

Saturday – Keynote Speaker

Getting the most global medium to live up to its global promise

Speaker:

Guy Berger, Professor and Head of the School of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University, South Africa

Mark Tremayne: My name is Mark Tremayne. I'm an assistant professor at the School of Journalism here at U.T. I'm also the research chair for this symposium. I know several of you here. I've had interactions with you in regards to that. Right now I'd like to introduce our keynote speaker for today. He is Guy Berger, the head of the Journalism program at Rhodes University in South Africa. He has been working in the new media area for quite some time. He started the new media lab there in 1995, which put him ahead of the curve for a lot of universities. He's been a person to know in new media since that time. In fact, he was named in 1998 by the Online Journalism Association one of the 50 people to know in new media. His talk today, "Getting the Most Global Medium to Live Up to its Global Promise". Welcome, Guy Berger.

Guy Berger: Thanks, Mark.

[audience applause]

So good morning. Thank you for inviting me, Rosental. I'm really enjoying this conference. It's a hard act to follow that first panel but I will try and be a provocateur rather than presenter. And as you can see, this is very much work in progress. I don't have the audiences. I'm probably very confused in of this presentation but I hope I'll stimulate some ideas.

So I come from a country which, as you know, was under apartheid and white domination for 300 years. We are a very self-centered country. We're probably more self-centered than the U.S. In other words, everybody was looking at us for many years and we know almost nothing about the rest of the world, particularly not the rest of the continent. And I'm telling you this because this is my journalism school and I recently ventured out into the rest of Africa to research other journalism schools and we are fortunate, we have a nice new building. It's all funky with African designs and colors and things like that. And even in our toilets, we've got nice quotations all over the walls.

[audience laughter]

So when students need to get something for their assignments, they just go off to the john.

[audience laughter]

We, yes, we've got female but they mixed all over. Anyway, we've got a really nice lab, which if you look at this slide, you can actually partition into separate

2007 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

compartments to do specialized training or you throw it open into a convergent, giant lab.

Well, one of the place I went to was Nigeria. I went to Lagos. In terms of my research, I'm trying to find out about the rest of the world and that's me next to Lagos car. [inaudible] slogan, as you can see. Lagos, the center of excellence. Now you might know of Nigeria from this point of view. 419 scams. If you're not familiar with 419, it's this kind of thing. [inaudible] kind of semi-tragic way but somebody who has died or the widow of [inaudible] and you can basically do a deal with them and they'll give you a lot of money.

So this is the idea of Nigeria to outside people. When you get there you find actually people don't advertise houses for sale. They advertise houses not for sale because these scamps go and sell your house while you're out.

[audience laughter]

And when I was there I actually saw a house which said, "Not for sale," and somebody had then painted over the not. Now it wasn't clear if the homeowner was really trying to sell the house or whether a scam had come and painted over that.

Anyway, Nigeria, interesting place. They have an election coming up. They're Africa's biggest democracy. They've had more years of coups and military dictatorship than they've had democracy; 8 years of democracy in the past recent period. A lot of religious issues. The northern part the majority are Islamic and you might remember a story of Amin [inaudible] who was the woman sentenced to death by stoning because she had a child out of wedlock sometime ago. Of course, the man didn't get any sentence. The president is Olusegun Obasanjo. He tried to get a 3rd term in office but, fortunately, he couldn't change the constitution. There was a lot of mobilization against him but he has a vice president who he's fallen out with and has kind of used the state to try, state system to try and discredit this guy. So there's some kind of potential instability coming up in this country.

But it's also Africa's most oil rich country and you might be surprised to see, this is way it stands in relation to the U.S. It's no Mickey Mouse supplier of oil to the U.S. But although it's an oil rich country, nothing really trickles down to the people on the ground. This is Lagos, you can see the erection post to the one side and it's just raw sewage down the side of the road. You don't want to look too closely at these [inaudible].

