

# Journalism education

– improvement of  
the quality of education  
and new technologies

6th South Caucasus Media Conference  
Tbilisi, Georgia, 19-20 November 2009



Organization for Security and  
Co-operation in Europe

The Representative on  
Freedom of the Media

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## Foreword

**Ana Karlsreiter<sup>1</sup>, Adilia Daminova<sup>2</sup>**

### **Dear Readers,**

It is our great pleasure to present you with the publication on the 6th South Caucasus Media Conference, held by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in Tbilisi on 19–20 November 2009. The first day of the Conference was devoted to journalism education, while the second day focused on the general situation in media freedom in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.

In 2004, inspired by the great success of the Central Asian conferences that had been held since 1999, Miklos Haraszti, at that time the newly appointed OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, decided to challenge the impossible and organise a similar event for journalists from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. The scepticism and negativism toward this initiative were great on every possible level, from diplomatic nuances to logistics. Haraszti was warned it would be a fiasco: journalists from Armenia and Azerbaijan would never even talk to one another. Haraszti did not give in, and the tradition of the South Caucasus Media conference was established. We would like to use this opportunity and thank him for this great initiative.

Since 2004, the five following conferences have examined some of the most important topics related to media freedom: dealing with libel and freedom of information, public service broadcasting and the Internet, media self-regulation in the South Caucasus, the movement toward

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1 Ana Karlsreiter, Senior Adviser to the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media responsible for the countries of the CIS

2 Adilia Daminova, Project Officer in the Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media responsible for monitoring media developments in Central Asia and organising regional Media Conferences

independent and responsible media, and the challenges of public service broadcasters and the digital switchover.

The first day of the Conference, as always, was devoted to a special topic. This year, it was journalism education, a very timely issue. It is generally recognised as important for journalists to have better qualifications, especially now that new technologies allow so many of us to become so-called 'citizen journalists.' The conference participants acknowledged that the impact of a quality education in journalism is limited in the absence of the parallel development of independent media, and urged their respective governments to refrain from overregulating the profession of journalism.

For the first session of the conference, dealing with international experience in the area of journalism education, we invited well-known experts with extensive international experience in media and journalism education from Russia, Lithuania, and the United States.

The first speaker, Andrei Richter, a well-known professor from the Department of Journalism at Moscow State University and Director of the Moscow Media Law and Policy Institute, talked about the current problems of journalism and journalism education. In his presentation, he pointed out the dangers that newly-developed Internet legislation, if applied arbitrarily, can pose to the Internet community and traditional media. He also emphasised that countries are obliged to respect international standards for freedom of expression in their respective national legislation.

The American expert David Mould, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies and Professor of Telecommunications at Ohio University, spoke about the challenges and new directions for global journalism education. He discussed whether one needs a journalism

degree (or any university degree) to be considered a journalist. Dr. Mould emphasised that licensing requirements on journalists might lead to restrictions on freedom of the press. While these licensing and professional bodies threaten pluralism, he noted that ‘the growth of the Internet’ and so-called ‘citizen journalism’ has ‘further democratised journalism.’

Manana Aslamazyan provided a different angle on the subject of journalism training and education. Manana is well known in the area of Russian and international media development. She is a media and television expert who, as the head of Internews Russia, has trained 11,000 Russian journalists. Manana is currently based in Paris, working as the Executive Director of Internews Europe. She started her presentation, entitled ‘There Is No Such Thing as Too Much Training,’ by saying that a country’s state of democracy can be determined on the basis of the quality of its journalism. She shared with the audience some of the lessons learned during her many years of training journalists in Russia, and the common message was that journalists must continuously build their skills and improve their professionalism.

The discussion was then picked up by Dainius Radzevicius, Chairman of the Lithuanian Union of Journalists. In his presentation, ‘The Impact of Technology and Consumer Habits on Journalists’ Qualifications,’ Mr. Radzevicius pointed out that rapidly developing technology has led to an explosion of new media platforms, prompting society to question whether ‘real journalists’ are actually needed. As with any type of transformation, new technologies pose a threat as well as offer an opportunity. He concluded that the collapse of traditional media can shake up both media and the state, but it can also present an opportunity for the development of a more open and better informed society.

As is traditional, the situation in media freedom in the three countries was discussed on the second day. Speakers from South Caucasus reported on the challenges they face in the region. Unfortunately, the situation in media freedom in the region has deteriorated since the first Conference in the region in 2004: several journalists remain imprisoned, issues related to licensing and media ownership remain unresolved, and reporting on issues of public interest is still difficult.

These and other issues were raised by representatives of media community: Mehman Aliyev, Director of the Turan Information Agency in Azerbaijan; Boris Navasardyan, President of the Yerevan Press Club; and Eka Kvesitadze, a journalist and a political analyst from Georgia.

Mushegh Hovsepyan, a professor at Yerevan State University; Etibar Babayev, Head of the Department of Journalism at Baku Slavic University; and Maia Mikashavidze, Dean of the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management at the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs, examined the situation in journalism education in their respective countries.

All of these exchanges were made in a constructive atmosphere, allowing the participants to respond to one another's frustrations and collaborate in seeking ways to resolve their problems. Some left the conference with new ideas, while for others it was an opportunity to assert their own points of view. Hopefully, no one left with a feeling of indifference. Everyone had an opportunity to express their opinions without fear of being judged, ostracised, or punished. While the situation with respect to media freedom still remains bleak for the region as a whole, these conferences present an opportunity to share the very values and commitment that brought journalists to their profession, and these should be respected and celebrated.

The 6th South Caucasus Media Conference was a great success. It is the uniqueness of the Conference that has kept this initiative alive and strong for so many years. It is the spirit of bringing together people who share the same profession, passions, problems, and aspirations—people who still feel very close to one another, due to their Soviet past and the shared realities of independence and its associated problems.

That closeness is keenly felt during each of our conferences. It starts as participants scan one another's name plates with genuine curiosity to either reconnect with old colleagues or meet new people. This goes on until the very end of the conference when, at the farewell dinner, participants are still hungry for more communication. They bring in extra chairs and gather at one table where they can mingle with others and talk openly about the challenging but exciting and rewarding life of a journalist. These informal exchanges are valued by our participants even more than the formal discussions during the sessions.

In our daily work on media freedom issues, we deal with many injustices, violations of principles, legal cases, and pieces of legislation. During the conference in Tbilisi, however, we enjoy the most rewarding part of our jobs: meeting with the journalists themselves, spending time with them, sharing a story or two, and making friends for life.

We would like to use this opportunity to thank all of the contributing countries that make this conference possible year after year. This year, the list of contributors included Austria, Belgium, Germany, Lithuania, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States.

We hope you enjoy the pages that follow!



## 6th South Caucasus Media Conference

**Journalism education – improvement of the quality of education and new technologies**

*Tbilisi, Georgia*

*19-20 November 2009*

### **DECLARATION**

The Sixth South Caucasus Media Conference was organized by the Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in co-operation with the OSCE Offices in Baku and Yerevan. Hosted by the government of Georgia, the event took place on 19-20 November in Tbilisi.

Throughout the years the South Caucasus Media Conference has become a unique forum to discuss media issues and cooperation among journalists of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

The specific focus of this year's conference was journalism education. Participants examined the role of journalism in modern society, assessed existing educational opportunities, discussed best practices in journalism education, and exchanged experiences. The two-day event provided productive framework for new ideas on how to approach the challenges that face journalism education in the South Caucasus.

Media professionals and government officials from the three countries participated in the conference. In addition, representatives from university journalism faculties, members of national and international organizations, and national and international experts joined the conference to discuss the latest media developments in the South Caucasus.

*Here are some of the main findings of the Conference:*

***On media freedom.***

*The Conference:*

1. Urges all three governments to foster pluralism and refrain from harassment and monopolization of media.
2. Urges the regulatory bodies in all three countries to carry out their activities in a non-political and transparent manner, and to grant licenses to media representing all shades of their political life in order to ensure pluralism.
3. Notes that media ownership should be transparent, and urges all three countries to create or enforce legislation in this regard, as pluralism of ownership is a pre-requisite for pluralism of content.
4. Demands the immediate release of journalists presently in custody, and an end to future imprisonment in Azerbaijan.
5. Commends the commitment of the Azerbaijani government to decriminalize defamation. If this becomes reality, the South Caucasus could become a progressive European region where journalists will not be imprisoned for their work.
6. Welcomes recent positive developments in Georgia that have encouraged media pluralism and independence, including the satellite access that was granted to the opposition channel Maestro TV; preparations to launch a parliamentary channel in February 2010; and the growing number of invitations to all political forces to talk shows on private channels.



*On journalism education.*

*The Conference:*

1. Acknowledges that the impact of quality journalism education is limited without parallel development of the independent media.
2. Acknowledges that journalism is a civil activity; therefore, governments should refrain from over-regulating it.
3. Emphasizes that pluralism of the media and freedom of the Internet are the key values and among the most important conditions for the existence of a democratic society. Therefore, it is vital to ensure pluralism in the educational systems as well.
4. States that an academic degree in journalism should not be a prerequisite for a journalistic career. Media outlets can employ journalists who do not have a degree in journalism and this right should be respected by the authorities. Journalists should not have to meet government licensing standards in order to pursue their journalistic work.
5. Recommends, nevertheless, both basic academic and on-the-job education and training for media workers. Continual training programs should be provided for all journalists and other media professionals, including editorial staff, to further their existing knowledge and gain new skills.
6. Encourages development of up-to-date teaching and studying materials that incorporate new standards and methods.
7. Recommends that academic journalism education attract more practicing journalists as faculty.

8. Notes the importance of ongoing professional development for the faculty of journalism departments.
9. Calls on academic and journalistic educational organizations to provide training for media professionals on entrepreneurial and technical skills, so journalists can establish and operate independent and self-sustainable media outlets.
10. Stresses the importance of international cooperation in journalism education. Calls for greater use of international experience and best practices in journalists' training and educational institutions. Greater exchange of teaching materials, faculty and experiences among South Caucasus states should be promoted.
11. Encourages improving research facilities in journalism education institutions.
12. Notes that in the near future all media will be hosted by the Internet. The concept of locality will dissolve into the global realm; therefore, media education should reflect the global character of journalism. Governments should refrain from regulating the Internet.
13. Calls on the governments to support development of an Internet sphere with affordable and high-quality Internet connection and to create favorable conditions for healthy competition among ISPs.
14. Recommends incorporating Internet and online tools, including Web 2.0 tools, such as social networking, file-sharing platforms and other user-generated resources into the curriculum. All journalism students should be trained to use modern interactive technologies.

15. Calls on the states to assist state and private educational institutions with financing for their IT equipment and Internet access.
16. Believes that professional ethics and media law should be incorporated into curricula to promote responsible media.
17. Encourages journalism schools to acknowledge the importance of investigative journalism in democratic society and as a tool for combating corruption. Investigative journalism should be afforded a high place in the curricula, with the incorporation of journalist safety courses for volatile environments.
18. Encourages governments to support journalism reform education with all of the above goals in mind, taking into consideration the fact that education provided for journalism students not only shapes their professional skills, but defines the media as a legitimate profession in general.



## Opening statement

### David Darchiashvili<sup>1</sup>

It is my privilege and pleasure to be participating in this very important conference dedicated to media development issues. I particularly want to stress that we miss the full-fledged presence of the OSCE. I am both very excited and optimistic that sooner or later—and hopefully sooner than later—the OSCE will be working on various issues in Georgia again.

The issues to be discussed during the next two days of the conference are extremely important, since they are linked to the principles and imperatives of freedom of speech, which is inseparable from and fundamental to the democratic development of any society. In this respect, it is important for Georgia and the South Caucasus on the whole to guarantee freedom of speech for our citizens. Issues related to media freedom and freedom of speech will be addressed by media experts, politicians, NGOs, and the international community. This joint effort is necessary, as each of these parties look at these issues from their particular angle with their own demands and concerns.

The main topic to be discussed at the conference is media education—one part of overall media development and an essential aspect of ensuring the principles of freedom of speech. I believe that media development is not only important *per se*, but in the context of the wider debate on freedom of media in the South Caucasus as well.

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<sup>1</sup> David Darchiashvili, Chairman, Committee on European Integration, Parliament of Georgia

On the one hand, freedom of speech is an invaluable principle. On the other hand, freedom of speech in modern and post-modern times is not only about telling and disseminating the truth about various events that take place; it is also about creating a reality. Media not only cover and reflect reality; they also create it for us by portraying what we should focus on, what to treat as major developments, and what to ignore or forget. In this case, professionalism becomes even more important, since media (free or not free) can manipulate our opinions and outlooks. Only real professionals who abide by the ethical standards of the profession will refrain from manipulation.

The Georgian public is entertained mostly by soap operas and political debates. Both media products are made by media representatives. We all become the characters on the screen, especially through the electronic media. How well we play our roles very much depends on our personal integrity and behavior. But also it depends on journalists. I mean here that the political actors depend on how the media portray them. The media can portray us in a particular light and from a particular angle. Legislation can provide a framework for media activities, but of no less importance (and sometimes of even greater importance) are journalism ethics and professionalism. Therefore, the crucial issues in media education are how to produce the news, how to deliver the messages to our audience, and how to mediate between those who do something important for ordinary citizens and the citizens themselves.

Representing the politicians and the Parliament of Georgia, I am fully aware that I might sound or seem subjective, since politics is also about the struggle for power. Nevertheless, while realizing that we cannot exclude subjectivity from our speech or our opinion, I want to present an overview of the situation regarding media freedom in Georgia.

The Georgian media legislation that was amended in 2004 and in 2008 is a quite successful example in terms of provisions for the freedom of speech. It is impossible in Georgia to sue journalists for defamation and, thanks to the current legislation, such cases are no longer heard.

The media in Georgia are quite diverse. It is unfortunate that they sometimes seem confrontational. This confrontational nature probably comes not so much from the media themselves, from legislation, or from the will of the government or certain political forces, but from the general political culture. The issue of political culture will also probably be touched upon when we talk about journalism standards, ethics, and education.

On the one hand, this confrontation is risky and probably requires all of us to focus more on rules of interaction, ethics, and standards. On the other hand, it provides an opportunity for a diversity of opinions, which is again the basis for freedom of the media and information. In addition, television and print media express views on political or other developments in the country that are in total opposition to one another, and this is good. As a representative of the Georgian Parliament and a particular political party, I want to say that Georgian democracy and Georgian freedom of speech are on the right track. Furthermore, the glass of our development is half full, rather than half empty. It is a process that must be continued, even though there are certain faults, mistakes, and concerns that must be addressed, and the situation must be improved further in this respect.

I believe that the situation in many other democracies in transition, including our neighbours in the South Caucasus, makes such conferences so important. I hope that these two days will give us very substantial and concrete suggestions on how to make the media, a crucial part of our lives, as effective and as free as possible.

Thank you once again, and I hope you enjoy conference.





## Keynote speaker

### Miklos Haraszi<sup>1</sup>

Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you all to our 6th South Caucasus Media Conference.

After last year's closure of the OSCE mission to Georgia, it is a matter of great pride and responsibility for us to be here. I am especially glad that we can represent the OSCE here, and thus symbolize the promise of restoring the full presence of the OSCE in this country on the basis of Georgia's integrity and independence.

We have a very special gathering here. The annual South Caucasus Media Conference was introduced in my first year as the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, and it has been held during every year of my tenure.

Holding this conference in Georgia has both positive and negative implications. The Conference has been held in Georgia every year since its founding, meaning that Georgia remains a consistently reliable host for media professionals from the three countries of the South Caucasus to come together, share their experiences, and discuss issues of their professional interest. On the other hand, since Georgia is still the only country in the region where journalists from Armenia and Azerbaijan can freely come together and discuss issues of professional importance, this

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<sup>1</sup> Miklos Haraszi, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (March 2004 – March 2010); human rights advocate, writer, journalist, and university professor

means that peace and freedom of movement have unfortunately not been fully restored in the region.

But I have always believed and continue to believe in these meetings, and in the diplomacy they promote.

I would like to thank our local coordinator, Ms. Ilona Kazaryan, who has herself been a longtime member of the OSCE family, for organizing the conference. I would also like to thank this year's contributors to the Conference: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Lithuania, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States.

Thank you for your attention.



**International experience  
in the area of journalism education**





# Current problems of journalism and journalism education

**Andrei Richter<sup>1</sup>**

1. I would first like to dwell on the understanding of the profession of journalism in today's post-Soviet world. There are two reasons for this, both connected with the latest amendments to the mass media legislation.

First of all, please note the law passed in the Republic of Kazakhstan “On Amendments and Addenda to certain regulatory acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan on aspects of information and communications networks”, and specifically the amendments to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On the Media” that came into effect in August 2009.

According to these amendments, all of Kazakhstan's Internet resources were equated in status with the media. The country's authorities believed that the development of modern computer communications with all their interactivity, discreteness, and other such characteristics allows Internet sources to be equated with the media. It means that requirements and restrictions stipulated in the Republic of Kazakhstan law On the Media and other legislative acts in the Republic of Kazakhstan relating to the media will be applied to forums, blogs, chat rooms, and so on.

The Kazakhstan authorities did not consider all of the consequences stemming from this step. All critics of these amendments pointed out that

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<sup>1</sup> Andrei Richter, Professor at the Department of Journalism, Moscow State University and Director of the Moscow Media Law and Policy Institute

forcibly assigning journalist status to the authors of blogs and remarks in chat rooms, and to other Internet users, and the status of media outlet to all Internet resources, would lead to restrictions on freedom of expression on the Internet.

The amendments, however, also affect the traditional media in the following way: Associating journalists in Kazakhstan with bloggers and chat room visitors inevitably entails denigration of professionalism, erosion of professional standards, complete rejection of self-regulation, and finally the decline of social responsibility and the role of traditional media in society. What do I mean here?

Practically, it is impossible to extend journalist rights to everyone who writes on the Internet, reproduces photos and video clips for Internet resources, and puts their own works (or the works of other people) on them. Practically, it is impossible to grant the rights guaranteed in the law On the Media to be accredited and to be present at the sites of natural disasters, political rallies and demonstrations, organizations of all property types, and so on, to all of these people. Introducing a filter for “new journalists” or “other journalists” will inevitably lead to arbitrariness and a narrowing of the chances for “traditional” journalists to exercise their rights.

Today, journalists are united by professional organisations, clubs, and associations, though not as much as they could be. They work as part of a professional team with its own rules and traditions. They are united by the understanding, flawed though it occasionally might be, of the essence of their profession and its purpose, journalism’s role in society, its social responsibility, and so on. Many of them are familiar with the standards of professional ethics and law. Half of all Russian journalists got a specialised higher education in this field of knowledge.



If we equate all of the authors on the Internet with journalists, what do we get? The same thing we get if we dilute a drop of ink in a glass of water: not a glass of ink but coloured water. Everything related to the profession will be eroded by hundreds of thousands of people who sometimes have no idea of what the professionals are talking about today. All that today remains of journalistic standards – and believe me, there is a lot – will evaporate and the journalism of today will tomorrow seem like an unachievable ideal. When everyone becomes a journalist, no one will be a journalist.

Second, however strange it might seem at first sight, the recent legislation of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia is having the same effect. By this, I mean the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On the Mass Media” dated 7 December 1999 (after its fundamental modification in 2001), the Law of the Republic of Armenia “On the Mass Media” dated 14 January 2004 and the Law of the Republic of Georgia “On Freedom of Speech and Expression” dated 24 May 2004.

