity and who are as committed to transformation as much as I am, but that they are a minority is a process which we want to change. So this is something that we want to address.

The establishment of your forum is most important, it corresponds with our national policy, pulling population groups together to speak with one voice. In this spirit, I welcome this meeting.

THAMI MAZWAI (*SANEF Chairperson*): Affirmative action features very prominently in our agenda. We are very conscious that the media is the mirror that the outside world uses to understand our country and that it should reflect the whole country. Also among our activities, we are busy with drawing up an Editorial Charter, linked to a code of conduct (you can't have one

without the other). This document will show that South Africa is committed to a free and independent media.

We are currently concerned with Section 205 of the Criminal Procedures Act. Warrants issued under this act and requiring journalists to give evidence in Cape Town recently were withdrawn, but our concern is that the law itself has not been scrapped. We must protect the credibility of the media. Once journalists are subjected to having to disclose their informants, it destroys their credibility. I was a victim of this Section 205 and went to jail for refusing to reveal my sources, as have some of my colleagues. With the advent of democracy, this law should be consigned to the scrap heap.

Media diversity has also featured prominently in our discussions. ...

MANDELA: Before you move on, let me say that your concerns with 205 need to be discussed with the Ministers of Justice and of Safety and Security present. Now, if a journalist says that a secret source gave information, is this something you in SANEF are proud of? Can it not be abused, where gossip is raised to truth?

MAZWAI: We in South Africa are transforming from a secretive society and as time goes on there is going to be more openness. We are talking about a code of conduct to serve as checks and balances that we as editors will put into place to use to ensure that secret sources are used with integrity and honesty.

ANTON HARBER (*Editor, Mail & Guardian*): Unidentified sources can be abused. But without their use in the cases of Watergate, and the Third Force exposes, the sources would not have emerged. So there is a real value to democracy in secret sources. As regards Section 205, journalists are seeking no special privileges. Yet, if a situation is created where journalists are can't cover Pagad in Cape Town, that does not serve the interests of journalists or of the ministry of Safety and Security, who in fact get a lot of information from what gets published.

MANDELA: I am concerned with these "inbuilt" guarantees that the use of secret sources won't be abused. What are these guarantees?

BRIAN POTTINGER (*Editor, Sunday Times*): A single source story that is not checked is bad journalism. The guarantee you seek lies in training. We are addressing that in our programme of action.

MANDELA: Some journalists in other countries do frown on the practice because of abuse.

RAYMOND LOUW (*Editor, Africa Report*): In fact in Sweden, they prosecute those journalists who

► *continued on next page*

reveal their sources, and with good reason. In South Africa, the Open Democracy Act will incorporate protection for whistleblowers. It is important that the press has access to secret sources.

MOEGSIEN WILLIAMS (*Editor, Cape Times*): In terms of safeguards, the audience is the ultimate judge because we only sell our newspapers or attract our audiences if people believe our journalism is credible. If we are not careful with our sources, the public will not buy our papers.

MAZWAI: We will follow up with meetings with the Ministers. On a different topic, we would like to set up three-monthly meetings with yourself.

MANDELA: Let us agree in principle on that.

MAZWAI: On the question of media diversity, a lot of publications have closed despite playing a crucial role in the struggle and more recently in ensuring that South Africans talk to each other. We in SANEF will have talks with the Independent Media Diversity Trust to put in place a training programme for independent publications - a lot collapsed because of poor management. And we will be going to the newspaper houses to get them to contribute funds to the Trust. Media diversity will come from several media. The big media groups are being bought into by Nthatho Motlana and Kagiso Trust, but this will not change the culture there which will continue for several years. While this situation continues, we need more media.

MANDELA: Who would like tea and who would like coffee ... or anything stronger than tea or coffee?

HARBER: You want us to accurately reflect the drinking habits of the journalistic community!

MAZWAI: We would like to see state funds channelled through the IMDT. Direct government funding of media will not work. Of course there would need to be annual statements, but placed in the hands of the Trust. In five years, the funded publications should be profitably serving communities. We cannot just talk about diversity in the media and not do anything about it.

MANDELA: That is a very positive step. I am very concerned that mass media should not reflect its ownership and control, but the population of the country. There is an attempt from traditionally white organisations and parties to resist transformation. Some of the newspapers that used to support the apartheid regime have radically moved away from that position. Their editorial columns give unqualified support for transformation. Generally speaking, though, I seem to feel that the conservative press is trying to preserve, one way or another, the status quo. Take their editorial comments. If you sat with the editors, they would find it difficult to justify their views. Because of this some senior black journalists are not writing for their audiences, but for a particular group because in the new set up they feel they should be getting promotion. They therefore believe the only way to get ahead is to join a campaign against transformation. This can be done with integrity; nonetheless, they know that Thabo Mbeki does not promote them. Those who employ and pay and promote, are the persons whose views count. Hence diversity in the media is very important and I welcome it.

HARBER: The function of this organisation is to make sure that ownership changes are carried through all the industry, and also with press freedom. We want to carry a commitment to

press freedom — to carry that passion — to all levels of the state, including the judiciary where elements are hostile to press freedom, the civil service where there are people hostile to openness, and to the population as a whole.

We are concerned that there remain a range of statutes on the books which restrict press freedom. This needs attention, and must be updated and brought into line with the new constitution.

MANDELA: I request you to compile a list of these. Sometimes, government does not know all the details that concern you.

LOUW: We have given a list to Cyril Ramaphosa, the Minister of Safety and Security and the Minister of Justice, beginning two years ago.

We as civil society groups don't have the resources to investigate all the restrictions on the press. We provided a list and recommended that government set up a task group of several members of the media, civil society organisations and legal people in government so that the process can be embarked upon. Comtask itself could not deal with the whole range, although it found that there is this legislation that should be removed.

“If senior black journalists criticise us, give us the right to criticise them.”



DENNIS CRUYWAGEN: I want to ask ...

MANDELA: Speak up Dennis, you sound like a woman!

CRUYWAGEN: I was trying to charm you, sir! What I find regrettable, when black journalists have suffered such a lot, that someone of your stature, sir, should go onto a public platform and criticise unnamed black journalists. It is very dangerous, and I appeal to you to stop it.

MANDELA: I don't want to personalise the issue. But if senior black journalists — who are in a position to interpret the aspirations of the community — criticise us, then give us the right to criticise them. Freedom of expression is not a monopoly of the press; it is a right of all of us. I would like to avoid discussion where you criticise me, and we criticise you and you want to make me name you.

HARBER: We don't want this as a forum for criticising what specific editors and papers say and do. Yes, it is agreed that debate and criticism is a two-way process. We should seek to do this in an atmosphere that is helpful and constructive for the right kind of independent relationship. An attack that is on a group of journalists as a whole from a public platform can be dangerous and is not healthy for government or the media. You may think criticism oversteps the mark and you must say so. We would like to keep it in a way that doesn't harm journalists.

MANDELA: Well, if you expect us not to criticise, you are mistaken.

HARBER: It should be a healthy exchange, but let us keep it healthy.

MANDELA: It is about nation-building and rec-

onciliation that senior black journalists attack me. We would have had bloodshed unless we had not made these into fundamental policy. This country would have gone up in smoke. You have no idea of what we faced. Few of you know that the right wing had set a date to stop the elections. I had to see certain individuals to get them to intervene. They criticise me about reconciliation without coming to me to ask “why are you doing this?”. The country was on the brink of civil war three months before the elections. But journalists, especially black journalists, criticise this policy in public. Can you give me a reason why I should not criticise them?

I meet with an editor like Brian [Pottinger] and talk to him and then he says the ANC is dishonest in the next editorial. I don't want us to discuss this where you force me to make us defend ourselves and yourselves. Let us rather talk about issues of understanding.

BRIAN POTTINGER: This is not a forum for personal matters, but the point is that criticism should be specific. If there are problems with an editorial I wrote, then mention me. Our concern is really raising professionalism, and to ensure this is not just words, we are looking at a programme of action with educational institutions, training the trainers, internships and cadet schemes. Lots of mistakes are not mischief, but a lack of knowledge. We also want a series of seminars where civil servants can meet journalists and explain how they work. Strengthening knowledge is the key to understanding.

MANDELA: The basis is accepting the integrity of the press and with whom you're interacting. Once you question this, you

destroy the basis of a relationship with another human. If you question our integrity, we can't keep quiet. We have had strange experiences with some journalists, where you brief them on the true facts — but some are beyond the pale; they say they agree with you and later say the opposite. You can't expect us to be quiet. We will not reply to every criticism. But certain criticisms you can't ignore.

The mass media is important, without it we will never succeed. I don't want a mouthpiece of the ANC or government. The press would be totally useless then. I want a mirror through which we can see ourselves. No man is an island, and it is a mistake to see transformation as the result of one man when it is a collective effort. Where government makes mistakes, you must say so. Where you make mistakes, so we should say so. Where you do a good job, we should congratulate you.

JUDY SANDISON (*Editor, Radio News, KwaZulu Natal*): We are concerned about community education of people about the role of the press in a democracy. The release of all results of local elections in our province was delayed, so we released them as they came in. It tended to be urban results first, which favoured the ANC. Some listeners wanted us to hold back results till all were in, not understanding how the media covers elections. If ordinary people do not see the value of a free media, no one will fight for us if we are under threat.

MANDELA: Social values can't be corrected in

► continued on page 47

Photojournalism

BENNY AN INTERVIEW WITH GOOL

BY MONTY COOPER

FOUND Benny Gool, waving at me in the street, green t-shirt flapping. I had arranged to interview this wiry, silver-haired photographer at his Cape Town home where he could take me through the photographs of the “Staggie killing” last year. ■ Benny has been thrown unwillingly into the spotlight by his clinically accurate photo-reportage of the horrific killing of alleged drug lord Rashaad Staggie — a deed committed by marchers on an anti-drug protest led by vigilante group Pagad.



“One guy pumped about seven bullets into Staggie. Then there was the ‘whoof’ and the fire got him.”

His slightly haunted eyes scanning the prints, Benny tried to unravel what happened. He had captured an event which shook South Africa and beyond — even rocking the media — and which exposed most graphically the warfare raging over gangs in the Western Cape.

Musing over the horrific photographs, Benny said: “Look at his eyes!”, pointing to the picture that is arguably the most gripping of all: the shot of Staggie kneeling in flames, with his face in great pain.

Some of the colour pictures have acquired a documentary, monochrome look that renders them almost timeless — especially the last moments of Staggie’s life when his body was doused and the pavement and his body were the same grey colour.

He seemed stunned when discussing that evening, saying repeatedly: “It was hectic, hectic!” — an understatement if there ever was one. “I

was one of the first to know about Pagad ... when I told the newsdesk, they just laughed. On the third day, there was a large protest march. We had been threatened. I was called a sell-out.

“that night there were about 500 cars, with the police driving on the side all the time. There were easily about two to three thousand people. We were about the third or fourth car in the procession. And when we turned off to Salt River, I knew then we were off to Rashaad Staggie’s house.

“The groups gathered and prayed round the house off London Road and then shots rang out. I am sure that none of the shots came from the house... most of the shooting came from the crowd. I have never seen so many guns, so much shooting! Soon there were injured lying all around the house...”

► *continued on page 11*

“Staggie came home and began screaming at the crowd, even as he raised his hands in surrender.”

“Bullets were fired through the bakkie and one entered Staggie’s head and emerged from his ear.”



**“I was shit scared,
I was very, very scared.”**



All this time, Benny was using F90 Nikon cameras with automatic motor wind. Fearing for his life, he was careful about pictures and being too visible. “I wasn’t careless — I was selective.” All the time, Benny’s colleague, journalist Roger Friedman, was also being jostled and shouted at by the angry crowds. “People were swearing at us all the time! These were people from my community ... people were pushing me all the time.”

Benny had great praise for Roger who was very supportive throughout — “pulling me out of the firing line at times. At one time I was right next to one of the gunmen firing, and I knew if I had pointed my cameras at him, he would have shot me.”

Later that night, when looking at the negatives coming out of the processing machine back at the *Cape Times*, Benny realised that he really had been in extreme danger. He has a negative of a crowd scene when the shooting began, and there, like a celluloid nightmare, is a gunman in the corner of the frame pointing a pistol at him.

The real nightmare of that evening happened when Rashaad Staggie came home. People started shouting when the man arrived in his bakkie. He was allowed to drive right through the police cordon. Benny kept on saying: “I’ll never understand why the police let him through.”

The crowd became highly agitated, shouting slogans like Allah Akbah! and crowding around, recalled Benny. “I have never seen so many mad people with so many guns. Staggie screamed: ‘Wat maak julle? Hoekom skiet julle op my huis?’, as he was photographed with his hands in the air, still in his bakkie.”

Meantime, one of the crowd was waving a gun inside the bakkie and trying pull Staggie out of the cab. Bullets were fired through the bakkie and one entered Staggie’s head and emerged from his ear. “I was shit scared, I was very, very scared.”

Despite this, Benny continued calmly photographing the progressive murder, but carefully, trying not to be too conspicuous. Staggie was soon out of the bakkie, blood streaming down his face, and then lying in a pool of blood.

The next step in the drama took place. “One guy came over and pumped about seven bullets into Staggie. Then there was the ‘whoof’ and the fire got him; the metro guys scuttled away. It was then that Staggie realised that his time was near. The crowd was shouting Allah Akbar! and Staggie tried to run down into London Road before he died on the pavement.”

Afterwards, Benny rushed back to the office to get the negatives processed. The debate to publish was on. The argument that the public should have the right to know was clearly the winner. With passion, Benny said: “People want to know about the gang warfare — there are after all, over a 100 000 gang members in the Western Cape!”

He added: “We braced ourselves for an all-out-war the next day, a massive backlash — but there was one drive-by killing.”

However, the nightmare was not over for as far as this photojournalist was concerned: it shifted to the content of his unpublished negatives. The police and gangs thought that Benny’s negatives contained the identity of the murderers. But he denies this hotly: “I told them — if I had such a negative, it would have been on the front page.”

The threats to Benny and his family started two days after the incident. He received phone calls warning him about the gang reaction in Manenberg. He went to see Staggie’s brother and told him, “I was just doing my job as a journalist”.

The biggest shock was when the National Intelligence Agency phoned and warned Benny about a price of R20 000 placed on his head — they had received this information from wire-tapping. After consultations, the photographer put his camera aside for a few days, took his son out of school, hired armed guards and took off down the coast for a period. “It was the most uneasy time of my life.” To compound matters, the police subpoenaed him for the negatives, but eventually dropped their bid after a huge public outcry.

Benny has gained an enormous amount of respect in the community for the pictures, but his freedom as a photojournalist is curtailed: he has been told to stay away from the Pagad meetings. Ironically, though, he is able to operate freely on the gang side.

This courageous photojournalist, who cut his teeth in the alternative press in the era when the police did the killing, plans to enter the photographs in the World Press and the Fuji Press competitions.

If he wins, he told me, he intends to set up a fund for young and struggling photographers.

I left, hoping that Benny and his family will eventually find some peace from the war around the gangs and be able to sleep at night.

Monty Cooper lectures photojournalism at Rhodes University.

radio Proactive

It's not easy to cover local government elections in a volatile province with more than 90 'no-go' areas. But novel tactics and a no-nonsense approach helped SABC radio pull off an operation that sets a precedent relevant far beyond KwaZulu-Natal. JUDY SANDISON, regional editor, explains:

COVERING the first South African national democratic elections in 1994 provided our radio news team with solid experience to draw on in planning coverage of the much-delayed local government elections in KwaZulu-Natal — ultimately to take place on the 26th of June 1996.

I identified four key challenges that our news team had to meet to achieve successful coverage:

- ensure the issues and concerns of ordinary people were voiced on air;
- ensure that all political parties and role players were given fair unbiased coverage;
- ensure that our listeners received a wide spectrum of relevant, clear and useful information to enable them to make informed choices;
- ensure that journalists could freely report on events and issues without intimidation or duress.

In addition, we had to do a lot more than co-ordinate news and current affairs coverage on Radio Zulu, Radio Lotus and East Coast Radio. We also arranged for another 25 reporters to join our team from other SABC newsrooms to strengthen our presence across the province, and to report in another five languages on what was a national as well as an international story. The eyes of the world were on our politically volatile province and no-one could predict how much conflict and intolerance there would be. With more than 90 'no-go' areas this was no small challenge.

In '94 we had learnt that it was pointless having separate meetings with officials from the major political parties. They simply used the opportunity to lambaste us and make demands instead of focusing on improving communication channels. ANC and IFP officials had refused to sit down together in a meeting with us. What they did was meet with us individually and incessantly demand more air time and exposure, which put us under pressure from all sides. I vowed that next time round I would insist that **all** parties (in '96 there were twelve) meet **jointly** with us to share information and improve communication and professionalism while still keeping a good arms-length distance.

So, early in '96, I didn't set up any separate

meetings, but simply sent out a formal invitation to the public relations officers and officials of all the parties contesting the elections — large and small — to a meeting to improve communication. If they wanted to meet with us they had to come to the meeting. Most responded affirmatively. One that didn't hear about it from the others and made sure he was at the next one as he felt left out. This placed all the parties on an equal footing with us.

It made it much easier to manage our coverage by setting agreed-on ground rules from the start for all: for example, that we would ensure minority parties were given fair coverage; that we needed to be informed in good time about weekend events in particular so coverage could be planned; that we would not be covering every function; what the ground rules for debates were; that we would run a series of debates and listener phone-ins; that complaints would be immediately addressed; that parties would ensure we had up-to-date contact lists, etc.

With the parties all in one meeting, the pressure for airtime was more evenly distributed and we could manage the whole process better. We had a meeting roughly every six weeks from March to June with a review meeting in August. These then ceased except for ad hoc issues.

In an effort to prevent politicians totally dominating the airwaves and boring our listeners with too much rhetoric we involved non-governmental organisations (NGO's) in our planning. This had begun before the '94 elections and had been most constructive. However, we had often run out of interviewees as they were simply not enough neutral 'experts' to interview. Suitable organisations were too busy or over-used and at times our own journalists had to run listener phone-ins when invited guests did not pitch at the last minute.

I decided to revive regular contact with relevant NGO's in January '96, but broadened the base to include peace committees, human rights groups, church and rural groups, voter education, etc.

We met roughly every three weeks and these meetings were absolutely invaluable in identifying grassroots issues, projects and people we could interview. We also scanned the universities for credible academics for analysis and

Gritty reporting

ALL IN ALL the feedback from listeners and role players about our radio news coverage was that it was fast, accurate, comprehensive, fair and interesting

Getting the results and experience of voters in from our reporters in rugged rural areas was quite a feat, and some staff had hair-raising experiences on gravel roads and byways, travelling long distances in 4-by-4's or armoured vehicles seeking

places where the cell-phones would work.

We got some useful pointers about where we could improve too: for example, in our use of percentages in election results. Many of our listeners — whether Zulu, English or Afrikaans-speaking — complained that they did not understand percentages. Some NGO's felt we had not focused enough on where peace projects had successfully got off the ground in

strife-torn areas, and on the dynamics involved.

Despite a complicated computer results system having been installed in the central Durban newsroom, it was really the leg-work of our reporters and current affairs producers that gave meaning and relevance to our news.

Counting took more than a week to complete and we resumed our normal schedules the second week, having had extra current affairs and update slots on Radio Zulu the week of voting. We had expected all the results to be in by Saturday latest,

but they were still trickling in the following week.

It was very ironic that, despite radio's reputation as the most immediate news source, some listeners asked in a phone-in why we didn't hold back the urban results until the rural ones were in. Initially the IFP complained that we gave the ANC too much coverage the first week — then the ANC complained that we gave the IFP too much coverage the second week of results.

Ultimately both parties conceded that overall fairness had been maintained.

► *continued on next page*



Photograph by Nash Narrandes. Courtesy the Natal Witness.

debate in our current affairs programmes.

The election procedures were very complex and we had to be sure that we as journalists understood them so that we could give a clear picture to our listeners. So we had briefings with the various task forces, with Durban Metro and rural officials, and Deputy Minister Valli Moosa came with elections expert Khehla Shubane to brief the news team on the mechanics of the elections and the run-up to them.

An election manual was compiled by a radio news researcher (jointly with TV researchers) and this included important election information, maps of the different Regional Council areas, and a database with contact numbers, NGO's, political parties, names, geographic and socio-economic profiles, etc. This experience was so useful that we now have a permanent researcher to assist reporters, producers and editors in a multitude of ways.

Reporters were deployed across the province several months before election day to do vox pops and audio packages on people's concerns. We broadcast the news stories — and also used the information in planning our programmes to meet their needs. We ran phone-ins now and again to monitor our own progress.

The voter education responsibility fell very heavily on radio news in '94 and we had hoped that more formal programmes would be recorded and broadcast this time. We took a decision country-wide that the radio news role was to report issues and events and not to do voter education. However, when the paucity of such education became clear, we felt that with one of our stations being the country's biggest, most influential broadcaster, we had to respond to our listeners' needs as best we could. So we incorporated stories on what was confusing or unclear in current affairs and had studio guests respond or debate these issues.

We had experienced death threats, intimidation attempts and harassment before the '94 elections and had hoped this would not recur. However, I realised more action was needed when one of our reporters was verbally harassed and his microphone shoved away by a South Coast political official who was being charged with murder. Although we made an official complaint to the party concerned and received a written apology from one of its leaders (which we broadcast), I was worried that such incidents could recur because of the increased political tensions in the province.

I raised my concern in one of our NGO meetings and it was proposed that a code of conduct be found or drafted and put forward for parties to give input and to sign. I contacted the World Press Freedom Committee in Washington for help. They gave me some names to contact and wished us luck as they had not come across such a code for politicians/media before. No existing election codes covered what we needed.

A copy of the novel "homegrown" code which we came up with is reproduced on the right.

I was pleasantly surprised to have this concept fully supported by representatives of the 12 political parties. The code was signed at a public ceremony in the foyer of the SABC studios in Durban on the 6th of June 96 in the presence of NGO leaders, Project Ukuthula bishops, editor-in-chief Barney Mthombothi and other guests. Bishop Stanley Mogoba, head of the Electoral Code of Conduct Commission (ECCO) had agreed to monitor any breaches at our request.

The code was well-honoured by all concerned during the election period. The elections as a whole passed with very little violence — far, far less than was feared or expected. There were incidents like stone-throwing between ANC and IFP members at Shakaville, but, remarkably, none of our radio news reporters experienced any harassment or intimidation.

If they had we would have documented it and passed it on to Bishop Mogoba for ECCO to decide on censure or fines or whatever. Ironically, shortly after the elections, some heated disagreements took place between some of our news staff and some political officials, but as a result of good communication channels, these difficulties were ultimately resolved and the working relationships put back onto a professional footing.

Our experience has shown us that the debate about the role and function of the electronic media in a democratic society needs to be carried widely through the whole fabric of society. If ordinary citizens do not see the value of media freedom and the significance of a free media as a building block of democracy then this freedom can be eroded with ease. This is a vital challenge for all media workers to address.

“It made it much easier to manage our coverage by setting agreed-on ground rules from the start for all.”

Media code of conduct FOR POLITICIANS

To ensure a free, independent news media, commitment is needed from all the main players:

- by journalists and editors to the ethical and professional codes of the profession;
- by politicians and political leaders to the following code of conduct:

“We agree that the rights of working journalists should be respected at all times while they are engaged in news-gathering;

We undertake to respect and promote the physical safety of journalists to the best of our ability, including:

- not inciting crowds or groups to attack media representatives;
- not verbally or physically interfering with journalists trying to report on stories;
- not restricting access to any news source;
- not preventing journalists from operating freely in any part of the country without fear of intimidation;
- not mentioning or attacking individual journalists at public functions such as rallies and so making them vulnerable to attack;
- not to pressure presenters/journalists, while they are on air, to do ad hoc interviews;
- not to attempt to bribe journalists;
- discouraging party members and others from making abusive anonymous phone calls or threats aimed at journalists or editors;
- using existing mechanisms to channel complaints about items broadcast;
- to wholeheartedly help party members understand the role of the media in a democratic society.”

The SA magazine industry goes boom

Every new entrant anticipates an exit, writes ANNELIZE VISSER.

IN THE BRIEF HISTORY of the South African magazine industry, the news stand has never been as crowded as it became in 1996. There was a proliferation of new titles and increased frequencies (and a few notable exits) from an industry that is notorious for attracting many and rewarding few.

TML's magazine division launched *Out There* and *Elle* (the latter in partnership with global giant Hachette Filipacchi Presse), acquired *Longevity* and lost *Playboy* after the girlie market crashed under pressure from the anti-porn lobby. Natmags invested R215 million in a new Cape-based printing plant and increased the frequencies of *Drum* and, through their acquisition of a 50% stake in Touchline, of *Sports Illustrated* and *Kick Off*. Opinions vary on the viability of Touchline's next project, a local edition of international health and fitness men's title, *Men's Health*, to be launched in the first half of 1997.

Penta was liquidated and resurrected in a dramatic rescue by SMC Capital and Independent Newspapers with newcomer Sheldon Cohen in charge. Republican Press/Perskor lost *Scope* but launched *Next* to compete for the weekly mass market and spread panic in the women's category by announcing it would launch *Marie Claire* in May. Rumours abound that Conde Nast will join the international players whose foray into the South African industry is, along with market fragmentation and investment in the so-called emerging (black) market, the major cause of the explosion on the news stand.

The competition has never been so fierce in an overtraded market where every new entrant anticipates an exit and every new arrival stakes its survival on stealing a bite of someone else's slice of pie. Against the background of increased demands on the same pool of adspend and readership base, there is less for everyone. Or, if you're a publisher, there is niche. But it's hard to find two publishers who agree on what niche publishing means. Is less really more, or is it just less?