Well I went along, I got stuck in a traffic jam. Actually there's no U.S. traffic that is as bad as Lagos traffic. It just doesn't move and you sit in your truck or car and there's millions of vendors around you selling things and there's also lots of beggars. On one side I had a guy with a deformed hand hammering on the window. Other side, a little girl who should have been in school was pushing her nose up against the window pane and singing a song and holding the hand of a blind guy. So, you know, it's a really mind blowing experience.

This is where I went to, one of the journalism schools there. This is reverend and trained to the Baptist, trained at a Baptist college somewhere in the U.S. He runs a journalism school. He introduces me to a colleague of his. He says, "This is our chief typist," and lo and behold, it his chief typist. She's the only one who has a

2007 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

device upon which you can actually do things. He has nothing on his desk, not a typewriter, not a computer.

Like some first world J. schools, they have sponsorship. Okay, facilities are underwritten. This is a dairy company that paid to paint their classroom. These are, they've got two Apple Macs donated by this guy from Iowa. That's a generation of Macs that they've got, okay? They can't use them. Mac, can't use them because there's no power. Okay? The same guy, he took me to, this reverend took me to look at the broadcast studios. We couldn't see inside, it was too dark. So as I was telling Rosental yesterday, he instructed a man to switch on the generator and the scenario followed like this, the guy said, "There's no possibility of this because the generator is leaking." So the reverend said, "Well, get it running for a few minutes anyway." He said, "Well, there's no petrol." So Reverend said, "Go and get him some," so he said, "Well I have no transport." "Well, run." "Well, I have no money." Anyway, eventually the chap comes back with a bit of petrol, he starts the generator, it's pouring out petrol but there's no power, okay? That's the situation.

I also went to bathrooms there and, unlike our bathroom, they don't have things on their tiles but they also don't have water. Okay? This is not unusual for J. schools in Nigeria. So what do they, how do they teach people? Well, they produce handwritten stuff and this is their best board. This is what the students, where the students publish their work. And when I was taken to be shown this quite proudly by the head of the school, he was quite shocked to see that the students had published this particular [inaudible] here.

[audience laughter]

But interestingly enough, this is a case of, I supposed would like J. schools in first world countries, this is not an original art school. This is an article that's pinched from somewhere about etymology of the word f-u-c-k. So it wasn't even original.

Anyway, what's interesting about it is that the students do access the web on and off when they have a few coins, they go to cyber cafes, which are quite expensive because there's no land line telephony to speak of, no cables. It's satellites. So it's really costly. But they do it and the press, people come out of the J. school and go work for newspapers like these. They are very, very vibrant and lots of them. Okay, some come and go but, you know, it makes a contribution to democracy in their country. And they have web sites of various kinds.

So I tell you all that because this was a mind blowing experience for me, coming from South Africa, going to Nigeria. Now the elections coming up, I think this whole country and the fact that there's an election next month is quite an interesting story. But when you find it, if you looked at various web sites, I don't think so. Despite the oil significance, religious significance and so on and [laughing] I asked people this question. Well I get asked, people ask me in the U.S., here's the president and so you have a country like Nigeria which is obviously very poor and the U.S. and my own country, very rich by comparison, and yet both countries, rich countries, are quite info poor about these other places. So we might use our riches in some respects but we're info poor.

And so my whole approach to trying to look at U.S. websites and the global question is to focus on the history of where we come from in terms of, I suppose knowledge about the world we live in. So potential of Americans, this is old hat to you I'm sure,

2007 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

but 48% still believed in 2003 that there were these links. Twenty-two percent believed that the weapons of mass destruction had actually been found.

[audience laughter]

Twenty-five percent, that's not bad actually, believed that the world was in support of the war. By the way, it was found that the people watched Fox Television scored the worst on this.