These laws equate journalists in status with other people. On the one hand, these countries adopted progressive laws on freedom of information, guaranteeing every person information from government sources. Freedom to seek, obtain, create and distribute mass information was applied to everyone. On the other hand, the given mass media laws cancel the special rights of journalists, including the rights to visit state authorities and organisations, specially guarded sites of natural disasters, accidents and catastrophes, mass disturbances and mass gatherings, as well as places where a state of emergency has been declared; the rights to attend meetings and demonstrations, to make notes and other rights seemingly guaranteeing the freedom to seek and obtain information.

Some of the laws abolish the possibility (and need) for mass media to be accredited with state authorities and public organisations and the special

procedure previously enjoyed by editorial boards to request information (in Georgia, for example). This is replaced by a general obligation on the part of such authorities to answer enquiries from both individuals and editorial boards.

The focus of freedom of expression as an element of freedom of the media has been shifted from journalists to all citizens. Journalists' special rights to set forth their own opinions and assessments in communications and materials intended for distribution have also been abolished. Some authors in these countries believe that the provisions of the mass media laws concerning the editorial charter, relations between editorial boards, editors-in-chief, founders and others, establishing the status of journalists and correspondents, have been retained "by virtue of the Soviet legal culture and, consequently, seem inappropriate under contemporary conditions" and conflict with the market economy<sup>2</sup>. Some journalists' rights are unjustifiably called simply "absurd"<sup>3</sup>. Scientific studies carried out in the same states indicate that, on the contrary, such actions on the part of the legislators were premature<sup>4</sup>. It cannot but be noted that they lack any consideration of the traditions that have taken shape in post-Soviet society of respect for and protection of the rights of journalists or any understanding of the importance of the duty they fulfil: journalists fulfil the vital social function of seeking, obtaining and distributing socially important information about the activities of government and other bodies (including ones not accessible to other people). To equate journalists' status with that of other people is to deprive them of many information rights and opportunities, prompting the media to concentrate on easy entertaining topics.

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2 See: *Adeishvili Z. Media and Law*. – Tbilisi, 2004. P. 11.

3 This applies to journalists' rights to visit the scenes of natural disasters. *Ibid.*, P. 63.

4 See, for example: *Alpaidze T. Legal aspects of the activities of the mass media: Thesis abstract for Candidate of Sciences (Law)*. – Tbilisi, 2005. P. 27.

To deprive the journalist of editorial rights and eliminate the special editorial charters also entails the journalist becoming no more than a “screw” in media enterprises, entirely dependent on the owner’s will. All these factors together undermine the people’s trust in the mass media and ultimately deprive freedom of the media of public support. It is evidently not by chance that, the year following journalists’ rights being deleted from the national law, the influential Georgian non-state human rights organisation “Freedom Institute” drafted a bill intended to protect the rights of media representatives, “which is also called on to ensure the editorial independence of journalists”. As far as the obligations of journalists corresponding to their rights, in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan the majority of the obligations journalists used to bear have been abolished. Here, the journalist has been reduced to the status of “performer of information activities” (Armenia).

2. Journalism is an “open” profession. To be a part of it in the post-Soviet states, just as in the United States, Britain, and Germany, you don’t need to produce a diploma attesting to majoring in journalism (or, for that matter, in any other kind of education). In this, journalism differs from the “closed” professions of physician, lawyer, accountant, or pilot. This does not, however, mean that journalism as a profession does not require special knowledge and skills.

Today in Russia, there are around 140-150 thousand journalists; approximately one-half of these have a higher professional education in journalism. It is generally recognised that the shortage of professionally trained personnel (or well-trained professional personnel) will lead both to problems in the profession itself and to problems in the different branches of the media. The following are among the problems in journalism that the RF Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications noted in 2007:

- triviality of content in a considerable number of media;

- broad distribution of customised materials;
- superficial journalism that relies on Internet resources and takes no responsibility for the reliability of reported facts;
- violations of the purity of the native (Russian) language;
- violations of the laws on media in the content of different materials, especially in matters of regulating advertising, prohibiting incitement of racial and religious intolerance, and propaganda of enmity and hate.

In most cases, these problems are associated with the shortage of qualified personnel. A lack of knowledge, for example, leads to editorial staff refusing to tackle topics that demand thorough training. It is impossible to work with an intricate plot if the journalist's vocabulary is limited and he/she does not master the linguistic resources of his native speech, of stylistics, and so on.

In this list, incidentally, we once again encounter the already mentioned threat to the profession posed by Internet resources. If journalism is reduced to copy writing, rewriting and copying other people's materials and information off the Internet, without verification and without one's own creative approach, it just isn't journalism. Once practices like these begin to dominate in the media, we'll be able to forget about journalism as a profession.

There are no speculations involved here. Such processes will have (and already have) practical ramifications, particularly in changing the public's attitude toward journalists. The public won't defend journalists, won't defer to them, won't help the media, won't listen to the voice of journalists, and won't respond to the socially important problems they raise if the idea of journalism as cheap entertainment, a way to make a quick buck, and a form of pure business prevails.

Many media heads and experts see the problems of education and the profession. A survey conducted among Russia's regional media in 2007 showed that 71% of district newspapers, 55% of regional newspapers, and 42% of municipal newspapers are experiencing a shortage of *professionally trained* journalists.

What does “professionally trained” mean? A survey of regional media conducted in 2004 revealed deficiencies in three areas:

- training in the social sciences (economics, law, sociology, and so on);
- practical professional knowledge (ways of searching for information, knowledge of genres and styles, and so on);
- mastery of computer programs.

3. We all know that having an academic diploma in journalism is no panacea; a great deal depends on the quality of such education. In Russia, at Moscow State University, where the author of this article works, we recognise the need to develop and improve the education of journalists. The MSU Faculty of Journalism recently won a national competition for the right to develop programmes of university education for the country's higher educational establishments – the new Federal State Educational Standard for Journalism. The concept of the programme<sup>5</sup> is based on the following **basic provisions**:

- using the positive experience from training journalists in Russia, especially that relating to its traditional fundamentality;
- considering the requirements of current media practice and the opinions of employers;
- considering present-day world experience and trends in media operations;

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<sup>5</sup> Innovative approaches to designing basic educational programmes for post-secondary professional journalist training. Prof. Ya.N. Zasursky, ed. Moscow, Moscow University Press, 2007, p. 126.

- applying the experience of journalistic education in leading countries;
- considering the opinions of instructors and education experts.

I would like to devote special attention to the **principles** at the heart of the new system of journalistic education. The most important of these are:

1. practical and technological orientation of training (media schools, on-the-job training in editorial boards, schooling in new technologies and skills);
  2. combining mandatory and optional elements of training for effective adaptation for changes in the profession;
  3. combining universal professional training with specific, specialised training;
  4. cultivating the creative elements in a journalist's work (workshops and studios);
  5. determining the degree to which students have mastered their professional knowledge;
  6. consistency and fundamentality (of which philology is the core, and through mastering of the profession on the theoretical level is the foundation).
4. Here too, I would like to digress from the topic and dwell on the problem, often mentioned in discussing journalistic education, of the need for the theoretical and philosophical, if you will, training of a journalist.

As in other former Soviet republics and in Russia since the second half of the 1990s, we are now seeing a boom in journalistic higher education. If

there were 23 higher educational establishments that had a programme for training journalists in the USSR, there are already more than a hundred in the Russian Federation today. Training centres have sprung up not only at traditional universities, but in former pedagogical institutes and even in technical post-secondary schools.

In the opinion of the author, the problem is associated with the expansion and fragmentation of training centres (some even without a skilled teaching staff); universities have these problems as well. The problem lies in *fragmentation of the understanding of the essence of a journalistic education*. Some say the essence of education lies in teaching the methods and skills of the practical arts. Others say it lies in training that is as close as possible to actual work, in on-the-job training in editorial boards, and in master classes taught by well-known journalists. They believe that universities, in turn, ought to train mass communication theoreticians and media critics. A third group rejects traditional training in favour of the new methods of Internet journalism, blog-journalism, mobile phone journalism and even Twitter-journalism (which, they say, is where the future lies). A fourth believes that under market conditions, a student journalist should first of all master the theory and practice of management and advertising, and perhaps even the psychology of the mass consciousness. This is fragmentation, not pluralism; there is almost no dialogue between the adherents and opponents of these views.

Such fragmentation is based primarily on different understandings of the essence of the profession of a journalist in society. Among the public, there is no consensus in regard to what journalism is. This is one thing on which consensus is vital in order to keep society healthy. Journalism is viewed as a business, a weapon of propaganda, a means of advertising, a medium for informing the population, a way to distract the masses from their problems, a way to relax, an irritant, and so on.

So long as there is no understanding of the place and role of journalism as one of the main pillars of democracy, so long as there is no understanding of the place and role of the journalist as someone performing a valuable public service, so long as journalism and journalists en masse do not come anywhere near the ideal, it is hard to speak of and rely on a common understanding of the sense and essence of a journalistic education.

When a common understanding does emerge, we will then be able to think of common standards in education as well. One lever by which it will be possible to change a great deal is government and private partnership. Today, this means that media companies in Russia and beyond are strengthening collaboration with universities and are developing through dialogue the most promising elements media theoreticians and practitioners can impart.

5. Courses in the legal basis of journalism hold an important place in a system of journalistic education. Here, it is true, we can also resort to the utilitarian/practical arts approach and just teach students how to avoid responsibility for violating copyrights, revealing sources of information, for slander and insult; how to keep from getting fired; and how to lie and not be punished.

In my view, the aim of such a course should be to show why a special legal regime is being established for journalists and the media, how to obtain socially important information from government sources, how to prove in court the material is of public interest, how to defend their professional rights, and how to explain to future journalists their special responsibility to their audience.

The course should include a presentation of the fundamental principles governing the issues of freedom of speech and the press; norms,



institutions, and court cases in the area of media law in Russia and in the countries of the West. The programme covers 12 topics and includes 36 academic hours of lectures.

In Russia, the Law “On the Media” of 1991 establishes the guarantees and boundaries of freedom for journalistic activities. The main achievement of this law has been the prohibition on censorship and making it legally possible to establish and register newspapers, magazines, TV and radio stations, and news agents that are independent of the political party and government machine. It defined the procedure for establishing the media and suspending media operations, the set of rights and responsibilities of journalists, and the nature of editorial boards’ relationship with the public and with organisations.

In the years that have passed since the adoption of this media “constitution,” the Russian parliament, president, and government have issued a series of other legal acts that now make up the fabric of Russian legislation on the media. There are now some 30 laws and dozens of decrees and regulations related to journalistic activities. They cover the areas of copyright, the holding of election campaigns, advertising, state secrets, and so on. The process of drafting legislation in the area of the media is still incomplete. There remain holes in the legislative system, the most obvious of which is the lack of a law in the field of television and radio broadcasting. Here Russia is the exception among the European states, the dramatic nature of the situation being even further exacerbated today by the transition to digital television. The development of domestic legislation on the media gave rise to a number of problems associated with the lack of traditions and experience in applying it, and the narrow legal culture of both journalists and society as a whole. Knowledge of the law, the mechanism for applying it in journalism, its particulars, procedures, trends, and finally of their own rights and duties make the professional activities of media workers considerably easier and helps

avoid violations of the law that can harm not only journalists, editorial boards, and the subjects of articles and reports, but thousands of readers and viewers as well.

Journalism can function effectively when a legal environment favourable to its development has been created; that is, once the rule of democratic law in the relations of media journalists and editors with state agencies, structures of civil society, and individual citizens has been established. Establishing the rule of law is, along with creating a favourable, transparent, and predictable political base and a system of nation-specific regulations, necessary to create an information society oriented toward the interests of the people.

As a result of the democratic changes over the last 20 years, the development of the media in Russia has acquired completely new features that are characteristic not of command administration and direct government but of legal regulation that incorporates appropriate world experience. In the course, a great deal of attention is given to the legal foundations of journalism abroad. Knowledge of the foundations of international and Western legislation on the media is important for understanding the democratic trends in the regulation of the media. Knowledge of the European law and norms on freedom of expression is of great importance too in that the Russian Federation has been a member of the Council of Europe since 1996. As a result, our country is obliged to provide for the standards of this international organisation in its own domestic legislation.

A sceptical student would tell an instructor that the laws in our country are by no means universally executed. And he would be right. But we have to explain to the student that the law doesn't say how things stand in the country; it just prescribes how they should be. The judicial prohibition on murder, even in the most democratic state of law, does not

rid the population of murder, not even in the most democratic country in the world.

Russia, just like any other post-Soviet state, is striving for the relations among its citizens to be regulated not by force of arms but by contracts whose power is upheld by the courts; this is simpler, more tranquil, and safer for everyone. Courts base their decisions on the letter and spirit of the law. The legal foundations of journalistic activity in Russia have already been created. Journalists have to learn their rights and work to exercise them as much as possible; this includes promoting the rule of law in their articles and other materials. Being conscious of their role and responsibility will give journalists the practical opportunity to work freely in the media.



# Challenges and new directions for global journalism education

**David Mould<sup>1</sup>**

## **INTRODUCTION**

I'd like to thank OSCE for the opportunity to share my perspectives on journalism education. I can't offer any single recipe for success, because journalism and educational systems differ between countries and cultures. However, some issues transcend national and cultural boundaries. I want to raise some talking points and hope we can continue the discussion throughout this conference.

I've been coming to Central Asia on a regular basis for the last 12 years to teach journalism workshops and consult with universities and media organizations. This is my first visit to the Caucasus region, so I'm interested in comparing the state of media and journalism education in the two regions. Unfortunately, I am not able to speak to you in your national language. I speak some Russian, but not enough for a presentation. Fortunately, I have an excellent Russian-speaking graduate assistant, Arman Tarjimonyan, who translated this presentation and offered useful comments.

I want to start with two major questions. Do you need a university degree to be a journalist? The answer is probably no—we all know of talented journalists who don't have degrees in any field. However, the worldwide trends towards formal journalism education and university enrollments are increasing. If so many young people are studying journalism, this leads

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to the second major question: what should the curriculum be and how should it be taught?

## **MODELS FOR JOURNALISM EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

There are basically five education models for journalists:

1. The European vocational model. It's usually a six-month to one-year diploma program, with practical, skills-based courses in information-gathering, reporting, writing, editing, law and ethics.
2. A university bachelor's degree with a major in journalism. This is the model used in the U.S. and other countries, including the countries of the Former Soviet Union.
3. The short skills course for university graduates with degrees in other fields.
4. Two types of master's program. One provides skills-related courses for those without journalism training or experience. Another, primarily for experienced journalists, focuses on the social, political, economic and cultural dimensions of journalism, provides a theoretical understanding of media and their effects, and teaches academic research skills.
5. Short courses, workshops and on-the-job training for working journalists, offered by media organizations, media assistance organizations such as Deutsche Welle, the BBC World Service Trust and Internews, and international donors, such as UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).

## **JOURNALISM AS A PROFESSION**

Journalism is a profession, but in most countries anyone—whatever their education or professional qualifications—can work as a journalist, assuming they can find a job. This distinguishes journalism from other professions such as medicine, law or engineering, and it’s probably why there’s disagreement—especially between the media industry and universities—on what qualifications are needed. It’s the same in business, where natural talent is sometimes enough. There are successful journalists and business leaders who are self-taught, and may not even have finished secondary school.

Medicine, law and engineering have licensing requirements that students must pass before being allowed to practice. You don’t go in for surgery (or even a consultation) with someone who claims to have a natural talent for medicine but has never gone to medical school. You don’t ask someone who has not studied law to draw up a legal document or defend you in court.

But anyone can write and publish a story. And the growth of the Internet and so-called “citizen journalism” have further democratized journalism. In today’s multi-channel, 24-hour news cycle, it’s a challenge to separate good from bad information. The lack of a common definition of professional standards—what it means to be a journalist—is a difficult issue.

I don’t think the solution is to set minimum educational standards or have national professional tests, such as those taken by doctors and lawyers. The licensing of journalists—whether by government or a professional body—can lead to restrictions on press freedom. Although there is poor and irresponsible journalism in every country, the answer is not to regulate journalists, except through the normal legal remedies. Journalism should be about the marketplace of ideas, and regulating the marketplace—by

allowing only certain people to publish—can have profound and harmful effects for politics and society.

That said, I propose that we set some expectations for journalism education and training—whichever of the five educational models is used. In this effort, we need to respect national educational traditions and systems, and different expectations of the role of journalists in society. Media scholars have challenged the assumption that Western-style press systems can be universally applied. Merrill (2002) writes that the insistence on “capitalistic and pluralistic media structures” is an “arrogant and ethnocentric” view. “Critics cite the concentration of ownership, servitude to business interests, devotion to the sensational and obscure, focus on profits, pandering to political elites, reinforcement of the social and economic status quo, and other common sins of journalistic irresponsibility” (Shafer, Freedman & Rendahl, 2008). In this view, journalism education that promotes Western news values and media independence is antithetical to the value system of some societies.

However, cultures and journalism change over time. In the Soviet era, the accepted role of the journalist was to be a servant of the state, whose mission was to promote the ideals of the Communist party and Marxist-Leninist ideology. The Soviet Union has gone, but journalism in some societies is still a primarily political occupation. In some countries, including the United States, journalists are supposed to be members of the so-called Fourth Estate, vigorously watching over government and business. Yet they work under commercial pressures (from owners and advertisers) that can be as restrictive as any political control. In some developing countries, the journalist’s role is moderated by the principle of social responsibility; while remaining theoretically independent of government and business, the journalist is expected to respect and promote national history, literature and culture, write in the native language, and contribute to the positive development of society.



To summarize: while we can try to set some common expectations, all journalists operate within political, economic and cultural boundaries.

## **INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR JOURNALISM EDUCATION**

Several national and international journalism and media organizations have developed lists of competencies—what makes a good journalism education, the knowledge and skills all journalists need, regardless of local conditions. Let's look at the three most-widely cited:

1. European Journalism Training Association (EJTA) (2006) In June 2006, EJTA, meeting in Estonia, issued the Tartu Declaration (see <http://www.ejta.nl/>).
2. World Journalism Education Congress (2007)
3. UNESCO Model Curricula for Journalism Education (2007) (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001512/151209E.pdf>; UNESCO, 2007<sup>2</sup>)

International standards are important to universities in the South Caucasus region because they need their students' degrees to be accepted in other countries. Some universities follow the Russian model, some are seeking U.S. accreditation, but the most prominent trend in recent years has been to look towards Europe and the Bologna Process, under which academic degrees and credits gained in one country's educational system will be accepted in another's. Universities have begun to change the length of degree programs and adopt European credit and grading systems. What is most important, however, is what

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<sup>2</sup> Similar standards are set by national journalism education and accrediting organizations. In the U.S., the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC), <http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/> lists 11 competencies for journalism students

students will be able to do—their competencies. That is why the Bologna Process does not only look at credit hours or years of study, but at results and outcomes. Although journalism as a discipline has not yet been assessed—or “tuned” to use the Bologna language—most observers agree that international competency standards, such as those from EJTA and UNESCO, will be used as a model.