Is a niche magazine the same thing as a special interest consumer magazine, as *New York* magazine consultant Martin Walker claims in the November/December 1996 issue of *MagFocus*? Or are they entirely separate things, as Natmags' research manager Barbara Cooke insists in the same issue, locating niche in the market and special interest in specific titles that straddle market demographics? Is special interest a subset of niche, as Sheldon Cohen believes? Is niche just something publishers

resort to to cover their embarrassment at not achieving as large a readership as they would've liked? Or does niche reflect the consumer's revolt against the insult of sameness on the one hand, and offer an excuse to small-circulation titles to charge high advertising rates, as Associated Magazine's Jane Raphachly claims?

TML's Gisèle Wertheim Aymès prefers the word "focused" to "niche". And Republican's Roy Minnaar answers a question with a question. If we launched a men's title, he asks, would you call that niche or special interest? Frankly, who knows?

For readers and advertisers, the explosion in the magazine industry means more choice. But choice can be as bewildering as change. Marketing managers note with regret that media buyers remain largely preoccupied with numbers and quantity measured in cost per thousand, as opposed to the still unfamiliar currency of a narrowly targeted audience. Frustrating for the new niche players is that established brands in the women's category still consistently exceed the 100,000 mark while Natmags' trio of mass market weeklies continue their spectacular growth. "If you think about it, the mass market is also a niche," said one publisher a little despairingly.

After initial resistance, advertisers are now paying more to reach *Elle's* "small but relevant" readership than for the large audiences delivered by *Cosmopolitan*, *Femina* and *Fair Lady*, says Gisèle Wertheim Aymès, who dismisses these rivals as "much of a muchness" when it comes to choice. "In the woman's category there are good quality general interest magazines but apart from *De Kat*, *Elle* is the only focused title."

Out There and *Elle* shared a nice haul of awards at the Specialist Press Association Pica Awards ceremony in November, and in December *Elle* won an award from the International Press Distributors Association for the best launch of 1996. It was also the most extravagant launch the industry has seen, and critics fear that TML's lavish spending on its magazines will discourage others from joining the industry.

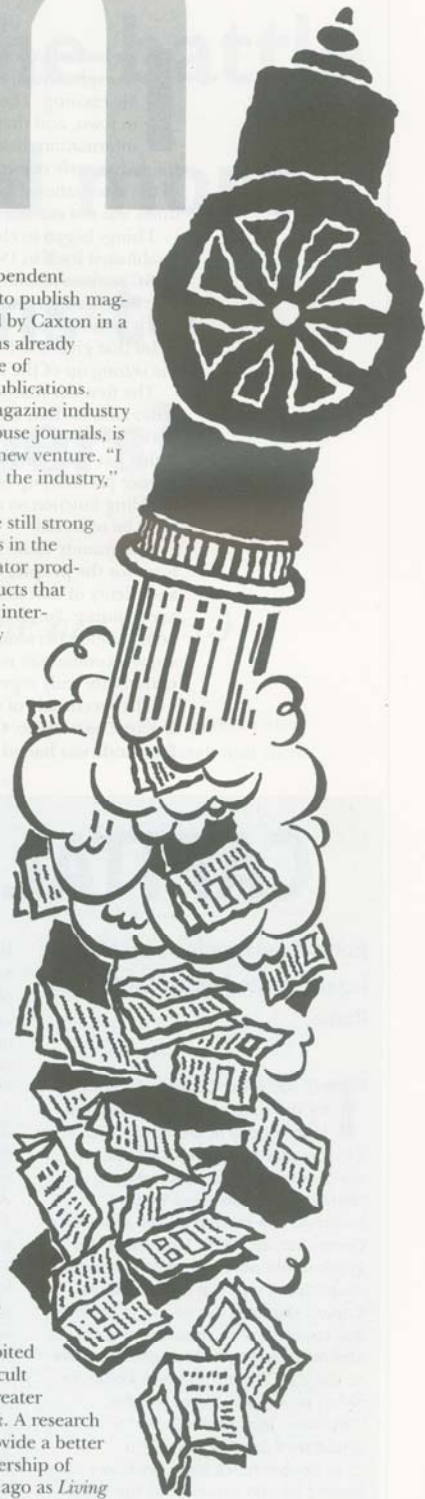
It didn't however discourage Sheldon Cohen from leaping in to rescue Penta when it collapsed halfway through the year under a debt burden reputed to be many millions. Consensus is that Penta grew far too quickly, launching new titles whose development the income from the existing titles couldn't sustain. The new Penta is owned by a consortium

of SMC Capital and Independent Newspapers, whose right to publish magazines is being challenged by Caxton in a protracted dispute that has already caused the closure of some of Independent's regional publications. Cohen, who enters the magazine industry via stints in comics and house journals, is full of enthusiasm for his new venture. "I believe in our titles and in the industry," he says.

"The mass products are still strong but people are finding less in the lowest-common-denominator products and looking for products that address their lifestyle and interests. That's the reason why we see specialist or niche products as an attractive place to be. It is driven by readers who want more choice and by advertisers who are moving away from cost per thousand and looking more carefully at weight versus target." Too carefully, perhaps, Cohen admits. For most media buyers, size still counts.

Cohen predicts more entrants and exits in 1997, but reiterates Penta's commitment to the five titles remaining in its stable. The company withdrew from *Student Life* before the deal and subsequently closed *MegaLife*, which had been "tainted" by a long relationship with the Health & Racquet group.

Cohen's plans include a new look for *De Kat* and *Tribute*, with more pages for *De Kat* and more glamour for *Tribute* whose 10th birthday will be exploited for brandbuilding events; cult status for *Big Screen* and greater frequency for *Keeping Track*. A research project is under way to provide a better understanding of the readership of *Living*, relaunched a while ago as *Living Africa*, but to date unable to shake off the free-distribution label left over from the



► continued on page 45

You need to review the record of radio in order to fully appreciate the magnitude of the changes, says **ROBIN SEWLAL**.

Radio days

I've had an unwavering interest in radio since primary school days — even though the medium back then in the country was not terribly exciting. The government-controlled SABC was the only game in town, and that irked me mightily. One could not rely on the information disseminated, and its programming was, in general, staid. To satisfy my urge to receive good radio, I simply tuned into some of the international broadcasters. Though reception even at the best of times was not ear-worthy, it was nevertheless more engaging.

Things began to change when the independently-run Capital Radio established itself in December 1979 as an alternative to the string of SABC stations reaching out to just about every corner in the country. The 80's brought about a few more stations, and a bit more diversity. But it is this decade which has spawned a sufficient number with varying styles that gives the listener choice. Progress has been phenomenal with the setting up of the Independent Broadcasting Authority.

The first tier that received attention from the IBA was Community radio and, to date, almost 100 stations have been issued licences for a period of twelve months. The IBA's Position Paper on Community radio, which has been long overdue for release, is to provide for a 'permanent' licence probably up to four years. The authority has performed an enabling function so as to ensure a rich array of norms, values and cultures be reflected.

Community radio has made remarkable strides in providing a platform for the peoples of our land. However, this sector requires support, and plenty of that too. Two vital areas in need of attention are funding and training: Funds to make stations sustainable and training to ensure better skilled personnel for them to be more appealing. Stations that enjoy a community mandate must thrive. It is only then can we say that citizens are truly represented in the mainstream of developments.

The recent sale of six successful stations from the SABC stable, namely East Coast Radio, Oranje, KFM, Algoa, Highveld Stereo and Jacaranda was hailed as the first major act of privatisation and empow-

erment. These stations fetched hefty prices on the market, in some cases, exceeding all expectations. It therefore begs the question whether the new owners — seeking returns on their large investments — are prepared to tamper much with their winning formats. To do so would be running a huge risk. These stations were primarily set up to target white audiences and it will be intriguing to see if and how these new radio bosses are going to satisfy the needs of other groups without losing existing listeners.

It's a belief that programming formats will undergo miniscule changes in the short to medium term. Perhaps we could see greater changes when the owners have had a good run and the financial picture is pretty. In the meantime, though, there is still an opportunity for other would-be broadcasters to come to the fore, and soon.

The IBA has approved the granting of a further eight commercial licences countrywide, three in Cape Town, four in greater Gauteng and one for Durban.

The SABC has, in the meanwhile, been alive to the competitive environment. In September 1996, the corporation re-launched most of its radio services. Some stations underwent changes in name as well as in corporate identities. Programming content continues to develop. The Act stipulates that the SABC ought to, *inter alia*, take cognisance of the needs of language, cultural and religious groups, and to air educational programmes. But a public broadcaster needs funds to meet its public service mandate. SABC Radio advertisers are being lured away by new stations. There can be no dependability on licence fees as figures in this regard are not guaranteed.

The SABC therefore has been lobbying the government for subsidies. A priority is to get the state to part with a sizeable slice of the money acquired from the sale of the six stations. Mechanisms must be thrashed out to ensure editorial independence and integrity should the government see fit to help finance the SABC.

Besides community, commercial and public radio, there are several

CAPITAL assets

Robin Sewlal reflects on the legacy of the late, great Capital Radio.

THE IDEA for Capital was conceived by the then managing director, John Moody in October 1976. With a three-year budget of R6,4-million, the Simon and Garfunkel classic "Bridge Over Troubled Waters" launched the station on the morning of December 26, 1979. Housed in the gracious old port captain's abode with magnificent views in Port St Johns, Capital changed the sound of radio in our country. With music, news, sports and much more, it brought a sparkle to the ear. The station had exclusive rights on the continent for the "Wolfman Jack Radio Show", syndicated around the world.

In double quick time, listeners were turned on and tuned in to the Wild Coast sound that got the old guard at

the state-run SABC to take a long, hard look at what it was doing. Though plagued by technical problems from its inception, Capital Radio became an overnight success. It was not the strength of the signal that mattered but the quality of the programming.

I'm particularly saddened by the silencing of the station that churned out 'all the hits and more on 604'. My relationship with Capital commenced during the test transmission days in 1979. It was a pleasure to visit the crazy team in that idyllic environment. The road from Umtata to Port St Johns is enough to give one nightmares but entering the 'Garden of Eden' quickly settles one's nerves. There's plenty of fond memories of those early days. The late Jim Ellery played host to me on my first visit and what a fabulous one it was too. Oysters were 20c a dozen and crayfish sold for 50c each. I did not need to go on a buying spree — "The Wiz" Oscar Renzi's deep freezer was forever filled to the brim with seafood

easily available from fishing expeditions. The golden sands of Second Beach was ideal for all night raving parties. I was amazed to see how jocks living on the other side of the Umzimvubu River got to the studios. You either got across by pont, ferry or tightrope walking a metal tube above shark-invested waters. Steve Crozier fell into the river and became the first to present a show naked from the waist down. The "Welsh Twit" Alan Mann was thrilled with his beach buggy while John Berks, the country's top jock, was being his usual self. If it was not the station playing great music, it was thumping out of "Gentle Giant" Treasure Tshabalala's (now with Radio Metro) home. Content with his lifestyle was Allan Pierce. On the other hand, Meshack Mokwena, the youngest at 19, was fitness conscious. It was certainly a small paradise. I started my on air work with Capital after the station moved its operations to Johannesburg. By then, I already had developed a strong friendship with Oscar as I was managing his activities. It was a hoot working closely with the other guys, not to mention the difficulty in keeping Jeremy Mansfield, currently on 702,

away from his mischief.

Let it be said that the station launched many a successful broadcasting career — Lee Downs (Goodhope FM), Tony Blewitt (5FM), Dave Guselli (East Coast Radio), Kevin Savage (KFM), Darren Scott (M-Net), Chris Prior (SAfm). The list is endless. Yet it was, without doubt, the station's news broadcasts that earned the station global repute. From day one with Gary Edwards (702) at the helm of the news department, Capital Radio gave its listeners only the facts, accurately and speedily. In the dark days of our precarious past, the station was unwavering in exposing the government of the day. This rich tradition of 'telling it like it is' continued with people like Mike Hanna (CNN), Julian Potter (BBC), Zahed Cachalia (Australia), James Lorimer (Network Radio News), Manu Padayachee (M-Net) and David O' Sullivan (702).

It's hard to come to terms to hear nothing from a station that gave so much. But the Capital memorabilia is there to treasure for a lifetime while the beautiful memories of this innovative station will linger on forever.

other forces on the radio landscape. Special licences have been granted in the past. These stations are set up for a specific event and stay on air for a maximum of thirty days. Moreover, radio networks can be picked up through Multichoice, the satellite subscriber service. These are currently beyond the control of the IBA. In-between all this, pirate radio operators have surfaced. Fortunately for the credibility of the industry, the authorities have dealt with them in the appropriate manner.

The IBA, in its Position Paper on Private Sound Broadcasting Services, calls for the establishment of a Broadcasting Industry Forum. The idea is to promote a culture of responsible self regulation by getting members to participate in developing industry standards. Pencilled in for immediate discussion are a language development fund, advertising and sponsorship guidelines, and a revised Code of Conduct. It's a fine thought but I would imagine that it will be far better for such an association to emanate from a relationship that evolves naturally between the community, commercial and public service sectors. Each of these tiers has its own stance on policy matters so finding common ground will be a near impossibility. Only when the industry as a whole is ready, should it move in the direction of forming a forum. Personally, I'd love to see a complimentary connection between all three categories of broadcasters.

All in all, the radio industry has experienced tremendous growth. But what does it mean for the practice of journalism? Commercial radio is duty-bound to daily provide 30 minutes of news. There are many tales to be told and, all things being equal, news closer to home deserves prominence.

Radio news networks serving community radio have emerged in this era of station-proliferation. Therefore, a conscious attempt must be made by those heading up news teams to provide items of relevance to the wide range of localised stations. The human element of gathering news cannot be stressed sufficiently even though marvellous pieces of equipment are available for purposes of processing.

As the industry moves in leaps and bounds, radio pundits have to be proactive in tailoring their programming to the discerning ear. Stations can't be all things to all people. Content has to be carefully crafted in order to instil a sense of listener addiction. Audiences are becoming more sophisticated

and, accordingly, unforgiving. Even though an abundance of stations exists, further diversity on the dial is necessary, more so in rural regions. The IBA is committed to re-writing the frequency plan thereby creating space for other players. The industry requires the involvement of people with a passion for broadcasting

as opposed to those who merely use the facility as a means to an end.

The day of the radio has only just begun.

Robin Sewlal is Programme Co-ordinator: Journalism ML Sultan Technikon

Who's winning the battle to get more and more South Africans to buy newspapers?

(There's nothing Irish about the answer...)

Over the six year period, 1990 to 1996, there is only one company whose sold newspapers have grown by more than the rate of the population increase. That company is Caxtons Newspapers. Our 11 paid papers had over 24% ABC circulation growth. This is in stark contrast to the biggest publisher of dailies, who've seen circulation slide in the same period.

In addition, Caxton is a group who has a vigorous empowerment programme. We're bringing newspapers to communities who have never been served by newspapers before. And we're doing it in partnership with peo-



ple from the communities we aim to serve. In Alexandra, in Soweto and on the East Rand. And there are more to come.

With a full time training department, and a unique system of awards and incentives, Caxton encourages its journalists to aim high. The payoff comes in the dedicated readership for our free and paid papers. With an aggregate circulation (including associates) of 1,3 million in 62 communities, Caxton is playing a major role in the creation of a free and informative press in the New South Africa.

Caxton - born, bred and rooted in the RSA.

CAXTON/CTP & ASSOCIATED NEWSPAPERS: ■ BEDFORDVIEW EDENVALE NEWS ■ KEMPTON EXPRESS ■ TEMBISAN ■ SANDTON CHRONICLE ■ RANDBURG SUN ■ NORTH EASTERN TRIBUNE ■ NORTHCLIFF MELVILLE TIMES ■ ROSEBANK KILLARNEY GAZETTE ■ BENONI CITY TIMES ■ BOKSBURG ADVERTISER ■ BRAKPAN HERALD ■ GERMISTON CITY NEWS ■ SUNBEAM ■ KRUGERSDORP NEWS ■ RANDFONTEIN HERALD ■ ROODEPOORT RECORD ■ DOBSONVILLE KAGISO EXPRESS ■ WEST RAND TIMES ■ SECUNDA BETHAL HIGHVELD RIDGE ■ ALBERTON RECORD ■ SOUTHERN COURIER ■ PRETORIA RECORD ATTRIDGEVILLE ■ PRETORIA RECORD CENTRAL ■ PRETORIA RECORD CENTURION ■ PRETORIA RECORD EAST ■ PRETORIA RECORD MAMELODI ■ PRETORIA RECORD MOOT ■ PRETORIA RECORD NORTH ■ ALEX TIMES ■ VAAL STER ■ VAAL VISION ■ VAALWEEKBLAD ■ BONUS ■ BRITS POS ■ GEMSBOK ADVERTISER ■ NOORDWESTER ■ RUSTENBURG HERALD ■ STELLALANDER ■ THE MAIL ■ DIE LAEVELDER ■ LOWVELD NEWS ■ ZULULAND OBSERVER ■ UMLQZI WEZINDABA ■ LADYSMITH GAZETTE ■ DRAKENSBERGER/TIMES OF LADYSMITH ■ OGWINI ■ SOUTH COAST HERALD ■ SOUTH COAST MAIL ■ SOUTH COAST SUN ■ SOUTHLANDS SUN ■ BEREA MAIL ■ HIGHWAY MAIL ■ NORTHGLEN NEWS ■ QUEENSBURG NEWS ■ TEMPO ■ TAXI ■ NEWCASTLE ADVERTISER ■ INKANYEZI ■ ESTCOURT MIDLANDS NEWS ■ GEORGE HERALD ■ OUDTSHOORN KOERANT ■ MOSSEL BAY ADVERTISER ■ KNYRNA & PLETT HERALD

Man kills dog

The Task Group on Government Communications (COMTASK) has completed its investigation into government communications and the recommendations rest with Deputy President Thabo Mbeki. CHRIS VICK reports.

SO, THEY'VE FINALLY AGREED to shoot the dog. They've taken it out into the backyard, loaded the gun, and they're ready to pull the trigger. SACS, the information mongrel which out-lived the other runts in the apartheid litter, gets the bullet in September — Thabo Mbeki willing.

Millions of South Africans probably don't know how much misery SACS caused them through its distortion of information, its dreadful publications, its waste of resources, the role it played in trying to win hearts and minds, or its pathetic and insular attempts to transform itself.

Soon, we will hopefully see in SACS' place a government information system more appropriate to an emerging democracy — one which, as Comtask describes it, is able to create a meaningful dialogue between government and the people.

The nature of that new animal will, if the Comtask report is implemented, essentially be as follows:

- A new Cabinet Committee on Information Economy will be set up early next year to politically manage government communications.
- A Government Central Information Service (GCIS), coordinated from the Presidency, will be set up to coordinate communication in three areas: media liaison, liaison with provinces, and communication services (handled by a new Communications Service Agency (CSA), responsible for centralised training, bulk buying, centralised advertising, etc).
- All this will be guided by a new advisory body operating on a two-year mandate under the rather SACS-type title of "Communications 2000", who will provide professional knowledge on a pro bono basis.

The Task Group's 83 recommendations are intended to take South African government communications from its current state (no clear message, no clear policy, no clear lines of communication) towards a service which is streamlined, efficient, transparent and has credibility. So how will it differ from what we have now? Hallmarks of the new system, according to Comtask, will be:

- Two-way communication between government and the people. As the Task Group says:

"Government must engage better with civil society, creating a dialogue between government and the public."

- Greater emphasis on the needs of the illiterate, the disabled and those historically deprived of information.
- Coordinated messages from government.
- Skilled, trained government communicators.
- Management by objectives, resulting in more effective use of resources.

Quite how long we wait for these changes is anyone's guess — although if the Deputy President's Office sticks to Comtask's proposed timetable, the Cabinet Committee and Communications 2000 should be set up by February, the GCIS should be in place by June and the CSA should be operational by July. SACS should be dead by September.

Going ballistic

Comtask was "born" on a missile testing range in Arniston during December 1995 at a specially-convened summit of government communicators and media representatives. At the time, politicians were starting to struggle with the impact of "freedom of expression": The media honeymoon was very obviously over, and the journalists who had helped to magnify the potential of the liberation movement were starting, with equal success, to magnify its limitations.

Comtask was mooted to come up with some solutions, and a 10-member team put in place to do some investigating.

Sections of the media felt threatened by the initiative. I remember a lunch with key management figures at Times Media Limited a few weeks after Comtask was appointed, where the table buzzed with mutterings about "this new Steyn commission" in a reference to PW Botha's anti-media initiative in the early 1980s.

The TML bosses were troubled: Mbeki wants the media to be government lackeys; he wants government slots on TV; he wants to nationalise the press. You could almost see the apartheid State President "morphing" into the post-apartheid Deputy President. These were scared men.

You wonder how they all feel now. Then, they worked for the old mining bosses; now they work for the old mineworkers' bosses, and their whole world has changed with it.

A lot more has changed in the media environment since Comtask was mooted. Print media ownership has gone through a significant change of hands, we've had passionate and healthy exchanges between government and the media, and some media institutions

have realised the importance of rebuilding journalism.

Of course, not much has changed for the consumers of government information. They still generally have to be literate, live in electrified homes, and fall inside an SABC "footprint" to know what the people they elected are doing. Government still relies far too heavily on the mass media to communicate, and when they do communicate it's generally down a one-way street. The Open Democracy Act is still being tossed around government departments for comment, and it's still extremely difficult to get information out of some government departments.

Thinking long and hard

Was Comtask worth all the effort? There's no doubt that the report is an excellent commentary on (most of) the challenges facing government communicators right now. There's also no doubt that the recommendations, if implemented properly, will transform the way government interacts with the public.

But even if the report dies on Mbeki's desk, Comtask will have succeeded in forcing a range of South Africans to think long and hard about the kind of government information system they want, and to express themselves on vital issues such as the needs of the illiterate, the disabled, and other disadvantaged groups. South Africans have also spoken out on issues such as media ownership patterns, the desperate need for skills development among both journalists and government communicators, and the appropriate use of information technology.

In addition, the Comtask process has united government communicators around common demands. It has speeded up debates around the establishment of a media development agency and other support for community media (hopefully, not too late), the need for the Open Democracy Act to be pushed through Parliament, and greater coordination of South Africa's efforts to sell itself abroad.

Of course, we cannot forget Comtask's generous act of euthanasia: it has (Thabo Mbeki willing) killed SACS — and put us all out of our misery.

Copies of the full Comtask report are available from, wait for it: any SACS office.

Chris Vick has been communications chief for Gauteng premier Tokyo Sexwale and is now Independent Newspapers' Group Editorial Director, Training.

This report is also at: <http://www.polity.org.za/govdocs/commissions/comtask.html>

Opening windows

Community television activist **KAREN THORNE** signals the arrival of a new factor in the broadcast landscape.

COMMUNITY television has been waiting patiently at the back of the queue of South African broadcasting policy reform. At last, the Independent Broadcast Authority (IBA) has completed its "Triple Inquiry" research, issued licences to over 80 community radio stations, presided over privatising others and is about to issue more commercial radio licenses plus a national free-to-air private television licence.

Now, the IBA must confront the issue of community television. Key questions which remain unanswered relate to financial viability and the related issues of the structure and nature of community television.

Community television in South Africa has emerged, over the past few years, as a motley collection of evangelical christian broadcasters left out in the cold with the transformation of the SABC, historically advantaged ethnic groups looking for an opportunity to import foreign language programming to meet the needs of minority communities and commercial operators using the loophole of short term licences to equip their would-be regional commercial stations. What characterises these groups, in a way that clearly reflects the imbalances of the past, is their access to resources and skills.

But by far the most organised, yet characteristically under-resourced, component of the community TV sector is a national network of audio-visual media training and development NGO's, loosely organised around the Open Window Network (OWN). Projects such as the KwaZulu Natal Video Access Centre, the Community Video Education Trust, the Media Training and Development Trust, the Newtown Film and Television School as well as new initiatives such as the Eastern Cape Video Access Centre, have been quietly paving the way for a viable, sustainable and above all community-driven community television movement. These projects are working within historically disadvantaged communities to build production capacity through skills development and production support, thus building community television from the bottom up.

One of the major challenges facing the community television movement has been how to take a model of community television, which is relevant for developed countries and translate it to the context of the developing world. The fundamental difference is that developed countries can afford to support community television (not that they do) and that "ordinary people" seeking access to community television in developing countries are doing it because they want a job and not only because they want to "exercise their first amendment right to freedom of expression".

How then does community television meet

COMMUNITY TELEVISION, as widely understood, is, in principle, a particular form of media which is owned and controlled by communities through its representatives. It represents clearly defined interest groups or operates within geographical boundaries. It also differs from other forms of media in that it is non-profit or independent of corporate ownership. Community media is participatory, premised on the belief that the airwaves and the printing presses are a public resource and that all citizens have the right to freedom of expression. Community media has therefore risen to the fore as an invaluable tool to develop and socially empower previously marginalised people.

the needs of skills development and job creation on the one hand (and should this be one of its objectives?), and of preserving community television as an access point for non-professionals on the other? Within the South African context some believe that community television can and has to do both but that policies must be in place to ensure that this is properly managed. Within this debate, these policies must also address the question of ensuring community ownership and control. Intrinsicly linked with this debate is the BIG question: "Where is the money going to come from?". There are no easy, glib answers to this question. But providing that there is the political will to do so, a solution can be found.

The audio-visual medium is expensive and this is often given as the reason why it is not earmarked for support as a viable medium for development at a community level, as is community radio. However, the audio-visual medium also happens to have great potential for income generation.

The IBA makes allowances for income generation through advertising. For community television, a range of market place activities could bring income to the sector including the sales of programmes, offering of services, advertising and securing of sponsorship, commissions and contracts.

To facilitate the opening up of potential in these areas, OWN is hoping to sign a Record of Understanding with the SABC which will cement the "Natural Partnership" between community media and the public broadcaster referred to by the SABC in their submission to the Triple Enquiry.

This partnership is likely to include cooperation agreements around programming, access to airtime, training and facilities. In return the SABC will be accessing community originated, diverse language programming, helping to build the public broadcaster's beleaguered regional services. Similar partnerships, aimed at unlocking production contracts need to be struck with other emerging broadcasters as well as all levels of government and the NGO sector.

However, if international experience is anything to go by, then community television will need to be funded from a range of sources.