[audience laughter]

Now this was in 2003 and 80% of the people got their news from broadcast, okay? So one might say, "Well broadcasting is so superficial, it's hard to retain and so on." But in 2006 when more people are getting news from online, you still had these kind of problems, okay? And even when you come to your Secretary of State, fairly uninformed population. That's a pure statistic. And this is now 31% of people getting their news from online. So there's still an interesting problem, I suppose.

Now the effect of this, this was written by Professor Stephenson at Chapel Hill and I think it's quite a powerful quote, except that he wrote it in 1994 [laughing]. Okay, what else, what has changed? I don't think too much.

And so you have a bit of a paradox because this is a claim by a guy in the Christian Science Monitor and he says that despite everything that is pointing to a more globalized world, you still have international affairs as a marginal phenomenon. And much the same sentiment expressed in this quote. While it's more vital to understand and even simpler to report the story because of technology, air travel, and so on, it's less likely to happen.

That was on the same theme. What's quite interesting is that in this globalized world you've got such interdependency that one would expect this to be reflected in your old media at least and in particular your new media. There's a similar kind of point being made.

So people are beating this drum and I'm not quite sure that it's being heard, particularly in the mass media. This is all the same kind of sentiment but I think they all express the point quite well.

Okay, now is it because audience are uninterested? In 1990, the figure was that 41% of people said they were interested and 5% [inaudible] for what they were interested. So there's a disjunction between what people say and what editors say. Now this may in fact be right but we will come to that but further on. Because what people say and what people do is, of course, not necessarily the same thing. But it does suggest that there's a bit of a lag, at least in terms of conscious subjective express perceptions.

And 2002, 86% of editors said they were basically globalized in terms of their local communities but only 50% said they covered this. And this is not only by companies, it's about immigrants in the local community, university connections, and so on and so forth. So, again, you face this kind of discrepancy but you want people in the media think is the case in what people are saying.

2007 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

The history to this and one of the histories is there's been a huge downsizing of American journalism, journalists, foreign correspondents and in some cases some may say this has been a cause of a lack of public interest or, you know, in some cases may be a symptom. Sorry. But I think Tom Rosen still probably correct, you know, from the Center for the Excellence of Journalism when he says that it's really about cost cutting rather than the demand for international news.

So that's kind of history of where it came from. Of course things changed a bit after 9/11. This is Michael Parks, who, you know, is on the LA Times and runs Edinburg. He said, "U.S. papers carry more stories in 4 months than 4 decades." Of course that's understandable. At the time or shortly after the 9/11, in 2002, editors said that real interest have indeed increased but they, most of them expected it to shrink again. They thought they'd go back, it wouldn't actually kind of see this as a sustainable wave of interest. But at least at an express level, people did say that they still interest. This was just last year, okay? Very high interest, according to this. And what was interesting about this study last year was that they said, "This is new. Women, minorities and less educated Americans are even saying the same thing." Although I have to qualify this because the interest that's being reported is interest primarily in news about the war, which, you know, figures. And, in fact, if you look back at even at what some people were saying was a golden age, it was about the Cold War. It wasn't about news in general. And that, in fact, some people would argue that international news was followed by your correspondents. But the other way around is the news, as it's constructed, is a result of the correspondents being sent to places. And, of course, they are sent to places of strategic interest.

But one of the fates of this is that a lot of the news does become U.S.-centric. And one of the consequences of that is that it also then takes its cue and I supposed this was very much a case after the war. This is the information from previously but certainly after the war, the better journalists and so very much the cue was taken by that.

And one of the, it's completely understandable this approach but one of the affects is that it gives a particular perspective on a country and it's also usually a country that only comes to light after crisis breaks. And this is not unique to the U.S., this kind of media behavior, this domestication of stories, because there are lot of stages that actually say that in almost every country news gets, international news gets reinterpreted from the point of interest in that country. Certainly in my country that is the case.