### **LIBERAL ARTS FOUNDATION FOR JOURNALISM**

How can someone work as a journalist if they do not know the history, geography, economics, literature and culture of their own country and maybe even something about other countries in the world? Journalists without this background are ill-equipped to gather information and write about contemporary issues. The newspaper magnate Joseph Pulitzer, who founded the best-known practically-oriented journalism program at Columbia University in New York, stated in 1902: “Journalism is, or ought to be, one of the great and intellectual professions” (quoted in Dickson, 2000, p. 10). Many in journalism share the view of Bill Kirtz, a former newspaper editor and publisher who is now a journalism professor:

The best journalists are the best-educated journalists, who apply research skills, academic rigor, and high ethical standards to their craft. They need the type of knowledge that is at the core of the liberal-arts tradition, to be found in courses that explore history, culture, politics and science. ... A narrowly-educated journalist—one with only technical skills or one with only theoretical knowledge—cannot define “news” intelligently or determine its significance, much less present it with clarity and grace. How can a reporter distinguish a fad from a trend without the historical and cultural context provided by a solid liberal-arts foundation? (Kirtz, 1997).

We need to dispel the myth that any journalism can be “objective,” a simple mirror of reality. The process of news is all about selection— which topics to cover, which facts to select, who to interview, how to contextualize the story, how to provide a clear and balanced account. This is not a technical issue, not even one about good writing. It is about value judgments. The better and more broadly educated the journalist, the better the value judgments.

European education systems try to build this liberal arts base into secondary education. In principle, students who take diploma (non-degree) programs should have already gained this broad knowledge. In practice, this depends on curriculum, teacher quality and national peculiarities; historically, secondary education in Britain, France and Spain has been more ethnocentric than education in the Netherlands, Germany and the Scandinavian countries.

In the United States, Russia, the Former Soviet Union and other countries, this range of knowledge is usually part of the undergraduate degree program. Most journalism educators in the U.S. subscribe to what's called the liberal-professional model. The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) requires that three-fourths of an undergraduate's coursework is outside journalism and in non-skills areas—in the humanities, social sciences, arts and science. The rationale is that a liberal arts education prepares students for lifelong learning, helping them to conduct research, think critically, analyze problems and integrate knowledge.

Let's compare the liberal arts requirements at four leading accredited journalism programs. All also require basic mathematics/quantitative skills and English composition courses.

University of Missouri School of Journalism, <http://journalism.missouri.edu/undergraduate/>:

<b>Liberal Arts Area</b>	<b>Number of credit hours<sup>3</sup></b>
Foreign Language	12-13
Biological, Mathematical, Physical Science	9
Social and Behavioral Science	12
Humanistic Studies (literature, arts, theatre, film studies, philosophy, religion)	9

The Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Arizona State University, <http://cronkite.asu.edu/undergrad/index.php>

<b>Liberal Arts Area</b>	<b>Number of credit hours</b>
English composition	6
Statistics	3
English literature	3
Philosophy	3
History	6
Government (Political Science)	3
Psychology	3

<sup>3</sup> Most semester courses are for three credit hours.

S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University,  
<http://www.syr.edu/publications/undergradcat/Newhouse.pdf>

Liberal Arts Area	Number of credit hours
Foreign Language	6 (two semesters or one year of study)
Quantitative Skills	3
Writing-intensive courses	6
Humanities	6
Natural Science and Mathematics	6-8
Additional courses from liberal arts	12-16

Ohio University, E.W. Scripps School of Journalism, <http://scrippsjschool.org/>: Subjects and Number of Courses<sup>4</sup>

Political Science (2)	Sociology and/or Anthropology (2)	Economics (2)	Psychology (1)
History (2)	English Literature (2)	Statistics (1)	Philosophy (2)
Foreign Language (3—three quarters or one year of study)	Natural or Applied Science (1)	Fine Arts (1)	Speech (1)
African-American or Women’s Studies (1)			

In journalism, accreditation—so highly valued by rectors and university administrators—comes at a price. The three-fourths rule in the U.S. effectively limits the number of skills-oriented courses students can take. Some journalism educators believe the guidelines are too rigid, and

<sup>4</sup> Ohio University is on a quarter, not a semester, system with three 11-week terms (Fall, Winter and Spring) in the academic year. Students on a quarter system typically need 192-200 credit hours to complete a degree compared with 120-128 on the semester system. Most liberal arts courses in a quarter system count for four credit hours; in a semester system, most count for three. One semester credit = 1.5 quarter hours.

have opted not to seek accreditation. That gets them into trouble with university administrators who are concerned about the reputation and ranking of the institution.

### **IS JOURNALISM A PROFESSIONAL OR ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE — OR BOTH?**

In many countries including the United States, there is a long-running debate over the teaching of journalism at the university level. Is it a professional field, where students are taught the basics of information-gathering, reporting and editing, and skills in photography, radio and TV production, graphic and Web design? Or is it an academic discipline, where students need to understand theory and research methodologies, and place media in historical, political, social, economic and cultural context? Journalism programs are caught between an industry that demands more skills courses and faculty with professional experience, and universities that value research and expect faculty to hold Ph.D.s.

From my research and experience as an educator, I'd like to suggest eight major issues for journalism education:

1. Journalism education needs to move away from literature
2. The merging of journalism and public relations
3. The role of language
4. The impact of media convergence
5. Independent student media
6. The role of independent work and study

7. The need for disciplinary specialization
8. The role of university-industry partnerships

### ***#1: JOURNALISM EDUCATION NEEDS TO MOVE AWAY FROM LITERATURE***

Historically, journalism in the Soviet Union was a subfield of literature so logically journalism education was conducted in faculties of philology. Although some programs in the United States grew out of departments of English literature, the emphasis has always been on fact-based journalism, not literary aspects. Although we can agree that journalists need to write clearly and concisely, with correct spelling and grammar, in their native language, there's debate over the value of literature to journalism education.

Teachers of language and literature can improve students' writing skills, but may not be able to teach journalistic style and structure. Modern journalistic writing style is less literary and descriptive, with shorter sentences, fewer subordinate clauses and minimal adjectives. All students should study a country's literature, but as part of the liberal arts background—not as part of their professional education. We need to move journalism out of the field of literature, making it its own discipline.

### ***#2: THE MERGING OF JOURNALISM AND PUBLIC RELATIONS***

In many countries, students interested in careers in public relations and marketing enroll in journalism programs. There are two main reasons: a lack of public relations degree programs and courses; and the simple fact that there are more, and better-paying, jobs in public relations. The lines between journalism and PR, especially in societies where government or major corporations dominate media, are not nearly as clear as the journalism purists would like to think. It's not unusual for journalists to end

up in PR jobs at some point in their careers; some PR professionals go the other way.

Most studies recommend separating the curricula of journalism and public relations. “It is useful for both sides to understand each other, but it is not best practice to conflate these two fundamentally different professions” (Hume, 2007). The UNESCO Model Curricula “do not include courses in communication studies (or mass communication or mass media studies) or in film studies, information studies, public relations, or advertising, all of which we feel should be offered separately” (UNESCO, 2007). With adequate resources, a university can offer separate curricula in journalism and public relations. Many institutions in this region, however, do not have the resources (especially the teachers) to offer separate curricula. In my view, both fields demand similar competencies—the ability to gather and analyze information, present it clearly and concisely, think of good visuals, tell an engaging story and maintain professional ethics. A well-trained journalism student can work in PR and vice versa. Let’s provide the skills and have the students make the career choices.

### **#3: THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE**

The documentary maker and social activist Alfonso Gumucio Dagron once called the Internet “the electronic apartheid” (Dagron, 2001). What he meant is that if you don’t know English, you do not have access to a lot of information. This, of course, has consequences for journalists who rely on the Internet as a source for research. Since Dagron wrote his article in 2001, the volume of non-English material on the Internet has substantially increased, so the speaker of Spanish, Arabic or Russian may have almost as much available as the English speaker. However, sources in other languages—including Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani—are still limited.



Some universities offer what they call “international journalism” programs, with some English-language courses. If the goal is to help students conduct research in English, that makes sense. If, however, they’re expected to become practicing English-language journalists, that’s another matter. Some universities where most instruction is in English report that their journalism graduates are at a competitive disadvantage for jobs in national or Russian-language media.

#### **#4: THE IMPACT OF MEDIA CONVERGENCE**

Traditionally, journalism curricula have been divided into sequences or departments—for newspapers, magazine, TV and radio, and, most recently, online media. Although all students take common skills courses in information gathering and reporting, it’s assumed that they will follow different career paths, and need different, medium-specific skill sets. Most journalism educators attending the WJEC “seemed to still be working in the traditional categories of print and broadcast, while teaching the newer media, like online news and podcasting, only as an afterthought” (Hume, 2007).

The rapid economic and technological convergence of media has shaken this assumption. Once, newspaper companies were in the newspaper business; they might own many newspapers and share content, but everything was in print. Similarly, a company could own TV and radio stations, but it was still a broadcast operation. Today, on the global, national and local levels, many media companies own several outlets, including print, broadcast and online. From a business perspective, it’s more economic to employ one person to produce content for multiple outlets than several people, each working for a specific outlet. However, as long as print and broadcast technologies remained distinct, journalists worked in separate media spheres.

That has changed as media technology—particularly digital media and the Internet—have broken down distinctions between media. You can

read a newspaper and watch a TV news program on your computer, and download a podcast. Today's journalists need the skills to work in all media—to shoot pictures and video, and adapt a print or TV story for online media. With a 24-hour news cycle and stories breaking on the Web, many U.S. media companies—even in smaller markets—have created converged newsrooms where journalists produce stories for several media.

At Ohio University, we are in the midst of a curricular process to eliminate traditional undergraduate journalism sequences—newspaper, magazine, broadcast and online. In basic reporting and writing classes, students shoot and edit video and learn how to structure and illustrate an online story, with links and threads. Although we will keep some advanced specialized courses, e.g. in magazine feature writing, most courses will include assignments in multiple media. Similar curricular reforms—or at least discussions of reforms—are taking place at other universities around the world. In the future, journalistic specialization may not be by medium, but by discipline (see #7 below).

We can no longer ignore (or look down upon) the Internet, mobile, Twitter and other new media as news sources. Most journalists use the Internet for information gathering. More significantly, the so-called mainstream media have lost their monopoly on information. The head of training at the BBC College of Journalism in London estimates that there are 150 to 200 “citizen journalists” for every professional journalist in the world. Because the costs of becoming a “citizen journalist” (by writing a blog or uploading stills or video from a mobile phone) are low, this is becoming an important source of news in developing countries where traditional media struggle to be financially viable. Whether we like it or not, Internet rumors, social networking sites, amateur citizen journalism and mobile phone reporting have become part of the information world. In this increasingly cluttered information environment—where it's difficult to distinguish

between good and bad information—journalists have a key role to play in analyzing and moderating the flow of information to the public, checking facts, dispelling rumors and revealing the political or social agendas of “citizen journalists,” bloggers or activist groups (Hume, 2007). To fulfill this function, they need to be able to work in multiple media.

### **#5: INDEPENDENT STUDENT MEDIA**

How can students gain regular professional experience in journalism and media? Most take internships and jobs during the summer, while they are out of school; this limits the opportunity to integrate work and study, and to reflect on daily work experiences in the classroom, with input from teachers. The best models for blending theory and practice are in programs where students spend time every day working in student-run media—newspapers, magazines and online media, and campus radio and TV stations.

For student media to contribute to education, several conditions need to be met:

1. Students need to manage the media. This means editorial and, within legal limits, financial control. Although the institution may provide space and a modest operating budget, the most successful student media are run as businesses, where students sell advertising and raise funds from non-university sources. This helps students to understand the challenges of managing a media business.
2. Students must have editorial freedom—the same freedom that is given to regular media, within the limits of the law. Journalism faculty may serve on an editorial advisory board, but the editors and managers should all be students, selected by their fellow students for their journalistic and leadership skills. The university administration should not seek to censor or control content or use student media

for public relations. With this freedom comes responsibility—student media need to follow laws and ethical codes, and can be held liable if they do not.

3. Student media need to serve their audience by covering issues of concern to them. Although other students may make up most of the audience, other people (university faculty and staff, community members) are interested in events on campus. This means covering campus political, educational and social issues as well as the usual music and movie reviews. The best student newspapers take their “watchdog” responsibility seriously, and report on the actions of university administration.
4. Student media are not class projects. They publish or broadcast year-round while the university is in session, and are available to non-student audiences.

#### **#6: THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT WORK AND STUDY**

A few months ago, I asked a colleague from Central Asia to sum up journalism education at his university. His answer was brief and revealing: “Long hours in cold classrooms.”

Several months later, administrators at another university asked me about education in the United States. How many hours a week did students spend in class? How many hours of lectures did teachers give? When I told them, they looked puzzled. Surely, students could not learn much if they were in class only four or five hours a day.

I tried to point out that the number of hours in class—whatever the temperature in the room—is not the only way to measure what a student learns or what a teacher does. We need to recognize the value of out-of-class assignments—reading, writing, individual and group research—and

practical experience, and the time that teachers spend supervising and assessing this work. Ohio University journalism students go from class to work all evening at the student newspaper, which publishes a 6-8 page edition every weekday. We need to measure what is learned, not just the information delivered. The administrators listened politely, but were not impressed.

A student at a university organized according to the old Soviet model typically spends twice as many hours a week in class as a full-time student in the U.S. or Europe. In the first two years of a bachelor's program, for every hour in class, a student is expected to spend two hours on homework and independent work; in the third and fourth years, that ratio is increased. The goal is for students to become self-directed learners who know how to learn, and have the research, analytical and writing skills to take on new topics and trends. Too many lectures—the “long hours in cold classrooms”—does not encourage active learning, but instead makes students dependent on the teacher for learning. That's not a good formula for people we expect to be lifelong learners.

The reason I've often heard for the number of para in a typical student week is that universities do not have the resources available for independent work—the libraries and computer labs are inadequate. That's changing as Internet access and speeds improve. Many excellent research materials are now available on the Internet and more students have search skills. It's probably a better investment to improve Internet access than to buy more books.

### **# 7: THE NEED FOR DISCIPLINARY SPECIALIZATION**

Journalists work in an increasingly complex world, with many specialized areas of knowledge—in health, business, science, the environment. One emerging trend in journalism education is to prepare students to be specialists in the fields on which they report through interdisciplinary

studies, joint degrees, or minors. Major media have always had journalistic beats, where reporters specialize in politics, business, literature and the arts. But most of these journalists started as general assignment reporters, without specialized study.

The argument today is that some areas—such as science, medicine, financial markets and military strategy—require serious academic study. Studies show that many members of the public know little about the basic principles of science, such as the replication of experiments, testing of hypotheses, the meaning of statistical significance, and use of control groups. Similarly, journalists reporting on political polls need to understand how the research was conducted, including sampling methodology (sample size, margin of error, etc.), and how the results are interpreted.

A report from the Carnegie-Knight Initiative on the Future of Journalism Education calls for journalists who are “steeped in knowledge about the subjects they report on.” According to the president of the Carnegie Foundation, “[J]ournalists today need a keen grasp of statistics, science, politics and history” (Claussen, 2006). Some journalism programs are encouraging students to take majors, minors and joint degree programs—in such varied fields as public health, medicine, environmental studies, urban planning, business, economics, history, religion and art. As the editor of *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* put it in an editorial, “why wouldn’t managers and executives want reporters who knew more, rather than less, about what they were covering?” (Claussen, 2006).

In one way, this supports the notion of a liberal-arts education because it stresses coursework outside journalism. In another way, it runs contrary, because it requires specialization in a subject, rather than a broad mix of courses. Specialization can produce a well-prepared science or medical

reporter, but will that journalist be able to report on politics or cover a demonstration or natural disaster?

### **#8: *THE ROLE OF INDUSTRY-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS***

The final challenge that all university-based programs face is building partnerships with the media industries. This does not mean allowing media managers to design the curriculum—that way, you’ll end up with a series of skills courses. But it does mean involving working journalists in several ways:

1. Journalists as part-time teachers of practical courses. Universities have to accept that a Ph.D. is NOT an essential requirement for teaching. And they need to offer competitive pay rates—currently, experienced journalists are unwilling to teach because the pay is so low. Another option is for a working journalist to team-teach a course with a faculty member. This can have mutual benefits: the faculty member will learn new knowledge or skills, but will also mentor the journalist who may know little about teaching.
2. Journalists and teachers as joint supervisors of student internships. Universities need to develop more structured internships for students and make sure they are worthwhile learning experiences. This requires collaboration between teachers and journalists in the selection and assessment of students, and their work assignments. Many students have to wait until the third or fourth year to do an internship. There should be opportunities from the first year.
3. Professional development for teachers. Media organizations need to offer short-term opportunities (usually in the summer) for teachers to not only observe, but work as journalists and gain new skills.

4. Curriculum development and media training programs. Experienced journalists can help journalism educators update their programs and course content. Similarly, teachers can advise media organizations on the design of in-service professional training programs, including workshops and on-the-job training.

## CONCLUSION

Journalism remains a popular area of study for many young people, and the media industry (despite the recent economic downturn) has significantly expanded, creating more jobs. Media companies and foreign donors can contribute to journalism education, but they alone cannot provide the sustained effort that's needed; media companies are still struggling financially, and foreign donor projects come and go. Universities, by contrast, are here to stay, and need to take responsibility for educating the next generation of journalists. This means curriculum reforms and improvements in teaching, especially of practical courses. While resources--financial and human—remain a major barrier, I have reason to be hopeful because of changes in attitude among journalism educators and, in some cases, the university administrators. Change is happening, albeit in small steps, *malenkiye shagi*.

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# No such thing as too much training

**Manana Aslamazyan<sup>1</sup>**

Everyone who is in one way or another associated with the media in any country around the world recognises the need to constantly raise the qualifications of journalists. This is due to the need to continually master rapidly changing technologies. It is due to the wish for career growth and the need to master new, more complicated genres. It is due to people who have no specialized journalistic education joining the profession. It is due to the creative nature of the profession, which regularly demands new ideas and new takes on things.

It is of extraordinary importance that practicing journalists have the permanent opportunity to regularly take part in various programmes for raising their qualifications and improving the quality of the media in their homelands, since it is by the quality of journalism that one can determine a country's state of democracy. Without a free, professional, responsible journalistic community, it is impossible to build a strong, just, and prosperous society.

For more than 15 years, I worked as the director of Internews, Russia's largest non-profit organization. We organized and conducted dozens of the most varied projects associated with the development of Russia's electronic media. Above all, however, we were well-known as the largest centre for the retraining of media personnel. Internews trained more than 11,000 people. There were hundreds of seminars, schools, workshops,

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<sup>1</sup> Manana Aslamazyan, Executive Director of Internews Europe, Paris

conferences, round tables, and internships. We had more than 500 trainers of all types: permanent and temporary, locals and foreigners, the experienced and the young, from Moscow and the regions, and so on. I'm certain there's no TV company in Russia that doesn't have at least one Internews graduate among its employees. The demand for our courses was immense: at the start of each training project, we had anywhere from three to ten times as many applicants as we had places for them. We taught all of the professions needed in a media company. Sometimes, of course, we made mistakes, but we learned from them and acquired our own experience – the experience of organizing training projects for the media in a country that was undergoing enormous change, not only in its political and economic system, but in the media as well.

At this conference, I want to share with you some of the lessons I learned during those years. Practical advice that has nothing to do with an academic journalistic education. I'm certain that all of the NGO leaders attending the conference who are involved in developing the media have their own experience of successes and failures. But perhaps my observations too will be of use to someone, especially if you face the task of creating a place in your own country where those working in the media industry can raise their qualifications, improve their working skills, and better understand the specifics of their chosen profession.