One reason for this is the danger of community television becoming market driven. Purely commercially driven community television would place it in the same position in which the SABC has found itself with the failure of government to financially support the public broadcaster. The resulting excessive reliance on advertising revenue, means the SABC is unable to fulfil its public service mandate to provide a balance of education, information and entertainment as it is forced to pander to market forces.

In South Africa, with the transformation of government communications, community media stands to play an important role in promoting open governance particularly at a local government level. Community television projects in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town are already forging strong partnerships with local government structures.

The community media sector needs to broaden its lobbying strategy to include some five Government ministries within whose line functions the community media sector falls (local government, education, etc.).

In order to locate possible sources of funding, the IBA also needs to look into the possible regulatory implications of cross subsidisation from, for example, a percentage of licence fees from commercial broadcasters (including satellite operators). Such arrangements will, however, impact on community broadcasters' slice of adspend as they expect to both compete with, and be cross-subsidised by, the commercial sector.

A preferable option may simply be to own part of a private television station. OWN, in conjunction with the National Community Media Forum (NCMF), is exploring the possibility of forming an investment wing, the profits from which could finance community television. OWN is particularly interested in making an investment in the related sphere of private television. This would give the beneficiaries the opportunity to "add value" to their investment through the provision of programming and thus boosting the income generating potential of Video Access Centres and local television stations. This would also help to get

➤ *continued on page 36*

DEAR SIR: YOUR NEWSPAPER

The story of the redesign of the Cape Argus as told

Mind pictures are useful when it comes to planning a newspaper relaunch, particularly if it involves a big publication with a large staff. A clear mental image must be established right at the outset so that everyone's myriad activities can be geared toward a comprehensible and coherent outcome. If the journalists don't understand what the editor is doing and why, it is highly likely that the readers won't either.

I used a few mind pictures in extensive consultative sessions with staff of the *Cape Argus* as we prepared this year for the most comprehensive relaunch in the grand old title's history. The images encompassed the entire strategy but had direct implications for the redesign component, which is the focus of what follows.

First, I said to my colleagues, imagine a newspaper which has been coming to work for more than a century in a suit. Now picture it arriving each morning at Newspaper House in a pair of Levis. Then think of a newspaper as having a volume on an amplifier, with points from zero to 10. Consider *The Sunday Independent* as, say, a three, the *Cape Times* as a five, and the new *Cape Argus* as a seven. Bright and loudish, but not distorting through the speakers.

These images were a means of getting us all on the same wavelength, understanding that the very personality of the paper was going to change – and certainly feel younger – from its content to its tone to its look.

It had taken about three months in the second quarter of this year for us to develop an overarching strategy for the September relaunch of the *Cape Argus*. The task was quite unlike that of my previous project, *The Sunday Independent*, not least in that we started with a blank canvas in the case of the Indie: we invented the paper, from content to design to staff structure, from scratch, and then tweaked as we went along, constantly assessing which of the innovations had worked and which hadn't.

The *Argus*, as it was known when I arrived in Cape Town, could hardly have been more different: 139 years old, for starters, set in its ways, published seven days a week (on-day Monday to Friday, overnight for Saturday and Sunday), mass market as opposed to niched, serving a staggeringly diverse audience, a great institution of the Cape but feeling fusty and stale, performing sluggishly and in need of the reinvigoration that is periodically required as time overtakes even the most successful formulae.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 8, 1996

CAPE TOWN'S OLYMPIC NEWSPAPER

CITY LIFE

THE DECISION-MAKERS JET IN

Cape Town lays on warm welcome for IOC team

RELAUNCH
Excitement as members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) arrive in Cape Town for the start of their visit to the city's performance this weekend.

President Mandela will warmly welcome the delegation tomorrow and address the Government's intention to host the 2004 Olympic Games here.

The IOC members will be staying at the 2004 Olympic Village in the city.

He has spent the past few days in London and a brief period in Paris, including meetings with government officials, business people and sport representatives.

But international director Jacques Rogge said the team was to have arrived early today, but the flight was delayed because of technical difficulties.

But Rogge said today "We are not in a hurry to get here, but we are not in a hurry to leave either."

"All our work has been done, and we are happy to be working on our big team, right from the Government to the IOC members."

He has spent the past few days in London and a brief period in Paris, including meetings with government officials, business people and sport representatives.

But international director Jacques Rogge said the team was to have arrived early today, but the flight was delayed because of technical difficulties.

The team was to have arrived early today, but the flight was delayed because of technical difficulties.

INSIDE today

WEATHERMAN PETE SAYS:

It may have made it only if the last weekend, but weatherman Pete says...
Today... and the rest of the weekend... will be sunny, warm and clear...
The latest update on the weather...
The forecast for the weekend...
And for the weekend...
CAPE ARGUS TELEPHONE: 021 448 4484
FAX: 021 448 4484
E-MAIL: pete@capeargus.co.za

Clinton wants woman as US Secretary of State

Washington - United States President Bill Clinton has announced he will nominate a woman to be the next Secretary of State in 1997. Clinton is said to be looking for a woman who is a Republican or a Democrat.

In an Oval Office ceremony yesterday with the vice-president, Mr Clinton reached across party lines to select outgoing Secretary of State Madeleine Albright as his pick.

White House National Security Advisor Anthony Lake was chosen as the next director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and the top deputy, Samuel Berger, will be named.

All 50 US Senate regular members will be asked to confirm the appointments.

'Abducted' Jacqui seeking a divorce

Johannesburg - Jacqui de la Cruz, the 36-year-old Cape Town model, has been abducted by her husband for the second time in a row.

The Cape town model, who was abducted by her husband for the second time in a row, is seeking a divorce.

In an interview last night from the home of a Johannesburg doctor friend, Ms de la Cruz said she had had some other arrangements with her husband.

She said the doctor's intervention was a divorce who was looking after "a very serious divorce case."

Ms de la Cruz said she had had some other arrangements with her husband for the second time in a row.

Daring to be different: the arrival of the International Olympic Committee in December was bound to set the creative juices flowing in the light of the strong editorial stance the Cape Argus has taken in favour of Cape Town's bid to host the Games in 2004. In addition to the masthead's daily Olympic Bid Clock, counting down the days to the naming of the successful bidder, the paper's slogan changed for the day, the editor wrote a personal message welcoming the IOC team, Weatherman Pete was given extra space for his description of climatic conditions the evaluators could expect and artist Colin Daniel was let loose on four columns of space. Mario Garcia's 'honey' feature ('Hey, honey, did you see that story in the Argus about...') survived at the foot of the page in one of its many configurations.

Sudden wind puts paddlers in too deep

ABILETOWN - The National Rowing Institute has warned rowers to be alert to the risk of sudden wind gusts when out on the water.

The institute's rowing coach, Peter Lamb, said that the sudden wind gusts can be very dangerous for rowers.

Mr Lamb said that the sudden wind gusts can be very dangerous for rowers.

Ship and dry a relieved Cape Town and bottom photographer Lambert after the race.

Ship and dry a relieved Cape Town and bottom photographer Lambert after the race.

This personality change was not proposed willy nilly or on a whim, but as part of an integrated strategy to get the *Cape Argus* into rude health, ready for the next century. We concluded that major invasive surgery was needed, necessitating a recovery period followed by – we earnestly hoped – renaissance.

I don't have the space here to walk with you through that strategy in its entirety, but it is important to note that a redesign is a nec-

essary, but not a sufficient, condition for a relaunch. The fact that simply repackaging the same old goods is an approach doomed to failure is so obvious that it need not be laboured: the design is merely the store front and the aisles – it's what's on the shelves that will ultimately decide success or disaster. So our first and most intensive deliberations were about content.

I always leave the design to last in the relaunch process. It must emerge from that process rather

than be imposed at the beginning. Once you know what you want (and, sadly, very few South African journalists appear to regard design literacy as an essential component of their professional armouries), it can be done very quickly, and if the rule is applied that simplicity must always defeat over-elaboration, then with the help of skilled colleagues and technology, it's actually easy. In our case it probably took less than 10 percent of the relaunch programme.

The trick, though, is logic and discipline. The design must be assembled like a Meccano set, each part fitting naturally into others, with deviations from established rules never inserted by accident but only for carefully considered effect.

The innumerable permutations offered by the new technology bite both ways: in the hands of people who do not have a grasp of the fundamentals of a design, it can lead to the "Mac madness" which afflicts so many of our newspapers and produces typographical atrocities.

This is why I favour, for several months after a relaunch, limited options on style-sheets and ruthless design policing. Once we've got this car running smoothly, I tell the sub-editors, then we can think about mag wheels and GT stripes. Let's get it going reliably first. And it makes their jobs that much easier, because the rules become second nature – when they're bent for effect, as they must be in a lively newspaper, everyone is aware that they're being bent, and why.

Before getting into the fonts and formulae, I do need to place the design which eventually emerged in its wider context.

We were operating in a specific market, under specific (and recently altered) conditions. Our sister paper, the *Cape Times*, had until only a short while before been owned by a competing newspaper group and chasing exactly the same market as *The Argus*. Further down the road of its relaunch than us, it was now establishing itself as a morning paper with a very strong finance component (*Business Report*), catering for well-educated readers and tending toward issue-oriented content.

We by contrast were in the confusing (to readers) and difficult (for us) position of publishing our founding edition early in the morning and "topping up" later in the day. Much too much of the paper was produced the day before, and it showed.

There was no clear distinction in readers' minds about what made the *Cape Times* and *The Argus* different from one another: except that the *Times* had the advantage of coming out first with a paper prepared late into the night, while we had to scurry around in the morning for fresh content – before most potential sources had even woken up, let alone showered and dressed!

We decided to take the strategic risk of moving our deadlines later (flying in the face of international common wisdom about afternoon papers) and becoming a truly on-day paper once again in terms of fresh, breaking content. This is good for journalism but risky for distribution, as the paper's shelf-

REEKS OF YOUTH

by its editor, Shaun Johnson



Wearing it well: Shaun Johnson (standing, right centre) and his team fly the flag on the eve of the September 5 relaunch

life would be dramatically reduced. Also, it is a fact that the 1990s notion of "time famine" has made it harder and harder to convince people to take the time to read a substantial newspaper in the evening.

But we did not have the option of going for the morning slot, so the challenge was to create a paper that was friendly, accessible and bright enough to compete with all the other activities that dominate homes in the evening – the Western Cape is, incidentally, very family-oriented.

People read morning and evening papers in entirely different frames of mind and moods. One of the means we employed to achieve this was carefully altered, formulaic pagination, which I'll discuss later.

We also took the major step of reintegrating the geographically "zoned" sections into one newspaper for one Cape Town in the new South Africa.

The Group Areas Act and its long-lingering aftermath had seen to it that by following the geographical route one ends up publishing by "group area", offending many and satisfying few. It seemed to me obvious that if an important or interesting event occurred in Mitchell's Plain, it should go in the same paper which is read in Constantia, and vice-versa. The Cape Argus is an institution belonging to all the people of the region it serves, and had to reflect that.

So much for the positioning of the paper: let's talk about the

design, and another mind picture. I think of newspaper design like a piece of clothing. The primary question is whether it fits, and is well-made. After that it's a matter of fashion and personal taste. Does the design work? Is it a toolbox from which you can quickly, consistently and neatly assemble several newspapers each day? Those are the questions to be answered positively before you go ahead.

You can rest assured that if those criteria are satisfied, and the result is clean and readable, people will get used to the particular fonts and other elements you have selected. Every single aspect of the design must pass this test: does it make things easy for the reader? Thereafter it's a matter of whether you prefer flares or stovepipes.

In the case of the new Cape Argus, though, I wanted to do something more than just produce a paper which worked for the reader – we could have done that in 15 minutes with an old faithful like Times New Roman.

I had the growing feeling that South African (and, for that matter, British) newspapers were beginning to clone one another in their design fundamentals. Several titles published in our country at the moment are so alike in "feel" that one has to turn back to the masthead to see what one's reading. (Indeed the fashionable "small caps" masthead is itself part of the cloning process.)

So we wanted to create a paper that would leave no reader in any doubt that it was the Cape Argus in

their hands, and this informed our decisions on fonts, the grid, and our colour palette.

I was determined that the Cape Argus should look like no other newspaper ever seen in South Africa, or indeed the world. I believe passionately in the power of journalistic innovation, accepting that by definition not every aspect of innovation can be successful, and we were insistent that when the new Cape Argus came out, it would be an absolute original. We are all busy building a new country in South Africa, and we

I had the growing feeling that South African newspapers were beginning to clone one another

must work at building new newspapers as well.

Clearly such profound change was going to come as a shock to people who had become used to the look of the old Argus, but I bet anyone who would listen that the new look would be accepted within weeks, and it was.

Even the Gill Sans Bold Extra Condensed masthead, incorporating the Olympic Bid logo because of the importance of the issue for this metropolitan daily, was quickly embraced. We journalists often agonise over things that the reader

TIME	CHANNEL	PROGRAMME	TIME	CHANNEL	PROGRAMME
12.00-12.30	1	12.00-12.30	1	12.00-12.30	1
12.30-1.00	1	12.30-1.00	1	12.30-1.00	1
1.00-1.30	1	1.00-1.30	1	1.00-1.30	1
1.30-2.00	1	1.30-2.00	1	1.30-2.00	1
2.00-2.30	1	2.00-2.30	1	2.00-2.30	1
2.30-3.00	1	2.30-3.00	1	2.30-3.00	1
3.00-3.30	1	3.00-3.30	1	3.00-3.30	1
3.30-4.00	1	3.30-4.00	1	3.30-4.00	1
4.00-4.30	1	4.00-4.30	1	4.00-4.30	1
4.30-5.00	1	4.30-5.00	1	4.30-5.00	1
5.00-5.30	1	5.00-5.30	1	5.00-5.30	1
5.30-6.00	1	5.30-6.00	1	5.30-6.00	1
6.00-6.30	1	6.00-6.30	1	6.00-6.30	1
6.30-7.00	1	6.30-7.00	1	6.30-7.00	1
7.00-7.30	1	7.00-7.30	1	7.00-7.30	1
7.30-8.00	1	7.30-8.00	1	7.30-8.00	1
8.00-8.30	1	8.00-8.30	1	8.00-8.30	1
8.30-9.00	1	8.30-9.00	1	8.30-9.00	1
9.00-9.30	1	9.00-9.30	1	9.00-9.30	1
9.30-10.00	1	9.30-10.00	1	9.30-10.00	1
10.00-10.30	1	10.00-10.30	1	10.00-10.30	1
10.30-11.00	1	10.30-11.00	1	10.30-11.00	1
11.00-11.30	1	11.00-11.30	1	11.00-11.30	1
11.30-midnight	1	11.30-midnight	1	11.30-midnight	1
midnight-1.00	1	midnight-1.00	1	midnight-1.00	1
1.00-1.30	1	1.00-1.30	1	1.00-1.30	1
1.30-2.00	1	1.30-2.00	1	1.30-2.00	1
2.00-2.30	1	2.00-2.30	1	2.00-2.30	1
2.30-3.00	1	2.30-3.00	1	2.30-3.00	1
3.00-3.30	1	3.00-3.30	1	3.00-3.30	1
3.30-4.00	1	3.30-4.00	1	3.30-4.00	1
4.00-4.30	1	4.00-4.30	1	4.00-4.30	1
4.30-5.00	1	4.30-5.00	1	4.30-5.00	1
5.00-5.30	1	5.00-5.30	1	5.00-5.30	1
5.30-6.00	1	5.30-6.00	1	5.30-6.00	1
6.00-6.30	1	6.00-6.30	1	6.00-6.30	1
6.30-7.00	1	6.30-7.00	1	6.30-7.00	1
7.00-7.30	1	7.00-7.30	1	7.00-7.30	1
7.30-8.00	1	7.30-8.00	1	7.30-8.00	1
8.00-8.30	1	8.00-8.30	1	8.00-8.30	1
8.30-9.00	1	8.30-9.00	1	8.30-9.00	1
9.00-9.30	1	9.00-9.30	1	9.00-9.30	1
9.30-10.00	1	9.30-10.00	1	9.30-10.00	1
10.00-10.30	1	10.00-10.30	1	10.00-10.30	1
10.30-11.00	1	10.30-11.00	1	10.30-11.00	1
11.00-11.30	1	11.00-11.30	1	11.00-11.30	1
11.30-midnight	1	11.30-midnight	1	11.30-midnight	1

Boxing clever: the TV listings are a time-consuming chore but very reader-friendly

won't give a second thought to as long as they're functional – but I'll come back to the matter of the critical reception of the relaunch later.

Here then is the small story of the transmogrification of *The Argus* into the *Cape Argus*. (Part of the reason for the title change, by the way, was that I wanted to celebrate valued traditional elements at the same time as dramatically modernising the paper. The first edition of 1857 had come out as *The Cape Argus*, with the regional moniker being dropped only about 20 years ago. We aimed to be a great metropolitan paper with no pretensions about being read nationally, so we were quite happy to identify ourselves with our region once more.)

I had collaborated with United States design consultant Mario Garcia prior to the launch of *The Sunday Independent* in June 1995. Garcia, for all the parochial and xenophobic nonsense that has been spoken about him, has done great things to haul our industry out of its 1970s torpor and into the real world of newspaper publishing and competition at the end of the century.

He was brought to South Africa by former Star editor-in-chief Richard Steyn, and Steyn deserves credit for his vision and recognition that we did indeed have a lot to learn from a world which had been closed off for decades.

Garcia and I had in fact designed the basics of *The Sunday Independent* in a two-hour brainstorming session in Johannesburg

in early 1995. He does not come to a newspaper with a pre-ordained design in his head. If he has a like-minded editor he will sit, listen, and doodle while the editor describes the look in words.

In Cape Town this time around we sat in my rented flat in Oranjezicht deep into the night and he hardly said a word, except to ask for clarification here and there. In the next hectic week the design came together beautifully, as innovative as can be and certainly different from any other paper in the country.

I gave him some basics and some specifics. The basics included brightness and a turned-up volume that stopped well short of fully-fledged tabloid treatment. I wanted strong headlining and strong straps which could also be read at a glance, rather than operating as glorified blurbs.

We were blessed with a good photographic team and wanted to showcase their work. Because we wanted people to be able to take the paper home and share it out among family members, we needed a two-section main body along with the tabloid Tonight supplement and the broadsheet Classified section.

Within the main body I wanted absolute sectional consistency, so that readers knew precisely where to find what they liked in the paper, every day. All that would vary would be the overall size, depending of course on fluctuating advertising support.

Continued on next page



PETE'S 5-DAY WEATHERWATCH

PETE SAYS: As predicted, there is a table cloth over Table Mountain which means plenty of south easterly wind over the weekend. It's likely to switch to south west by Monday bringing the occasional cloud with it. But I'm sticking to my guns on the fact that I believe summer is here, apart from periodic hicups in the form of the odd shower - on Tuesday perhaps?

OUTLOOK: Fine and windy



TOMORROW: A high pressure belt over the southern parts with a western interior trough means the fine weather will hold. SUNDAY: There will be a coastal low along the south coast with a blocking high to the east bringing partly cloudy conditions. MONDAY: A frontal trough to the south east with a coastal low along the south coast will bring some cloud.

CAPE TOWN SOUTHERN SUBURBS FALSE BAY COAST

Fine. Wind fresh to strong south easterly

NORTHERN PENINSULA

Fine. Wind fresh south easterly

PAARL-STELLENBOSCH

Fine

HERMANUS-OVERBERG

Fine. Wind fresh south easterly

LANGEBAAN-WEST COAST

Fine. Wind fresh south easterly



Key for weather symbols: Partly cloudy, Cloudy, Rain, Snow, Thunder showers, Fog, Recurring, Wind, Snow, Fog, Cold front.



Johannesburg Partly cloudy, 13 to 24deg Pretoria Partly cloudy, 16 to 27deg Durban Partly cloudy, 18 to 28deg

NATIONAL TRAVELLERS' FORECAST Bloemfontein Partly cloudy, 14 to 27deg Port Elizabeth Fine, 16 to 23deg East London Partly cloudy, 18 to 25deg Kimberley Partly cloudy, 15 to 23deg Upington Partly cloudy, 18 to 36deg Springbok Partly cloudy, 19 to 33deg

TOMORROW'S WEATHER PICTURE

FISHING Not too fine a point on it, boat fishing is probably a wipe-out for the weekend. There appears to be just too much south easter out there which, it is predicted, will hit 40km/h. But it's music to the ears for rock and surf anglers. The onshore wind is likely to bring kob, steenbras and even eel on the bite in the surf spots between Muizenberg and Macassar and even further afield beyond Gordon's Bay. The ledges at Rookvanz, Cape Point, has been yielding some yellowtail to experienced anglers.

SURFING The strong south easter has all but flattened the surf on the Atlantic coastline. It's down to two to three feet and the best spots for today and the weekend are the Dunes, the Hoek and Minnerloot. The False Bay coastline is like a washing machine, but Kogel Bay could be worth a visit.

HIKING A good outlook from a weather point of view as long as you remember that the south easter can be very cold at higher altitudes. There is also going to be some cloud about.

DIVING The south easter has set up a nasty cross current in False Bay which means rough white water and poor visibility. Diving is not recommended. On the Atlantic side the south easter, under normal conditions, clears up the water in areas like Kommetjie, but the water is very cold - guard against hypothermia.

TONIGHT SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY

Weather forecast table for tonight, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday with wind, temperature, and sun/moon icons.

RAIN 24 HOURS TO 8AM TODAY Cape Town Airport, Stellenbosch, Paarl, etc. with precipitation amounts.

TIDES High water today, low water today, spring tides, neap tides.

AIR TEMPERATURES Today at 7am, expected max today, yesterday 2pm, etc.

WATER TEMPERATURES Sea Point, Sea Point pool, Muizenberg pool, etc.

INTERNET ADDRESSES SA Weather Bureau, Cape Town Weather Watch, etc.

WORLD WEATHER Amsterdam, Athens, Auckland, Buenos Aires, etc. with weather conditions and temperatures.

A star is born: Weatherman Pete, alias assistant news editor Peter Goosen, is occasionally mobbed by small children in the street after becoming an overnight sensation with his detailed and chatty five-day forecast

From previous page

Specifically, I made these requests among others. A sans serif headline font which could be used in caps for a splash lead, in upper and lower for the rest. Because the backbone of advertising support in the Cape Argus is what I would call garish retail, I asked if we could develop a formula whereby all headlines were in bold, with only the point size shifting in order to indicate to the reader our judgments about the importance of stories. (Instinct tells me that the endless variety of font weights has been overused at the expense of simplicity and clarity and that it's time to go back to basics, but the need was acute in the Cape Argus because the editorial space has to fight for visibility against very dominant and bright advertising.)

I asked for Nimrod as the body type because most people seem to find it easy to read - you're reading it now - and suggested an innovation/experiment whereby the intros are in the same type and size (Nimrod 9 on 10) as the body copy, but are in bold and ragged right with hyphenation off. I think they have turned out to be very readable and neat.

I asked for a colour palette which related to our continent and our city, and moved away from the boring standards.

I stressed the need for an absolute minimum of complicated gimmicks, so that our pressurised subs could commit their energies to accuracy and creativity rather than deciphering - and confusing - elaborate stylesheets.

After our lengthy session Garcia went off to his hotel room with his Powerbook and in the morning we began, together with our systems wizard Dave Chambers, to erect the scaffolding.

Main headlines in Helvetica Neue Bold Condensed, inside heads Helvetica Bold Neue. Strapheads in Walbaum, an elegant and strong italic. (Neither of the fonts had been used before in South Africa, as it happened.) Body copy in Nimrod; a restricted range of pull quotes on a colour wash, easy to place and difficult to muck up.

Basic structure modular with no doglegs, erring towards horizontality rather than verticality, but breaking each page for balance. A six-column grid with options for bastard measures dependent on specific pictures. No fussy drop caps or purely decorative elements: everything simple, everything subjected to the "is this for the reader or for us?" test.

The examples on these pages will give you a much better idea of the whole than a string of jargon from me, but I think it is worth pointing to some of the particular innovations which, when seen

together, begin to build the "difference" we sought.

I stole my own idea from The Sunday Independent (in design one should not be ashamed about pilfering if other publications have done something effectively and it suits your needs) and got rid of the irritating barcode by swinging it up into the left hand corner of the masthead space.

I couldn't, as with the Indie, get

Everything simple, everything subjected to the 'is this for the reader or for us?' test

what I call a landscape ad across the bottom of page one, so we had to work around the traditional rectangular solus.

We tried running the day and date vertically next to the barcode ("in cyberspace", said one of our subs), but had to move the date and seal back to more traditional spots. We left the price in cyberspace, so to speak, and no one seems to mind.

We put our new slogan "Cape Town's Biggest, Oldest, Favourite Newspaper" discreetly beneath the colourful masthead.

We built in a promo slot with the masthead - a version of the sky-box - for plugging Tonight and other features, and gave a lot of attention to a daily "Inside Today" plug on page one, featuring our new personality forecaster, "Weatherman Pete". (Know your market: the weather is a very serious issue for everyone in Cape Town, cutting across all cleavages of class, race, gender and the rest.) I had the feeling that upfront puffs were often not taken for what they are - prime page one space, deserving of the best thinking, writing and design the title has to offer.

The paper then began to shape up like this. Main body section one with breaking news for the upfront pages, changing gear subtly into more feature-oriented news pages with longer copy and bolder illustration, leading into the traditional slots of leader page and oped. Ours are called Cape Argus Issues (for oped) and Cape Argus Attitudes (for leader).

Issues carries a daily, localised humour column called Tavern of the Seas, and a rotating column written by our in-house specialists, from crime to the environment. It also carries "The Big Story", one lengthy issue-based feature of the day which I believe is more effective than a random array of lifters and own-generated pieces. My theory is that you will know at a glance each day if the subject inter-

ests you: if it does not, you'll move on without inconvenience. The Big Story is adorned by a daily painted portrait by our excellent artist Colin Daniel. The page also carries obituaries of local personalities on a regular basis.