But nonetheless, I think one can still say that although this might be a common thing, there's also a shortage of, there's a quantity program and then there's a quality program. And the quality program is that it's, really this is old hat stuff and I'm sure you can recognize this, the quality program is the way in which international news gets represented and this was from an interesting point made by West African bureau chief for AP who then went onto Baghdad, she said that, in fact the effect of the increased international interest in Iraq was that other countries began to fall off the map and she, her bureau was downscale, low staff as relocated and it meant therefore that the whole kind of news that she had to cover became the really important bad news, which of course just feeds those perceptions.

So if you got back to Nigeria, for example, maybe they don't cover the election but if you do cover that, you cover the crisis kind of stuff. Now what's interesting, of course there's crisis and there's bad things but there's also people actually making a

2007 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

go of it. They live in the J. school like I showed you but yet they feed people into newspapers that are quite vibrant.

Stereotypes in international news, [inaudible] etc., etc., and of course a lot of international news, just like historically a lot of domestic news was sort of all about men. [laughing] Powerful men. And I'm going to wind up this section but there's also a question in terms of foreign news in many countries, particularly U.S. there's foreign and there's foreign. So there's foreign news about Europe but not about certain countries in Europe and not about other countries. And we [inaudible] when you're talking about developing worlds so one needs to nuance this whole analysis a little bit more.

Anyway, to sum up this section, I think quite a narrow picture has prevailed in old media and the question that I've been trying to explore now is when you're looking at online, do you find the same kind of stuff? And that's also bearing in mind that the new media finally has come of age where actually not just a reflection of what's in the old media. So is new media doing a better job than old media?

Okay, so that brings me to the high hopes for the web. Okay, there was of course a lot of hype about the web every since it came about and there's sort of reinflated hopes and so on. But it is true that there are characteristics about the web that it negates space, it compresses time, etc., etc. And also by publishing on the web you're immediately a worldwide player, okay? And that is very distinctive. It makes it a medium like no other medium that's come before it. And a lot of people, even Reese who is at the University here, right, with some people, they came up with these hypothesis that basically you have kind of coverage of geography and you'd have it deterritorializing of news with the user, the creator and the content could all be unbundled as it were.

In fact, in one art school they hypothesized that the open age for the internet would lead to cross national connections so you can see a lot of hope and hype in fact about this. And not that Reese was saying that the global had replaced the local but still he was saying that the national principle is no longer dominant. Well, we'll see. We'll see. I'm not sure that these are the case. There is 1 guy who actually has said this from Christian Science Monitor that, in fact, the internet is providing international news. Again, we'll look at that. There is a view that because traditional media hasn't been doing the greatest of jobs that, in fact, the internet could step in and that there's huge potential for people to have international linkages, collaborations, content exchanges, etc.

But one has to also qualify some of those hopes by looking at the political economy of the web and this is about, who is an importer and who is an exporter of web content? So whether that content is good local information or international information, which countries are the importers and which countries are the exporters of that content?

Of course those countries that don't have strong production capabilities, anybody on the web is likely to go and look somewhere else and if your country doesn't have strong international content in your local thing, again you might be encouraged to go somewhere else. And so of course there's some imbalances here because close to 90% of the domain names are in the western countries, okay? And North America and the U.S., the dominant content production but it doesn't have very much about international affairs, religiously speaking. And so once you find countries with

2007 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

minimal content, go to U.S. sites, access U.S. focused content. So you can see there's quite a complicated set up.

And I also came up with this work in progress hypothesis that if you look at old media then new media, there's not really much difference because the character of content is still local-centric in both cases. Production is still on the global scale, mainly the U.S. and the west. Consumption, there's still an imbalance but I think that, but less because as we'll see because some U.S. web users do go to international sites. Okay, so it's not quite as imbalanced as it used to be. And I think the mediation, of course, has changed because it can be direct now.