Let me say right now that I shall answer the question “If you were so successful and popular, why are there so few balanced, independent, and responsible TV and radio companies in Russia today?” at the end of my address. Here then are some simple conclusions and thoughts on media training in the newly independent states:

**Lesson One.** Don't bother starting if you aren't in for the long haul.

Creating a strong, responsible media sector demands much time and a flexible strategy. The retraining process is never-ending, and in no country, not even the most developed one, can you say “Everything’s done, we can stop working.”

New media outlets and new media projects appear every day around the world. Old publications are reformatted. New TV and radio formats come out. Technologies are updated. Media laws are changed. In other words, the process of change and renewal is never-ending. The process of training personnel capable of dealing with these changes is just as endless. This is why, when you’re setting up your own training centres, you have to set long-term strategic tasks for yourself. Cultivate experience and skills. You have to constantly evaluate and update your strategy to meet the needs of the times. Media NGOs should understand all of the processes at work in the industry (economic, political, technological) better and earlier than the media themselves. Study and plan, make forecasts and draw conclusions; this is the only way you can make yourself indispensable to your media community.

**Lesson Two.** Media means teams and teamwork.

Many other experts besides journalists are involved in creating a media product. Even the most talented and independent journalist will not be able to realise his/her own capabilities if:

- the head of the company has no vision, strategy, or management skills;
- the company has no adperson that can generate income to finance operations;
- there are no technical experts who can print a newspaper, shoot and cut a video, or record sound quickly and with quality;

- there are no lawyers who can assess risk and ensure legal protection for journalists.

The list is endless.

Each element, each division is important. This is why you should not forget about allied trades specialities when putting together a programme of media training; you have to raise the qualifications not just of journalists but of camera operators, directors, layout artists, production designers, advertising personnel, promoters, and even media bookkeepers. Remember that only a close-knit team with common goals, a common vision of standards and quality, and mutual understanding and established ties can achieve success.

**Lesson Three.** A lot real fast, or a little over a long time?

Sooner or later, every organization involved in media training asks itself “How can we distribute our budget more effectively?” What is better for the industry: a few long, extended programmes every year for a limited number of students, or a lot of short seminars for a broader audience? Each one answers the question in its own way. So, one offers a long-term practical course for ten people every year, while another offers one-day seminars. Favouring just one type of course (long-term or short-term, individual or group) cannot, in my view, effectively improve the situation in one sector or another. So, if you want to be an effective training centre, you have to develop a variety of programmes that differ in content, complexity, and length. Only then can you satisfy the constantly growing needs of the industry. The combination of different courses each year will help maintain the overall average level of journalism, while the individual extended approach will train leaders in the profession.

**Lesson Four.** Personnel are all-important.



No training programme can succeed without highly qualified instructors. In the first years of the new media's development, almost all of the seminars in our countries were conducted by foreign experts. This was entirely understandable. The new national media structure had only just come into being; journalists had no experience working in independent, privately-owned outlets, and there were no private outlet managers at all. Foreigners came here with a lot of enthusiasm, bringing their own practical experience, which was different from ours, and the firm belief that they would help us transform ourselves quickly. As the years went by, the situation began to change. It became clear that the process of transformation would not be fast; there are a lot of us and we are all different. Foreign instructors were more expensive for us than our own people because they needed airfares and translators. Most important, our own people began to catch on. With each passing year, there was less and less need for media development NGOs to hire foreign trainers. In my view, a combination of domestic and foreign trainers is very important in case of rare and conceptually new programmes. The most important thing for a training centre, however, is to build around it a constantly expanded and renewed group of home-grown professionals whom the centre itself helped master the methodology of teaching and create a full-fledged teaching programme. This does, of course, require investment, both financial and intellectual, but it is quickly returned. With regard to the students, most of them prefer to have domestic stars as trainers, since the language barrier disappears and the instructor better understands the conditions in which the media of one country or another exist. But to stop hiring foreign instructors completely might lead to isolation and the loss of contacts in the industry's international community. So, a combination of experienced domestic and foreign trainers and stars could be most effective for developing journalism and the media as a whole in any country.

**Lesson Five.** How much can a journalist know?

Seminars devoted to exploring one particular media topic or another have become extraordinarily popular among domestic non-governmental organizations and foreign donors. This is due to dissatisfaction with the quality of coverage on these topics. Very often, journalists themselves are the reason for this dissatisfaction, either because of their own low level of education, or due to laziness or personal bias. A serious mistake by a journalist can cause just as much harm as one by a doctor or a teacher. So, while recognising the importance of such programmes, I'd say that a journalist working for a general-audience publication cannot be an expert on all topics, but it is the journalist's professional duty to find sources, specialists and experts for any report. So, when putting together a programme of specialized training courses, do your best to balance the curriculum. You have to devote just as much attention to the different ways of covering a topic as you do to the topic itself. The same is true for the professional aspects of the matter, special journalistic practices, and knowing how to explain complicated topics to a general audience in the clearest way possible.

### **Lesson Six.** Media + NGOs = ?

Real change happens only when it is supported by non-media efforts. In organizing training programmes for journalists, you have to constantly work to strengthen the ties between civil society and the media. Only by working in close contact with national and local organizations of civil society can the journalistic community better understand and appreciate its job and its role in society. NGOs can be initiators of ideas and sources of information while simultaneously being media critics. The media's main job is to help promote democratic values and create a just society, and media training programmes cannot remain on the sidelines of these tasks. Unfortunately, however, this mutual understanding between the media and NGOs does not exist in many of our countries. I would even say that they frequently view each other with mistrust and suspicion. This is largely

due to our governments, which often divide NGOs into “ours” and “theirs” and do *not* give various kinds of public organizations the respect they deserve. Meanwhile, the media suppressed by these same governments meekly accept the rules of the game and do not even try to deal with these issues like they should.

Therefore, I would like to add that one of the most important tasks of any training centre wishing to improve the lives of its fellow citizens is working to build mutual understanding between these two extraordinarily close sectors.

### **Lesson seven.** Fashion in training.

Just as in every other area of human endeavour, especially if it is associated with creativity, trends and fashions also change in journalistic training. We now see on-line programmes, public journalism, blogging studies, and so on. From time to time, donors are infatuated with one topic or another and are prepared endlessly finance such programmes, believing traditional seminars for traditional journalists to be outdated. As in my previous addresses, I should call for moderation. My personal experience, after Internews elaborated and conducted thousands of hours of advanced on-line courses, shows that you cannot get carried away and limit your training formats. In training journalists, you get the greatest effect when you combine on-line courses with a regular course for one and the same people. You should not go overboard creating expensive online courses if you don't have a long-term and multi-element strategy for the development of your training centre. You shouldn't follow fashion too closely. Another example is the fashion for public journalism, which is of course extraordinarily important but would not replace professional publications anytime soon, and possibly never. Television and newspapers will continue to exist alongside Twitter and Facebook for a long time to come. Bloggers will continue to compete with professional

journalists. I therefore would like you to treat the idea of fashion in such matters as education with a grain of salt.

**Lesson eight.** Faculties of journalism + training centres.

The main shortcoming of the system of education in the area of media is the gap between academic knowledge and the requirements of the industry. Most experts recognise the lack of practical educational programmes that take into account the particulars of a rapidly changing industry. This gap can be filled by professional training centres where media workers can acquire practical skills and advanced specialization. To do this, however, training centres have to know the industry better than the media themselves. For their training programmes to be in demand, effective, and interesting, training centres need to follow the processes at work in the industry very closely.

At the same time, it is very important to work together with faculties of journalism and to offer them your services to raise the quality of academic programmes through contacts with media workers, since it is academic education that provides a real base of knowledge, especially in the fields of history, literature, and language arts. As a rule, however, traditional programmes do not cover the disciplines of economics, management, communication skills, sociology, or media psychology. Most important, traditional education does not provide practical skills in the use of technology.

The main conclusion I draw from my experience is that you have to build not competitive relations with educational institutions, but relations of collaboration. It seems to me that the NGOs involved in media development should take the initiative in this, since they are more mobile and independent in their operations and can respond to change

more flexibly, in contrast to educational institutions bound by long-term academic programmes that are hard to modify.

**Ninth and Most Important Lesson.** Where's the money?

The main problem of education in any country of our region is financial. Who should pay for education: a foreign donor, a domestic donor, the state, the media company, or the journalist himself?

It's common knowledge that in the first years after the transformation, the overwhelming majority of seminars were paid for by grants from foreign private or public donors. Every one of us today can remember the names of dozens of international organizations. But time marches on, and the natural question arises: How long should foreign donors pay for training professional workers in our region? Everyone of course has his/her own point of view in this matter, and it's impossible to give universal advice. But I would still like to give one piece of advice to those who want to stay in the field of educating journalists for a long time to come. You can believe that sooner or later, you'll have to learn to take money for your services from the end users, who are all either media companies or the professionals themselves. Donors are gradually reducing their contributions, since problems around the world continue to grow and there are other countries that need donors' attention. This has been especially noticeable during the current economic crisis. Neither is the state ready to finance such programmes, since it has enough worries over financing educational institutions. So, in thinking of the future, try hard to plan a long-term programme for gradually introducing tuition-based courses.

Begin with a few and gradually increase the number of courses you offer. To do this, you again have to know what's happening in the industry better than the industry itself. You have to sense the moment when the

first signs of being able to pay for education appear in the industry. You have to start with the proposals that might be most attractive to company management: advertising, management, sales, traffic, design, and so on, along with the narrow practical skills dictated by modern technology. These mostly have to do with the transition to digital technology, but no one is teaching them.

Gradually win a position and a reputation so that you can at some point offer journalism courses as well. At the same time, of course, it's very important that you continue the search for other possible sources, and that you try to gradually lower your own costs and minimize your expenses. The route I suggest is slow and requires knowledge and a clear understanding of strategy, but it seems to me it's the only one open to us.

The route isn't fast yet, it's promising and, in my view, it's the only one possible – unless you're ready to say “Okay, we're ready to close down, mission accomplished.”

And now, as I promised, I'll answer the question “Why are the Russian media in the position they're in today, even though a lot been said about your successes? Where's this notorious effectiveness?”

The answer is very simple and you most likely would not like it, but I see no other explanation. In our work, scale is of decisive importance. In 15 years, we've had 11,000 students enrolled in our training courses alone – more, I'm sure, than any of you in this hall have had. But consider the size of the Russian media industry. That's only around three percent of those in the Russian media industry today. Across the aisle from us are the state-owned media, huge amounts of money, and a return to the past. I could tell you how we can be proud of our contribution and what kinds of difficulties our graduates encounter, but that's not the topic of today's conference. It seems to me your efforts could be a lot more effective,

since the contribution of foreign investors to this sector is not much less than their contribution to the Russian sector, but each of your country is much smaller. The degree of your involvement could therefore be much greater.

I've told you today some of my thoughts, based on my own personal experience. The issues of journalistic education and the overall importance of the media are of course much more complicated, and there are no universal recipes for each stage in the development of the media in a particular country.

The mediazation of politics, economics, industrial production, education, and even private life is a present-day reality. More and more, ordinary citizens, large corporations, and even entire states are encountering the need to consider the media factor in planning and organizing their lives.

Those who produce information now number in the millions; managers of information companies, in the thousands. Knowing how to survive in and navigate the communications environment, the ability to make money in one of the most profitable areas of contemporary business, and finally the chance to master the specialized language of the media – you can try to learn all of this and become an educational project offering a new type of education that combines breadth, complexity, innovation, and – most important – high ethical standards.

I wish you success along the way.





## The impact of technology and consumer habits on a journalist's qualifications

**Dainius Radzevicius<sup>1</sup>**

*The question “What is the media’s mission and what exactly is the mission of journalism?” is heard more and more frequently these days. Politicians, businessmen, and even academics are continually asking journalists this.*

But has anyone honestly answered that he/she wants only quality information and analysis, and is ready to pay for it? Everyone has become more demanding toward the quality of journalism. But everyone wants it for free. Businessmen and politicians in particular understand the role of the media business very well.

According to Lithuanian legislation, those involved in the preparation and dissemination of public information, journalists and publishers, are to be guided in their activities by the law, international agreements, and the principles of humanism, equality, tolerance, and respect for the individual. They are to respect freedom of speech, creativity, religion and conscience, and differences of opinion. They are to adhere to the norms of professional ethics and the provisions of the Journalists’ Code of Ethics, promote the development of democracy and the openness of society, encourage civil society and advancement of the state, strengthen the country’s independence, and develop the state language and national culture and morals.

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<sup>1</sup> Dainius Radzevicius, Chairman of Lithuanian Journalists Union

Let us compare two points of view on the idea of the essence of journalism – that of Vilnius University and one of Lithuania’s richest private businessmen, Ignas Staskevicius:

- *Journalism, as it is understood at Vilnius University, is “...the only field of study at Vilnius University for which an entrance exam, a creative competition, is required for admittance. ...Professional training in this field has its own requirements: journalists must understand the genres of journalism and the concept of freedom of speech. They must communicate well and be able to work with the public.”*
- *“The media’s primary mission is to serve as packaging for advertising; their second mission is to observe; their third mission is to be a source of information; their fourth mission is to provide entertainment; and their fifth mission is to serve as a platform for celebrities. At the end of the day, the media are just another business.” (One of Lithuania’s richest businessmen, Ignas Staskevicius, [www.bernardinai.lt](http://www.bernardinai.lt), September 12, 2005.)*

This point of view on journalism changed when the old media became the new media.

One might say there has been a revolution in the media. This revolution, however, means only one thing: there has been a democratisation of the media. The old, traditional media models have become new models. Journalism has changed as well.

The role of the journalist has grown considerably. Journalists and editors continue to be creators of content, but they are now also

- content aggregators (search systems);
- moderators between and among consumers (bloggers);
- managers who put the content of commercial communications into a form acceptable to consumers.

We should also note global trends and the current economic crisis. The old deal between consumer and advertiser was the persuasion of commercial messages in return for free or cheap information and entertainment. The new deal is that commercial messages have become an integral part of information and entertainment. Transparency and trust have become a great problem.

### **Television and the press: what has changed in five years?**

As early as 21 May 2005, Lithuania's Elta Press Agency wrote that Americans had begun to read newspapers less often. The annual circulation of *The Washington Post* had fallen by almost 3%, and that of *The Los Angeles Times* by 6%. Even the circulation of *The Wall Street Journal* had gone down by 1%. Only *The New York Times* could happily announce that its circulation hadn't changed. According to *The Wall Street Journal*, things may have been even worse for smaller newspapers.

Newspapers aren't the only media experiencing a decline in circulation. It is reported that people have begun to watch television news less frequently as well.

Even during the decline, however, newspapers and evening news programmes were the main news sources for millions of people. Eight out of ten Americans read at least one newspaper every week. More than half of all adults read newspapers daily. Almost 100 million Americans watched at least one evening news programme a week, and almost 25 million Americans watched the news every evening.

The reduced circulation of newspapers and the smaller audience for television news do not mean that the demand for information has gone down. On the contrary, *The Wall Street Journal* confirms that there has

been a boom in sources of information over the last decade. This means interest in the news is growing.

In fact, the news pie is not getting smaller; it is ballooning. It now, however, is being cut into increasingly smaller pieces. The main reason for this is convenience. People don't want to wait while the news gets old.

The previous generation remembers the decline in evening papers that happened because people could learn the news from television broadcasts, since this information was prepared several minutes before a broadcast began, rather than several hours, as in the newspapers.

People nowadays are striving for the opportunity to get the latest news at once, 24 hours a day. It's not important where they are and what source they're using.

In the opinion of *The Wall Street Journal*, good news is that the newspapers can make the latest technologies work for them. People are increasingly taking advantage of alternative sources, and these alternative opportunities allow newspapers to reach their readers.

Even more important is the question of where people will seek information in the future. The old periodical publications are proud of their traditions. They are proud that they publish verified (and therefore reliable) news, and that they are even now investing huge amounts of money to ensure the quality and variety of their information. Newspapers, however, in trying to hang onto their readers, have to do more than seek new ways of getting closer to their readers.

**Different media for different people**

Experts tell us that happy people socialise with friends, enjoy the company of other people, and read newspapers; unhappy people watch television. John Robinson and Steven Martin, sociologists at the University of Maryland in the United States, have established that people who are unhappy spend 30% more time in front of the television than happy people do. Robinson and Martin drew these conclusions for the period 1975–2000, after analysing the behaviour of 30,000 people (my source for this is *The Telegraph*).

We cannot claim, however, that watching television makes you unhappy.

This effortless pastime does indeed reduce the motivation for seeking other, more varied and useful ways of spending time. There is, however, another side to the issue: unhappy people are far more passive, and sitting in front of a television is for them a simpler means of entertainment. It requires no effort and no need to go anywhere or to plan one's time. In addition, it doesn't cost anything.

Sociologists still note, though, that this way of spending time brings only short-term satisfaction, and has a negative impact in the long run.

Professor Martin compares the habit of watching television to the use of drugs: "It creates only short-lived, superficial satisfaction, and helps one forget his/her problems for a while; putting off solving them, however, only strengthens his/her disappointment and dissatisfaction with life."

For people who have personal and communication problems, continually watching television often becomes a habit whose effect, in Professor Martin's words, resembles that of tranquilizers.

Experts also note that the level of happiness among people who spend a lot of time on the Internet is the same as the statistical average, unlike the level for people who often watch television.

It is still a fact, however, that users the world over find information that interests them on their own, and are devoting less and less attention to the traditional media. This is confirmed by the data of IBM's 2007 Annual Survey of Consumer Digital Media and Entertainment Habits.

The IBM studies found that while 19% of the respondents stated that they relaxed and worked on the Internet for six hours every day, only 9% said they spent as much time watching television. Another 60% of the respondents were devoting as many as four hours a day to the Internet and other virtual entertainment, while 66% of those surveyed said they gave the same amount of time to television programmes daily.

In the assessment of experts, these trends reflect changes in society stimulated by the development of information technologies, or ITs. On the Internet, users find new, reliable information reflecting a variety of opinions, while personal computers, mobile telephones, and other such gadgets already allow people to take part in creating news themselves.

In addition, virtual entertainment increasingly serves the function of socialisation. The latest technologies allow people to easily become part of different communities (created on the basis of common interests, for example). More and more users therefore choose the Internet as their source of information and entertainment, rather than information produced by the traditional media that does not always meet individual needs. This reflects the recent rapid growth (as compared to traditional advertising and other media) in the volume of virtual advertising as well.

In the study mentioned above, it is also noted that the Internet is becoming the most popular source of information among young people. The majority of those between the ages of 14 and 34 who took part in the survey said their main means of entertainment and information was their computer and mobile phone, and not television. Users from 2400 households in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Japan, and Australia participated in the survey.

### **Readers are the best newspaper editors? Yes!**

Stephen Pritchard, President of the International Organization of News Ombudsmen and the readers' feedback editor of the British daily *The Observer* visited Lithuania in mid-October 2009. He stressed that even in a period of decline, while newspaper circulations are shrinking all over the world, his paper is able to retain its readers and hasn't experienced a large drop in circulation, as its competitors have. He believes that if the readers trust you, they'll buy you.

At a meeting with Lithuania's journalists (organised by the Lithuanian branch of Transparency International, an organisation for the study of corruption), Pritchard said the attitude of editors toward their audience is a vital factor characterising a good newspaper.

He also emphasised that having a column in the paper devoted to readers' letters is still no indicator of its transparency and accountability to its readers.

It is vitally important, Pritchard noted, to talk about the contribution readers make to the paper's content. Internet portals, where people can freely comment on articles, do this. In Pritchard's words, publishing a letter from a reader whom the editors have offended, or from a displeased hero of a story, either at the paper's website or in a special column in the

paper, is still no guarantee of either the newspaper's transparency or its accountability to its readers. It would be the same as if a sick man went to a doctor, told him his problem, and the doctor replied there was nothing he could do. A newspaper should allow itself to be taught.