"Attitudes", our version of the traditional leader page, carries a large Zapiro cartoon, a small leader (we're trying to cut the waffle), James Clarke's humour column and a very lively letters section which we've called Cape Points. That ends section one.

Section two - Argus 2 - starts with Life, the easy-reading quirky department of the paper. There's a personality profile and portrait each day ("In Town Today") chronicling the fascinating characters of the region and those who are (increasingly) passing through. We ask each one what they think of Cape Town, and run their answers bite-sized.

Life includes a Things To Do In Cape Town section, a shipping column (this is still a port city), and a rotating range of feature material.

The jewel in its crown is Weatherman Pete Goosen's page, complete with a suburb-by-suburb forecast of Cape Town's notoriously diverse climate, which we humbly believe is the best newspaper weather guide in the world. It was clear to me in the relaunch process that so-called "service journalism", for so long the unglamorous

end of our business, is growing exponentially in importance, and if you put excellent people on the job your readers will love you for it.

Life is followed by our business section, which concentrates heavily on Cape business, given that Business Report does a comprehensive national and international job in the mornings. We want business readers to feel they must buy both the *Cape Times* and the *Cape Argus* for full daily coverage.

Business leads into Racing and our strong Sport section, which also seeks to give unparalleled local coverage as well as featuring celebrity columnists like Paul Adams and Duncan Crowie.

Then there's the Tonight entertainment section with a range of controversial columnists and a uniquely formatted (and editorially time-consuming) television guide - again an investment in exceptional service journalism.

The same basic design principles are carried through to the weekend papers, although the headline fonts and pagination differ because we wanted the papers to be clearly from the same family, but not twins.

A great advantage of the simplicity of the design "system" is that subs don't ever have to switch body copy, byline styles and the like. The colour palette I mentioned is unique, too. We have invented our own colours, drawn from the sights of our own city: Sea (blue), Sand (brown), Sun (yellow), Earth (red), Rock (grey), and Grass (green). Like I said, you know when you're reading the *Cape Argus* that you're not reading something else.

In closing let me deal with the - how can I put it politely - mixed reception to the new look from competitors and rivals and others not overly fond of us. Quantum leap relaunches are very seldom hailed at first - just ask *The Guardian* in London what was said about their radical change of clothes in the 1980s.

The local *Mail & Guardian* contrived to sleuth out the only advertising agencies critical of the new look, while I sat with a pile of congratulatory faxes on my desk from the others. I've come to expect that from a paper which for all its other qualities is legendarily mean-spirited when people other than themselves seek to contribute to a much-needed improvement in the overall quality of our journalism. The M & G's (tellingly) unnamed "design experts" suggested the *Cape Argus* would flop. They had, however, said the same about *The Sunday Independent*.

And then there's my friend Richard McNeill, formerly of the *Sunday Times*, who appeared to burst several blood vessels when he saw the new paper - so much so that he instituted a lengthy and vituperative correspondence on the issue in Business Day. I enjoyed it hugely, thinking that it must surely be the first time that the design of a Cape Town newspaper has become the subject of heated dinner party conversations in suburban Johannesburg.

Design on its own is not, and can never be, enough to make a newspaper succeed

per has become the subject of heated dinner party conversations in suburban Johannesburg.

The fact is, though, that McNeill got it wrong because he appears unable to adjust to the dynamics of dramatically changing circumstances and demands in a dramatically changing country. What worked in Fleet Street in the '60s is well and good ... for Fleet Street in the '60s. This is South Africa in the age of nascent, fragile, skittish, unformed democracy - and burgeoning electronic media.

I was sorry McNeill got so carried away in his attack, because it forced me to answer when I was asked why I thought he was quite so furious. The fact is that he had himself applied earlier, unsuccessfully, for the job of design consultant on the *Cape Argus* re-

launch. So perhaps Garcia's appointment had something to do with the subsequent apoplexy?

He also allowed his rage to blind him in terms of professional analysis: a calmer look would have showed him that far from being gimmicky, the *Cape Argus* design is probably the most simple, disciplined and user-friendly in the country - ask the people who know, the subs. Anyway, perhaps Richard will have cooled down enough in a year or so to look again at the *Cape Argus*, unjaundiced.

I've said it before and will say it again: design on its own is not, and can never be, enough to make a

Paired up: oped and leader appear on the penultimate pages of the first section. The Gothic masthead on the leader maintains the newspaper's links with its 140-year past

per has become the subject of heated dinner party conversations in suburban Johannesburg.

The fact is, though, that McNeill got it wrong because he appears unable to adjust to the dynamics of dramatically changing circumstances and demands in a dramatically changing country. What worked in Fleet Street in the '60s is well and good ... for Fleet Street in the '60s. This is South Africa in the age of nascent, fragile, skittish, unformed democracy - and burgeoning electronic media.

I was sorry McNeill got so carried away in his attack, because it forced me to answer when I was

asked why I thought he was quite so furious. The fact is that he had himself applied earlier, unsuccessfully, for the job of design consultant on the *Cape Argus* re-

launch. So perhaps Garcia's appointment had something to do with the subsequent apoplexy?

He also allowed his rage to blind him in terms of professional analysis: a calmer look would have showed him that far from being gimmicky, the *Cape Argus* design is probably the most simple, disciplined and user-friendly in the country - ask the people who know, the subs. Anyway, perhaps Richard will have cooled down enough in a year or so to look again at the *Cape Argus*, unjaundiced.

I've said it before and will say it again: design on its own is not, and can never be, enough to make a

Bud Greenspan: A shrewd, romantic and fresh view of the Bid



Light, active yet serene Olympic Bid-maker Bud Greenspan says the city has what it takes

Bud Greenspan has made no secret about his feelings for the Olympics, but he has a deeper regard for the results of the Olympic Games than he would like to admit. ... (The following is an edited version of a recent interview with Bud Greenspan, who is now in Cape Town, South Africa, for the opening ceremony of the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens.) ...

Everything else - politics, sponsors, knee-jerk reactions, newspapers - is just a distraction. ... (The question is, are the capabilities there? I think they certainly are. If you look at the technical progressions, ...)

People paper: the Argus 2 front page carries an interview, says what the personality thinks of Cape Town and puffs sport

newspaper succeed. I also believe in a form of perpetual revolution, that the tweaking and improvement of a living title will never be complete.

But we believe at the Cape Argus that the amount of inventiveness, care and concentration which has gone into the packaging of the paper will bear ripe fruit for us in time, as readers come to

accept that the whole is indeed greater than the sum of the parts.

We have a long way to go yet and I believe that content and all other elements will improve immeasurably in the coming year, as we get better at driving the vehicle we have assembled.

It is a little-recognised fact, but newspaper relaunches are always subject to the delayed reaction phe-

nomenon: if innovations have caught on, it will be recognised some months down the line. But we have made an exciting start, and our paper is being talked about again; it is alive and growing.

One reader's delightful early response to the new paper was this: Dear Sir, Your newspaper reeks of youth. I think he meant it unkindly, but I don't see it that way at all.

The Commonwealth Press Union brought journalists from 40 countries to a conference in Cape Town in October 1996. The following six-page focus presents selected papers delivered at the occasion.

editor or publisher:

DEBATE

TON VOSLOO
Executive Chairman
Naspers

MULLING OVER the title of our discussion, editor or publisher and the invidiousness of deciding which of the two shall survive, it seems pretty obvious that without the editor there is no publisher!

Seen from my perspective as a life-long journalist/editor turned publisher, one should take a holistic view and say: the publisher is there to complement the editor, and as a team they should address the taxing problem of survival of the fittest.

That is the philosophy of the publishing house I run and there are no real energy-sapping debates between "them" and "us". From both sides we work towards the same end result. The better your publications, the better the bottomline of the group.

What is certainly true, is that only the fittest will survive the encroachment of the immediacy brought about by the revolution in information and the on-line technology. We are well and truly linked to the global information village and the concomitant internationalisation of our business.

The best way to survive is to roll with the punches. Speaking as a South African publisher, one has the slight advantage of not being at the bleeding edge of technology. That is the prerogative of the technology fonts of the world in the USA, Japan and Western Europe. One is able to utilize the best proven technologies and apply it to your advantage.

But we have our own difficulties common to developing or lesser developed nations. One has to contend with a lack of skills, or the costly business of training or re-skilling people; the general back-log of literacy in society; the lower level of economic attainment of the nation in a plural society.

How does one then shape a viable publishing business in such an unpromising environment? I'd like to share a few thoughts on coming to terms with what could be viewed as a glorious opportunity.

- Don't waste valuable time by delaying the introduction of time-saving technology. Time saved in production in the editorial and other production run-ups, leads to improved products and better marketing opportunities.

- Don't fret too much on the clamour by unions on job retention. In my tenure of 14 years we have created a thousand more jobs (16 per cent) in total through the new opportunities that were brought about by new technology. We have cut hundreds of less productive

jobs, retrained hundreds and through natural attrition and constructive agreements with the unions, reached a situation of being leaner and meaner than ever before in terms of productivity.

- Adopt the holistic approach to publishing. If you have no stake in pay television, it's probably too late! By that I mean that the key to great areas of business lies in digitization. The break-up and immediate transmission of words and figures and their reconstitution create new opportunities in publishing, and we are only at the beginning of that phase in communications.

Publishers have to be alert to these opportunities and unfortunately we outside the so-called G7 nations, have no place to hide. The big guys are in a position of moving in.

That bad news can be off-set by virtue of the fact that in nations on the road to modernisation and fuller literacy there is scope for integrated paper-bound publishing. In South Africa millions of people are only now getting electricity and better schooling. I don't think they will all be weaned to the PC at home and totally away from paper in the next decade or two, and besides if you take the holistic view, you'll gear yourself to be represented in the opportunities available in both avenues of publishing, that is on screen and on paper.

We have had fantastic success in turning the challenge of multilingualism to the publishing environment to huge profit by cloning an Afrikaans weekly magazine into English. Both are now the top sellers in their mass market.

We have done the same with our Afrikaans financial weekly, publishing it in English, and we have just successfully relaunched a monthly aimed at the main upcoming market into a weekly in English and Zulu (the last being the language spoken by most South Africans).

Publishing can only flourish in a profit-driven environment and I am happy to state that we now have more media freedom in all respects than in our total recorded history of 346 years! A darkish cloud looms in the misguided perceptions of influential people in government that imbalances in press ownership, printing and distribution can brought about through penalising successful groups by compelling them to undertake unprofitable tasks.

The quickest route to media balance has been taking place at breath-taking speed the last two years, in which whole chunks of TV,

radio and print media have been resourced to the previous have-nots. We are in the throes of a media revolution and a wise government will let that action take its course.

The absolute and overriding qualification is that publishers should always attach more importance to good editorial talent than even editorial people think they



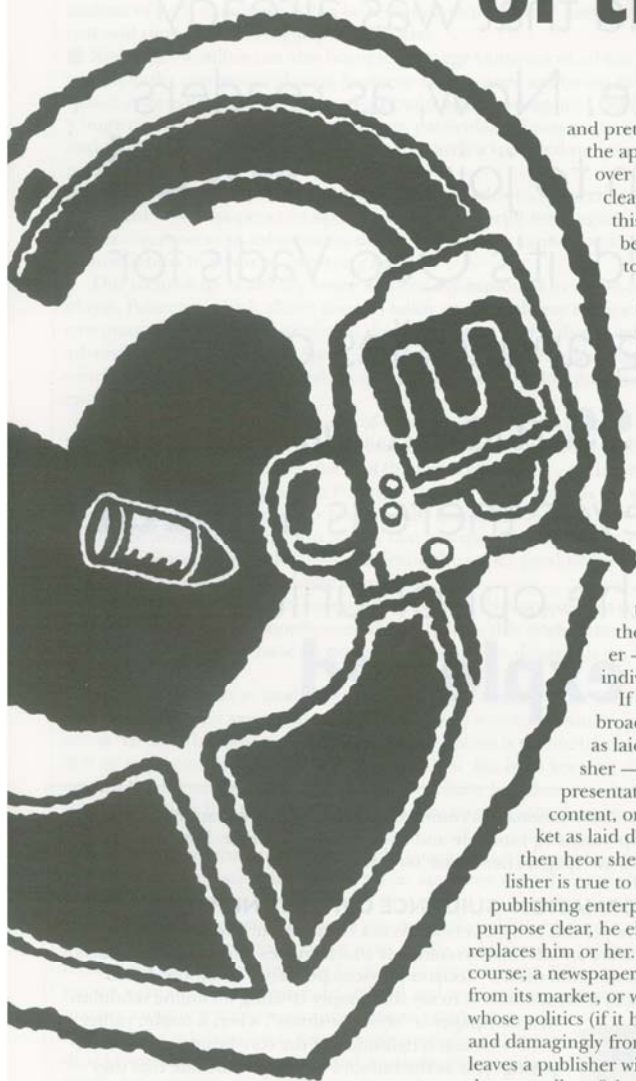
deserve! Publishing is about marshalling intellectual capital and building valuable titles and products around those circles of intellectual capital.

Once you have these priorities lined up in their correct sequence, you can look forward to surviving the challenges of the technological revolution we are experiencing. Let no one who says newspapers, magazines and books on paper are history go unchallenged. In printed form they provide the yeast for all other forms of publishing.

So the editor and publisher are of necessity in the same straitjacket. They both have a 100 percent interest in joint survival, not at the exclusion of the other.

survival

of the fittest



and pretty well everything else in the apparatus of newspapering over the last 45 years — I am clear on one thing at least and this is the pecking order between publisher and editor.

The publisher personally takes on the rights and responsibilities of a free press, or a half-free press, or a press quiescent to the centres of power, depending on where he or she lives, the moment the newspaper is launched. The publisher delegates these rights and responsibilities to the editor. The editor crafts the news-paper to reflect the policies and perhaps, the ideologies of the publisher — who may of course be an individual, a board or a trust.

If the editor strays from the broad mission of the newspaper, as laid down by the publisher — be it in terms of politics, presentation, quality, balance of content, or identification of the market as laid down by the publisher — then he or she cannot survive. If the publisher is true to the stated purpose of his publishing enterprise, and has made that purpose clear, he either redirects the editor or replaces him or her. There can be no middle course; a newspaper aimlessly meandering from its market, or whose quality is falling, or whose politics (if it has any) veer significantly and damagingly from the will of its publisher, leaves a publisher with no choice. The editor is the controller of the product, its public reputation, and its market success. If those fail, so has the editor.

But, of course, within that clear framework lie many subtleties, frequently tensions, and sometimes conflict. As managing director of Times Newspapers in London, I well recall Harold Evans — that icon for campaigning editors everywhere, and a fellow-director —

casually divulging to the whole editorial staff of the *Sunday Times* the outcome of a mighty confidential board meeting which had taken place only an hour or so before.

Taxed with what I regarded as indiscretion bordering on the betrayal of his duties as a director, Harry Evans expressed a personal conflict caused by his being both an editor and a director — effectively editor and part-publisher. He felt strongly, he said, that he had to keep faith with his hand-picked and highly talented editorial team. There was tension between his staff and the policies of the board and, though he was a party to those policies, he felt a strong obligation to his journalists not to withhold important information which might affect them. He offered to resign from the board, to protect his integrity as editor.

Harry's offer was not taken up, but the incident illustrates the conflict that can arise when an editor/director has such strong ideals.

Should an editor also be a director of his newspaper? There is an argument, and it's cogent enough, that he shouldn't sit on the board. This is the "ivory tower" point of view: Don't burden him or her with business worries, don't deflect energies by requiring attendance at board meetings. Keep him or her content to do the job, editing the newspaper, blissfully unaware of rising newsprint prices, impending industrial action, pressroom problems, escalating property costs, growing pressures on advertising revenues....

I must confess that, all things being equal, I hold the opposite point of view. If the editor has the publisher's trust, has proved to be consistent, and can adapt his or her considerable intelligence and decision-making abilities to the broader aspects of the business, why consign this asset to the outer circle?

Of course, on the board, an editor will promote the case for more editorial space, higher paging and a bigger budget. But, again within reasonable bounds, the editor surely has the right to protect the means of his or her own success which is measured more often than not by the cold declaration of the monthly ABC return. The priorities of the business as a whole shouldn't be endangered by an editor's argument; that, after all, is surely why the chairman and the chief executive are there!

DEBATE

DUGAL NISBET-SMITH
Director
The Newspaper
Society, UK

THE QUESTION, of course, is a non sequitur. Publishers need editors; without publishers there would be no editors. But the question also implies a competitive, even a combative, relationship — and one has to accept that this can exist.

As both an editor and a chief executive —

newspapers & the 'net online future

Print is not dead.

Against the hype-mongers who see paper publications going the way of the dodo, print still has a long future. It is true that circulations of newspapers have fallen in first world countries: the UK down 18% — or more than four million newspaper buyers less each day — since 1990. But in developing countries, sales are booming. Between 1991 and 1995, India recorded a 33% increase; Malaysia 24% and Singapore 15%.

And although advertising market share continues to shrink in the majority of countries, ad revenues are still continuing to increase almost everywhere — again especially in the developing countries. It is the case that these developing countries are moving off a small base, but let us not ignore the fact that India, for instance, with almost 30 million sales a day in 1994, stands third, behind Japan and the USA, in the world's top circulation statistics.

These trends look set to continue for at least ten years, with newspapers more than holding their own against competing media. Yet, if editors and publishers are shrewd, they'll put energy into going online, even if the threat to their advertising or readership is still medium-term. The reason: the Internet is, for now, less a threat than, first and foremost, an immediate opportunity to complement print publishing.

Newspapers in the Commonwealth, at least, have not stood still, including even those whose existing print readers are still far from having online access. It appears that just 20 of 49 Commonwealth countries have no Web presence as yet², although online publishing is bursting out at such a rate that this information is probably superceded as each new week unfolds. The point is that even the world's poorest nations are getting their newspapers online.

And it is not just national publications entering cyberspace. There is also the online publication, *India Journal*, which has its content created in Bangalore in south India, then gets wired across to the USA where it is designed and edited in New York, and is finally distributed via two hypermarkets in New Jersey where many expatriate Bangaloreans are settled.³

Nor does the picture of national newspapers going online reflect things like the experience of the London-based *Electronic Telegraph*, where an entirely unexpected and rather large constituency of readers was discovered: "wired" Asian immigrants on the east coast of the USA with a passion for cricket coverage which American media failed to quench. Then there is the Shri Lankan *Sunday Observer* paper whose online version (<http://www.lanka.net/lakehouse/>) takes adverts from local families seeking would-be bridegrooms in the diaspora.

Why should newspapers be going online — especially when most see little early prospect of financial payback? Overall, there are four distinct rationales, followed in varying and implicit degrees around the world. These are: an infor-

As latecomers to the Internet, newspapers found a **medium** and a world that was already made. Now, as readers begin to join the **wired** world, it's Quo Vadis for the granddaddies of the **mass** media. **GUY BERGER** believes there is a **future** — if the opportunities are fully **exploited**.

mational-guidance rationale, a community-communications rationale, a guardianship-watchdog rationale and a journalistic rationale. Put these all together and newspapers need have no fear of the Net.

THE INFORMATION-GUIDANCE OPPORTUNITY:

"Although we publish newspapers we do not consider ourselves newspaper publishers. ... we are an information company which creates information products to satisfy information needs," declares Mexican publisher Alejandro Junco.⁴

The logic of this statement is to say that simply creating an online rendition of a newspaper is "shovelbusiness", when it ought, rather, to be a radical redefinition of the core business of newspapering. Just as the railways discovered too late that they were in the transport business, and motorised vehicles rendered them near obsolete, so too do newspapers have to consider what business they're in.

Now, some, like Junco, see themselves as fundamentally in the information business. In this scenario, a printed newspaper, an online service, even a fax service — these are all just so many ways to execute the business. There is some value in stressing information. But British internet commentator, Ray Hammond, believes if this means competing

COMMONWEALTH NEWSPAPERS ONLINE Nov 96

Africa:	25
Asia:	10
Caribbean:	12
Pacific:	16
Canada, UK:	60
Malta:	4

newspapers and the 'net: the online future

in hard news, newspapers will die. In his view, if a newspaper deals in tabloid style entertainment: it has a hope of surviving.³

On the contrary, as Birgir Magnus, Swedish chief of McKinsey and Company, observes, for newspapers the entertainment business entails powerful competition from television, magazines, CD-roms, video and online services.⁶ And Jorgen Ejbol, editor of Denmark's *Morgenavisen Jylands-Posten* says: "If you repeat what is on television or in magazines, you devalue what newspapers can do. Let them do what they do best. The solid foundation of a newspaper is information; entertainment is only a small part of it."⁷

Newspapers, then, are in the information, rather than the entertainment business, and this is their strength. So what are the advantages of extending this business to online publishing? Several major benefits stand out:

- Online delivery makes distance defunct, meaning that far-flung potential audiences such as emigrants can be recruited to the reader ranks without the cost and time of delivering paper products.
- Newspapers online can also begin to leverage value out of all the information wasted in the conventional print business: stories need not be cut to fit paper space; information can be archived and sold again and again. I believe there is a huge market for online press clippings, particularly if newspapers collaborate and establish 'one-stop' search engines to search a specified range of newspapers' archives.
- Internet allows for personalised information delivery, converting "Le Monde to Le Moi."⁸ Newspapers can open a new and powerful front against mass media competitors in information delivery by using a sniper service rather than a blunderbuss in terms of targeting readers.

This technology is already being successfully exploited by a non-newspaper player, Pointcast, which allows users to tailor a news delivery service that arrives continuously on their computers in the background and is displayed (along with adverts) as a screensaver. In South Africa, *Business Day* offers a similar service which delivers requested content, (eg. information on gold mining) as it emerges, as e-mail.

What this narrowcasting version of online publishing also signals is the likelihood of newspapers establishing online partnerships with stock exchanges, press release clearing houses, tax and finance advisers, etc., to deliver a package containing a range of data on a Pointcast model, which extends far wider than the information that the paper traditionally marshals by itself.

- Online news publishing also means that newspapers can begin to differentiate their information outlets — specialising the paper product for a market that is different to that for the online market.⁹

This all sounds excellent, except for one thing. Newspapers do not have sole custody of information supply, even if they believe this is what they do best. In particular, they do not have an exclusive franchise on doing this on the Internet.

To go on Internet as another string to the bow against other media competitors is to find these same players — plus entirely new competitors — also in this arena. In fact, the most popular news service online is said to be not any of the 800 or so newspapers now on the net, but CNN. Far from keeping the line against the merchants of images, newspapers have had their text-based territory invaded. Others like the mighty Microsoft are moving into the online information business.

It seems, then, that newspapers can't ignore the wired world, but nor are they guaranteed information hegemony there, any more than they are often losing it in the battle beyond.

Also online is a massive range of raw, unmediated information produced by groups whose prime activity is not mass media publishing, but who with online technology can now get into the business at minimal cost. Whereas once newspapers were the public sources of (edited and summarised) government information, company statements and pressure group pitches, much of this information is increasingly available online direct from source, and unabridged for those wanting the detail. Information on the Internet is, in short, no monopoly preserve for traditional mass media, let alone newspapers. (This is not even to mention businesses, many of whom now steal from their print-ad budgets to pay for their own direct, online publicity).

All in all, the Net is crowded with information suppliers, all potential rivals to newspapers. Indeed, because of the global nature of the cybermarket, each individual online newspaper is now partially competing with every other

Not even big brand print will transfer status to the anarchic, youthful, churning, promiscuous and wild world of the web.

paper, and even your unique local information may not attract readers in the nether-regions who have interests in more general, global matters on the one hand, and their own localities on the other.

Going online is to enter a context that is a great leveller, and not even big brand print products will necessarily transfer their status and appeal to the anarchic, youthful, churning, promiscuous and wild world of the Web.

So what does this mean for newspapers redefining themselves as information companies and going into online publishing? Frankly, it means refining this definition of the business, by drawing on other characteristics that are currently part of the print newspaper business. One of these is the narrative role of newspapers: the way in which they turn data into meaning.

Basically, the amount of information and entertainment online (and offline) means that users may look to a trusted newspaper and its team to help them navigate the net, to make sense of it and of the data available online and elsewhere. Says British journalism professor, Peter Cole: "The superhighway needs sherpas and guides. ... Use the Net if you must. Exploit the various new forms of distributing information. But remember this, the most adept collectors of information, the best organisers and electors of information, the best explainers of information, the best analysers of information are print journalists."¹⁰

In this point of view, newspapers are not only in the information business, but in the guidance (and even informal education) business. Certainly, the Internet makes it easy for papers to play this role: with hypertext, it is easy to supply background to the news for those looking to make sense of a scattered universe. And even where the journalistic function of packaging and telling may be bypassed, there is a role to act as an information broker. This means providing services for sorting out and selecting from the daily avalanche of information, and placing hotlinks precisely to the full-length original documentation now offered online by governments, companies and pressure groups.¹¹

This, then, is a special twist to the informational opportunity, highlighting how a newspaper on the Net needs to go far beyond simply putting its news online. Indeed, it may highlight a similar lesson for print products: giving guidance to the reader in a context of info-overload.

THE COMMUNICATIONS-COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY:

Another rationale for a newspaper to publish in cyberspace is not the information component of the business, but the communication aspect. Basically, newspaper content, whether online or on print, is dead, inactive information. As noted by futurist, Paul Saffo, the web is full of captured, pinned-down information, as if in an information-mausoleum. This is not without value, but it is insufficient for the online medium. The Internet, he points out, is now coming alive with Java software and Virtual Reality Modelling Language — opening up the possibility, indeed the necessity, of a three-dimensional newscast.¹²

As Net technology continues to explode, newspapers online increasingly will experience the opportunity, indeed the necessity, of competing with television and radio in visual and audio terms. It will not be enough to defend text territory against these media: offensive approaches will be necessary, and the distinction between them will begin to blur at the centre.

This is a start, but not yet the fully-fledged communication business, however. Saffo remarks that a reader accessing an online publication may guess there are 200 other people reading (viewing?) the same, but you only know they are there because the server is so slow. For him, the next chapter in the Internet is interacting with them. Not connecting people to information, but people to people in information-rich environments.