But in other words, it's not a huge difference to the old world that we look at. Well let me just focus a little bit on the online realities here. I think there's double paradox and forgive me, I'm speaking as an outsider and I don't be insensitive here but we have an interesting situation where it's non-users, non-Americans who experience the internet as international, okay? That's their use. And you find the U.S. is a country which is go to war is at the same time, its users are not using the internet internationally and, in fact, that's, they're not using the technology but there's also on the contrary there's a kind of, the more international we are and the fact that we're at war, the more hyper local we should become. So there's 2 paradoxes there. there's the technological one that has not been technology come cultural and the other one related to the conjuncture. And I don't understand them. Maybe you can.

I just took a, this is completely unscientific but I just took a snapshot of some of the websites of some of the people who spoke in here and these are the news ones. I didn't take Brian's website, which has got a lot of international stuff, but Washington Post has a recipe finder, okay? They didn't have anything about international content there. The same with these other papers didn't have anything about international content. So there you go. None of them lead with an international story. I didn't find any internationalized angle. And I said this is not scientific, of course, but it's an impressionist thing which at least there is some value. If you click on world, you do get a degree of foreign content. And it's different 'cause if you look at 2 other papers represented here, Le Monde and El Pais, their web sites are leading with international stories, although what's interesting is El Pais story, with international is Hollywood, okay, which also tells you something.

[laughing]

And I also looked at online journalism boards and, of course, the Pulitzer Prize has only recently taken to cognizance for online so it'll be interesting to see who do they recognize or what do or what is the winning international coverage in the U.S. next year? Will it be, will it be an online entry? I doubt it. I looked at the O and A awards, they've got very little international related coverage that is recognized in the O and A awards.

And as for maps, you probably can't read this from here, but this is about using Google maps and not a single use in this list here of using maps for international story telling, story telling about international affairs. Web 2, well social networking I think against the negative point to original idea about the daily me, it shows in fact there's going to be a daily us. But the daily us is going to be very insular. It is every inch, it has a distinct and the unknown them who is the occasional erratic and them.

2007 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

And I think one of the things, too, is that global diversity gets unrealized. It's there but, you know, it's not being reflected in cyber space. And including the students at my university, you know, I don't know how many thousands of miles away, how do they organize their social lives? By a Facebook, okay? This is the kind of crazy world that we live in, it seems. So when they go in there, they behave like Americans, okay? They don't behave differently. I mean they don't bring their difference. So we don't have that diversity to enrich things.

As I mentioned, some U.S. users go elsewhere, especially during this talk of the Iraq war. I'm sure you all know this. But what is interesting is one of the reasons for going elsewhere was that the websites, according to the research, were actually different. The irony is that most websites around the world were using 8P but they only took them to them differently. Okay, reflections and that's just one reason why people went there still. Around this, according to this research, around a quarter of users do visit foreign sites. And, of course, then occasionally you have spikes like that.

There is a danger that the kind of access by this 25% who do access other sites, it becomes a bit of a fringe activity because your mainstream online media is not providing it. so you then go and do stuff on the margins. This is just from Nielsen net ratings which gives you a statistic there.

Okay, in other words, I think that there's not much and this is speculation but I think that if you did proper research probably would find it's substantiated. Not much reflection of globalization. Not especially unique to the U.S. There is diversity if you go to different web sites driven by each country giving its own sort of aspect, angle on the thing. But on the whole, as a global medium, it's really lacks behind global development and that there's an imbalance in how the users experience international aspect.

Okay, so what's a reason for this in terms of online? Why is online not performing that much better than traditional media in terms of reflecting an international world? Well, the most read story in the New York Times was a kind of, sort of how to tame your husband using behavioral training methods. I don't know if anybody read this. It was even in the Reader's Digest. Okay, so it's what people are interested in so that's why I qualify but when people say this, are interested in those stories because they actually want to read something else.

This story you might know of. This is Seattle Times. Okay, this is a columnist who wrote this story about this online and I just want to tell you about it because it's entertaining but it's also interesting. He says he should have written columns about people having sex with horses, okay? And this is because this is what the stats reveal and the stats reveal that what people actually read, the top most read story in the Seattle Times was this horse sex and 4 more of the stories were about horse sex. Okay? It's not all bad news because he says that actually there were some other stories which confirms some interest in the international affairs about, you know, these two but two out of 20 [laughing] that's not as high as one would hope it would be.