An important question then arises: Are journalists and editors inclined to be taught? In Lithuania, unfortunately, neither rank-and-file journalists nor (even more so) editors are ready for this.

Pritchard says that a newspaper should take steps to find ways to help the offended reader, do its best to compensate him/her for the harm inflicted, and act according to the higher principles of journalism. According to Pritchard, newspaper ombudsman is a general term applied to those who do the kind of work he does. Most often, such people are called readers' feedback editors or readers' advocates. In the United States, another term is popular: public editors.

Pritchard says his paper strives to be absolutely honest and open to its readers. This allows it to retain many of the readers who identify their newspaper, for example, with a publication concerned about environmental protection. It in fact turns out that this is a constructive way of criticising journalists and a way to retain the readers at the same time.

As is well known, the readers of any newspaper are its lifeblood. Journalists and editors have to work more responsibly and with better quality in order to retain their readers. Earlier, it was possible to ignore the interests of the readers, since they had no choice: in order to get information, they had to buy a newspaper. Then came television and radio, which took many readers away. Now it is the Internet, which makes newspapers free and easily accessible.



So, the “newspapers and readers” interrelation has changed substantially. Readers are more powerful than they were earlier, and had therefore be more listened to. If you want them to read you, look out for their interests.

In Pritchard’s words, then, introducing an ombudsman position helps to track the readers’ sentiments. In the United States and Great Britain, newspaper circulations are rapidly shrinking; some of them, however, are hanging on quite well – *The Observer* for one, and the similar paper *The Guardian* as well.

We believe the work of an ombudsman helps find the key to readers and preserve their loyalty. Ombudsmen should worry about the quality and accuracy of information. They should work openly with their readers. If they trust you, they’ll buy you. This is why much has been said about public journalism.

At present, an intensive dialogue is under way between the consumers and producers of news; one might even say that the boundaries between the two groups are disappearing.

It is interesting to compare the media markets in countries where media traditions are completely different. A Lithuanian journalist from the daily *Atgimimas* who talked with Pritchard stated openly that it would be almost impossible to institute the position of readers’ feedback editor (in other words, an intermediary between audience and content creator) in Lithuania. It is obvious that Lithuanians often believe that excessively painstaking efforts to correct one’s own mistakes can be perceived as an admission of weakness and the inability to do one’s job. It is also believed, by the way, that there are no strong institutions for the self-regulation of journalists in Lithuania: no one is interested in their decisions which are often contradictory. It sometimes seems as though no one is worried about readers’ reactions.

Stephen Pritchard admits that what is normal for the editors of *The Observer* might well be impossible in Lithuania. He reminded the audience, though, that this at one time seemed impossible in Britain as well. A bold and respectable press does not appear overnight, all at once. As it was in Britain, so is it now in Lithuania. The more Lithuania's journalists work with their readers, however, and develop them so that they become critical toward what they read, the greater the hope that strong, mature, and daring media will be created.

### **Penetration of new information technologies into Lithuania's media**

Both global (international politics, net ethics) and local factors (Lithuanian laws regulating the Internet, for example) directly affect the media in Lithuania. Rapidly developing information and communication technologies are penetrating ever more deeply into all spheres of public life, creating an information society. Educated members of a knowledge-based society who are receptive toward innovation give the media an incentive to work better, since they can connect with sources of information, thanks to the new technologies, and challenge the media as intermediaries in the process of transmitting information.

The introduction of new information technologies in Lithuania's media has entered its second stage, characterised by wider application of new technologies. New versions are being created and the search is on for new models. Mass use of the new information technologies to gather, publish, and disseminate information has begun.

The global net has given the public new opportunities that allow everyone to freely write and publish texts. Experts point out fundamental technological characteristics of the Internet that directly influence its informational media: interactivity, hypertext, and multimedia. These

features have changed the essence of the traditional perception of journalism.

Interactivity has led to two-way information traffic that has replaced the classical model of communication. Hypertext has substantially changed the linear style of writing and the sequential reading of text, while multimedia has provided the opportunity to freely select the information format.

As a result of the spread of information technologies, however, there is a growing surplus of information. The role of the media as an information filter is therefore getting stronger.

It is entirely obvious that the consequences of using the new technologies can especially be expected in areas directly associated with the production, dissemination, and use of information content, which are in fact the media.

The technological opportunities offered by the Internet – the means to gather, transmit, and publish information – are much more varied than any other information technologies. On mobile telephones, for example, it is still possible only to transmit/send text or audio information, and the possibility of directly putting a video on the Internet has recently become a reality. On the Internet, however, it is very easy to combine images, sound, and text; to find additional sources of information through hyperlinks; and to take part in discussion forums, chat rooms and the like.

Interactivity is one of the Internet's most important characteristics directly impacting on journalism. It makes for updating information, two-way communication, and a uniquely multiple model of communication (many to many).

The new information technologies are changing the content of the media, the profession of journalist and the processes of work, the structure of media organisations, and the relationship with target audiences. Lithuania's media increasingly recognise the advantages of the new information technologies and are beginning to use them on a much wider scale.

Lithuania's electronic media sites have become more interactive in recent years. Since 2000, most media sites have acquired more interactive capabilities, from the point of view of two-way communication. In terms of two-way communication, the interactivity of Lithuania's main media organisations' sites have already reached the level of the electronic portals of foreign media organisations.

It can be said that the content of Lithuania's media sites is changing in favour of the reader/user. This is confirmed by the new media services (such as WAP, e-mail news services, SMS messages, and so on) that have appeared in the last two years.

We can say that Lithuania's journalists are happily taking advantage of the new technologies in their work, realising that the Internet has made their work easier and improved its quality. Another trend has been noted: the structure of media organisations is changing. Traditional media publications and Internet-format publications supplement one another with more complete information. They are literally being combined into a common organised system.

One other item should be noted: so far, it has been possible to do things on the Internet that cannot be done in traditional media, even though they all still fall under one and the same category. In Lithuania, there is no agency that would control this area.

The active application by today's media of information and communication technologies in a journalist's work has a social and cultural effect on how well society is informed. The implications of the great changes in recent years are just beginning to be felt. Studies have been conducted in this field to find answers to the following questions: How do Internet technologies affect media operations in the broad sense, and How are the everyday work of a journalist, the genres and content of information, and the demands of the audience changing?

The rapid deployment of new technologies in other spheres of public life (politics, business, social ties, art, and so on) is leading to a great many questions. Projects that combine interdisciplinary studies (political science, sociology, anthropology, and the media) will provide answers on how this affects the processes of democratisation and the degree to which citizens participate in them.

### **Journalism and professional training: what is changing?**

In contemporary society, the demand for both journalism and integrated communications is growing. In the context of different global changes, all organisations realise the importance of publicising their operations, of effective communication and dialogue with the public, and of ensuring that they function well in the long term. The rapidly changing information market and the deployment of new technologies also demand professionals of a completely different order who are not limited to the boundaries of one particular country but are capable of critical thought and analysing events in today's world, and can work not only in traditional media communities but in the Internet's new media communities as well.

This calls for good theoretical and practical training of international standard. One can get such training in a master's degree programme.

This is why, for example, Vilnius University's Faculty of Journalism in Lithuania is organising a course for a master's degree in integrated communications, along with continuing studies in integrated communications.

What is the course oriented to in the context of changing technologies and user skills? The university's experts say that the aim of their new master's programme in journalism is to train competent and responsible professionals who are capable of informing the public and of analysing political, economic, and socio-cultural processes, using the latest methods of transmitting information, and who are guided by the standards of journalism ethics.

What are they teaching the new generation of journalists? First of all, the theory of mass communication; types and genres of discourse; the practices of the press, radio, and television; media law and ethics; and media organisation management. A course on Internet creativity is highly relevant. Journalists also acquire a good deal of knowledge on public relations. Courses on video communications, communications culture, and political communications are mandatory. Special attention is given to analysing propaganda and, of course, to media innovations.

What prospects await someone who has gotten such training? University graduates are now working in Lithuanian and international media organisations, in public relations agencies, in commercial companies, and in governmental and non-governmental organisations. They are also continuing their education in doctoral programmes in the social sciences. Masters who have finished other courses besides journalism are qualified to work not only in media organisations (the press, radio, television, and the Internet) but in centres for media research and studies, and in media monitoring organisations as well. They can also work in research organisations dealing with media issues in the social sciences,

and independently set up new media organisations in the commercial and non-governmental sectors.

### **Does anyone need real journalists?**

The European Federation of Journalists is worried over this question.

The EFJ issued a declaration in Bulgaria on 16 May 2009, the essence of which was contained in its first sentence: “the dramatic restructuring of the media economy across the world and particularly in Europe poses serious questions for all in journalism and the media industry.”

We should listen to the journalists’ words: “dramatic” and “particularly in Europe.” We all point the finger at the persecution of journalists in Belarus or Russia. Likewise, we are worried that members of the press are actually being hounded out of the country in Iran. We don’t even notice that there is plenty of drama right here in our home, in Europe.

But perhaps journalists are worried over nothing?

For example, is it really worth seriously discussing whether the technology that allows people to create and share content is changing the media? It’s a fact. But it deprives the media that serve their communities of financing. The blogs and social networks opening up new parts of the world are displacing traditional media, especially newspapers.

Media markets are collapsing. The flight of advertising to the Internet and a new generation of users who have less time for newspapers and traditional television have caused panic in an industry which is cutting jobs and slashing editorial costs at the expense of quality journalism and weakening democratic pluralism.

The decline of journalism and media in Europe caused by employers desperate to squeeze even more profits out of the sector is getting even worse as a result of today's economic downturn.

The crisis is having a dramatic effect on media coverage of the political, social, and democratic life of Europe. There is no longer a balance between private sector media and publicly-funded outlets, especially in broadcasting, which has traditionally provided the citizens of Europe with pluralist and diverse information.

There are no guarantees that media pluralism can be assured. The private sector is no longer able to guarantee the provision of information services that have been central to preserving and enhancing standards of democracy in Europe.

At the same time, public broadcasters are experiencing their own crisis as well, and are coming under enormous political pressure (see the latest report from the Open Society Institute, *Television across Europe: More Channels, Less Independence*, which reveals the extent of the crisis in Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Italy, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia). In Europe's main media, both public and private media are under equal pressure.

Today's crisis is not short-term. The extent of the collapse of traditional media in the United States has caused enormous shock both to media practitioners and public bodies. There is little doubt, sooner than later, that Europe, too, will face the consequences of market restructuring.

This change is inexorable and offers potential for the creation of more open, more engaged, and more informed communities. This will only happen if there is protection for the professional, public purposes of journalism – to stimulate, educate, and inform public debate, and to call



to account those who exercise power in society. Journalism provides the mechanism for scrutiny and a check on corruption, and it keeps societies open.

How has the current economic crisis affected the media? We can see major cutbacks in print advertising, for example, in the United States, Germany, Great Britain, and Lithuania, sometimes by as much as 50%. In some countries, television advertising has been cut back. The future obviously belongs to the Internet.

Learning ethics is generally a lifetime job. Frequently, it is only at the end of your career that you can say whether or not you've performed ethically. How then can we teach young persons to work ethically in just one year? How can we cope with pressure from the public, the government, or business? How can we teach them not to betray their profession? The temptation to exchange a dangerous and low-paying profession for one that is safe and pays well is great. Many do not last. Politics, business, advertising, and public relations beckon, and at best, such people go back to universities.

In choosing the profession of journalism, one therefore ought to carefully answer one question: Does he/she know that the most important thing, the thing that makes his/her mission clear, is recognising what he/she *is* and *is not* prepared to answer for? Don't hope for your reports to be believed blindly. Such levels of trust are possible only after many years of an irreproachable reputation. The more reasoned your reports and presentations, the more trust and interest they will evoke.

What should a journalist remember and do?

- Truth is the most important thing in journalism.
- "Verify your information!" is the golden rule.

- A journalist's conscience is his/her permanent censor.
- Be true to the public.
- Be independent from your sources of information.
- A journalist is an impartial observer.
- Provide the public with the chance to take part in debates and seek compromises.
- Focus only on main topics.
- Provide comprehensive news coverage and ensure it is balanced.

What is the job of government agencies, universities, and non-governmental organizations?

The role of the journalist is an important one. This means that the public deserves quality journalism, and they therefore should be ready to pay for it. Only one thing is required of politicians: Don't interfere with journalists while providing favourable opportunities for the dissemination of information. Private business can make its own important contribution to raising the quality of journalism by being generous with its advertising revenues.

Universities can become centres for studying ways of raising the quality of journalism. Another important job of universities under today's market conditions is the training of qualified media personnel who are capable of using the latest technologies in their creative efforts while upholding their profession's ethical standards.



# **Journalism education in South Caucasus**





## Journalism education at Yerevan State University

### **Musheg Hovsepian<sup>1</sup>**

The year 2009 was a jubilee year for the Faculty of Journalism at Yerevan State University (YSU). This year marked the tenth anniversary of the Faculty's founding. Not only has the Faculty taken shape and become well-established over the last decade, it has also transitioned to a three-stage credit system of study that has opened up new prospects for journalistic education and provided new opportunities for its integration into the European educational system, and full membership in this system.

The history of journalistic education in Armenia already spans 60 years. The Department of Journalism opened at Moscow State University in 1947 created ponderable prerequisites and opportunities for the opening of similar departments in the universities of the former Soviet Union's republics. Two years later, in 1949, a journalism department opened within the Faculty of Philology at YSU, and 50 years later, in October 1999 Faculty of Journalism was created on the base of the department.

After our declaration of independence in 1991, new opportunities and prospects for journalistic education opened up in Armenia. New market relations gradually took shape inside the country that affected the informational structure as well. The new market conditions made new demands on faculties and departments of journalism in state and private institutions of higher education.

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<sup>1</sup> Mushegh Hovsepian, Professor, Head of TV and Radio Journalism Chair, Journalism Department, Yerevan State University

The primary task of the YSU Faculty of Journalism is to train journalistic personnel according to the demands of the new era and realities. In a short period of time, similar faculties and departments have been opened both in state institutions (the Pedagogical, Russian–Armenian (Slavic), Linguistic, and Artsakh universities; the Institute of Physical Culture; and the Gyumri and Vanadzor pedagogical institutes) and in new private institutions. The leader in the field of journalism, however, was and remains Yerevan State University.

In addition to academic institutions, journalists are also trained at the RA National Academy of Sciences and the South Caucasus Media Institute, in whose master's programs future journalists receive a more focused specialisation. Of the existing media companies, the A1+ television company, which guarantees the graduation of professional television journalists, offers higher education journalism courses.

In our opinion, raising the quality of journalistic education on the basis of short-term programmes demands the close cooperation of the abovementioned organisations not only with local and international journalistic associations but also with the YSU Faculty of Journalism, which is ready to render assistance in the joint development of unified curricula, teaching methodology programmes, and the training of highly specialised journalistic personnel.

During discussions organised at the Faculty of Journalism in 2006 with the participation of interested parties, the question of jointly developing unified long-term and short-term curricula in consideration of the new realities and teaching methodology programmes was examined. To this day, however, not one higher educational institution has expressed interest in this project, and the entire burden of such work has rested on the shoulders of the YSU Faculty of Journalism. It should be noted that the Faculty prepared in a very short period of time long-term and short-



term curricula that considered the new conditions and demands of the credit system, and that could be offered as pilot programs to educational institutions and organisations involved in training journalists.

The YSU Faculty of Journalism today has specialised workplaces outfitted with state-of-the-art digital equipment, recording and editing TV and radio studios, a computer room, photographic laboratories, and, finally, a multimedia centre.

Responding to the demands dictated by today's information market, the YSU Faculty of Journalism is transitioning to new teaching methodologies. The Faculty trains specialised personnel in the electronic (TV journalism, radio journalism, and Internet journalism) and print (the publishing industry, printed periodicals) media.

It should be emphasised that from the day the Faculty was founded, the Department of the Theory and History of the Press and the Department of Radio and Television Journalism, each having a highly qualified professorial and teaching staff and state-of-the-art technical instruction facilities, have been operating effectively. In the last five years alone, the Faculty has published more than a score of monographs and books now used in its courses, and introduced at Armenian and international academic conferences. Three professors with doctorate degree and twenty candidates of science work in the two departments. To stimulate further academic efforts, the Faculty issues a theoretical research almanac, *Journalism: Questions of History and Theory*. The almanac comes out periodically—once a year. A student newspaper, *The Journalist*, in which the best articles written by Faculty students taking the course on the journalism trade are published, has been coming out since 1989.

For the first time in the history of Armenia, the Faculty has created an electronic archive of the Armenian press, [www.presslibrary.am](http://www.presslibrary.am). It helps students to study the Armenian press; to use archive articles to prepare for exams; and to write their bachelor's, master's, and candidate's theses. One of our achievements in recent years has been the creation of the multimedia site [www.journalist.am](http://www.journalist.am). The student site highlights accomplishments in one area or another. In the TV and Radio section of the site, not only can students post their own articles, they can also participate in on-line forums in which their work is discussed. The electronic site is especially effective for organising lessons on the topic of the journalism trade.

Around 400 students are now enrolled in the Faculty of Journalism's full-time and part-time programmes (bachelor's and master's). Around 120 new students enroll each year, of whom 60 are full time and 30 study by correspondence; about 30 enter the master's programme, while two of them go on to the candidate's programme.

Many undergraduate and post-graduate students work in leading media outlets while they pursue their studies. This helps them apply the knowledge they have acquired at university, and to start work in the media after they finish their studies. This makes it much easier to study special disciplines, as does the presence of technical facilities that give undergraduates and post-graduates the opportunity to acquire practical skills and perfect their craft in parallel with their theoretical knowledge, while gaining practical knowledge of their chosen specialty and entering the information field more confidently.

Global changes are now taking place in journalism. An overwhelming number of student journalists are well acquainted with digital and informational technologies and can perform tasks using the latest technologies. A shining example of this is the multimedia centre opened

at the Faculty of Journalism in 2007. Under the supervision of their instructors, the multimedia centre gives students the opportunity to acquire the skills they need to master multimedia equipment and to upgrade their computer skills.

These opportunities and demands of the information market have fundamentally changed the traditional concepts of journalistic education. New curricula and teaching programmes have been developed, the multi-lingual literature has been updated, and a technical facility has been improved. The qualifications of the professorial and teaching staff have been raised. Links with journalistic and public organisations have been expanded. This has provided an opportunity to train a new type of versatile journalistic personnel with a highly varied profile of specialisation.

Not only have the basic subjects thus been included in the programme for training professional radio and television journalists, but several ancillary, related subjects as well: cinematography, film direction, elocution, documentary script-writhing and editing, and other techniques of TV and radio journalism that provide an opportunity to train well-rounded, versatile journalists. To focus the teaching process and make it more effective, the Faculty often brings in leading experts from the republic's different media: journalists, directors, and cameramen. The same principles apply for the print media as well. This is yet another demand of the information market.