A number of newspapers are already expanding from online information services, into communication as well — by running bulletin boards or newsgroups linked to their online service. For South Africa's *Mail & Guardian*, this has proved a vibrant forum for discussion by a small — but influential — sector of its readers. For the *Electronic Telegraph's* Ben Rooney, it has meant two hours a day answering e-mail. But he opines, it's good for his marketing because the readers tell him exactly what they want.¹³

All this is great stuff in the Saffo perspective. Because, in effect, in this view, newspapers are not so much in the information or communication businesses, as ultimately in the community creation business.

This is a theme echoed across the board, particularly in industrialised countries. Winning papers, says Sheldon Lasda of US Gannett Rochester Newspapers, are those who are reworking their relationship with readers, in a context

The next chapter in the Internet is not connecting people to information, but people to people in information-rich environments.

newspapers and the 'net: the online future

where these people have more and more choices and alternative relationships.¹⁴ By attracting readers into its discussion group, the *Mail & Guardian* entrenches its relationship with them through a dynamic, interactive service.

The paper, in other words, positions itself as the metaphorical centre of a community. It can do this because online newspapers are not just online, but communicative.¹⁵ The technology itself enables newspapers to build relationships within and between readers in ways that go far beyond what unidirectional print publishing can do. The reader, in this view, is an allrounded human, with not only information needs, but communication needs that a newspaper can also help satisfy. This is far from a relationship with a mere sales-price paying customer.

According to Young and Rubicam executive Michael Samet, if a newspaper is a representation of its community, it should consider literally becoming an internet and telecoms service centre in its community. This is the potential awaiting Nasionale Pers, the first newspaper group in South Africa to get into the service provision business. "Instead of being 'newspaper-centric' on the Internet, the newspapers should be 'community-centric'." This has advertising spin-offs, says Samet, because it can help advertisers get personal with their target markets.¹⁶

To be in such a position is also, in Birgir Magnus's view, to be able to act as gateway to the Internet — and as such to develop a unique, marketable space as well as an understanding of where users are going. Like Internet guru Nicholas Negroponte, he points to the possibility of newspapers getting into transactional services through their online activities. When readers can order books or book plane tickets through their trusted online community paper, newspaper publishers will be able to take a cut.

This kind of role links the newspaper business outside of itself, and indeed many commentators today are signalling the need for newspapers to form partnerships with a range of other companies. Of course, high amongst this is the ease of joint-publishing partnerships between newspapers across nations, made possible by online technologies and the growth of transnational information markets. Such an instance in South Africa is the *Mail & Guardian*, a fusion of the local *Weekly Mail* and the UK *Guardian* into an entirely new product with both a print and an online version.

But there are more opportunities than only being a community-creator and consolidator. Just as well, seeing that although newspapers may have an accumulated historical advantage in this, they are by no means the only actors creating communities online. The very technology itself has a myriad of communities constituted by listservs and newsgroups where millions of people talk to each other quite independently of mass media institutions.

The bulk of readerships of many countries' newspapers may be nowhere close to being potential online communities, but one should not underestimate the potential for the cosmopolitan, upper-end of readerships to be drawn into online communities — and even developing countries' editors need to consider what will make their papers' specific online community the primary one for this group. In this respect, there is, fortunately, something special that newspapers can bring to the cybertable.

THE GUARDIANSHIP OPPORTUNITY:

Modernity and the new media have had a profound impact on what is closest to the hearts of editors, i.e. not only on newspapers as media institutions, but on newspaper journalism as such. Most important here is the ethic — the mission, indeed the imperative of journalism — and this is what signals the guardianship opportunity.

Swedish researchers Peter Dahlgren and others, observe that there has been a weakening in recent years of media's traditional boundaries between politics and culture (high/pop), advertising, PR, entertainment and journalism.¹⁷ They believe that the classical paradigm of journalism is waning. The craft, at least in ideal terms, has traditionally been seen as providing independent reports and analyses of real events and processes, addressing a public that has the same public culture. There has been a narrative of accuracy and impartiality. Now all this is less clear-cut.

TV is partly to blame for having destabilised the classic notion that journalism provides as its main function, information, and particularly rational information. Journalists have turned into experts and media stars, and experts and media stars have become journalists — not least the appointment of the UK's very own Sarah Ferguson. TV's discourse,

Newspapers can bring something special to the cyberspace — the ethos of journalism.

In the medium term, cyberspace will be more valuable for the input, rather than the output, side of journalism.

say the Swedish researchers, addresses spectators and consumers rather than citizens, thereby even altering the political relevance of journalism.

The situation today then is one where the vast majority of media output is not journalistic in nature, and the competition for attention to the media must also be understood partly as one between journalism and non-journalism. But it is also a situation that has led to a blurring of the distinctions between journalism and non-journalism — to infotainment, Larry King Live and Oprah Winfrey.

Whether the Internet proves to be primarily an entertainment rather than an informational medium remains to be

seen. Either way, though, there is one special area where newspaper journalists can strike a blow for classic journalism online. There already are many pretenders to acting as guides, gateways and community-creators on the Net, but few will venture into the turf traditionally occupied by the press: viz, that of fourth estate.

Newspapers have always played roles greater than gleaners, interpreters and disseminators of information.¹⁸ They have done something more than create communities. They have represented these communities, reflected the public interest in its manifest forms, by taking on the role of trusted tribunes of the people and watchdogs on the powerful. Certainly, pressure groups will use online technology to prosecute their particular cause. But the beauty of newspapers is that they do not play a sectarian role.

The fourth estate will not be immune from scrutiny by the fifth estate — the globally linked millions of people who make up the Internet. But newspapers alone amongst other institutions, including other media institutions, undoubtedly bring a uniquely critical quality to bear in the online world — and indeed also upon the online world. This is a core journalistic ethic, and perhaps one providing greatest leverage in both print and electronic arenas for newspapers.¹⁹

THE JOURNALISTIC OPPORTUNITY:

Online technologies impact on newspapers beyond highlighting their watchdog role. The journalistic imperative of guardianship stays the same, but the form, content and methods of journalism in Internet production change.

As regards form, the Netmedia conference at London's City University recently suggested: "Journalists want to be freed from the need to fill holes around advertisements, and they want to be creative with multimedia and hypertext — but many readers just want fast facts without the fuss."²⁰ Nonetheless, the time will arrive where in all likelihood, "we won't just be print journalists, or radio journalists, or television journalists. We may well be digital, multimedia journalists."²¹

Will the audio-visual potential on the Net come to predominate over the purely textual, and what will this mean for traditional wordsmiths? Will stories be written (produced?) to screen-bite length, with other layers behind? What will be the designs, colours and graphical qualities that succeed in online publishing?

All this is still in process, and it is too early to say. Some of the results may trickle through to print versions in ways we do not yet know, in the same kind of way that music video language, with simultaneous diverse distracting messages that compete for attention, has come into CNN television news. It may be that the very multi-media functionality of online publishing will reinforce the worth of words on a page in the print world. All this remains to be created — by newspaper journalists and their audiences in particular. A missed opportunity if it is left to the e-zines, the business websites and the other newsmedia online.

What will be different, has to be different, will be journalistic content. If online publishing eventually pays, could it subsidise print? Could the money it saves on paper, printing and distribution costs, lead to a greater percentage of budgets being allocated to journalism as such — with better quality content as a result? There's an opportunity, albeit long-term.

Content anyway needs to better reflect the escalating developments of our times. Newspapers, whether online or on paper, need to acknowledge that their readers' experiences, identities and media exposure are changing. Editors will need to take not a traditional newspaper-centric point of view, but a reader-centred point of view: be pull-driven in their editorial contents, not push driven. A regular column on web surfing means less space for other information, but it is becoming as essential as the TV listings. Another opportunity.

► continued on page 40

Newsvalue

Don't simply follow the fashion of *The Sun*, says NEVILLE STACK, editorial consultant, syndicated columnist and former editor.

THE TALK ABOUT the Internet reminds me of the story of the early days of the telephone, when the mayor of New York made his first phone call. He put down the phone and declared to the assembled press: "Wonderful. This invention will change our lives. One day every city will have one."

The Internet may be regarded by some newspapers as a threat to their future, but my concern is the enemy within. The enemy of mediocrity, confusion, professional incompetence — or worse still, complacency. Complacency is a terrible disease, you don't know you have got it until you die.

In a changing society, the press has not kept pace. Design has changed, yes. But papers are now design-led, not ideas-led.

There is a problem of too much competence, of what Marshall McLuhan called the tyranny of professionalism. In its name, we accept universal techniques and wisdom. But are they still valid? The professional is what tends to be copied, it becomes the fashion. Fashions come and fashions go. The personality of the newspaper is essential, but is the paper going to be always the same? Or will it change as fashion dictates?

The bowler hat is no longer fashionable in society, but it is still worn in many newspaper offices. Not physically, but in spirit.

There is only one direction newspapers can go: forwards. But go back and see if the language and content of the press has altered since 1937. You'll get an unpleasant shock.

Our communication skills have not evolved. If transportation had evolved as "fast" as our newspapers have, foreigners would come to conferences in Cape Town by ship, possibly rowing.

People pay for their paper in advance, taking it on trust. We have an implied contract with the readers to give them what they want; to surprise them and add value to their lives. Yet too often journalists are writing for one another, mentioning obscure people and in jokes — patronising readers by making jokes for the sub-editor sitting alongside. That's bad for the personality of the paper. It produces a split personality.

The tyranny of professionalism requires that we must evolve with our craft. But where are we going to?

Rupert Murdoch, that prince amongst philosophers, once quoted the pundit who said: "You don't lose money by underestimating the public's taste." His direction is down. Undercutting the opposition by giving even more naked ladies, awful scandals, more fun.

But down we go too. Trivial news agendas. Bigger pictures and smaller news. Space is occupied by rubbish for design's sake. What information and comment are left out?

Too many newspapers clone from the worst in journalism, not many are looking for a higher form. Alas, those that are looking, are failing.

We need to look at a different set of values. Not only the body count and the formula "if it bleeds, it leads". What is the news value that the readers want? Leadership, original ideas, lateral thinking, oblique points of view. It boils down to adding value to the reader's life.

That's what news really is. When a reader puts a paper down, he or she doesn't say, or even realise, but life is that bit better. Maybe in something as trivial as getting a recipe or as important as advice on how to vote.

The ephemeral media don't work as well as print. Entertainment and snap news coverage is great for TV, wonderful for radio. In South Africa, these are the most important means of essential communication. But you have to be physically present to receive it. Or you have to ask your neighbours to tell you what they think it said. But print is permanent, accountable. It can be kept, checked and discussed. This is why South Africa — and other countries — urgently needs more newspapers, with properly trained and motivated journalists.

A journalist need not be a dissident, but should always be a dissenter. When I talked my way into my first job, my training was to be insulted and humiliated by old men who smoked and drank and passed on outdated

practices. I got fired for insolence.

When I became an editor, I resolved I would not let my staff go through that wasteful experience. I argued that the chairman would not let his Mercedes be driven by a driver without experience or training, so why then did he let incompetents drive his newspaper?

Today, in the name of economy, managements are letting loose children to do grown-up jobs. Managements must be made to realise that untrained staff are false economy.

In my editing days, we ran an induction course, and exposed young people for two weeks to ideas and some principles of journalism. At the end, they were not competent journalists, but they had, in effect, a licence to learn. They could go further then, with our help.

The philosophy of managements today tends to regard the newspaper not as a living thing — a creature that is greater than the sum of its parts — but as a product. I use the product argument to say that wanton slashing of budgets would result in a corrupted product. Too many of today's managements don't hesitate to compromise the product, by cutting staff and foreign bureaux.

But when the price of cocoa beans goes up, the makers of Mars bars willingly pay the price, not cut the specification, because they care desperately about the quality of their product. And because of that concern, the sales are buoyant.

In the current newspaper management culture, the first imperative is to slash budgets and the first casualty is usually the editorial training scheme. "Where's the training scheme?". Most of us have suffered very badly in this way, and for some the false economies resulted in terminal decline.

In South Africa, protest journalism developed into an art-form. But after protest, what? We should be going for service journalism. We should uphold the principle of adding value to people's lives. Not following the degraded practices and the worst excesses of the gutter papers.

The Sun, the British tabloid, sells more papers per day than all the quality papers put together. But is it really acceptable journalism to run a competition around the royal scandal with the words: "Who would you rather date — Fergie or a goat?"

That newspaper has a very clever, professionally brilliant staff. But what are their values? Are they trained in professional principles and personal scruples? No. It is said that the editor of *The Sun* thinks that ethics is a county in England.

If you are a brain surgeon, before opening a textbook, you have to subscribe to a code of ethics. So why cannot journalists have standards they can be proud of?

Put all these points together, and you have guide to the nature of the complacency disease.

"It is said that the editor of *The Sun* thinks that ethics is a county in England."



HOW HEALTHY IS YOUR NEWSPAPER?

Here's a checklist of questions an alert editor should ask every morning:

- is my newspaper ideas-led or a follower of old-fashioned fashion?
- is my newsdesk a powerhouse of ideas, or just a passive processor of what comes in?
- does my staff realise that bad news comes unbidden, but good news has to be sought for?
- are my journalists hunters?
- do our follow-ups and supplements always read like last year's?
- do we challenge the intellect of new staff in an induction course? Or is our training policy to sit them down next to the most incompetent, de-motivated journalist because he or she is the only one with time to talk to them? (Thus perpetuating a downward spiral of ignorance and de-motivation?)
- do I try to find out exactly why my staff leave (it isn't always money)?
- do we have a skill development programme, so that our journalists become more competent all the time?
- is our problem thinking up ideas?

A case for constructive journalism

**New Nation editor
GABU TUGWANA
says that
emphasising
development news
strengthens the
media watchdog.**

IT IS INDISPUTABLE that popular mainstream media still dictates many column centimetres of editorial space to sensational reporting rather than democratic debates on reconstruction and development of our new society.

For instance, there is insufficient publicity on activities of Parliamentary portfolio committees. Yet these committees are a powerful instrument of our maturing democracy. They have vast powers which enable them to summon army, police and even intelligence chiefs, to publicly account for activities or expenditure within their departments.

There is also a lack of detailed coverage of government delivery of social services. Many communities who previously had no access to clean piped water now enjoy a service taken for granted all over the developed world. Some of these communities had to travel kilometres in search of water. But when they were provided with water taps within reach, their story was summarised and buried deep in the newspapers or simply treated as a caption and a picture. An unusual water provision project of a rural community of Winterveldt in the North province scarcely drew attention when the community joined hands with the government and private sector to secure clean water.

It is true that news is, by definition, about events out of the ordinary. But this should not be seen in a one-sided way which only sensationalises issues. Self-initiatives of a society taking advantage of new conditions created by our young democracy is also part of this unusual story. People in many developing nations tend to wait for government to bring development to their door step. It is rare that the community approaches government to provide necessary material and expertise to enable them to change their situation. This is, therefore, an unusual story to be told in a two-year-old democracy.

However, this is not to suggest that the media should be like a tame dog in a young democracy. A self-respecting media will chose to cover all aspects of society in order to reflect a complete picture. And emphasising development does not compromise, but in fact strengthens, a true watchdog of society. South Africa has entered a long and hard journey to social equity which deserves good coverage in our media.

There is no doubt that our country is faced by big challenges. These challenges were heightened by great praises showered by the world on our "miraculous" transition to democracy. Ironically, the challenges have also created flashes of tension between the government and the media. The government has been complaining that the media is not presenting a fair and balanced view of the changes taking place in the country.

But one must also point out that government tends to be its own worst enemy on certain occasions. This is particularly true when entangled in a controversial issue. It either holds back information or releases conflicting views. One of the recent examples is its handling of the aids awareness play and the manner in which the contract was awarded. Another matter was the donation made to ANC by a hotel magnate said to have donated to the ANC and the organisation's deputy president handsomely, and believed to be running away from prosecution for bribery. The government has been quick to blame the media on these issues but has also failed to praise the media on constructive news coverage.

Our media operations tend to spend too much time admiring our own footwork. With our attitude, we risk losing focus on our goals. Media was one of the important partners in the struggle for freedom.

Reflecting the desires and aspirations of society at the time was enough to make us enemies of elements who resisted democracy.

The task of reflecting society is harder today because we have lost a sizeable number of skilled journalists to the private sector and government service. Our newsrooms are today largely staffed by younger and inexperienced journalists. Of these, there are far fewer with writing skills. This is particularly the case with journalists from disadvantaged communities. Lack of opportunities, both at education institutions and in the profession in the past, hampered their progress. Added to this, is a disadvantage that English — which they are expected to use at work — is not their mother tongue.

Faced with competition from the Internet and other sophisticated means of communication, newsprint needs to stay ahead by putting a lot of emphasis on writing and analysis. For this, you need journalists who are well-trained and equipped to read and interpret the situation correctly. This special species of personnel is an asset to the community — especially a community like ours which is going through transformation.

This is where training comes in. However, except for the emerging press during the country's states of emergency which put emphasis on in-house training, the mainstream press was not interested. The mainstream used their economic power to snatch some of the good students from the emerging press.

With the demise of the emerging press, one of the

great challenges facing our media is to meet the urgent need for large-scale training of journalists countrywide. Although we have training provided by the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ) in Johannesburg, I doubt that it can singly meet the current big need.

With the advent of our democracy, there is a growing number of free sheets and small community stations countrywide. Journalists and administrators of these projects will need good skills to sustain their projects. The responsibility of the newspaper, radio and television in covering and understanding issues in a trans-

forming society like ours, is greater than before and only skillful personnel can succeed to perform well.

We need more technicians, universities and even in-house training schemes to be able to adequately meet our needs. Maybe this is also an area where the Commonwealth Press Union can come in by providing resources and equipment. Here I'm talking about training in South Africa — where most people who need the skills are

**We need journalists to
strengthen democracy, by not
only being sensationalists, but
rather constructive foot-soldiers
who will be good custodians of
transformation.**

based — rather than the present exchange programmes which take journalists abroad. I have nothing against overseas programmes, but I think they will be more effective if they are done as advanced training catering mainly for journalist trainers or role model journalists who will impart skills to younger cadres.

The young South African democracy which has been described as a miracle worldwide, need not fail. One of the elements of supporting this model society is to produce skilled journalists. These are journalists who will help to strengthen democracy, by not only being sensationalists, but rather constructive foot-soldiers who will be good custodians of transformation. They will be well-equipped to monitor progress and help shape debates that create challenging direction to our democracy.

While keeping healthy markets to bankroll our publications, radio and television stations, our journalists should never lose sight of a much greater responsibility — participating fully in social and economic transformation of our society. True development of human beings involves much more than filling the cash tills.

There is an urgent need to give people a new sense of dignity, a new community experience and enjoyment of a fuller life in our newly-attained freedom.

If journalists fail in this regard, then our struggle for freedom would have been in vain.

fast track freeze-frame of the



MATHATHA TSEDU
Sowetan, Political Editor

SPEEDSTERS

HARVARD TEAM

- Dennis Cruywagen, Deputy editor, *Pretoria News*
- Ryland Fisher, Deputy Editor, *Cape Times*
- Rich Mkhondo, Independent Newspapers Foreign Correspondent, Washington.
- Kaiser Nyatumba, Political Editor, *The Star*
- Kanthen Pillay, New Enterprises Manager, Gauteng Newspapers
- Tyrone Seale, Assistant News Editor, *Cape Argus*
- Mathatha Tsedu, Political Editor, *Sowetan*
- Esther Waugh, Senior Political Writer and Parliamentary Correspondent, Independent Newspapers.

LOCAL TEAM

- Tyrone August, Features Editor, *Sowetan*
- Thabo Leshilo, Business Editor, *Business Report*
- Sol Makgabutlane, News Editor, *The Star*
- Prakash Naidoo, Senior writer, *Sunday Independent*
- Praveen Naidoo, Deputy Managing Editor, *Daily News*
- Colleen Ryan, Chief of Staff, Editorial, *The Star*
- Chris Steyn, Editor, Independent Newspapers Investigative Unit

INDEPENDENT Newspapers, South Africa's biggest English newspaper group, recently embarked on a training programme for senior black and women employees who could be earmarked for senior executive positions such as editors in the future.

The programme was in part due to a realisation by Independent Newspapers that if they are going to survive in the coming years, they need to train people who would run their papers.

While white journalists had access to training and advanced education in the past, and this was sufficient because the papers were in the main directed at whites, the future of papers is now black. If papers are to survive, they must woo more black readers and this means more black journalists, editors and other executives are needed and needed now.

The programme was also due to the pressure by civil and trade union organisations that pointed out that of the over 13 titles that the company owned, until very recently, only one, the *Cape Times*, was edited by a black person.

In a South Africa ruled by Nelson Mandela, how could this Irish-owned and -controlled company still continue, while it purports to have come into South Africa to help the democratic process?

The combination of these two factors saw Independent vote R1 000 000 to the training programme that brought 11 staff members, nine blacks and two white women and myself as a *Sowetan* employee to the programme.

As a functional and public relations exercise, the programme was designed to draw as much attention to itself as was possible, for this would help offset the questions of the absence of blacks in senior positions that the company's executives had grown tired of answering.

Press releases were therefore the order of the day, and part of the year-long programme included a six-to-seven week stint in the United States as part of the prestigious Nieman Foundation, which runs a world renowned programme for journalists.

The programme also included seminars at the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ) where various topics of interest to print journalists were dealt with. These included an assessment of the advance of broadcast media in South Africa, and how these developments impacted on the way newspapers reported news.

For example, one seminar on the broadcast media came to the conclusion that the changes at the SABC have made radio and television

news more credible. Thus, while in the past many people would only believe what they heard or saw on radio and TV after checking it out with the newspapers, many people now believe what the radio and TV broadcasts. These stations are also on-the-ball with news, and as such, breaking news becomes history by the time any paper prints the story. Newspapers have to come to terms with this, and many have not yet cottoned on to this change, and write breaking stories as if the readers have not yet heard about the event.

Discussions were also held with other journalists, and the programme participants were enlisted into the IAJ's programmes of planned conferences such as the African editors come-together, sometimes sparking debates amongst participants that they were being used by the IAJ to pursue its own interests.

The programme in the Boston and Cambridge in the US included a field survival exercise called Outward Bound which was a bonding exercise under duress, leadership training programmes by tutors associated with the Harvard Business School, journalism leadership programmes by Dr Bill Boyd of the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, and discussions on ethics and other challenges of the media today with people like Nieman Foundation curator, Mr Bill Kovach, Freedom Forum technology expert Adam Clayton Powell III, Boston Globe columnist Derrick Jackson and many others.

Boyd's programme was the longest, covering budgeting, coaching, choosing news stories, and exercises of critically assessing the Boston newspapers as well as three award-winning series run by different newspapers in several parts of the US.

The upshot of all this was discussion around the relevance of these issues to our own circumstances, and many of us felt that the process had opened our eyes to new areas and avenues of work that we had been neglecting.

These new areas included planning projects that could take a year to cover, where instead of just running with a story, you could choose a topic and go for it, research it and write. In other words, not just one good story but a series that could go for the whole year. Discussions on budgeting and advertising were areas that many of us had not dealt with before, having been content with just our journalistic abilities.

Before returning home, the group spent a few days in Washington, where they also visited the *Washington Post* and the Centre for International Journalists. The programme

ended in December, after the rest of the group (and new members added later) went through a gruelling process that included spending days at each floor of the company's main headquarters in Johannesburg learning how finance, advertising, circulation and printing work.

They also went through the other main centres of the company, Durban and Cape Town, learning the different ways in which these parts are the same as well as different.

A big debate, however, rages. What happens with the group since completing the programme in December? As the programme had been sold as 'editor material' for those from Independent Newspapers, (*Sowetan* did not make any such promise and I went in with no illusion of an editor's job waiting) what now?

It is quite clear that there are no editors' jobs waiting out there in those papers. Many of us understood that the rhetoric of the selling of the programme had much to do with the public relations exercise and as such had not sufficiently emphasised what this programme was really about: training.

And for those of us who saw this, we felt it was a situation that should be understood for what it was: A group of white executives trying to salve their consciences and take off the load of accusations of no black advancement in the company by spending R1 million.

Blacks in the programme had to also understand that they sorely needed the skills that the programme gave them, skills that they could use as editors if they were appointed, or as senior editorial executives which many if not all of us were.

And herein lies the way to the future.

To approach the training programme as nothing more than what it is. And for other companies to realise that senior editorial executives need to be prepared for the tasks ahead, especially companies such as the New Africa Publications Limited and the new owners of Times Media Ltd who must establish their own programmes, and for NAP to stop playing kiddyback like we did with my presence in that course.

It is a challenge that not only faces companies, but educational institutions too, to prepare curricula and programmes not for four years study at the university or technikon, but short gussy courses, focussed and directed at specific categories of trainees.

Are media owners, media workers and media teaching institutions ready for this challenge?

“Wasn’t Eugene Nyati the one who fibbed about his CV at Wits?”

The *Sunday Times* retained former University of North-West professor, GRAEME ADDISON, to set up a scheme to recruit and mentor young black journalists for long-term careers in the newspaper. He went on a 15 000km recruitment drive around South Africa, visiting most of the universities, technikons and commercial colleges that train journalists. He reached some damning conclusions...



Graeme Addison

THE PHONE WENT and it was Brian Pottinger, about to assume the role of editor of the *Sunday Times*, asking me to come to Johannesburg and set up a “mentoring” scheme. I readily said yes. After training journalists for 20 years I felt confident that we would find solidly trained students in the tertiary institutions.

Eight months down the line and I can truthfully report that everything is different when you look at media training from the perspective of an employer in the midst of transformation. This will probably annoy everyone, but the simple truth is that most journalism departments are doing a poor to bad job, and the media have done little to put them right.

Indeed, the media are part of the problem. A conspiracy between past governments and newspaper owners ensured that journalists were strapped into a straightjacket misleadingly called “objective journalism”. It wasn’t objective at all.