So I think the thing about what users actually want, you know, impacts on the kind of content that is significant. But it's also not only what Americans want to know about, it's also about other people want to know about. So I think that horse sex

2007 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

traffic probably included a lot of traffic from around the world, not just, you know, based in Washington. So this is of course a very interesting statistic that people often don't talk about that much. But if you look at the New York Times digital, 44% of the visitors came from outside the U.S. I couldn't find other statistics. It's quite hard to get statistics on this.

This best at all say one-third of the traffic comes from outside the traditional area and then, of course, the same goes for Google, Yahoo, and Microsoft. And this a claim about how indicative, that this indicates how globally internet has come, which is true in a way. Except it's not everybody going everywhere. It's the world coming to the U.S. websites.

This is the same kind of thing, it's just elaborated. Five of the top 10 sites are operated by U.S. based companies. Goes back to the import/export thing I was raising earlier.

There's mixed feelings about this and the Neil Firmer at last year's conference raised these issues because this is a global medium attracting international traffic but it's not really that welcome because of the raising server costs. The nature of these international visitors, so in fact a lot of news sites actually discourage it. In fact, it may be one reason why, you know, they tend to be insular focused.

There's a very interesting discussion amongst people who ran websites that kind of had advertising fixed with Yahoo and they were saying here, there was 1 person wrote and said, "I was taught by you. I should have used a script to block international traffic." Okay? Because Yahoo doesn't want international traffic because it doesn't help the advertising. And, of course, you can get these systems now which can help you, you know, if you look at the highlights and think it says, "Do you waste bandwidth and money to unproductive traffic?" These are real economic questions that are behind this. I'll just jump back for a time.

Mark, himself, the chair, he's written about some of these questions. Gated cyber communities, now he wrote about but there's an international aspect, also. The cyber community, it's not just a local community but it's also an international thing and there's more and more linkages internally rather than externally. At the start of the Iraq war this was a survey of sites.

Blogs, of course, have more linkages, external linkages. It's a big deal now because, you know, bloggers don't mind about driving traffic elsewhere, unlike your institutional mainstream media. But even blogging is still pretty national based. So I think one can conclude from all this that online media is still very much national in character. Even when there's a global ordinance.

So to sum all this up, minority of U.S. users do go offshore. The U.S. news websites aren't aiming at an international audience but they get them anyway. And the result is that you have a U.S.-centric cyberspace in terms of the information there.

I'm not sure if this will last and this is an interesting question. In the same way that some countries have developed their sort of counterparts to Hollywood. You know, in India the only watch Bollywood and Nigeria they have Nollywood and so on. You may find particularly with a kind of increasing production capacity in third world countries, that people begin to have their own language sites. We discussed yesterday how Sweden is an example. How, you know, different national spaces can

2007 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

attract national users. This is also, these are also quite interesting statistics and I think that these kind of changes mean that you might find a U.S.-centric cyberspace realm is something that is going to be a passing phenomenon.

Well, to begin to wind up here, I think that 1 thing that could really be explored is this whole narcissistic thing that's about, to an extent that foreign news is reflected and included in cyberspace to what extent does it tell you more about yourselves rather than about that other country? And of course there's some dangers there I'll touch on in a second.

There are exported purchase, import and purchase so that even if you're interpreting international information for your local audience, you also need to try and export in a global market some of your content internationally and so I won't go into this because it's a complicated thing but I think that you have this very strange kind of translation of [inaudible] that start off being national way, become international and then become re-national, okay? And we're just cyberspace players for that, particularly on the news front.