Media outlets with small numbers of personnel, where each journalist acquires different highly-focused skills, are the foundation of Armenia's information market. The training of such specialists for the Armenian information market today is of the highest importance, since knowledge of information bank, international and domestic e-media market, mastery of information technologies and communications equipment are required. In

the modern world, it is now possible to enjoy the cutting-edge experience of other countries in the area of media education, the application of new educational standards, organising professional training and upgrading the qualifications of local professorial and teaching staffs, creating new specialised teaching programmes and curricula, and translating and adapting the latest instructional literature. The strengthening of ties with local and international journalistic organisations and university contacts also plays an important role. The YSU Faculty of Journalism, being the leading academic institution in the republic, is ready to cooperate in this sphere with other higher educational institutions of the South Caucasus in, among other things, creating teaching plans and programmes, developing instructional literature, and training journalistic personnel.

The following measures must be taken to improve the quality of instruction:

1. Expand cooperation with leading state universities of Europe (Great Britain, Germany, France) and create new teaching plans in accordance with the credit system.
2. Acquire new equipment with the help of interested organisations, and move television and radio studios and photo laboratories to a digital format.
3. Conduct on-the-job teaching and production workshops with the journalism faculties of major European universities and the editorial boards of leading media outlets.
4. Invite instructors from European universities to run training sessions and master classes.

5. Offer the opportunity for journalism faculty instructors to upgrade their qualifications and undergo professional training at European universities.
6. Update the selection of instructional literature with the help of Europe's leading universities and adapt internationally recognised textbooks and teaching materials to local conditions .

Over the years, the Faculty of Journalism has received technical assistance from international organisations (the UN, OSCE, EU, EC, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and NATO) and the universities of Boston, Moscow, and St. Petersburg, and has had the opportunity to organise courses for instructors to upgrade their qualifications. With the help of international organisations and universities, a number of books by leading foreign journalists and scholars have been translated, and instructors from foreign universities have been invited to deliver lectures. A special course on international organisations has been developed and included in the master's curriculum.

Local journalistic organisations collaborate with the YSU Faculty of Journalism: the RA Union of Journalists, the Yerevan Press Club, and the non-governmental Internews organisation, which provide comprehensive, specialised assistance to the Faculty with the aim of raising the quality of education.

In concluding my speech, I would like to thank the organisers of the conference, the speakers, the OSCE Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the OSCE field missions in Armenia and Azerbaijan, which helped organise the Sixth South Caucasus Media Conference.



## Problems of journalism education in Azerbaijan

**Etibar Babayev<sup>1</sup>**

In recognizing oneself as a member of society, a person assumes responsibility for its maintenance and development. The need for information to shape our experience not only of society but of the events that have already taken place and are now taking place, both inside and outside it, is a cornerstone of society's existence. The demand for information has given rise to the profession of journalist—the producer and distributor of this commodity.

During the building of the mythical Communist society, the Communists, having proclaimed themselves the sole organized and uniting force in society, and recognizing the value of information as one of the most important means of controlling society, placed the media under their complete control: newspapers, magazines, radio (and later television), and information delivery means. The totalitarian system began when the media, as the Fourth Estate, lost its freedom and the public started getting only that fine-tuned information allowed by the Party system in the doses and directions needed for its successful functioning. The average person, as a member of society, lost the right of choice. The average person was from now on supposed to think the way he/she was told to, becoming a sort of zombie that would be easy to manipulate and control.

With the collapse of the totalitarian system, people, freed from its fettering levers of power and hungry for real information that corresponded to

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<sup>1</sup> Etibar Babayev, Head of Journalism Department at Baku Slavic University

reality as it was, began insatiably to devour printed material of different orientations with differing (and frequently superficial) interpretations of current events. They soon encountered the problem of determining the information's veracity and credibility. In a race for popularity and influence, the journalists of that period, having lost the control and guidance of Party bodies, lowered their level of responsibility for the trustworthiness of the material they produced and its interpretation, since they had no grasp of the main ethical principles of their profession. There was in fact nowhere they could have acquired journalistic ethics, since Party bodies had earlier assumed the prerogative of shaping this quality of journalism and substituted their own ideas for it. Strict control over the flow of informational material deprived journalists of their civil responsibility before the public they informed and transformed the idea of journalistic ethics into an empty concept, limited by a mundane sense of personal relationships. In the totalitarian system, information was supposed to be dispensed only in controlled doses, and in the quality and content required for propaganda and agitation. The system of Party control over the media took responsibility for the ethics of the material, freeing the journalist themselves from the burden of accountability.

As a result of changes in the social makeup, the information market is now free. Journalists, however, both because of the education they received and because their mentality has remained the same, have not rushed to change, nor have they been able to. At no time in their training were they required to learn the true values of their job or to understand their professional role in the life of society. Time, time, and even more time is needed for this; perhaps the life of an entire generation. Hence, instead of reports on and analyses of the processes going on in society, or reviews of events according to their level of importance, we now have a flood of scandalous feature stories. Many journalists today do not understand that a sensation is a sensation only when a new quality of an event affecting the interests of the public at large or an overwhelming



majority of people reveals hitherto unknown animating motives and new, previously hidden items of importance. Instead of work that enlightens the public, we thus observe a process of “dumbing down” the customers of information. This has now become the main job of most journalists.

The lack of professionally trained, politically versed, and well-rounded journalists means that economists and political scientists who have no special education in the field often get to work on television. More and more often, the hosts of studio programmes are nobodies who are ready to talk on any topic, discuss any questions, invite whomever they wish onto the show, and set up on-screen squabbles in the race for ratings, which are often determined by extremely dubious methods.

Academician R.E. Mekhtiev talked about this truthfully and with some pain in his recently published article “The Problem with Azerbaijan’s Airwaves: Issues and Responsibilities”: according to Mekhtiev, Azerbaijan television is “a system of empty entertainment programmes that offer nothing, tear-jerking soap operas, senseless talkathons, and scandalous stories. It is a monotonous, mind-numbing waste of time that tries to attract an audience by any means possible in the race for ratings and advertising revenues, relegating to oblivion current problems and the fact that the country is engaged in a battle for its territorial integrity in a most difficult international situation.”

Although the Soviet authorities knew the value of the printed word, and knew how to use the pen as well as the sword, it was only in the post-war years that professional training for journalists was begun at higher educational institutions in this country, and on the campus of Azerbaijan State University (ASU) in particular. For a long time, ASU was the only academic institution training journalism majors.

New, privately-owned educational establishments offering journalism training began to appear alongside the state institutions in the country after it gained its independence. The training of young journalists, however, was mainly done on the basis of existing teaching materials, using textbooks written in the *Zeitgeist* of the Soviet period and incorporating the ideological demand of that period. It was difficult to train a new generation of young journalists by using such materials. Carried away by the opening of new academic institutions, the country forgot about the need to develop new teaching methodologies and textbooks.

Baku Slavic University (BSU) began training journalistic personnel five years ago. The first class graduated this past academic year. The curriculum was developed on the basis of state educational standards for journalism majors. Today, however, the university faculty are facing new problems, how to modernize the teaching process in particular. We are speaking primarily about the active introduction of new generation standards, an enlightened and comprehensive approach to the educational process. If this is not done, difficulties could arise with integration into a unified European environment in the area of higher education.

At present, 171 students are enrolled in the journalism department, which operates as a subdivision of the Faculty of Philology. Of them, 93 students are enrolled in the Azerbaijan sector and 78 in the Russian sector. The first graduate students in journalism were admitted this year. Our aim is to train journalists for work in television, radio, information agencies, Internet publications, newspaper and magazine editorial boards, and advertising and public relations agencies. We want to see to it that our graduates, once they've started work, are distinguished from the start by their skills in solving professional problems of average difficulty. Exactly one year ago, we managed to set up a student radio station. The editing room has all of the necessary technical equipment

and, most important, a genuinely creative work environment has been created. The compact studio has state-of-the-art technical equipment for going on-air with news programmes, for preparing radio scripts, and for interviews with studio guests.

A 32-channel professional control board with a quite broad range of technical parameters is installed at the director's station. The University's five-storey building is radio-equipped. The signals can be received in all departments, in the laboratories, and in the administrative offices. A variety of broadcasts are produced by the students themselves. The station is on the air for ten hours a day. The students edit the programmes and do all of the sound work on them. Prominent figures in literature, art, science are regularly invited to the studio, along with the republic's leading journalists and foreign guests as well. The studio has been visited by members of the BBC, and by journalists and instructors from the journalism departments of higher educational institutions in the United States, France, Germany, Russia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

Unfortunately, we have yet to create the necessary conditions for transmitting skills in the areas of television journalism and communications technologies to our students. Television and radio above all mean production. Instruction therefore ought to cover the creative, technological, and technical aspects of training personnel.

The journalism profession is a vocal profession. Unfortunately, this important component of the educational process has been ignored up to now. Substantial changes will be made to the curriculum in the new academic year. We will otherwise be unable to correct and perfect students' speech.

We must strive so that along with theoretical knowledge, students acquire practical skills, learn to analyze the heart of each event and to write about

it in their publications, obtain organizational skills for preparing TV and radio programmes, and take an active part in operations at all stages of the creative process, from creating the format for a show and working out the budget for a studio production, right down to the individual camera shots and the editing.

This year, it was proposed that students perform coursework and senior projects in the form of full-fledged television and radio productions to ensure the practical orientation of their studies. Not long ago, a protocol on training journalistic personnel according to modern educational standards was signed between BSU and the BBC. This was preceded by a great deal of orientation and preparatory work. It is planned to create textbooks that meet the new pan-European requirements. Members of the authors' group have been selected. People from the BBC took part in preparatory work, and their recommendations have been handed down to the working group. Cooperation between BSU and UNICEF began this academic year. A programme on "The Rights of Children in Journalism," the teaching of which is planned for next academic year, has been drawn up as part of that cooperation effort.

In the last four years, our students have had on-the-job training at the country's most prestigious media outlets and agencies, at the RIA-Novosti news agency, and the British TV and radio company BBC. In accordance with a student exchange agreement between BSU and Moscow State University (MSU), three BSU students are now studying at the MSU Department of Journalism.

Our student journalists take part in all the University's publicly important events and regularly feature them in the University newspaper and the national press.

Despite the success we have achieved, however, there are still certain objective and subjective problems in our system of journalistic education. One of these is associated with the introduction of the credit system; at the moment, all that can be said is that ideal standards for introducing this system have not been determined even in Europe. In any case, however, we can make several comparisons. In European universities, students spend a maximum of 15 to 17 hours a week in lecture classes; for us, the figure is 30 hours. This situation naturally cannot help but negatively affect the quality of lessons outside of lectures. In addition, unlike Europe, the students' performance is evaluated based on a "Good" and "Bad" system. In developed countries, though, the work of the instructor in a lecture has long been assessed as "Effective" or "Ineffective."

One problem that must be solved is elevating the role of the lecture instructor as a moderator. It may be said with confidence that we, like other post-Soviet countries, devote special attention to theoretical knowledge in the educational process. A great deal of work must be done to ensure that theoretical knowledge is dovetailed with practice. This depends mainly on the material possibilities. As is well known, all European universities have state-of-the-art newsrooms. Lessons in these rooms play a huge role in becoming professional journalists. This is why in contemporary methods for teaching journalism, the greatest attention is given not to the volume of knowledge acquired by a journalist but to his/her ability to apply the knowledge received. If we teach such disciplines as "Journalism and Contemporary History," "The Media Business," "Journalism and Politics," and "A Journalist's Behaviour in Conflict Situations," we can attain great success and raise the level of national education in the area of journalism to European standards.

We should make a special note of problems associated with teaching materials. Textbooks that meet today's requirements for journalism, written by authors such as Gulu Magerramli, Zeinal Mammedli, Osman

Gyunduz, and others, have appeared recently. This is, however, not enough, and additional work in this direction is needed.

Naturally, the matter of producing textbooks is just one part of the problems associated with the training of highly qualified journalists. There are difficulties involved in getting experienced journalists to teach, there is no modern infrastructure, and so on. In addition, the training of journalists cannot be viewed in isolation from the overall situation in the country, the social and political circumstances. Low pay, social vulnerability, and the impunity of those who trespass against the professional dignity of journalists do not stimulate interest in this profession among young people.

In order to train truly professional and free journalists, we must gradually solve the abovementioned problems. Only then will we be able to look with confidence into the future of Azerbaijan journalism.







## An overview of journalism education in Georgia

**Maia Mikashavidze<sup>1</sup>**

The evolution of journalism education in Georgia is an accurate reflection of the changes the country has gone through and of its current state. The number of universities that offer journalism programs has grown from 1 to 22. Every year, more than a thousand students graduate with bachelor's and master's degrees from journalism programs. Local and international organizations hold training courses and seminars. Nevertheless, the sustainability and quality of educational and training opportunities remain problematic. Funding is scarce. Only a handful of universities have funds to invest in program development, teacher training, libraries, and facilities.

### **Professionalism as a Right and Responsibility of Journalists**

Practicing journalism in accordance with professional standards is not a top priority for the media industry, fueling the argument in society that reckless and unprofessional reporting may lead the media to fail in their fundamental watchdog function. A recent study by the Eurasia Partnership Fund's Caucasus Research and Resource Center termed the public attitude toward the media as "sceptical trust." To maintain the public's trust and to reaffirm its role, the media industry should put a high value on journalists' professionalism, education, and training.

Journalists and editors from the regional media have signed the Georgian Charter of Journalism Ethics with 11 key principles of ethical journalism. It

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<sup>1</sup> Maia Mikashavidze, Dean of the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management at Georgian Institute of Public Affairs

is hoped that this event will elevate the importance of professionalism in media. The Broadcasters' Code of Conduct, legally binding for broadcast license holders, contains norms of professional and ethical journalism.

### **The Landscape**

Twenty-two out of sixty-three accredited Georgian universities and colleges offer programs in journalism and related areas at the bachelor's level. Master's degree programs in journalism are offered by 12 universities. Four universities have media schools or departments. Others have journalism programs within their departments of social sciences, humanities, and political studies.

Competitive programs are offered by leading universities in Tbilisi. Javakhishvili and Chavchavadze State Universities, the Caucasus University, the University of Georgia, and the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs (GIPA) have modern curricula, interactive teaching, and skills-oriented studies. For the academic year 2009–2010, all five universities redesigned their curricula and launched new programs.

The quality of studies varies at other universities. Old-fashioned, theory-dominated studies are still common. It is hoped that the innovative curricula adopted at Javakhishvili and Chavchavadze state universities may lead to changes at other universities.

Universities in Batumi, Kutaisi, Gori, Akhaltsikhe, and Telavi teach journalism to the students from the regions.

No official statistics are available on the number of journalism students. Figures taken from the website of the Georgian National Examination Commission, supplemented by our telephone survey, added up to 846 slots in bachelor's degree programs and 260 slots in master's degree

programs announced by universities for prospective students in the 2008–2009 academic year. In total, universities made 1,106 slots available in journalism, the television arts, media management, media criticism, advertising, and public relations programs.

Some 500 journalism students are enrolled at leading universities, or roughly the half of the student body in the field.

### **Curricula**

In the absence of state academic standards for journalism education, universities in Georgia are free to design curricula that best suit their visions.

At the bachelor's level, journalism curricula are similar. We have examined the curriculum of Javakishvili State University, which serves as a model for many of the other programs in Georgia. The university offers two groups of courses: departmental or university requirements and specialized journalism courses. For each successfully completed group of courses, 120 ECTS credits are awarded. (*Editors' note:* The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) is the higher education standard for comparing the academic credentials and performance of students in the European Union and associated countries in Europe.) Journalism courses fall into three categories: theory (roughly 40 credits), journalism skills (70 credits), additional skills (media management, public relations, and so on; 10 credits). There are both mandatory and elective courses.

Some universities offer more courses in media management and public relations. All universities have curricula that are broad enough to accommodate student tastes and the job market.

At the master's level, there is greater variety in journalism curricula. Universities try to create distinct identities for their programs. Javakhishvili State University aims to deepen the journalism skills acquired at the bachelor's level and teach four additional disciplines (culture, politics, economics, and international relations) for students to practice niche reporting and analysis. The university has a second master's degree program designed for graduates of other departments and disciplines.

Iliia Chavchavadze University has closed its bachelor's degree program and announced a new master's in journalism program. It targets accomplished professionals in other fields who wish to train as journalists. At the bachelor's level, Chavchavadze University offers a three-year professional non-degree program in journalism and "screen arts" (camerawork, video editing, TV directing).

The Georgian Institute of Public Affairs has redesigned its curricula to incorporate new media concepts and skills in subjects ranging from reporting to media management and public relations. Its Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management, established in partnership with the Washington-based International Center for Journalists, offers practical, hands-on master's degree programs. The students at the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management are college graduates and professional journalists from Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia.

The School of Journalism and Mass Communications at the University of Georgia offers bachelor's and master's level programs and is traditionally strong in its management and public relations programs.

The Caucasus University has launched a new and innovative program in social sciences with specialization in journalism, media management, and strategic communication. This program is geared to the needs of working media professionals, allowing students to personalize curricula, select the

pace and schedule of their studies, and take classes in other schools of the Caucasus University.

### **Continuous Education and Training Programs for Working Media Professionals**

Georgia rightfully takes pride in its unrestricted access to the journalism profession; this has led to an influx of representatives of various professions into journalism. Editors still keep their doors open for journalists without academic degrees in journalism, but want to spend less time mentoring them and giving them on-the-job training. This has led to increased demand for continuous education and training. This demand is being met only partially by educational institutions and training providers. There are currently no academic programs in journalism offered in the evening, online, or in any other form in which one can combine work and studies. The GIPA and Caucasus University are the only two educational institutions that offer short, non-degree, evening programs with an average duration of 8 to 15 weeks.

Training programs are only partially meeting the demand. There are no training centers with a regular training calendar. In continuation of an old trend, training programs follow broad development priorities, set by donors, for the country and its media. The real needs of the industry are rarely met, and are certainly not studied. Out of 37 training courses in Georgia posted on or linked to the popular [www.media.ge](http://www.media.ge) website since last August, 22 were on covering specialized topics, varying from jurors' work in courts to mental health and trade unions. The other courses were for basic journalism skills. With the exception of two training courses, all of the courses were for journalists and not for media managers. Most of the training courses lasted two to three days.

Organizations that have traditionally provided training courses (Internews, the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA), Transitions Online) continue to do so in their respective fields of expertise. No local organizations provide professional media training courses on a commercial basis.

There are greater opportunities available to citizens of Georgia abroad, but those are skewed toward the English-proficient minority among professional journalists.

Media owners, as much as they may appreciate the training of their staff, rarely pay for training or offer promotions to journalists who are trained. Regional media owners complain that their journalists look for opportunities in the capital once they have been trained. Academic education and training are considered a "private good" and left to journalists to procure. Education is expensive: the average annual tuition in bachelor's programs is 3,620 lari (1,460 euros) or roughly 70% of Georgia's per capita income. State support of 2,250 lari (918 euros) is available to the best students. There is no financial support available for media professionals who are interested in improving their skills.

Our main conclusions regarding the situation in journalism education in Georgia are:

- There is a greater variety of programs and curricula at the master's level.
- Educators question the need for bachelor's level programs in journalism.
- The model of practical, skills-oriented education is gaining support.
- Internships and ties with industry are encouraged.
- There is a large gap between educational opportunities in Tbilisi and the regions.

- There is a need to establish regular training and continuing education programs.

### **Challenges**

University efforts to improve are hampered by a lack of qualified teachers, textbooks in local languages, and equipment and facilities.

#### *Teacher training and resources*

Teachers who are willing to raise their qualifications have very few opportunities. Only a few universities invest in training teachers. Self-education is pretty much the only remaining option, and is generally skewed toward English speakers. Teachers with no knowledge of the English language are limited in their professional improvement.