The Newspaper Press Union, colluding with the State, forced journalists to adopt a Code of Conduct that ruled out racial or sectional incitement and called for a responsible approach to security news. Incitement and responsibility were code words for suppressing the truth of what was really going on in the townships and other “key points” hidden from public view.

Newsriting SA-style became a technical exercise in truth avoidance. Today the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is exposing what really lay under the blanket of news SA-style. Although there were still models for

young journalists to admire (Rees, Day and Katzin on Muldergate, Jacques Pauw on the death squads) training was increasingly technical. Writing became more formulaic. We taught shorthand, interviewing, the 5 W’s & H and the Newspaper Press Union (NPU) code (a form of self-defence). With the arrival of the Atex system and DTP, editors cried out for competent, but not troublesome, recruits.

Have we put all that behind us? Today we are very conscious of the sins of the past, but we face a typically South African inability to move from rhetoric to operations.

The *Sunday Times* has now made a commitment to transformation by embarking on a programme to hire black journalists for positions up and down the ladder. This will fundamentally alter perspectives on what news is and who it’s for. The paper is adjusting its sales strategy to capture masses of new black readers.

The best thing about the current crop of students is that they have an excellent grasp of the democratic role of media. Students were not defensive of sectional interests, and they were dead set on wanting newspapers in particular to expose misdeeds in places of power.

Two generations of senior journalists have either emigrated or opted for internal exile in PR. Their loss has left newsrooms stripped bare and emotionally bleached. It’s time to revive the traditions of investigative journalism and crusading, but it will take more than formulaic teaching to achieve this.

The awareness of these changes is proving slow to penetrate our colleges.

It’s easy enough to criticise the journalism students, as if they were the problem. A belief that the products of journalism colleges can’t do the job has been an article of faith with case-hardened newspaper people for generations. Ironically, today many of the die-hards are themselves products of journalism departments. Perhaps they forget how it was for them. Perhaps a cynical attitude towards the academy is a mind-set that comes with doing the job for real.

I toured 19 institutions and interviewed 117 candidates, of whom about two-thirds were other than white, for internships at the *Sunday Times*. Six were finally selected. Another 20 are on a waiting-list to be placed with associated newspapers if I can prevail upon the editors to trust my judgements. My findings are based on 20-minute interviews and a two-hour written test of language skills and news awareness.

If I am provocative in what follows, it’s

deliberate. Most journalism students:

- don’t know how to craft a narrative
- don’t know how to proofread copy
- don’t read newspapers
- don’t follow current affairs on the airwaves
- don’t read good books for pleasure
- don’t prepare for interviews
- don’t know about critical developments in the media
- don’t know that they don’t know.

What do they know?

They know that they want a job and they understand that they must show enthusiasm for the company that’s interviewing them. They are desperately keen to impress but have little to impress with — few present books of personal cuttings or have any ideas for local stories. They lack the “consciousness of contemporaneity” as news-awareness has been called.

What are they good at? Preparing nicely typed CVs. In some cases, where the technology has had time to penetrate (such as at Rhodes and Natal Technikon) the students are whizzes at DTP and on the Internet. That’s fine, but I think we should remind ourselves that high-tech is no substitute for low cunning, a quality real journalists will always need.

Some students are very street-wise, coming from township or exile backgrounds; some are book-wise in the sense that they read for curiosity and to broaden their personal outlook on life. Most aren’t either of these things. They are what I would call laid-back legionnaires, waiting for life to happen to them. It will, of course; but it was not part of my brief to wait that long. A depressing picture of our youth? Not really.

As I said to start with, most leathery old newshounds have long ago lost the innocence of the university undergraduate. At age 20 I was no different. So I tried now to take an imaginative step into the world of the Me Generation, if that is what they are, and figure out what I would be thinking about, doing and reading in their position.

One supposes that it’s so hard to get a job in the formal sector that self-employment stares most graduates in the face, no matter their colour. An interview for a job is an unlooked-for bonus, but there are too many factors mitigating against being chosen — whether wrong colour, wrong gender, wrong ideas, wrong region, or simply wrong life. So the students go into the exercise giving off the air that they stand no chance and are just going through the motions.

The best thing about the current crop of students is that they have an excellent grasp of the democratic role of media. This was true right across the board from Peninsula Technikon to Fort Hare and the University of Zululand. Students were not defensive of sectional interests, and they were dead set on



wanting newspapers in particular to expose misdeeds in places of power.

Not a single student thought well of the way the ANC had handled Holomisa's allegations of bribery and corruption. They all damned Sarafina 2 as a cover-up by President and party. So the spirit of the fourth estate is alive, even if the skills are somewhat unwell. In anticipation of the angry letters that are bound to follow this article, let me really drive the nail in by clarifying why I say students can't write, don't read and can't think.

Most of those tested simply used the conventional 5W's & H template for news stories. That might suit a daily paper, but it's not what the weeklies are looking for. The inverted pyramid style is a necessary foundation for reporters but even the dailies nowadays are injecting a lot more interpretation into newswriting. The academics should wake up to the real changes going on in print journalism, here and abroad.

The breathless rush of a straight accident report is not really an appropriate model for the issue-orientated news that is coming to fill much of the modern serious newspaper. Business, politics, education, labour, environment and gender issues all occupy prominent places in the agenda of print news. You can leave it to the electronic media, including Internet, to deliver sound-bites and factoids. What you need is to cultivate a new generation of writers with a sense of connectedness (not just computer connectivity).

Students need to be drawn into the craft of writing multiple-sourced stories, using their own insight and stylistic flair to give the reader some bearings. After all, this is what the academics have been calling for, all these years: quality journalism.

Issues of intercultural communication, racial politics on the newsfloor, hierarchical versus flat organisations, competence in the English language, and much more, are living and kicking; they deserve a place in all courses that prepare recruits for institutional jobs.

But if they want it, they must teach it with appropriate research and writing tools instead of peddling tired formulae that depend on a rote-learning approach to how to crowd as many facts into an intro as you possibly can.

In the Sunday papers, stories are critically angled, highly coloured by human interest, and simply not what the lecturers are teaching. The *Sunday Times* is usually accused by academic critics of being sensational and downmarket compared with more serious weekly fare.

Like it or not, the quali-pop journalism of this newspaper aims for a mass market with a taste for striking headlines, brisk intros and lots of blood and guts in the narrative. Student writers should learn to tell a story with all the emotional taps turned on but not a fact out of place. The only courses that touch on these techniques are dubbed "feature writing", which misses the point entirely.

This kind of newswriting requires a blend of

literary imagination and sheer curiosity about the details of life. It's what attracted Charles Dickens, Jack London, Nat Nakasa and Riaan Malan — and the mere mention of those names should suggest that students need exposure to what has been called the "literature of journalism".

Numerous students told me they didn't have time to read for interest's sake. I was appalled. The quote of the tour was from one who said: "I'm so tired from studying that when I try to read I fall asleep". I hope they have a job for her in the land of Nod; we don't.

It is not only a literary background that is lacking. Students are seriously out of touch with media realities. Believe it when I report that a goodly number of those attending the interviews could not tell me (in any convincing detail) what they had read in newspapers or magazines in the past week. Or, for that matter, what they had heard on SAFM's morning current affairs programme (if they knew it existed). No excuses. News files are available in the departments and everyone has radios or TV's in the residences, with the exception of those in the desperately poor black former bush colleges.

Students may have looked at the front page of the *Sunday Times*, and out of deference to my age and foolishness they assured me it was a great newspaper and they would like to work there. What do you think of the paper's investigation into Eugene Nyati, I asked. Eugene who? Wasn't he the one who fibbed about his CV at Wits? I found myself being interviewed.

Attending to the media is a habit that should become established in first year, with regular tests to eliminate the shirkers. Teaching staff probed me about the impending change of ownership of TML into black hands. What struck me is that few of the academics passed on their interest in this subject to their students.

One question in my two-hour written test related to the attempt by TML to hold the new owners to a code of editorial independence. Most students guessed at the situation and did not know of the various positions adopted by editors, unions, management and the new owners, although it had all received exhaustive coverage.

What this suggests that transformation in the media industry is seen as a very distant phenomenon. Surely this is a topic on which research by academics should be fed back both into the media and into teaching? The reality is that those lucky enough to be hired will soon encounter media transformation without having been prepared for the shock of it.

Issues of intercultural communication, racial politics on the newsfloor, hierarchical versus flat organisations, competence in the English language, and much more, are living and kicking; they deserve a place in all courses that prepare recruits for institutional jobs.

As for English, the average level of comprehension and composition, as shown by a language test, was fair to good. But virtually all students failed the proofreading test. Precision is one of the things a university should impart; if students lack attention to detail it must be because the staff don't insist on it — or they lack it themselves, which is probably closer to the point.

The issue of "competence" looms behind

MENTORING

Our plan at the *Sunday Times* is to create a new generation of good reporters and writers by consciously mentoring them. Mentoring is a familiar technique in insurance companies. It is also familiar to most senior journalists who at one point or another in their careers have been mentored by those more seasoned in experience than themselves.

Together with the in-house programme, we are launching an internet resource page to be called the MentorLink. This will provide a site for discussion of training issues and make available training materials and ideas for journalism departments and their students.

Good mentors should impress certain standards of behaviour and professional practice on young journalists. We are also making place for junior lecturers to work in the newsroom for limited periods. Many of the institutions I visited are employing teachers who have no practical experience themselves; they have come up the theory ladder.



discussions of language. Subs become irritated by messy copy, reporters resent the attitude, and as subs are often white and reporters black the matter soon takes on racial overtones. What comes first, motivation or competence? In our situation of transition, motivation is A1-Number 1.

To quote someone who is very much in vogue in media departments nowadays, the German critical theorist Jurgen Habermas, you can't have efficiency without motivation, and you can't have motivation without legitimacy.

The legitimacy of media institutions was fatally compromised under white nationalism, by censorship, state control of broadcasting, and the co-option of newspapers by the state. Furthermore, the country lost at least two generations of senior journalists — one after Sharpeville and again after Soweto '76. Newsrooms were juniorised. Critical independence went to hell.

On the other side, a certain tone of agitprop entered the alternative press. Independence was compromised there too by the rulings of the Cultural Desk. However, the mass democratic movement as a whole bestowed a fierce belief in media independence — a belief I encountered again and again in the interviews.

If this independence is preserved and extended, workers within the media should feel motivated to do their jobs properly. If the new masters of the state and business manage to browbeat our journalists into new forms of submission, don't expect to see good writing. You can ignore all of the above and go back to the old ways.

► **OPENING WINDOWS: from page 19**

around the five-year window period during which profits would not necessarily be made on such an investment.

Partnerships with the other broadcasters, important for financial sustainability, does not necessarily mean that community television is destined to be eternally relegated to "public access" time slots on public and/or private broadcasters — a position which many think is the only future for community television. In some areas this may be the short term scenario until such time as community broadcasters build up the capacity to broadcast on their own. For other provinces, with widely dispersed rural populations, high signal distribution costs and a small advertising base, the time slots option may well be the answer in the long term.

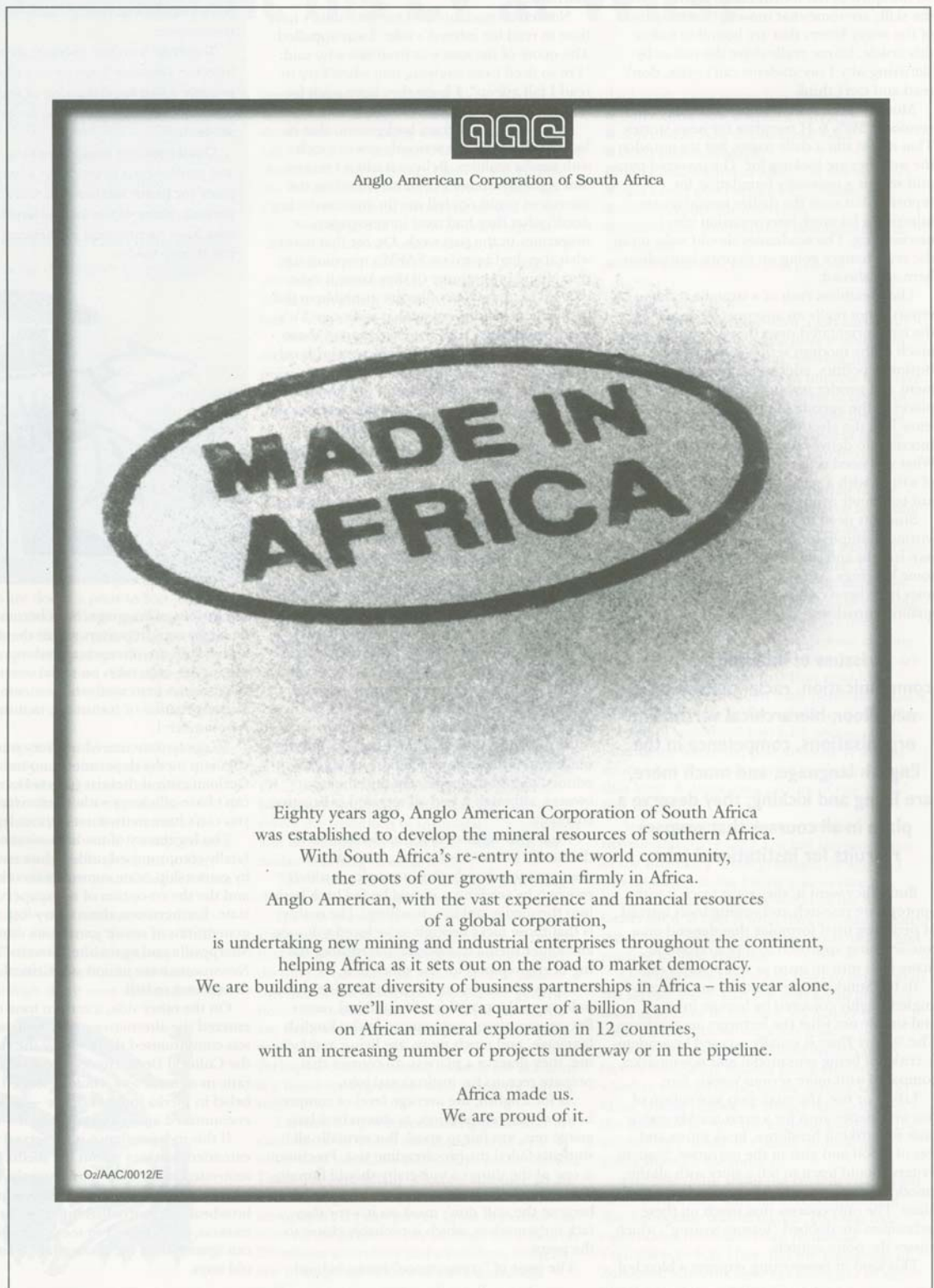
A cursory look at the numbers illustrates that even in areas where community television is viable, the IBA is going to have to rethink its approach to the concept of "multiple micro stations" which may be appropriate for community radio, serving a small local community, but for television is unrealistic. Community television, in order to be viable both financially and in terms of programming capacity, needs a bigger broadcasting radius than the maximum 10 – 15 km presently allowed by the IBA. With the exception of perhaps the Johannesburg inner city, there is not one community which has the programming capacity to broadcast for more than a few hours per day (at the very most). Within a limited broadcast radius it is highly unlikely that sufficient advertising will be raised to cover the costs of running a community television station or that advertisers will find the limited numbers reached a particularly attractive option. Besides the financial arguments, one would imagine that the people living in Khayalisha will be interested to see the programming made by their neighbours in Athlone and vice versa.

The issue of the structure of community television is perhaps the most challenging one. The above scenario implies that a range of stakeholders, from many different constituencies within a greater community, with vastly different resources and skills, will have to come together and cooperate around community television. The Australian experience is useful in showing how limited frequencies have forced a range of stakeholders together in a consortium through which they jointly own the broadcast licence and manage airtime.

The three-pillared challenge of balancing professional service with community access and con-

trol plus the related issues of financial viability and the structure of community television are bound to be the key issues to be addressed at the IBA's Community Television Workshop on 6-7 February 1997. The workshop will bring together an eclectic range of interest groups and community television is bound to emerge as highly contested terrain.

A positive outcome could be the formation of unusual partnerships towards the mutual realisation of a unified vision in which all players have a clearly defined role to play and which recognises that we all ultimately need each other in order to achieve our objectives. *Karen Thorne is co-ordinator of the Open Window Network*



AAC
Anglo American Corporation of South Africa

MADE IN AFRICA

Eighty years ago, Anglo American Corporation of South Africa was established to develop the mineral resources of southern Africa. With South Africa's re-entry into the world community, the roots of our growth remain firmly in Africa. Anglo American, with the vast experience and financial resources of a global corporation, is undertaking new mining and industrial enterprises throughout the continent, helping Africa as it sets out on the road to market democracy. We are building a great diversity of business partnerships in Africa – this year alone, we'll invest over a quarter of a billion Rand on African mineral exploration in 12 countries, with an increasing number of projects underway or in the pipeline.

Africa made us.
We are proud of it.

Oz/AAC/0012/E

Redesign for ● journalism training at the NQF interface

A standardised system for journalism education could lead to a uniformity of editorial voices, warns JANE DUNCAN, Publications Co-ordinator of the Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI).



SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION and the media are both at the crossroads of transformation, and the place where they meet is a juncture dubbed the "NQF".

The National Qualifications Framework means that journalism training, as with all other courses, is expected to rationalise itself in terms of the new competency-based approach. This is a form of education that has been tried and tested internationally, with complex and controversial results.

It has been linked to broader 'high skill high wage' economic strategies of increasing international competitiveness, echoed locally in the Macro-Economic Strategy. This has tended to lead to what has become known as the 30%/70% society, where the economy relies on a minority of specialised workers, with the overwhelming majority of people semi- or unemployed and largely unemployable. These economic divisions are becoming increasingly apparent in this country.

What is also apparent is that struggles for the heart and soul of the NQF are underway here. There are two essentially conflictual positions: those in the progressive camp who see it as a mechanism for redress of educational imbalances, and business-related forces who see it as a means of increasing competitiveness in international markets (the 'human capital theory' approach)¹. Journalism trainers will need to position themselves in relation to these debates, assessing whether the new system will skill people to cope with the complex demands of South African journalistic work.

According to Dr. Denys Rhoadie: "A journalist cannot operate efficiently and effectively unless he knows the nature and functioning of the government and economic system, as well as the social environment and cultural composition of the society in which he works, including the historical factors that conditioned contemporary society. Journalism is one field that cannot exist on a foundation of narrow vocationalism."²

There are real dangers that, in this regard, the NQF will not deliver the goods. However, there may well be newspapers that would far prefer journalists who will simply 'do the job' without the critical awareness that journalism education calls for. Graeme Addison has noted a reluctance on the part of a number of employers in the mainstream media to employ university-trained cadets as they may not accept the pay scales and news values of their employers as readily as their technikon-trained counterparts.³ The employers may not be adverse to, and may even welcome, students who — under the new order — are trained to conduct 'discrete mechanical repair tasks' but who have no 'feel for the machine'.

Structuring journalism courses to fit the needs of the market may therefore serve the function of reinforcing the current concentration of ownership and a uniformity of voices at the level of editorial control.

While the need to skill cadets so that they can find jobs is very real, a constricted form of training will not contribute to increasing job opportunities — a goal that must involve the co-existence of a vibrant and diverse layer of independent and community media with the existing media houses. Indeed, journalism graduates both from universities and technikons need to be challenged to help create these opportunities, especially in areas and communities where media do not exist.

Schools of journalism need to be proactive on the NQF to prevent potential pitfalls, as tertiary level pilot projects will be set up at some stage. Work can also be done to establish which NQF field journalism should be incorporated into, according to how best its interests are served.

In addition, taking a proactive stance with regard to the NQF will mean that journalism schools can define their needs clearly before entering into negotiations with the media industry on educational vision, course content, number of students and the duration of study. (If the recent report of the National Commission on Higher Education is anything to go by, all these areas will be subject to negotiations with 'stakeholders').

Addison has noted that the technikon system is already subject to a centralised bureaucracy, which has led to a standardisation that could be used to suppress diversity, free expression and institutional autonomy.⁴ These dangers may be multiplied under the NQF, with the added danger that funds may be cut if journalism training cannot prove that it is economically useful.

However, reservations about the NQF should not be used to dodge the challenge of reconceptualising academic independence in order to transform elitism and exclusions. If journalism is to truly reflect the diversity of opinions in the country, it will need to address

'Competency education'

can "impose a narrow and short-sighted perspective on the definition of learning 'needs', weighing in favour of those 'objectives' which can be expressed in simplistic, often mechanical terms. Such a restrictive view of competence obscures and trivialises many essential aspects of learning for work as well as many critical elements of mastery in performance".

... A Canadian vocational instructor said of his own students: "These people can perform discrete mechanical repair tasks, but they have no feel for the engine...I wouldn't want to hire them in my garage!" (Jackson, N. 1989. The Case against 'Competence': the Impoverishment of Working Knowledge, in *Our Schools, Ourselves*, Vol. 1, No. 3, April, pp78-85)

THE NQF is envisaged as a single integrated framework that will standardise studies in particular areas, and issue nationally recognised qualifications centrally instead of on an institutional basis as is the case now. Under the NQF, education will become outcomes or competency based; in other words learning will be quantified in terms of how well certain pre-defined competencies are demonstrated.

itself to the nascent 30%/70% divide, both in terms of the economic and linguistic backgrounds its students are drawn from, and the news values developed in the course of study. These redress imperatives must not be sidelined in favour of a rands and cents approach.

Likewise, trainers should hold onto the point made by Australian journalist John Pilger that trainee journalists must be sensitised to the scale of human suffering of the poor in particular, and should resist attempts to be seduced by the news values of those who have no interest in seeing this exposed.

We in South Africa have a rich legacy of educational struggle to draw from, which has bequeathed to us a 'thick, rich' approach to pedagogy and curriculum design, including one that we can apply to education in the interests of media diversity.

We must be careful not to sacrifice this experience at the alter of the market. The NQF juncture provides alternative directions and journalism trainers need to explore these.

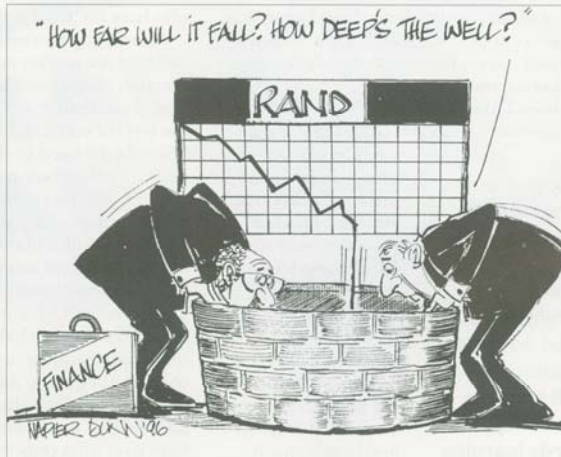
NOTES

1. Vally, S and Samson, M. 1996. Snakes and Ladders: The Promise and potential pitfalls of the National Qualifications Framework; *South African Labour Bulletin*; Vol. 20 no. 4, pp8-14 and 5, pp23-29.
2. Rhoadie, Denys.O. 1995. News-Editorial journalism education at higher educational institutions in the USA and the RSA; *Equid Novi*; Vol.16 (1&2); p144.
3. Addison, G. Technikon training for journalism and broadcasting; *Equid Novi*; Vol. 16 (1&2); pp151-152.
4. *ibid.*: pp41-45.

Mozambique-born Americo Valentim (Junior) studied art at Technikon Natal before embarking on a career in advertising. He now divides his time between the advertising industry and cartooning for *The Daily News*, *Sunday Tribune* and *The Saturday Paper*. One of his most popular cartoons is the "Grommit" strip.



Durban-born Nanda Soobben has drawn about 400 cartoons on social, political, sports and religious life, and his work has been published in more than 200 newspapers around the world. His social realist water-colours have been exhibited as far afield as New York and Rio de Janeiro. He summed up his approach: "As a painter, I reflect life as I see it. As a cartoonist, I challenge the status quo — I don't reflect it". He has devised a socially-aware comic strip called "The Otherside" to spread his views.



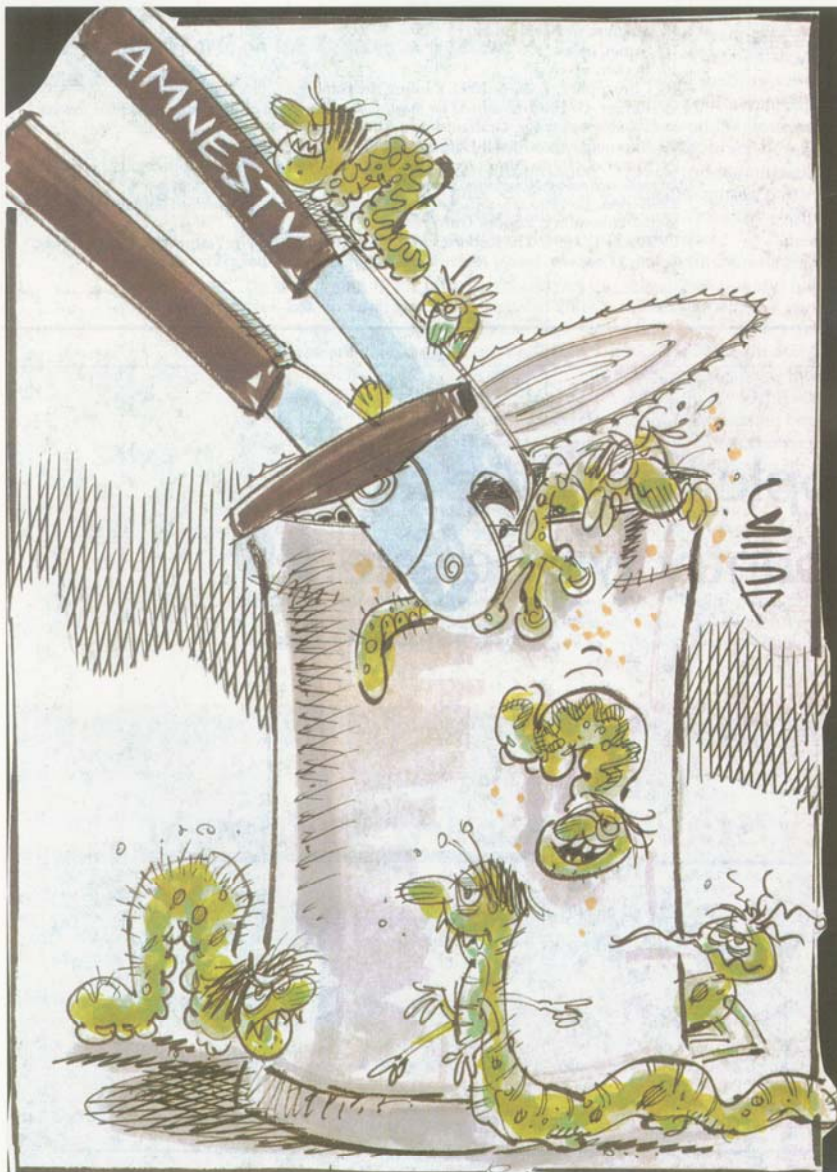
Napier Dunn, *The Mercury's* cartoonist, is also multi-talented. After studying at the Royal College of Music, he played the French horn in a number of orchestras around the world, including the London Philharmonic and Sydney Symphony. He started sketching fellow musicians during his years in orchestras, and found that cartooning and caricaturing became an obsession. While in Hong Kong, where he lived for six years, he went into cartooning full-time. Before moving to Durban, he worked on newspapers in Japan, Australia and Alaska.