And then, of course, you've got the whole question of playing in terms of customizing and possibly [ghetto-izing] where you can begin to get this sort of fragmented potential. Okay, I put this quote in because I thought this is quite an interesting observation and used to take us perhaps to some of the things we raised earlier about the, it's not so much the kind of content, the kind of way you tell the content. And perhaps this is where the internet, as it gets rarely used for its potential to tell the story and not just a shovel it away, could become significant. It's how you tell the story and how you spin the story, in a sense.

So these points that are made, that people not so interested in politics and I think everybody should know this but it's not really reflected, I think, yet in the media, particularly not in global news, online news media.

Okay, this is just another dimension about the fact that these are, these foreign stories were actually local stories in the sense of immigration being right there and to what extent that is catered for. Some of you would say that it's very hard to distinguish these issues. I'm not completely convinced by this particular point of view but it's something that is interesting and it may be that this hyper local focus could include a local/foreign focus through people on the changing communities in local vicinities.

And this is, of course people may have seen this movie, but this was one interesting example that was done by the Star Tribune. One of the few that I found which actually did follow this theme in terms of localizing international issues. I think they did a really nice production here of local people who'd come from Liberia and if you've seen this movie it's not far from the reality. And so they managed to just, you know, tell people in their community and people more broadly in cyberspace what it was like to be a Liberian living in Minnesota.

These are just, you know, this is why I say this is a work in progress. I'm trying to make sense of a lot of these things but we're in a new area now and ambiguity, it is ambiguous and so whatever you say, again there's always a kind of another angle to what extent you're dealing with reflecting a global universe and to what extent you're reflecting just a kind of a more blinkered one.

2007 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

And some of these observations, they are not coming from academics but from journalists themselves. Anyway, what's interesting about this, this begins to raise the question about not only local stories being, you know, international stories that are local but how do you also get local people far away to tell their local stories to you as an international content? And this does raise a question of who then is a foreign correspondent because in terms of your audience, you know, I mean who is foreign? So there's this point from Bloomberg, "A foreign national correspondent may be a report in India, writing it for the Indian Daily, whose work is read over the internet by resident of Indianapolis." This is the part of the complexity of international news.

I do think, though, much as one can give local people to write about stories like that, person in India writing for people in Indianapolis, having people on the ground is still important because it gives you a certain depth and perspective but you want people who also understand the audience for whom their product is going to be consumed ultimately. So to that extent it's also useful and not to have a parachute journalist, somebody who parachutes in and doesn't know the situation but to have the person who, from your culture, who is still reporting on a foreign place in a foreign place for your culture.

And I think this is really important. One of the, the Washington Post I don't think have done this story just through having people in the Middle East doing it for them. Nor could they have done it through parachuting in but why it's important to do this kind of story is that there's this kind of a [powerful] thing about a woman who was approached, somewhere in the U.S, she was approached by Mohammad Atta and he started telling her, he want to get a line to buy a small plane and he started telling her about Osama bin Laden and stuff and she never heard of Osama so it didn't ring any bells. Okay? So, I mean the importance of carrying these far off stories in their own right because at some point they well may become relevant even if they aren't relevant now. And how one actually begins to get journalists to go to places and actually tell stories, baring in mind the kind of globalized world we live in.

Just touch for you briefly on bloggers. I don't quite agree with this remark here, which could apply to bloggers. I don't think that international blogging is a complete alternative for foreign correspondence. I think there is still some need for that. But I think it's, of course, is compatible.

Global voices, of course, are very interesting. But to what extent is that part of the fragmentation stuff where that's now fringe stuff and your mainstream media is still ignoring international things.

Anyway, to wind up this presentation, I think we should bear in mind at this point in time that it's still, this is arguably the case that the web supplements other sources. Now if your other sources are not doing international news, the web isn't [laughing], the web is still supplemental anyway to those. And then of course we also have the issue that people want, although Brian is trying to change it, people want to get a certain kind of news on the web. And most news on the web is gotten through these non-news players as it were, rather than your traditional you have in these houses.