Most private universities do not have full-time teachers on their staff; this greatly affects the quality of studies. Instead, universities invite lecturers on limited-period contracts. A good teacher might get offers from several universities.

#### *Research*

The lack of funds also hampers teachers' ability to engage in research. With no research work to support teaching, their courses are often replicas of someone else's syllabi.

The lack of PhD holders among faculty to teach, supervise research projects, and mentor future scholars is another major problem. Georgian legislation allows Doctors of Sciences to serve as full-time professors at only one university. Greater attention must be given to PhD level education if academic education is to develop further.

### ***Facilities***

The long-standing debate over theoretical versus practical, skills-based education is irrelevant if universities do not have the equipment and facilities needed for practical work, as is the case with the most universities. Universities that are limited in their funds cannot invest in expensive equipment or bear maintenance costs.

### ***Textbooks***

Textbooks remain an unresolved problem for all programs. Teachers with foreign language skills themselves translate chapters from books published in foreign languages and compile course readers. Original textbooks or case studies of any quality are rare.

The Eurasia Partnership Fund, UNICEF, and OSGF are supporting the development of textbooks, but more coordination with universities is desirable in order for good, useful textbooks to be translated.

One popular website offering news and online resources to journalists and educators is [www.media.ge](http://www.media.ge). A new startup, [www.mediaEducation.ge](http://www.mediaEducation.ge) (founded by GIPA, Ilia Chavchavadze University, the Caucasus University, and the University of Georgia) serves the same purpose. The two websites rely on donor support to serve the community of journalism educators.

### ***Training Centers***

There is a demand for training centers to offer comprehensive training programs. Training centers ought to be established in Tbilisi and the regions. Journalists should be able to select from a range of training courses, from basic to advanced level skills.



### ***Funding***

Private journalism programs are supported by tuition fees. State programs essentially have their funding tied to numbers of students too. Since the number of students cannot be increased indefinitely, revenues are limited. There is no tradition of private or corporate donations, endowment funds, gifts of buildings, or other forms of charitable support.

Students need support in the form of stipends, travel funds, and books as well. State programs to support university level research and master's level education abroad are needed. The Conrad Adenauer Foundation grants stipends to students, and this makes a difference for talented students with limited financial resources.

### ***Accreditation***

In 2013, the planned programmatic accreditation will assess and accredit journalism programs presumably based on unified standards for journalism education. It is important that the standards accommodate the present-day variety of visions and curricula and are developed in a transparent manner.

Finally, a challenge that is a bit beyond our reach:

### ***The difference in values between graduates and media owners***

In the past, media managers complained about the incompetence and low level of skills among university graduates. Graduates are now increasingly complaining about media owners and find it difficult to apply the high standards of journalism taught in universities to the existing media.

The Georgian media, as is evident from a number of studies, is highly politicized and polarized. Many news outlets filter and frame news along

the lines of the political divide. Graduates who join the media with firm ideals of balance and impartiality find themselves at odds with this trend.

### **Conclusions**

In closing, I would like to note with satisfaction that academic education and training are again recognized as essential for the development of free and professional media. Journalism schools are active, follow the trends in the media, and want to serve as strongholds of journalism values and quality. Unlike the Georgian media, the community of journalism educators is closely-knit and collegial. It is necessary to join efforts and work with donors, media development organizations, and the media industry to improve the quality of journalism in Georgia.



# **Developments in the field of media freedom in South Caucasus**





## The state of freedom of speech in Azerbaijan

**Mehman Aliyev<sup>1</sup>**

The situation with freedom of speech continues to grow worse, as does the position of the independent media and journalists in Azerbaijan. Not only was 2009 no exception in this regard, it marked with ever greater relief the anti-liberal policy of the government. In terms of its dominant trends, the policy of depoliticizing, depluralizing, and monopolizing the country's information market has in recent years become the main priority in Azerbaijan. The increasingly harsh repression of opposition-leaning newspapers and journalists, begun in 2005 and now embracing an entire arsenal of repressive measures (contract murders, lawsuits, incarceration, economic suffocation, threats, bribery, beatings, fines, and so on), has led to the virtually complete marginalization of the country's critical press. The government, however, did not intend to restrict only the press: its plans included exercising monopoly control over the entire information market, including television, radio, and even the Internet (so far as is possible).

There were no particular problems when it came to television. All of the local TV channels are already under monopoly control of the powers that be: they all present the same information and differ from one another only in their names and selection of primitive shows. Foreign television channels were done away with by the hands of the National Television and Radio Council (NTRC) as early as 2008, when in short spell of time all three Russian and two Turkish channels were shut down, one after another. Only the Turkish channel TRT1 continues broadcasting into

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<sup>1</sup> Mehman Aliyev, Director of the Information Agency «Turan»

Azerbaijan today. This too will apparently not last much longer, since NTRC head Nushiravan Mageramly, guided by the strange patriotic formula “only programmes of national TV and radio companies ought to be on the national airwaves,” does not bother to conceal his intention to shut down that TV channel as well.

For more than two years now, the NTRC has obediently implemented the will of the authorities, purging the country’s radio airwaves of foreign sources of alternative information. This was accomplished despite loud cries from international organizations and officials in the United States and Great Britain not to allow such a step. The year 2009 began with reports that the FM broadcasts of the foreign radio stations BBC, Voice of America, and Radio Liberty (*Azadlyg*) were shut down. This decision by the country’s authorities substantially limited the audience of these popular stations: many people (especially young adults) were deprived of the convenient opportunity to listen to these channels on their mobile phones and car radios.

The country entered 2009 bearing the burden of unresolved issues in the media sphere, causing colossal damage to the government’s reputation. March 2 marked the fifth anniversary of the contract killing of Elmar Guseinov, editor-in-chief of *Monitor* magazine, but the government isn’t even trying to investigate the case. Two other editors-in-chief continue to languish in prison: Einulla Fattulaev, editor-in-chief of the newspaper *The Real Azerbaijan*, and Ganimad Zahidov, editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Azadlyg* (*Editor’s note: Zahidov was granted amnesty and released on March 17, 2010*). They were both convicted on the basis of absurd fabricated accusations and received long prison sentences (eight and a half and four and a half years, respectively). With regard to the convicted Einulla Fatullaev, whose case is now being reviewed in the European Human Rights Court, still another provocation was organized: narcotics were planted in his cell, and he could now be convicted once again.



(*Editors' note:* On April 22, 2010, the European Human Rights Court announced its decision on the illegal prosecution of Fattulaev and ordered that the journalist be released. On July 6, 2010, however, Fattulaev was convicted a second time and sentenced to an additional two and a half years in a hard labour colony.) Yet another convict, Novruzali Mamedov, editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Talyshin sesi*, died in prison last year after a long illness. Two other convicts, whose health was cause for alarm, Mushvig Guseinov and the satirist Mirza Sakit, have been amnestied.

The courts continue the practice of prosecuting newspapers and journalists under contrived pretexts. In a number of such court proceedings last year, recalcitrant media were ordered to pay heavy fines that virtually put them on the brink of bankruptcy. To accomplish this, the courts generally use articles of the Criminal Code pertaining to slander and the defence of honour and dignity. Not one of the dozens of court proceedings has ended in favour of the press. Virtually all of the opposition newspapers (and many independent newspapers as well) have in recent years been sentenced to pay court-imposed fines of tens and hundreds of thousands of dollars, and their bank accounts have been frozen. The distribution networks for printed publications have been virtually destroyed. In many areas, people have been deprived of the chance to subscribe to or buy newspapers. The prices for printing services (the quality of which is far from modern standards) is continually rising. For 12 years now, government agencies have been following a deliberate policy of destroying the media advertising market, one of the main sources of income for many publications. Companies that place ads in independent newspapers (and particularly in opposition papers) are hounded. Ads are placed in just a few newspapers, and the overall volume of the press's advertising market is no greater than 3 million *manat*. These punitive measures have led to a sharp decline in newspaper circulation in recent years. The average circulation of the newspapers for sale is 1.7 million papers per month, in a country with a population of more than 9 million.

As a result, the overwhelming majority of media outlets (98%) have lost their financial independence and fallen under the control of the authorities, who sustain the press with illegal financial infusions in exchange for loyalty. One might say that the authorities today have attained control over an overwhelming segment of the country's information market and now have the opportunity to manipulate public consciousness.

Despite the persistent demands of influential international organizations and the Council of Europe in particular, to adopt a law on defamation, and to cease the prosecution of journalists and printed publications on the basis of the laws on slander and insulting one's honour and dignity, the Azerbaijan authorities are holding this process back by whatever means they can while they continue their corrupt practices. Instead of a law on defamation, parliament in 2009 passed laws restricting the activities of the media even more.

In 2009, a widespread campaign began to limit freedom in the country legislatively. On March 6, parliament passed a number of restrictive amendments to the Law "On the Mass Media", according to which an appropriate body of the executive branch can initiate a legal proceeding to shut down media activity for two months. In the March referendum several days later, ludicrous amendments to the constitution were adopted, which prohibited the media from taking photographs or videotaping anything without first getting permission. In June the parliament was planning to adopt new reactionary amendments to the laws "On the Mass Media" and "On Non-governmental Organizations" that could completely paralyze the operations of non-governmental organizations and complicate the work of the independent press even further. Thanks only to the coordinated and active resistance of international organizations and the country's civil sector were these amendments temporarily taken off the agenda, but the threat of their being adopted still exists.

In 2009, the government's repressive policy against the media and troublesome journalists reached the Internet market. In June, the young bloggers Adnan Gadjizade and Emmin Milli were arrested on fabricated charges of hooliganism and sentenced to two and two and a half years in prison. Their arrest and conviction sparked an unprecedented response and a wave of criticism against the authorities inside the country and beyond its borders, since the real reason for their incarceration was clear to everyone: they were convicted for their free-thinking statements and satirical video clips on the Internet. This is why the government of Azerbaijan now wants to bring the Internet under its control too.

This chronicle of recent events testifies to the clear worsening of the situation with freedom of speech in Azerbaijan. The authorities' anti-media "triumphs" have resulted in an unsightly image for the country in all international reports. Respected international institutions (the US State Department; Human Rights Watch; Freedom House; the institutions of the OSCE, the Council of Europe, the European Union, and so on) have been methodically tracking the situation's deterioration. They continually point out to President Ilham Aliev the unacceptability of such an attitude toward the press and the persecution of dissenting journalists and media outlets. Despite the storm of criticism from the international community, however, the country's government prefers not to react to the distress signals and continues to build up purposefully its efforts to restrict and suppress freedom of speech in Azerbaijan.

This is the present-day reality of Azerbaijan in the area of freedom of speech—a gradually disappearing phenomenon, in the absence of which all of the assurances from the West on supporting democracy in Azerbaijan are, along with all of the government's talk about commitment to a democratic policy, nothing other than rhetoric that has no effect on the actual course of events.



## The tense political situation in Armenia and its effect on the media

**Boris Navasardyan<sup>1</sup>**

The main processes in the area of the media in Armenia in 2009 were in one way or another associated with the political situation in the country. The political situation in turn was shaped by the election campaign for the Yerevan Council of Elders; the tense situation that attained after the presidential elections and the tragic events of March 1, 2008; and the process of normalizing Armenian–Turkish relations.

The importance of the elections to the capital’s Council of Elders, held at the end of May, was determined by a number of factors. First, there was Yerevan’s change in status: in accordance with Armenia’s international obligations and amendments to the constitution, Yerevan was transformed from an administrative region (*marza*) to an urban commune. This means that the city must henceforth have a representative body of government and an elected mayor. Considering that the capital is the centre of political and cultural life, is home to around 40% of the population, and contains more than half of Armenia’s economic potential, any elected mayor is bound to be a highly influential figure.

Second, elections were held for the first time in Armenia’s recent history according to a 100% proportional electoral system. This elevated the role of political parties and lowered the influence that oligarchs and so-called “local bosses” had on the outcome of the elections. The latter were naturally more sure-footed in single-mandate majority constituencies,

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<sup>1</sup> Boris Navasardyan, President of the Yerevan Press Club

where it was easier for them to exert influence on the outcome of the elections by applying not entirely clean (and completely dirty) election techniques. The effectiveness of these techniques was reduced once the electorate voted for the party list, rather than for the specific boss of the territory.

Third, Yerevan is traditionally considered a city in which the most enlightened and politically active segment of the population lives, the votes of whom are not so easy to buy (in both the direct and figurative senses). In addition, the presence of people with a clear political orientation (especially in the central areas of the city), ready to fight for their votes, makes different types of election-rigging more difficult.

Fourth, Levon Ter-Petrosyan, the first president of the Republic of Armenia and the leader of the opposition, and his supporters saw the elections in Yerevan as a second round of sorts of the 2008 presidential elections, in which, according to the official results, Ter-Petrosyan lost to Serge Sargsyan, the current president of Armenia, but never recognized his defeat. This lent the election campaign an extra bit of animosity.

Fifth, unlike municipal elections in other cities and regions of Armenia, the Yerevan elections were held with the active participation of the media: 23 open-access television channels, 12 daily newspapers, and a percentage of Internet users incomparable to that of the provinces (approximately one-fourth of the capital's residents use it as a source of information) created a good base for thoughtful and informed choice.

Sixth and last of all, the Armenian authorities did their best to rehabilitate themselves in the eyes of the international community after the scandalous presidential elections and to raise the level of their own legitimacy. This also promised a relatively clean and interesting

competitive battle, and a corresponding information support on the airwaves and the pages of newspapers.

Elections are traditionally a litmus test allowing us to determine the state of the media and their most influential part: television. It was in this sense interesting to compare the coverage of the 2008 and 2009 electoral campaigns. The monitoring of television companies, performed by the Yerevan Press Club during both campaigns, allowed us to reveal the main trends and changes taking place. According to our data, this year's campaign was a "positive" campaign; that is, the political forces that supported the government built their propaganda strategies not upon discrediting the opposition (as they did during the presidential elections) but on accenting the advantages of their own candidates.

Such tactics for preparing campaign materials was duplicated in editorial policy. Unlike the 2008 presidential elections, the informational and socio-political programmes of the leading television channels did not indulge in blackening the opposition; at the same time, however, they had plenty of other colours for describing the virtues of the political forces and candidates supporting the government. These elections showed clearly that without control over television channels, no political force is capable of organizing an effective political campaign. The broadest and most positive coverage went to the People's Party, the leader of which is the owner of the ALM TV channel; the Prospering Armenia and Dashnakcutyun parties, which have "special relationships" with the Kentron and Erker Media TV channels, respectively; and the Republican Party of Armenia, the core of the ruling coalition, which gained a considerable advantage on several leading TV channels. Other parties without similar opportunities lost substantially to the parties mentioned above.

It must in all fairness be noted that this time around, the First Channel of Armenian Public Television took a completely neutral position. This was possibly due to a desire for rehabilitation after the presidential elections mentioned above. To a certain degree, this also explains the tactic of “positive electioneering” to which the political forces supporting the government adhered.

The most obvious and inarguable violations of the democratic norms for holding elections were those associated with media activities, and particularly the broadcast media. It is no accident that this side of election campaigns in Armenia is the one criticized most consistently and convincingly by international organizations. The 2009 Yerevan elections were supposed to show changes for the better, which they did only partially.

The opposition failed, however, to take advantage of this circumstance as much as they might have. They figured on the inertia of the mass dissatisfaction after the presidential elections and the tragedy of March 1, and on the economic situation, which was growing worse due to the world crisis. Compared to the same period last year, however, the political tension had declined, and the opposition forces, which had maintained attitudes of protest, were weakened as a result of the arrests of some of their leaders and activists. The Armenian National Congress (the ANC), headed by Levon Ter-Petrosyan, failed to establish a partnership with Legacy, the only parliamentary opposition party, losing valuable support in the election commissions, where Legacy (unlike the ANC) had its own representatives. Finally, following tradition, the first Armenian president’s team declined to take advantage of the opportunity offered it to present its own election programme on television. In particular, the ANC was in no rush to participate in the TV debates, unlike their other opponents in the election.



Despite the relatively clean election campaign in the broadcast media, however, all of the traditional problems of the latter became apparent in one way or another in the context of the Yerevan elections. The main problem was the way most of the TV channels allowed themselves to be controlled by the political forces supporting the government. Although this control led to more or less agreeable coverage during the Yerevan elections, there is no certainty that in another political situation, another “order from above” won’t be given. We have been witnesses to such metamorphoses more than once: after the extremely biased coverage of the 2003 presidential election, a thaw followed just several months later during the parliamentary elections; the 2007 parliamentary elections and the 2008 presidential election especially brought back the worst.

We thus draw the traditional conclusion: when there is no guarantee of independence for the agency regulating the broadcasting sphere, we cannot speak of legality and professional standards being constantly observed on the air.

Amendments made in April 2009 to Armenia’s broadcasting laws (and which, curiously enough, were given favorable marks by the experts of the Council of Europe) did not fundamentally change anything. If the country’s president earlier appointed all of the regulatory agency’s members, he now appoints only half of them, while the other half is elected by parliament (that is, by the parliamentary majority *de facto*). Considering that, according to Armenian political tradition, the president and parliamentary majority belong to one and the same political force, we cannot speak of the independence of any body formed by them. Meanwhile, the president continues to personally appoint the members of the Public Television and Radio Company Council (the body that oversees public broadcasting). An innovation of which the authors of the amendments were quite proud was an oath to support freedom of speech and civil society that members of both the regulatory agency (the National

Commission on Television and Radio) and the PTRCC must henceforth take. This will, however, have little effect on the work of the latter, except perhaps that the level of hypocrisy (which is in any case quite high in Armenian society) will go up.

The amendments thus did not solve any of the fundamental problems of reforming broadcasting legislation:

- The mechanisms described in the updated legislation by definition cannot raise the level of independence of the National Commission on Television and Radio, the body that regulates the operations of TV and radio companies.
- The amendments in no way facilitate genuine reform of the Public Television and Radio Company, bringing the PTRC into the field of legal regulation, or inculcating the principles of its responsibility before the public and its accountability to it. In other words, there never was a public broadcaster in Armenia whose creation was envisaged by the obligations the country assumed upon entering the Council of Europe, and there is none at the moment.
- The adopted package of legislation does not solve the problem of creating the legal conditions for unbiased and transparent tenders for the licensing of television and radio broadcasting. It does not guarantee against subjective decisions by members of the Commission and does not require explicit justification by the latter for their choice.
- Despite the obvious untenability of all arguments in favor of introducing a moratorium on assigning frequencies under the fabricated pretext of transitioning to digital broadcasting, the corresponding provisions introduced into the law *On Television and Radio* in September 2008 remain in their previous form. This cannot be seen as anything other than the authorities' reluctance to allow any broadcasting company beyond their political control on the air,

their unreadiness to draw the proper conclusions from the European Human Rights Court's decision in the case of OOO Melteks (the A1+ television company) of June 17, 2008, or to implement Resolution 1620 (2008) of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly.

It was confirmed as early as October 2009, when the government of Armenia approved the so-called concept of transitioning to digital broadcasting, that the pretext for refusing to hold licensing tenders and keeping A1+ off the air was fabricated. The document does not address any one of the fundamental questions associated with the transition to a digital format, and it does not contain any information on how postponing the tenders for two years will make them any different from those that should have been held at the times designated by law – October 2008. In other words, the approved document demonstrates that the moratorium solved no problem other than maintaining control over the broadcast media. (*Editors' note:* The amendments introduced in the law *On Radio and Television* in June 2010 have not led to the anticipated reform of the broadcast sector.)