Laugh

PEN SKETCHES

the beloved country



HIGH reader interest in newspaper cartooning was evident at a recent exhibition in Durban by three of South Africa's leading cartoonists, **Nanda Soobben, Junior Valentim and Napier Dunn.**

An unexpectedly heavy attendance during the opening extended throughout the three weeks of the "Laugh the Beloved Country" exhibition, held at the Durban Art Gallery. David Wightman, editor of *The Mercury*, paid tribute to the three highly talented cartoonists at the official opening, adding that local newspapers had been fortunate to find professionals of this calibre following the retirement of the internationally-acclaimed cartoonist, Jock Leyden.

newspapers and the 'net: the online future

► continued from page 30

Finally, journalistic methods will change. Journalists can now benefit from being able to join global communities of journalists in specialised discussion groups. This interaction — on ethics, tips, techniques, etc. — is already impacting on journalist competencies. Even more, however, journalists can be empowered by having access to online information. In the medium-term at least, it is probably likely that cyberspace will prove more valuable for the input, rather than the output, side of journalism — whether that output is on paper or online. We often forget that journalists are also consumers of information, and indeed to be a good producer of information, a journalist needs to be a good consumer.²²

As Canadian journalist Tom Koch argues, the future of journalism — especially in a global eruption of online publishing — may lie in finding and explaining the causes and consequences of events. Very often, he continues, journalists have been forced into sheer reportage of what politicians and experts have to say, because they do not have the knowledge or background to question it. With online information resources, they can now shift the balance in their favour.²³

An empowered journalist is an empowered communicator. That is a real opportunity for newspapers in electronic or paper versions.

CONCLUSION

Information, guidance, communications, community, guardianship. Changes in journalism as a practice. These are the opportunities. To go online does not mean to shut down print by any means. It means to identify and leverage the key characteristics of newspapers into a world where the benefits are many and the cost is comparatively low.

It is the right time for newspapers to get onto the Net. Done comprehensively, newspapers can get on top of the Net. Missing the opportunities will mean the Net gets on top of the newspapers, leaving society that much the poorer.

Guy Berger is professor of Journalism & Media Studies, Rhodes University.

1. Balding, T. 1996. World trends in the newspaper industry: an update. Speech to 49th World Newspaper Congress, Washington, DC, pp.3–5.
2. Information gathered online by Roland Stanbridge, director of the New Media Laboratory, Rhodes University Department of Journalism and Media Studies.
3. Hunt, R. 1995. 'The Challenge of Change: Editors Confront the Future. The Second Conference of the World Editors' Forum, Paris: International Federation of Newspaper Publishers (FIEJ), p.12.
4. Junco, A. Beyond the printed word. 1995. Paper to 48th FIEJ congress, Berlin, p.1
5. Hunt, op cit: 12.
6. Hunt, op cit: 9.
7. *Rhodes Journalism Review*. 1996. Excerpts from 49th FIEJ congress, pp.28–31
8. Magnus in Hunt, op cit:9.
9. Samet, M G. 1996. Building Newspaper brands and business in the digital age. Paper to 49th FIEJ congress, Washington DC, May.
10. Hunt, op cit: 27.
11. Becker, K; Dahlgren, P; Ekecrantz, J and Olsson, T. 1996. Media logic, journalism and global modernity: towards the year 2000. (unpublished project description, Department of Journalism, Media and Communication, Stockholm University). pp.1–11.
12. Saffo: The Web is Dead. 49th FIEJ congress, Washington DC, May.
13. Hunt, op cit: 5.
14. Prosser, A. (ed) 1996. The Circulation Winners. Paris: International Federation of Newspaper Publishers (FIEJ).
15. Magnus, in Hunt, op cit.
16. Samet, op cit: 12.
17. Becker, op cit.
18. Christopher, L Carol.1994. Closing the Gap. *Quill*, Jan/Feb.
19. Berger, G. 1995. *New tricks for the newspaper trade: an old watchdog meets press freedom and the information age*. Grahamstown: Rhodes University.
20. <http://netday.iworld.com/business/NATW/960722natw.shtml>
21. Fulter, K. 1993. Future tense: the anxious journey of a technophobe. *Columbia Journalism Review*. November/December.
22. Berger, G. 1996. *The Internet: a goldmine for editors and journalists*. Grahamstown: New Media Laboratory, Rhodes University.
23. Koch, T. 1994. The Reporter in the Information Age, in Vasterman, P and Verwey, P. (eds.) *Computer Assisted Research and Reporting*, Culemborg: Phaedon.

“Let the people know the facts
and the country will be safe”

Abraham Lincoln

The Star

Saturday Star

THE SUNDAY INDEPENDENT

DFA
Business and Public Advertiser

PRETORIA NEWS

BUSINESS REPORT

INDEPENDENT
NEWSPAPERS
GAUTENG

47 Sauer Street, Johannesburg 2000

Confab of

global censors

They are the watchdogs who watch over the media watchdogs, but who are they really protecting? The Independent Broadcasting Authority's BRONWYN KEENE-YOUNG reports on the debates at a recent international conference.

THERE ARE FEW CONFERENCES in the world where tea-time conversation goes something like this: "What did you give Michael Collins?" says the Irish delegate to her New Zealand counterpart.

"We're still waiting for it to arrive", replies the New Zealand delegate, "but what did you give it?" "Aah, we gave it only a 12", replies the Irish delegate mischievously. "and the British are furious with us."

I overheard this conversation — referring to the liberal age restriction given by the Irish to the film about IRA guerilla Michael Collins — at the Fourth International Conference on Standards in Screen Entertainment in London in September. The conference is hosted by the British Board of Film Classification and aims to bring together film classifiers and broadcasting regulators from all over the world. It is, to put it candidly, an international gathering of censors, as the majority of its delegates come from state-appointed classification boards who vet

films according to the prevailing morals and values in their respective societies.

What would one expect from such a gathering of state-appointed moral guardians? I admit to feelings of trepidation before attending the conference. My interest in it was twofold: firstly to see how international classification bodies worked in the light of our new Films and Publications Bill in South Africa; and secondly, to see how film classification and television programming regulation were related in other countries, particularly with regard to screen violence — which was the theme of the conference.

As with many conferences, the working group sessions and informal discussions provided one with far greater insight into the thinking of the delegates, than the plenary sessions which were dominated by academics debating the behavioural effects of screen violence. To my surprise and relief, a strong freedom of expression ethos dominated these discussions, accompanied by soul-searching and self-reflection on the part of the delegates who continually raised the question: "Who are we protecting?"

There was general consensus among the European and North American delegates — who were in the majority at the conference — that deciding what adults could or could not watch was inconsistent with the principles of democracy and individual liberties that these countries are founded on. On the basis of this

consensus, the focus of the conference shifted very quickly away from censorship to the role of classifiers in the protection of children, the provision of adequate labelling and consumer information, and media literacy training.

Delegates from Africa, the Caribbean and Asia (with the notable exception of Japan), adopted a different view of their role as film classifiers. It was evident from the input of these delegates that in their countries a strict paternalism is still applied in the classification of films. While the Western delegates generally balked at the cutting of films, this appeared to be common practice in countries such as Barbados, India, Zimbabwe and Tanzania where the classification boards were expected to act as moral gatekeepers for adults and children alike.

The lack of representation from non-Western countries — both as speakers and as delegates — resulted in the conservative approaches adopted in these countries being overlooked or dismissed without any meaningful discussion. The emphasis on the socio-economic and cultural context of the West to the exclusion of other countries, resulted in the sidelining of what could have been significant debate around the application of the principles of freedom of expression in different social and cultural contexts. For example, input by an Indian delegate to the effect that in oriental cultures freedom of expression comes with social responsibility, was immediately dismissed by other delegates without any attempt to interrogate the thinking behind this approach.

In the context of the more liberal approach towards film classification by most countries represented at the conference, some interesting policy proposals were put forward, which were aimed at alleviating the potentially harmful effects of violent screen material on children.

Emphasis was placed on the provision of information — in the form of labels or on-screen announcements — about the content of films. The limitations of this approach were widely appreciated — like the V-chip and other parental control devices, consumer warnings only work if parents are controlling what their children are watching. In the United States, for example, most children watched television alone in their bedrooms and were therefore not subject to any parental control over their viewing habits.

SOUTH AFRICA'S NEW FILM AND PUBLICATIONS ACT AT A GLANCE

■ How censorship happens:

All films must be classified.
Publications are dealt with upon complaint.

■ Degrees of censorship:

XX - no distribution
X18 - distribution only through licensed outlets (Any visual presentation of sex with explicit presentation of genitals is X18).
R18 - distribution with consumer advice (Sex, Nudity, Violence, Language) and age restrictions, in a sealed wrapper for publications.

■ Reasons for XX censorship:

Material, judged within context, that contains visuals of:
● A child (under 18) in sex or lewd nudity.
● Degradation: "a particular form of the advocacy of hatred based on gender". This therefore bans "explicit sexual conduct which

degrades a person and which constitutes incitement to cause harm".

- Bestiality
- Sexual violence: violent conduct concurrent with sexual conduct.
- Extreme violence: "explicit infliction of extreme violence or the explicit effects of extreme violence which constitutes incitement to cause harm."

Media that contains:

- Propaganda for war
- Incitement to imminent violence
- Advocacy of hatred based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion and which constitutes incitement to cause harm.

Media that, judged within context, advocates hatred based on religion and which constitutes incitement to cause harm.

■ Reasons for X18 censorship:

Visuals of sex with explicit presentation of genitals.

■ Reasons for R18 censorship:

Harmful or disturbing to children.

■ The Censors:

A Board and a Review Board.

■ Exemptions:

Newspapers in the Newspaper Press Union.
Bona fide scientific, documentary, dramatic, artistic, literary or religious work.
Bona fide discussion on religious belief or a matter of public interest.



► continued on next page

It was generally agreed that, given the advance of multi-media technologies — the Internet, computer and arcade games, multi-channel television, etc. — the application of age restrictions as a means of protecting children was becoming increasingly ineffective. The discussion turned to experimental media literacy projects which had been conducted in the Netherlands and in Britain.

Focussed specifically on screen violence, these school-based projects had attempted to educate children about the differences between screen and real-life violence. In one course, children were shown a clip of the TV detective series *Miami Vice* in which a policeman shoots dead a fleeing suspect, with no consequences for the policeman. The children were then shown a documentary about a real-life American policeman who had shot and killed a suspect and then been through four years of criminal and civil court cases, had suffered psychological and familial trauma, and who was having difficulty pursuing his career in the police force. Projects such as this had been found to be successful in educating children about the real consequences of violence.

A policy adopted by the Canadian film classification boards which was well-received at the conference was a system of ongoing consultation between board members and community groups. The Canadian boards also invited members of the public to join them in viewing and classifying films. In this way, the boards had managed to move away from the image of

remote, secretive and unrepresentative state-appointed bureaucrats, which often characterises film classification bodies.

It emerged from the conference with a greatly changed impression of the work of classification bodies and the manner in which they perceive their roles and functions. However, despite the freedom of expression ethos which prevailed at the conference, a repeated concern raised by the delegates was that the production and distribution of increasingly offensive material was resulting in a conservative reaction from governments and the public. Several speakers from European countries referred to instances where governments were putting pressure on classification bodies to impose stricter restrictions on films, and where parliaments were considering legislation to tighten up existing censorship laws.

For South Africa, given the context of the stormy passage of the Films and Publications Bill through Parliament, it will be up to our new film classification board to establish an enlightened approach to film regulation between the inevitable pressures of government, public pressure groups and the inherent right to freedom of expression. There is a lot our new board can learn from international experience — with, of course, a sensitivity to South African cultures, children and the street-wise media literacy of our free citizens.

Bronwyn Keene-Young is head of the IBA's Monitoring and Complaints department.

An industry keeping its own house in order...

BESIDES the new Film and Publications boards, and separate from the IBA's own Complaints Commission, the National Association of Broadcasters has established the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa. Its views?

"BCCSA has found that the *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* series as well as a *Dracula* series were not suitable for children's time.

"True challenges have, however, not come its way: would a broadcast of *A Clockwork Orange*, or *Natural Born Killers*, for example, be acceptable even on the M-Net subscription channel which provides its subscribers with a parental control device that blocks out 18 material?

"The BCCSA has fortunately not had to address the question — which the UK Independent Television Commission had to deal with — whether *The Last Temptation of Christ* would be acceptable."

Prof Kobus van Rooyen, chair of the BCCSA, excerpts from speech to International Conference on Screen Entertainment, London.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ARE YOU CONVINCED?

On-line!
FXI RESOURCES ON THE
INTERNET

Visit the Freedom of Expression Institute's Web site on the Internet. The site is a resource of documents on censorship and freedom of expression, and includes information on FXI campaigns, publications, and other activities of interest. The following can be found on the site:

- ✕ Information on FXI campaigns, including the Open Democracy Bill and the Film and Publications Bill
 - ✕ FXI publications
 - ✕ Information on the freedom of expression cases funded by the FXI's Media Defence Fund.
 - ✕ Archive of press releases from the FXI
 - ✕ A "What's New" section that provides up-to-date information on FXI activities and relevant information on freedom of expression.
 - ✕ Links to local and international sites of relevance.
 - ✕ The full site is keyword searchable.
- The URL or Internet address for the FXI's Website is <http://wn.apc.org/fxi/>

Southern African
MEDIA LAW
Briefing

The Southern African Media Law Briefing is a recently-launched newsletter published by the FXI, Article 19 (The International Centre against Censorship) and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA). It is published on a quarterly basis.

The aim of the Southern African Media Law Briefing is to exchange examples of 'good law' from throughout the Southern African region. It reports on cases which provide positive precedents for the defence of free expression and the independence of the media, as well as looking at important developments in constitutional and statute law.

The newsletter is a response to a need expressed by media lawyers in the region at a Conference in October 1995, organised by the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) and Article 19 to review the state of media law in Southern Africa.

Subscription rate: R98.00 per annum. Subscribers receive a package of three publications for this rate, the Media Law Briefing, the FXI's bulletin "Update" and MISA's publication "Free Press".

*Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI)
PO Box 30668, Braamfontein 2017
TEL: (011) 403-8403/4, FAX: (011) 403-8309,
E-mail: fxi@wn.apc.org*

FXI

Between Speech and Silence

Hate Speech, Pornography and the New South Africa

Edited by Jane Duncan

A book published by the FXI and the Institute for Democracy in South Africa

In South Africa, controversies surrounding hate speech and pornography have assumed a high public profile since the birth of democracy in 1994. On the one hand, there are those who argue forcefully for maximum freedom of expression to establish a complete break with the crippling censorship of the past. They also argue that all attempts must be made to resist incremental encroachments on this newly-won right. On the other hand, there are those who argue with great passion that forms of expression that spread hatred, degrade and even incite to violence should be restricted to protect the rights of their victims. What are appropriate responses given the turbulent history of our country? Can we allow these forms of speech if certain groups of people are silenced, and even hurt by such speech? Can we afford to restrict them?

These are critical questions for the new South Africa, and have become central to the debate on freedom of expression both in government and civil society in general.

Contributors: Raymond Louw, Ursula Owen, Joanne Fedler, Frederick Schauer, Gilbert Marcus, Shadrack Gutto, John Sopinka, Floyd Abrams, Kobus van Rooyen.

Price: R55.00

Available from your nearest bookstore. In the event of difficulties, contact Book Promotions, PO Box 5, Plumstead. TEL: (021) 72 0332; FAX: (021) 72 0383; E-mail: bookpro@aztec.co.za



When a paper ain't broke, you only fix it surreptitiously, says *Daily Dispatch* editor GAVIN STEWART.

change by stealth

THERE IS no visible reason why the *Daily Dispatch* should be the fastest growing mid-level daily in South Africa.

It has not had a major revamp, spectacular redesign or costly relaunch. It offers no discounts, big-money competitions, treasure hunts or other come-ons. It has gone through a protracted and painful conversion from a Hastech mainframe computer system to an Apple-based QPS pagination system. But ABC figures for January-June 1996 show a Monday through Saturday sales increase of 3,8 per cent to 39 147. March 1996 was the paper's best month ever, breaking an average of 40 000 for the first time.

The only other dailies to show any growth during this period were *Business Day*, up 3,2 per cent to 38 145 (avoiding Saturdays and public holidays), and the *Eastern Province Herald*, up 0,65 per cent to 31 387 on its Monday through Saturday sales. The *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, a Monday to Friday paper, recorded a phenomenal 14 per cent, rising to 7 534.

Outsiders like to use the absence of direct competition to explain the success of the

Dispatch: only in Kokstad and Umzimkulu and on the loop from Grahamstown to Port Alfred does it come face to face with rival dailies. This argument would be persuasive only if total daily sales were rising in areas where there is competition — Gauteng and parts of KwaZulu-Natal, for example. They are not.

Another set of pointers comes from a 1995-6 survey conducted by DSI for the Newspaper Press Union, "What people want from newspapers". Rated most important were accuracy of reports (87) and ease of reading (85), areas in which the *Dispatch* is unexceptional. Amount of news came next (79), a topic to which we will return in discussing our spread of news and our local/provincial political coverage. This is followed by entertainment value (68) and TV-Radio guide (63), another two areas in which the *Dispatch* does not visibly offer anything absent from other dailies.

Only with great caution should editors claim the credit for any increases in their sales. Such claims oblige them to take the blame for any decreases, which is unwise. When we draw a graph to show long-term circulation trends for newspapers operating in the same market — ABC figures go back to 1942 — we find a cor-

relation strong enough to induce humility in almost any editor. Far more significant influences appear to be the state of the economy, or people's feelings about their liquidity, and the flow of news.

The best any editor can hope to do, it seems, is to flatten the declines by a few dozen copies and steepen the inclines.

Armed with this scepticism, we can talk about changes in the *Daily Dispatch*. Before I joined the *Dispatch* in 1993, its sales figures and readership profile sounded immediate cautions for the aspirant changer. ABC figures showed that sales were better than those of any comparable newspaper, and that they had been climbing a more-or-less even staircase since at least the mid-1970s: the first six months of every year going up like risers; the second six months flattening like treads with the yearly price increase. The All Media and Products Survey (AMPS) showed a readership profile which was equally encouraging: about two thirds black and one third white. Given that the likelihood of anyone reading a daily newspaper increases with income, education and urbanisation, this seemed a fair reflection of

➤ continued on next page

Invisible design

FORTUNATELY perhaps, changing a newspaper is not easy. Since it is produced by a large and dispersed committee of people, each with a bundle of habits and attitudes, it contains a great deal of institutional inertia. Stealth strategy can benefit from these. Only by looking back three years is it possible to see that the presentation of the *Daily Dispatch* is significantly different from what it was.

The title-piece (generally but incorrectly known as the masthead) was once a robust Rockwell Extra Bold. In some distant time, and in order to accommodate ear advertisements, it was mechanically compressed without any change to the spacing between the letters. This produced a scrawny version of the original, printed in a sickly process cyan. It was awful, but it was also the trademark of the newspaper. First a touch of magenta was added and then increased, over a period of some months, to produce the richest

blue possible from only two process colours, which was all we could be certain we would have on any given day on the present press. It looked richer, but still asphyxiated. The only way out, without risking a new typeface, was to move the word "Daily" to an upper line and to letter-space the Rockwell. This was not really easy until the new Apples and the QPS system were installed early in 1996. Then the new style was tried out on the Sports pages for several weeks. There we could see what it looked like, adjust the letter-spacing, show it to management, and allow it to make its subliminal footprint on the minds of our readers. Nobody complained. Almost nobody seems to have noticed.

The change from Bodoni to Times Bold as the main headline type was accomplished with less stealth but no more comment. One day the old Hastech system was set to default all headlines to Bodoni Bold; the next day

“The *Dispatch* experience suggests that the words are more important than the appearance of the pages and that they deserve the careful attention of senior subs.”

to Times Bold. If anybody outside the newspaper noticed, they have never said so. In the same surreptitious way we gradually dropped Perpetua from the Feature pages and replaced it with Helvetica and, most noticeably, Helvetica Black.

The riskiest change, and the one of which I am not yet wholly convinced was changing the text face from 8pt Corona on 8.5pt to 9.5 Times on 9.5. Generated on our system and printed on our press, it is as economical, even more so in some settings. But Times below 9.5 is dangerously illegible and some subs have a nasty way of dropping a size when something refuses to fit.

With one exception all typographical changes to the paper have followed the same route. The exception was dropping column rules late in 1996. On the

QPS system, inserting rules when a page is otherwise complete is a fiddle and unreliable business for page subs. It also costs valuable minutes when the circulation department and the press room are begging us to get the paper away on time. The result is not yet completely satisfactory, but the use of ruled panels and of large, fine-rule boxes in the heart of a page can overcome most of the problems which arise when column rules are abandoned.

The shift from Hastech to QPS — from bromides stripped up in Cold Type to full-page make-up — has upset the established relationships in subbing. Since younger subs tend to be more fluent computer jockeys, they tend to be laying out the pages while their seniors in age and experience edit the copy and write the headlines. The *Dispatch* experience suggests that the words are more important than the appearance of the pages and that they deserve the careful attention of senior subs. A livelier layout might have contributed to the increase in our sales by making for a more congenial reading experience, even if most readers are not conscious of much difference. But the 20 preceding years suggest that layout is not the decisive seller.



SYFRETS/SAPOA

PROPERTY JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR AWARD

The Syfrets/Sapoa Property Journalist of the Year Award aims to raise the standard of property journalism in South Africa. It will serve to recognise the individual's contribution to the better understanding of property trends and developments and the education of the public in property matters.

THE CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION ARE:

- objectivity
- responsible reporting
- subject expertise
- reliable information
- relevance
- presentation (use of medium)
- ethical standards

ENTRANCE:

Journalists who write extensively on property and related matters (eg. building and construction) on a regular basis are eligible to enter. The competition spans the period June 1996 to February 1997. Entrants should submit work published over at least five months of that period. No more than 10 examples of the entrant's best published work should be sent.

PRIZES:

There are two awards. One overall national prize winner and a regional prize winner. Regional will be restricted to publications that only operate in a certain region, such as the *EP Herald*, *Daily Dispatch*, *Daily News* and so forth. The awards will be made at the annual SAPOA convention which will be held in Sun City during May 1997.

- Overall National Winner: R10 000
- Regional Winner: R8 500

JUDGES

Neville Berkowitz (*independent property consultant*)
Francois Viruly (*JH Isaacs Properties*)
Magnus Heystek (*Independent financial consultant and freelance journalist*)
Professor Guy Berger (*Head of Department of Journalism & Media Studies, Rhodes University*)
David Rennie (*Independent management consultant*)
Tiny Barnetson (*President of SAPOA*)

DEADLINE: 28 February 1997

ENQUIRIES:

Karen Roots
Syfrets Corporate Communications
Tel: (011) 480 3811 Fax: (011) 480 3823

the population the newspaper tries to serve.

The clearest caution was one editors might borrow from the medical profession: first, do no harm. Translated, this comes down to: first, lose no readers. Major surgery is warranted only on a newspaper in terminal condition, and then it does not guarantee survival. A further caution was that the newspaper had achieved this growth under three editors with very different styles — Donald Woods (1965 – 1977), George Farr (1977 – 1987) and Glynn Williams (1987 – 1993) — and a common passion only for local news in preference to national and international.

It was already policy that the newspaper should try to lead every day on a local story and that it should attempt to give fair coverage to all the towns, villages and hamlets in its remarkable web of delivery routes. *Dispatch* trucks cover almost two million kilometres a year, at a time when the big urban dailies are trimming down their rural sales and transport costs. A newspaper reaching Ugie or Maclear makes the journey through the night in four different vehicles, three belonging to the *Dispatch*, the fourth to a private contractor.

It also seemed to be understood that readers were interested in information about their locale and not in some confectioned version of it. Woods had given the newspaper some reputation for being non-racial which, above all else, I am concerned to preserve.

Dramatic changes in the content, appearance and character of an even moderately successful newspaper seem reckless and conceited on the part of editors, and insulting to the readers. With few exceptions, South African examples of spectacular change show the chances of losing readers are infinitely greater than the chances of attracting them. My guess is that newspapers draw from a reservoir of buyers who range from the occasional, through the frequent, to the compulsive. The best an editor can hope to achieve is to move the occasional reader to a frequent reader and the frequent reader to a daily reader, while keeping all the compulsives as compulsive as possible.