So there's still some limits about where cyber space media are playing in terms of international news. This is a point about kind of behaviors that people have, the snacking behavior, which applies also to international news. And then the danger that localism can be provincialism.

2007 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

This whole thing that Steve Yelvington and the kind of drum that was beaten here yesterday, such a lot about hyper local, hyper local, I tell you it's obviously it does make a lot of sense. A lot of newspapers are saying the same thing, for them to stop their declining circulations they're going to go for hyper local. And that's, of course, that's a priority to tell people that but isn't hyperglobalism also a priority and how do you combine hyperglobalism with a hyperlocalism? I don't know. Part of it is building competencies. There was this book published in 1999 for editors. I'd be quite interested to see a book that advises people in online media about the same thing. There is some suggestions that were made a while back for old media but I think they're quite useful suggestions.

This I quite liked. This is a remark by William F. Woo. He's a famous U.S. journalist. He's trying to get away from the exotic coverage where you have us and them. You know, he is really suggesting that one looks at life.

The economics that hit, I think there is a long tail with this international news and international audiences. So I think this kind of shortsighted view is to, you know, you don't want to ball up international traffic because its, to monetize it to advertising, I think it's a shortsighted view because I think increasing in an international economy, you can. When I booked an international ticket, I can book it through a U.S. company, except if I go to cheaptickets.com, they don't take international credit cards so. But it will change, of course. So I think the changing economic base with a global economy and global e-economy will mean that actually it make sense from a business point of view.

Well this is my second to last slide, I think. Taking the Schumacher and Reese model about understanding the media, I think the ideological level, it's about of sync that media doesn't reflect an internationalized world so I think it's got to change because the reality is so internationalized. And I think they are increasing external sources is easier and easier to get international news. Organizational, there's also outsourcing, you know? Which we'll say affects the news business.

Jeff Jarvis was kind of touching on some ideas the other, yesterday. The media of routine, I think there's a lot of new topics that are coming to the forum. New forms of news as well as a change in things. I think it's up to people individually who are interested in global issues to try and tell those stories and try and tell global issues to local stories.

And it's partially about leadership. And I think that everybody is having to chase. The market chases the audiences but you also, you know, good business and good capitalism is to lead them, to expose people to stuff they never knew they wanted. Not only to give them what they really want. So you've got to create demand. And Katherine Graham, you know, has said this, that, you know, it becomes a self fulfilling prophecy if you just keep on doing the same damn thing all the time.

Anyway, to really sum up, I think that there's a lot of place to serve the insiders, of course, but to serve your insiders by reflecting the world on the doorstep and reflecting the world that's far away. Okay, not to serve the entire only by doing the local wind chimes and dog contents. And then to serve the outsiders and I think to serve the outsiders also because that's part of the way in which I think web will have more of a cosmopolitan world instead of a daily us and unknown them.

2007 – International Symposium on Online Journalism

Challenges, I think, is, you know, will they, one coming and avoid a cyber bubble which seems to exist and the whole language question, which was touched on yesterday, is interesting. I think one can reflect a lot of interdependency, common humanity and diversity and even when people want to read about horse sex and Anna Nicole but in our country the day the state of the nation speech was made was the day that Anna Nicole Smith died so, of course, she's been to news websites, editors in our country, what drove the country? Not the president's speech but the death of Anna Nicole Smith. Figures. But what's interesting is you can actually tell people these stories. I mean you can, if you, if people are interested in horse sex here, well are there cases of horse sex elsewhere? Things, how is the Anna Nicole Smith story being played in other countries? These are ways in which, you know, these stories can be internationalized.

I think, of course, that content should be connected to local but not reduced to local. Well this is the last slide. You know, a great quote by Gay Tuchman and I think, you know, if you look at online news, you can say, "Well, you know, what kind of window is online news?" And we need web windows to match the view. It's an incredible view out there, which I don't think we are showing. So I hope at some point, the next Nigerian election, it will be in the view in online news. Thank you.

[audience applause]