This view has guided my editorial policy at the *Dispatch*. Call it stealth strategy if you wish: the rule we have followed is to make changes in content and presentation as invisible as possible. Robin Ross-Thompson, our Deputy Editor, recalls with some amusement the day the *Dispatch* tried to conceal a price increase under the mantle of newspaper that was "new, different, redesigned, etc., etc., etc." Readers were unmoved: they still complained the crossword blank was wrong and so, too often, was the bridge diagram. Every change now made is done with the understanding that it will be tried and, if it does not work, reversed.

In the second half of 1993, South Africa was already in the midst of profound political upheaval. Our first democratic election was due in April 1994; a different Who's Who was taking

centre stage. The threat of violence from many points on the spectrum was real. A newspaper which did no more than attempt to report what was happening was going to change rapidly enough. Only later, I believe, did we come to realise that changes in provincial and local government would be at least as important to our readers as changes in the national pantheon. Daily newspapers probably have an advantage over all other media when it comes to reporting these second and third tiers of government, which are routinely ignored by the national media unless they force their way to the microphone, which is guaranteed only in times of crisis.

The regular taps we had into our readership were our daily sales, our subscriptions, and the letters basket. Apart from the obsessives who haunt all newspapers, the letters reflected a very rich spectrum of opinions, which rewarded the effort needed sometimes to distill meaning from the pens of those writers whose home language is not English. Anybody in a rural village who takes the trouble to round up paper, pen, an envelope and a stamp in order to send a letter to a newspaper deserves to be taken seriously.

Politically the paper has attempted to persuade the provincial and local governments that we are as concerned as they are to achieve good governance. In a province totally dominated by the ANC, it would be stupid to imagine that a newspaper could have much influence on voting patterns at any level. Rather than to embarrass government, our concern has been to cover corruption, lassitude and inertia as problems in need of urgent attention. Our purpose is to make government effective, not to hamper or harass it. I suspect that this is not very well understood in Bisho.

We take the view that most of our readers are passionately interested in what government is and is not doing at every level and do our best to find out and to report it, and then to give it some context and analysis. Channels of communication are still constricted, but they improve each time the provincial government pirates a member of our staff. I know that many members of the Eastern Cape government and many other readers still see the *Dispatch* as a relic of the old South Africa, hostile to their aspirations. They say so regularly in the Letters column, and saying so in speeches seems almost obligatory — although the blame is given to "the media" and never to a single publication. My guess is that most of our white readers see us as too black.

I do not take the Goldilocks view that this means our content is therefore "just right". To do so would require the assumption that there are only two views of the world and that as long as you are somewhere between them all is well. Mercifully life and newspapers are more complex than that.

Gavin Stewart is former head of the Rhodes University Department of Journalism and Media Studies.

► THE SA MAGAZINE INDUSTRY GOES BOOM!

continued from page 15

days when *Living* was tossed over garden gates in affluent suburbs.

One of Cohen's first tasks at Penta was to restore the morale of angry, uncertain and bitter staffers. His next priority is to consolidate. "We will try to be sensible and not do what Penta was doing before," he says.

Natmags' entry into niche publishing came via a 50% stake in Touchline in April, resulting in increased frequencies for *Sports Illustrated* and *Kick Off*. Touchline will bring in international titles *Runner's World* and *Men's Health* in 1997.

Meanwhile Natmags has scored more points in the mass market it dominates, increasing the frequency of *Drum* in September, a move preempted by Republican's mass weekly *Next*. By December *Drum*'s circulation had grown to around 120 000 per issue (almost half a million per month); Roy Minnaar claimed figures of 90,000 per issue for *Next*.

Natmags' chief executive Salie de Swardt reports promising returns on a heavy investment in *True Love*, and lower circulations for *Fair Lady*, for a nevertheless healthy *Savie* and for *Women's Value*, whose former editor Rieta Burgers raised the coverprice in order to offer fewer, more. (*MegaLife*'s Alice Bell has succeeded Burgers who retired in 96).

The pressures on circulation come from a generally downward trend, a reduction in buying power and possibly from emigration, says De Swardt. "As new titles nibble at the readership and advertising base, it becomes a challenge to maintain ad revenue and grow it." The international input is also greater, with *Marie Claire* clearly directed at *Fair Lady*'s market, he says.

"The women's market may be overtraded, but there is always room for a good product," says Dr Gerrit Velthuysen, Perskor's general manager, distribution, of his group's investment in *Marie Claire*. "*Marie Claire* is generally accepted as the top magazine in its category. We decided that we wanted it in our stable because it would complete our existing portfolio; it addresses a market in which Perskor has never been involved. This is not just another woman's magazine."

Velthuysen anticipates a "fight to the finish" in which the market will determine who and what survives. And Roy Minnaar, Republican's editorial director sounds equally gungho. "Lots of overseas magazines are coming in now - some will succeed, some will fail dismally," he says. Minnaar cautions that international publishers who consider South Africa a backwater and a "soft spot" shouldn't automatically assume that their products will be better than those produced by the highly skilled local industry.

After 40 years in the industry, Minnaar has heard the market referred to as overtraded more times than he cares to remember. "The fact that the market is overtraded is irrelevant," he says. "We can't allow our company to become stagnant. We'll simply pinch readers from somebody else." Although Minnaar denies it, rumours persist that Republican will do some of the pinching on its own turf, closing less profitable titles to make way for new, more competitive ones.

Niche is being used as an excuse to charge mass market prices for niche advertising, says Jane Raphaely of Associated Magazines, which entered the niche market through *Cosmopolitan Fashion* in 1990 and *House & Leisure* in 1993. "But I do think there is a tendency towards fragmentation and specialisation in South Africa as a whole. We see more specialist stores opening up, more clutches of creative pockets of enterprise, more people making a living catering for individual tastes. Worldwide there is a revolt of consumers against being insulted by sameness."

Raphaely cautions that in the frantic competition between old and new titles, magazines may lose sight of their readers and focus only on circulation. "The publishers who will thrive in the next decade will be those who have the courage to single out an audience and cater for them," she says. "Advertisers will have many more choices and more tightly targeted audiences. But I believe our magazines should remain above 100,000 circulation, given their past performance and the loyalty of our readers. I also have confidence in *Fair Lady*. It is the strongest established brand in its language group."

Threats to the industry include a lack of time which is "worse than a lack of money," she says. Younger graduates who traditionally spent part of their first salary cheque to subscribe to their own magazine, now emerge hopelessly enthralled by the Internet. "Emigration is another threat. It takes educated, literate, potentially affluent people with families out of the market, and they're the ones the advertisers want."

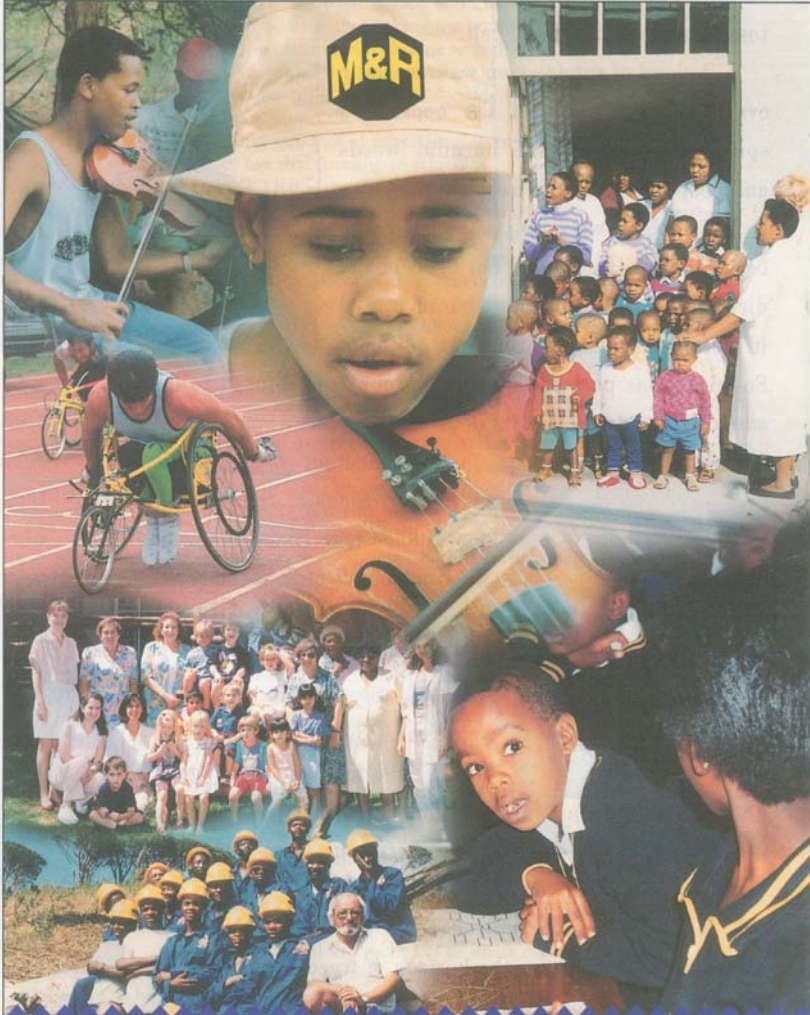
Raphaely sees enormous opportunities for growth among black and coloured readers. "They are mostly upwardly mobile and will turn to magazines that give them the information they need to satisfy their aspirations," she says, citing the healthy circulations currently enjoyed by motoring magazines.

Raphaely predicts that *Marie Claire* will not only find it hard to follow *Elle* into an overcrowded section of the market, but that the two international titles will be "big trouble" for each other. *Marie Claire* isn't filling a need or a gap in the market, she says, emphasising that Associated's new product, to be launched once the dust has settled on the company's newlybuilt headquarters in Cape Town, will "conform to our two requirements: it must fill a gap in the market and find a market in the gap".

At best the present flurry of activity in the magazine industry represents a positive response to the end of isolation and political funk. It means local publishers accepting the challenge from new international rivals, participating in global trends like market fragmentation and realising at last that the black market - once eternally the "market of the future", has arrived here and now.

But however compelling the sight of an industry gearing up to "fight to the finish" over limited territory, it is equally interesting to consider that when an explosion takes place in a confined space, cleaning up is always messy.

Annelize Visser is training officer for the Sunday Times.



REACHING OUT TO OUR COMMUNITY

M&R MURRAY & ROBERTS
PO Box 1000 • Bedfordview • 2008 • South Africa

Tel: (011) 455-1410
Fax: (011) 455-2222

just two and a half years. I appreciate the steps you are taking to make the community understand important issues.

SHAUN JOHNSON (*Editor, Cape Argus*): We are at the beginning of a transformation process. The media has been criticised because it has taken two years into democracy before this body was formed. But its formation was absolutely historical and will lead to total representativity. We do represent a much larger grouping, and are like a cabinet of national unity at present given that we were elected according to interest groups. Don't judge this group on its two weeks of existence, but on the Editorial Charter which it will come up with, and which includes transformation.

MANDELA: I had thought you were directly elected.

MOESIEN WILLIAMS: We have a sunset clause that expires next year.

MAZWAI: We have five working groups in SANEF, and these include affirmative action and training, and diversity.

I attended a black publishers group that was launched on Saturday, and they admitted they don't have the skills. This is the situation in both print and community radio. We have to do a programme to train them. We want to ensure that when we launch SANEF next year, we have a track record: we need a robust year. At the end of the day, we can't criticise other people for not changing, when we ourselves are refusing to change. You can't have one set of standards for government, another for ourselves, or for big business.

The question of communications between government and media is of absolute importance. Our function is to tell the public what government is doing or saying, whether we like it or not. We are not judges, but messengers. If information comes from the rock face, we can reflect it better. With all respect, I don't think government has done a good job of selling itself. Take a list of RDP achievements — it is inexplicable why there has been such a bad job communicating these. Government is not the best communicator. We want to do our bit to smooth it out.

MANDELA: Please note the spirit of the following comment I am going to make, so that you don't misunderstand me. We had the January elections. We have various ways of communicating — through the mass media, and direct with our constituencies. Sometimes it is difficult communicating via the mass media. We give out information we regard as crucial, and the press keeps quiet. Let us look at the patterns indicating popular support. In the the 1994 elections there was 62 percent support for ANC. Then we had local government elections and we came out with 66 percent. Then there were the local government elections in in the Western Cape and Kwazulu-Natal where the IFP got 44 percent and the ANC 33 percent. One newspaper said that in Kwazulu-Natal, the IFP has won, but in that province the ANC rules, because the total budget for IFP areas is R1.78 bn and R4.2bn for ANC areas. On numbers the IFP won, but the ANC increased its support there considerably. Then the coloured community in the Western Cape: in the general election, we got 9 percent, now we increased to 33 percent. Are we communi-

cating or not? Our constituency would not have continued to grow if we had not been communicating. But our method of communicating with the mass media leaves much to be desired. You can see this also in our method of communicating amongst ourselves, which is defective. Sometimes, I do not know our achievements in housing, health or water until I ask for reports on these.

JOHAN DE WET (*Editor, Beeld*): We do not have black journalists on Beeld. We have a programme of development, but our black journalists are grabbed by NGOs or government.

MANDELA: We have the same complaint. Our people are being grabbed.

DE WET: Very few black journalists write in Afrikaans. We wanted to appoint a black journalist as an assistant editor but we cannot afford him now. It would be of great benefit to us to have black journalists, but it is very difficult to find them.

MANDELA: Some of the Afrikaans newspapers have moved away significantly from supporting the apartheid regime, and Beeld is one. You criticise us, we don't always agree. But you are objective — I read the paper almost daily — and I want to complement you for that. (Of course, [looking around at other editors at the table] I also read all the other papers too!

Black journalists not staying for a long time may be because of the background, because this paper has been regarded as a mouthpiece for the apartheid regime. We have had serious problems in transforming leaders of the liberation movement to nation builders. They have an atmosphere of resistance to everything white and associated with government. Now we want the same people to lead the new process. This is where I have singled out some black journalists — not all, I expressly said "some" — for making it difficult for us in promoting reconciliation, without which we would not have had peaceful transformation.

Some black journalists are lagging behind whites. I have noticed the change in *Beeld*. Willie Kuhn (ex-editor of *Beeld*) is a trustee of the Children's Fund. It is absolutely necessary to allay the fears of a minority, as it has been throughout history. That is why we have emigration today, because of fear. We can't afford that. We must make sure people are not threatened, although we can also not compromise on transformation and the need to deliver to the disadvantaged. I don't want to pacify people in an irregular manner. We have struggled, been exiled, tortured, jailed and nevertheless been able to fight and win. So it is not cowardice to say we want peace and reconciliation. I never expected such progress as we have had, and the press has had a very important role in this transformation. Don't be impatient and think that you'll remove the image of Beeld and other newspapers within two and a half years. It will take some time. Beeld did contribute to preparing attitudes of Afrikaners towards change. A number of articles and columns have been very positive. This has been the contribution of all sections of the mass media.

LOUW: On media diversity, community radio and print do not have money, besides not having skills. One of the proposals that government should entertain is a subsidy system through the IJMDT to enable that to happen. There are lots of models around the world. We want to investigate these to find what is appropriate for us. The principle is that the state,

not the government, perhaps even through a multi-party vote, should funnel funds through an independent agency, ensuring there is a Chinese wall between donor and recipient. This is very important for media diversity.

MANDELA: I have noted your point. I have asked several ministers to look at the distribution of government advertising. There are companies contracted by the previous government to which we are still bound. Some of this is unacceptable. Some of the papers most critical of us are where we are distributing adverts to. Newspapers that are objective in their point of view are not getting any of these adverts.

MAZWAI: Thank you for those wise words!

MANDELA: I have asked for an equitable adjustment of advertisements. But we are dealing with clever boys who anticipated things and entered contracts so that the practices of the apartheid regime continue. That may be one of the ways to help fund newspapers.

LOUW: I am a little worried that the implication may be that if a paper is not supportive of government, it won't get advertisements.

MANDELA: One newspaper has boasted recently that it received R12m in adverts in one year. That is a newspaper which every issue must have an editorial attacking the government, and the cartoon portrays me with thick lips and looking like a real ... I don't know, with Joe Slovo perching on the one shoulder and Jay Naidoo up on the other.

They get a lot of advertising from us, and they use that funding to attack us.

LOUW: That is the price of democracy.

MANDELA: I am not saying they shouldn't do this. But that there should be equitable advertising.

HARBER: The Broadcasting Act encourages diversity. There are new radio owners emerging. But there is only talk about diversity in print, and no tangible government policy for this.

MANDELA: This is something you should discuss amongst yourselves. Be realistic — you don't transform overnight. It is a mistake if you think you change the practices overnight.

There is not threat to press freedom as long as the ANC is the majority party in government. There can be no threat to press freedom because we have suffered badly from a lack of freedom of the press. For us to make that mistake, would tarnish the leadership and the image of the country. We want your co-operation. The tendency to think that one man is responsible for moderate policy, and to ask what happens when he goes, and not to look at the collective, is to harm not only my party, but the country as a whole. I can assure you there is no threat from us to freedom of the press.

PRESIDENTIAL AIDE: Sorry to interrupt, but the Nobel laureates Mr de Klerk and Archbishop Tutu are here to see you, sir.

MANDELA: Well, they can wait! [continues] It is a mistake that some of our neighbouring countries have made, to crush opposition parties. If you do that, the whole process of transformation will slip away. Let us invite everyone; we have a strong case and the best weapon is to confront them at the table. This is how we have eliminated a number of parties. So it is not just a tactic — we believe vigorously in the freedom of the press.

Thank you very much, I must go as there are people waiting for me.

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 1, 1996

LONELY HEARTS

THE SA Communications Service (SACS) shackled up recently with the African Council for Communication Education (ACCE) for a weeklong conference junket in Cape Town. The theme, "communication for empowering civil society", conveniently reflected the latest (last?) catchy funding fashion amongst ACCE's declining donor base. Alas, civil society evidently excludes Africa's independent press. ACCE, whose president is a Cameroonian civil servant, wouldn't hear of calling upon Cameroonian dictator Paul Biya to release leading African editor Pius Njawa, jailed for "insulting the president".

For its part, the SACS announced itself to delegates with a laminated dinner party menu bearing a whitewashed message including the following line: "Then known as the Bureau for Information, the organisation's responsibility was to communicate with the South African population on behalf of other government departments." Tell that one to civil society and its journo who suffered censorship by SACS minions during the 1980s states of emergency. No surprise that SACS officials, in-between cheering their supremo Sol Kotane (he of Bop Broadcasting Big Bucks retrenchment fame), organised themselves to take the top positions in the South African chapter of the ACCE.

COUNTING FOR COMTASK

THE Media Monitoring Project recently inspected 7000 articles for Thabo Mbeki's Comtask. They then proclaimed 49% of news about government was neutral, 30% positive and 21% negative. This, without giving a definition of what these labels mean in practice when you come to classifying an article. Worse than this messy methodology, MMP commits a cardinal theoretical blunder. No self-respecting media researcher today believes that meanings reside in texts. In fact, anyone half-aware of how past media coverage of ANC terro's was decoded to mean ANC heroes, would be sceptical of reading meanings into texts. Meanings, to be meaningful, need to be studied in terms of what real readers, listeners and viewers make of them. Rather than the Media Monitoring Problem, good old journalistic thumbsuck would suggest that government's problem is not the percentages of coverage, but how to ensure that its practical performance is experienced positively by the populace, whether via the media or directly. It's deeds, not words, that really count.

SPELL THAT AGAIN

HAVING dished out the disgrace to the Media Monitors, Thumbsuck now turns to his own humbly. He was sorely embarrassed in the previous *Review* to have picked out the South African Society of Journalists and the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism for spelling mistakes. The self same edition spelt "Whither" without the "h" and misspelled a contributor's name. That almost beats a Sapa report on the Black Editors Forum and the Conference of Editors in 1995, which spoke of "Thami Matswai" and "Jan Patten". For a magazine done by a journalism school, our errors make us rather shame-faced. So, a free sub for the first reader to find a spelling miskate in this edition.

JUDGING THE JUDGES:

WHILE John Patten has retired to take on the mantle of columnist James McClurg, Thami Mazwai has soldiered on to be elected president of the South African National Editors Forum. In that capacity Mazwai last year headed up an off-

PUZZLE

VISIT <http://www.photojournal.ru.ac.za/ethics/ethics.quest.htm> and you'll see the adjacent photo. The question is whether online copyright has been broken or not. You decide. And when you have, ask yourself whether reproducing the image (or non-image, depending on your assessment) of the Net page, on this page, itself constitutes a violation.



the-record lunch for SANEF and the country's top two judges. Thumbsuck cannot reveal whether Constitutional Court president Arthur Chaskalson failed to moderate his media unfriendly statements about the subpoena power of Section 205 (take a guess), nor whether chief justice Ismail Mohammed used Codesa-style diplomacy to keep the discussion decent. But let it be known that Mr Mazwai - incarcerated under 205 for more days than he cares to recall - put forward the classic position of the journalist: "I have an open mind on argument in favour of Section 205," he told the judges. "It goes in one ear, and out the other."

NUTSHELLS

ANOTHER classic comment comes from Naspers newspapers boss, Hennie van Deventer, speaking at a Comtask conference in Caledon: "The public probably don't want 100% of information generated in parliament. That's the point of having editors. In fact the legendary definition of an editor is someone who separates the wheat from the chaff, and publishes the chaff."

Also of vintage value is the following: "When Samuel Morse flicked the switch for the first telegraph message, someone said that Maine could now talk to Florida. In Boston, Ralph Waldo Emerson remarked, 'Yes, but has Maine anything to say to Florida?'" Anthony Sampson cited this Alistair Cooke story when making a point about the Internet at the Commonwealth Press Union conference in Cape Town last year.

NO PLACE TO HIDE

DUMBEST caption in 1996: Photojournalist snaps white woman talking to black man, pic gets run big and in colour in *The Star*, the following words accompanying it: "Let's discuss ... Salome Stopford and Charles Mahlangu get away from the media in Brakpan yesterday to talk about the future of unsettled young Sifiso."

SMOKE SIGNALS

THE LOBBY FOR "free commercial speech", (puffery lingo for unrestricted advertisements), is enough to set Thumbsuck fuming. The tobacco giants support the cause, so does the Print Media Association. The PMA now wants the journo to join the campaign. But a bad odour still lingers: only months back, smoke sellers Rembrandt displayed zero support for freedom of editorial speech. The cigarette company yanked its advertising out of *The Star* when that paper dared to editorialise against smoking. If the media is going to support free commercial speech, there's got to be reciprocity. A one-way street is enough to make at least this journalist want to kick butt!

PRESS STRESS

AN AMERICAN study recently discovered that AUS journalists are more stressed out than ever, but they are smoking and drinking less. Er, ... is that "but" - or "because"?

DREAM TEAM

THE ASSOCIATED Press Managing Editors have compiled their dream newspaper team, drawing on famous figures who practised journalism at one point or another. Here are some of the highlights (find the rest at: <http://www.apme.com/eternal.htm>)

Senior Management:

- MARK TWAIN, Editor-in-Chief: "Get your facts first, and then you can distort 'em as much as you please."
- FREDERICK DOUGLASS, Editorial Page Editor: "Truth is proper and beautiful in all times and in all places." Born into slavery in 1818, he became one of America's greatest anti-slavery crusaders.
- JOSEPH PULITZER, Managing Editor: Sued by an opera singer who his paper reported gave a drunken performance, Pulitzer responded not with a retraction but with a story headlined "Full as a tick".

Department Heads

- CHARLES DICKENS, City Editor.
- BEN FRANKLIN, Business Editor.
- ERNEST HEMINGWAY, Sports Editor.
- WINSTON CHURCHILL, Foreign Editor.
- WILLIAM FAULKNER, State Editor.
- MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE, Photo Editor.
- WALT WHITMAN, Features Editor.
- WALT DISNEY, Art Director.
- IAN FLEMING, Projects Editor (Investigative Desk).
- ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER, Copy Chief: "The wastepaper basket is a writer's best friend."

Section Editors

- EDGAR ALLAN POE, Sunday Magazine Editor/Literary Critic.
- ALBERT CAMUS, Op-Ed Editor.
- H.G. WELLS, Science Editor.

Senior Correspondents

- JACK LONDON, National Correspondent: "Invariably I complete every (story) I start. If it's good, I sign it and send it out. If it isn't good, I sign it and send it out."
- RUDYARD KIPLING, Foreign Correspondent: "I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew); their names are What and Why and When and How and Where and Who."

Columnists, Editorial Writers.

- KARL MARX, Financial Columnist: "Information is the only delight of the newspapers."
- H.L. MENCKEN, Metro: "All successful newspapers are ceaselessly querulous and bellicose. They never defend anyone or anything if they can help it; if the job is forced upon them, they tackle it by denouncing someone or something else."
- BAT MASTERSON, Sports Columnist: "We all get about the same amount of ice. The rich get it in summer and the poor get it in winter."

Senior Reporters

- HENRY MORTON STANLEY, Investigative Reporter.
- TRUMAN CAPOTE, Police Reporter.
- JOHN STEINBECK, Social Services Reporter.
- FREDERIC REMINGTON, Staff Illustrator: It was Remington who was sent by William Randolph Hearst to witness the rebel uprising in Cuba. When he cabled home that he found no uprising, Hearst replied: "You furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war."

Other

- P.T. BARNUM, United Way Fund Drive: "There's a sucker born every minute."
- WARREN G. HARDING, Vice President/Advertising: Holds the distinction of being the only newspaper publisher ever to become president; he was second-rate at both jobs.

**Courageous Journalism
AWARD 1997**

**Applications close on
AUGUST 8.**

**For more information, call
Doug Mitchell at
0461 - 318336/7
or email
award@thoth.ru.ac.za**

GO GAGGA OVER GOGGA

<http://gogga.ru.ac.za/>



A project of the
Rhodes Journalism Department's
NEW MEDIA LAB
<http://nml.ru.ac.za/>

Search the South African press archives with a single query. Incls. *Mail & Guardian, Financial Mail, Beeld, Business Day, Independent Newspapers, Die Burger* and others. Watch out for our 1997 intelligence reports on Gogga, online advertising, subscriptions, design, listservs and calculators.