Compared to broadcasting legislation, the legislation on all of Armenia's other media remain quite liberal. In addition, certain positive shifts have taken place recently: there are now tougher sentences for hindering the work of journalists, criminal liability for defamation and insult in the media has been attenuated, the level of protection against malicious journalism has been lowered for representatives of the establishment (as opposed to other citizens).

At the same time, those government circles concerned about the relatively free print media, and the online media now developing especially fast, are not sitting on their hands, as various new initiatives show. The year 2009 was marked by the submission of draft amendments and addenda to the law *On the Media* and to the RA Civil Code. They call

for formulating “rights and duties” of journalists, and for tightening up the penalties for defamation. Even though the draft of the amendments to the Civil Code were somewhat improved after they were reviewed by the Venetian Commission, it is still far from the realities of Armenian media today.

In determining the amounts of compensation for moral damage, the authors of the draft legislation did not base their sums on any sort of economic research. Applying the provisions they propose could lead to newspapers shutting down after one or two lawsuits. Considering the Armenian courts’ unpreparedness for settling informational disputes and the blurring of provisions, there is a risk of the selective application of sanctions. Media that criticize the government will, of course, be especially vulnerable. (*Editors’ note:* On May 18, 2010, the Armenian parliament adopted amendments to the criminal, civil, and procedural codes that partially decriminalize defamation.)

The abovementioned legislative initiatives do not take into account the development of systems for the self-regulation of the Armenian media, or the uniting of new broadcast companies, newspapers, and on-line periodicals around a common code of ethics. Meanwhile, the Media Ethics Observatory, created in 2007, reviews no more than six to eight complaints from citizens each year. Considering that the Armenian courts have in the recent year reviewed only five similar cases, however, this figure isn’t so low. Further strengthening of the principles of self-regulation could be a much more effective way of fighting malicious journalism than tightening penalties legislatively.

It must be admitted that the high degree of political confrontation during the 2008 presidential election and the subsequent events of March did influence the media. The most radical information resources defending the interests of both the government and the opposition began to overstep

boundaries of morality that hitherto seemed inviolable. As the history of the world press shows, however, such crisis situations are overcome not by a tightening up of order but by media professionals recognizing their own social responsibility. To do this, it is true, they must feel that are free individuals.

Yet another political factor shaping the tension in the media was the process of the normalization of Armenian–Turkish relations. The issues of “football diplomacy” and Armenian–Turkish protocols were much disputed, and since May 2009, the topic has become most debated, overshadowing the results of the presidential elections, the election campaign in Yerevan, and even the Karabakh conflict. In contrast to the issues listed above, the Armenian–Turkish topic offered the possibility of justifying the most varied points of view. A lively and open (albeit not always knowledgeable) debate unfolded on television, in newspapers, and on the Internet. The opinions of Turkish politicians and experts, and of experts from third countries, were widely referred to. Such pluralism of opinions, especially on television, is rare in recent Armenian history.

The reason might be hidden in the approximately equal numbers of supporters and opponents of normalizing Armenian–Turkish relations in the form it took in 2009. This balance is characteristic of the political elite, and of the expert community, and of the journalistic milieu as well. All of them controlled considerable informational resources, including (a rare instance) television. It remains to be hoped that Armenia’s media community which whetted its appetite for pluralism covering the Armenian–Turkish issue will resolutely defend this principle as it applies to other problems.



## Georgian media: still facing old problems

### Eka Kvesitadze<sup>1</sup>

In 2005, I had the privilege of addressing a similar conference held under the auspices of the OSCE. I talked about the main challenges the Georgian media were then facing. Now, four years later, when I was asked to report on the media situation in Georgia again, I was curious to take a look at my previous paper and see if there have been any significant changes since 2005. My general assessment in that report was the following: we were tackling two major media problems, pressure from the government and a professional crisis within the media. Many believe that these problems are still our main ones. But since 2006, having weathered major political cataclysms, some dimensions of the problem have been changed.

First of all, I would like to underscore that, in terms of legislation, we have a very comfortable environment for journalists. The law “On Freedom of Speech and Expression” elaborates the content of the right to freedom of expression, explains its fundamental role in a democracy, and provides clear principles on when it may be restricted and the safeguards that need to be in place to prevent abuse of those restrictions. The law also elaborates on a number of rights and privileges that are implicit in the right to freedom of expression, such as a journalist’s right to protect his sources and the protection of whistleblowers—individuals who leak information on wrongdoings. It is unique in the region and provides

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<sup>1</sup> Eka Kvesitadze, Journalist, host of political talk show “Aqcentebi” on Public Broadcaster and political analyst at “24 Hours” daily

Georgian journalists and others with guarantees that are fully in line with international standards.

We have three national TV media: *Public Broadcasting*, *TV Imedi*, and *Rustavi 2*. TV Imedi now belongs to the Georgia Media Production Group (GMPG), a holding company comprising Imedi television and radio stations. The head of the holding company is Giorgi Arveladze, a longtime close ally of President Saakashvili and former member of the government. As for Rustavi 2, the official information states there are two owners: Parliamentarian Davit Bezhushvili's well-known Georgian Industrial Group (GIG), and a Georgian business group. No other details have been disclosed.

Georgian Public Broadcasting (GPB) has been at the center of a political struggle for the last two years. The government and the opposition spent part of 2008 jockeying for control over the Public Television station. Public Broadcasting's board of trustees was created under a political agreement, but pro-opposition members left the board during the spring rallies. In August, Levan Kubaneishvili, the channel's executive director, resigned, and George Chanturia, the channel's former general producer, was elected as the new director. These three television companies are widely considered as pro-government.

Four other channels (*Kavkasia*, *Maestro TV*, *Sakartvelo*, and *Real TV*) cover only Tbilisi. Two of these channels (*Kavkasia* and *Maestro TV*) are pro-opposition.

As for the print media, it is hard to get an exact number of newspapers and magazines. It seems to be in hundreds, and all of them benefit from full freedom of the press. The overwhelming majority of the numerous radio stations that broadcast news and political programming have not reported any pressure as well.



Before talking about 2009, I should touch upon an event that took place in 2007 and had a tremendous effect on the TV media market. This was the closure of Imedi TV. Imedi, which was at that time owned by the oligarch Badry Patarkatsishvili, had become a powerful mouthpiece of the opposition and the most-watched TV station in Georgia. Against the background of pro-government Rustavi 2, Imedi was considered the only free and objective TV station, but its news coverage was far from being objective and unbiased.

On November 7, after riot police had used violence to break up protests on the streets of Tbilisi, special forces troops stormed into Imedi's headquarters and the station was yanked off the air. For a long time after that, the Imedi television station remained at the centre of a national and international controversy. Its violent closure was the main focus of international criticism of Georgia, evoking negative comments from Western countries, the OSCE, and the European Union. Even today, Imedi remains an object of political speculation. The opposition demands that the government return Imedi to its (as they put it) "legitimate owner." After Patarkatsishvili's death in February 2008, the issue of the ownership of Imedia Media Holding Co. again came to public attention.

This year, however, Imedi (which is now headed by the former minister of economy George Arveladze) has become less and less important for the opposition. In 2009, *Maestro*, which had finally received a license for political programming, emerged as the main opposition TV channel. Along with *Caucasia TV* it was a major mouthpiece for the opposition during the spring rallies, lasting almost three months. *Maestro's* original-format talk show "Cell No. 5" inspired the opposition to put numerous "cells" on Tbilisi's major avenues and streets.

Although both the opposition and the national channels have hosted numerous talk shows, the opposition claims that almost all TV channels

broadcasting nationwide have turned into “a propaganda tool” of the authorities, and instead of objective information the mass media provide society with “virtual reality.”

The three national channels (Public Broadcasting, Rustavi 2 and Imedi) have become the target of opposition criticism, but it is frequently more than just criticism. During opposition rallies (and before and after), individual journalists working for these channels have been objects of physical or verbal assault from opposition politicians or their supporters; 2009 was filled with such assaults, and the public defenders’ 2009 report gives the details of these assaults.

In the summer of 2009, demonstrations picketing Public Broadcasting’s headquarters became a routine part of the opposition’s protests. The picketing involved blocking the broadcaster’s main entrance and forming a so-called “corridor of shame.” Activists from pro-opposition youth groups installed a so-called “desk of shame” on which they hung photos of some members of Public TV’s board of trustees, as along with some of the news anchors (my photo was among them).

The picketing was accompanied by numerous cases of verbal and physical insults against journalists.

Assaults on journalists occur frequently during such demonstrations, but not of course, only from the opposition. During protest rallies, law enforcement officials have been responsible for verbal insults and the obstruction of journalists’ professional activities. Journalists were injured as a result of the opposition’s confrontation with the police outside Tbilisi police department headquarters on May 6. Journalists working for the opposition channel Maestro TV were deliberately assaulted by the police and their videotapes were taken away, only to be given back just one day later.

One of the most sensational cases of 2009 was a controversial explosion, apparently caused by a hand-grenade, at Maestro TV that shattered windows and damaged the television station's iron gate at about 3 a.m. on the 25th of May. No one was injured. The Interior Ministry said that an investigation was under way and that criminal charges were being brought in the case.

One month ago, the Batumi-based private television station *Channel 25* also became the object of a political dispute. TV channel and opposition representatives claimed that the authorities were trying to silence the only independent TV station in the Adjara Autonomous Republic by imposing "unfair" taxes. The head of the local tax department, however, told the Georgian Service of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty politics were not behind the case. "Channel 25 is an ordinary taxpayer just like anyone else," he said, "and if it does not pay the debt, it will be auctioned off."

Later on, however, the government took a political decision to restructure the debt, so the dispute is, for the moment, fully resolved.

Despite the occasional violence, freedom of the press has improved in Georgia, and the country jumped 39 places to number 81 in the 2009 ranking by Reporters Without Borders (RWB), released on October 20. Its ranking at number 120 in the same index for 2008 was mainly attributable to the death of three journalists during the August war. "The indicators point to a deterioration in the press freedom situation in almost all of the former Soviet Republics except Georgia," says the new RWB index for 2009. "Georgia was able to leap 39 positions because it did not fight a war during the period covered, even if political tension continued to have an impact on the news media."

According to Freedom House's annual survey, the decline in media freedom in Georgia last year took place in the context of the broader political crisis that led to a crackdown on the media in November 2007.

The general picture of the media landscape has not changed much.

I will not deny that the national TV channels are pro-government. It is obvious that their news coverage is often not balanced and they sometimes really seem to be propagandistic. However, the opposition cannot say that either of these television channels ignore and do not cover their activities, or they are not invited as talk show guests or are not given enough time to talk. In my talk show, for example, which I hosted on Public Broadcasting, the overwhelming majority of my guests were from opposition parties.

Although state TV is accused of being partisan and unbalanced, opposition TV channels are not an example of unbiased reporting either. Channels like Kavkasia and Maestro in particular are much more intolerant toward different opinions than the state TV channels. Free media criteria thus do not apply to them, even though they claim to be free and independent.

It is a positive sign that the opposition's demand to grant Maestro TV a satellite broadcast license was met. Georgia's National Communications Commission granted the television station a satellite broadcast license for a period of ten years. With this license, the pro-opposition Maestro TV, which now goes out on cable in Tbilisi and in a few other towns in provinces, will now be able to expand its area of coverage, after which the station's programming will be available to those who have satellite dishes.

So, if we have government-controlled TV media on one side, there are opposition-controlled channels on the other side. This situation will

remain the same so long as the media as a business are not at least self-supporting and depend on politicians' money.

This is a general overview of the TV media market; as always, it is the longest part of our media report, as the print media remain fully independent and free.

The tendencies in the print media have been the same for at least the last 10 years. Every newspaper is struggling to survive as their circulation is very low, and most newspapers and magazines retain their tabloid character.

In 2009, however, a new magazine emerged on the print media market. It calls itself *The Liberal* and claims to be a politically neutral, quality-oriented outlet. Against the backdrop of the tabloids, it really is quite an achievement for the Georgian print media; regardless of its quality, however, *The Liberal* also has the problem of becoming a self-sustaining business.

For my report to be complete, it must be pointed out that negative tendencies remain to be same: the TV media market is polarized. TV channels are either considered pro-government or pro-opposition, and the viewers are polarized as well. The same assessment was made in the IREX Media Sustainability Index: "Mirroring the polarized political scene, news media have essentially split into two opposing camps, leaving little room for neutrality and balance."

The absence of investigative journalism is again the one of the biggest problems; none of the main national channels have this kind of program. A survey recently taken by the Caucasus Research Resource Center with the assistance of the European Union also indicates that viewers in Georgia show a clear appetite for investigative reporting, with 75% of

the respondents saying they would like to see investigative reports on healthcare, the courts, elections, and the protection of freedom of speech, and 64% saying they would also like to see relations between politicians and the Georgian Orthodox Church investigated.

A lack of professional skills and ethics also remains one of the main concerns, especially in the print media, which are more rumour-oriented than fact-based. The Media Council, a self-regulating body based on a code of ethics elaborated under international standards and agreed to among Georgian media players, was established in 2005. Because of its ineffectiveness, however, its operation has been suspended. All other attempts initiated by individual journalists or institutions to “impose” a code of ethics on journalists have also failed.

But I still think positive tendencies have prevailed this year. New outlets are emerging on the market. As for political debates, almost every channel has numerous talk shows, so politicians are in no position to complain that airtime is not being given to them.

The reformed *Channel 2* of Georgian Public Broadcasting will also presumably start broadcasting next year. The reforms are intended to turn Channel 2 into a political channel that will cover parliamentary processes and allow political parties to express their positions and participate in different political discussions. (*Editors’ note:* The reforms started in early 2010 and were completed in the run-up to the March 31 local polls and parliamentary by-election.)

There is also news of Public Broadcasting’s *Channel 1*. On September 22, 2009, Parliament approved an increase in the number of seats on Public Broadcasting’s board of trustees, from nine to fifteen; the ruling party said the move was aimed at giving the opposition an opportunity to endorse their nominees for the board. There are currently eight

members on the board, and all of them are viewed largely as loyal to the authorities. However, media activists and representatives of civil society are unanimous in their disapproval of an approach in which political parties are eligible to nominate candidates. A group of media activists named seven candidates for the vacant seats on Public Broadcasting's board of trustees and called on political parties to stand aside and give representatives of civil society more say on Public TV's board and help to "depoliticize" the service.

The issue of Public Broadcasting's finances seems to have become an object of broader public discussion. Until summer 2008, the main source of Public Broadcasting's financing was 0.15 percent of Georgia's GDP. In March 2008, according a new amendment to the law, the state budget became its source of financing. This amendment makes Public Broadcasting a state budget organization, which contradicts its nature. Just two days ago, the Public Defender held a meeting on the issue, and we think we should press the government to change this amendment. (*Editors' note:* On December 25, 2009, Georgia's parliament amended the law "On Broadcasting". Under the changes, the annual funding of Georgian Public Broadcasting is to be at least 0.12 percent of the nation's GDP (instead of the 0.15 percent prior to March 2008). The new legislation will come into force in 2011.)

## Appendix







## 6th South Caucasus Media Conference

Journalism education – improvement of the quality of education and new technologies

*Tbilisi, Georgia*

*19-20 November 2009*

### AGENDA

**Day 1, 19 November 2009**

**9.30 – 10.00      Registration**

**10.00 – 10.30      Opening Session**

*Opening statement*

David Darchiashvili, Chairman, Committee on European Integration,  
Parliament of Georgia

*Keynote speaker*

Miklos Haraszti, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

**10.30 – 11.00      Coffee break**

**11.00 – 13.00      First Session**

**International experience in the area of journalism education**

**Moderator:** Miklos Haraszti, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

*Current problems of journalism and journalism education*

Andrei Richter, Director, Moscow Media Law and Policy Institute, Professor, Journalism Department, Moscow State University

*Challenges and new directions for global journalism education*

David Mould, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, Professor of Telecommunications, Ohio University, USA

*No such thing as too much training*

Manana Aslamazyan, Executive Director, Internews Europe, Paris

*The impact of technology and consumer habits on journalist's qualifications*

Dainius Radzevicius, Chairman of Lithuanian Journalists Union

**13.00                      Group photo**

**13.30 – 14.30          Lunch**

**14.30 – 17.30          Second Session**

**Journalism education in South Caucasus. Presentations of representatives from each state**

**Moderator:** Alexander Boldyrev, Senior Adviser, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

**ARMENIA***The journalism education in the Yerevan state university today*

Mushegh Hovsepyan, Professor, Head of TV and Radio Journalism Chair,  
Journalism Department, Yerevan State University

**AZERBAIJAN***The problems of journalism education in Azerbaijan*

Etibar Babayev, Head of Journalism Department at Baku Slavic University

**GEORGIA***An overview of journalism education in Georgia*

Maia Mikashavidze, Dean of the Caucasus School of Journalism and  
Media Management at Georgian Institute of Public Affairs

**16:15 – 16:30      Coffee break**

**19.00                Reception**

**Day 2, 20 November 2009**

**10.00 – 12.30      Third Session**

**Developments in the field of media freedom in South Caucasus**

**Moderator:** Ana Karlsreiter, Senior Adviser, Office of the OSCE  
Representative on Freedom of the Media

Presentations of country representatives on developments in the field of  
media freedom over the last year.

## **AZERBAIJAN**

*The state of freedom of speech in Azerbaijan*

Mehman Aliyev, Director of the Information Agency «Turan»

## **ARMENIA**

*The tense political situation in Armenia and its effect on the media*

Boris Navasardyan, President of the Yerevan Press Club

## **GEORGIA**

*Georgian media: still facing old problems*

Eka Kvesitadze, Journalist, host of political talk show “Aqcentebi” on Public Broadcaster and political analyst at “24 Hours” daily

**11.00 – 11.30      Coffee break**

**12.30 – 13.30      Fourth and Closing Session**

**Moderator:** Alexander Boldyrev, Senior Adviser, Office of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

## **Adoption of the Conference Declaration**

*Closing remarks*

Miklos Haraszti, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media

**14.00 – 15.00 Lunch**

**Departure**







## 6th South Caucasus Media Conference

**Journalism education – improvement of the quality of education and new technologies**

*Tbilisi, Georgia*

*19-20 November 2009*

### **PARTICIPANTS LIST**

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Vusala Abishova	Director of APA News Agency
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Mehman Aliyev	Director of TURAN Information Agency
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Vaso Kapanadze	Journalist, Rezonansi Newspaper
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Ekaterina Kristesashvili	UN OHCHR National Programme Officer, Office of the UN RC in Georgia

Eka Kvesitadze	Journalist, Host of Political Talk show “Aqcentebi”, Georgian Public Broadcasting; Political Analyst at “24 Hours” daily
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David Nibladze	Programs and Development Director, Radio Hereti
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Shorena Ratiani	Country Director, Institute for War and Peace Reporting
Ramaz Samkharadze	Chairman, Georgian Regional Radio Network
Giorgi Sepashvili	Editor-in-Chief, Civil Georgia daily news online service

Shorena Shaverdashvili	Editor-in-Chief, Liberali Magazine
Dodo Shonava	Senior Producer, 2nd Channel, Georgian Public Broadcasting
Sophie Tchitchinadze	Communications Analyst, UNDP, Georgia
Gigi Tevzadze	Rector, Tbilisi Ilia Chavchavadze State University
Giorgi Tugushi	Public Defender of Georgia
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## PRESS RELEASE

### **OSCE representative urges South Caucasus governments to champion media freedom and pluralism following OSCE conference, meetings in Georgia**

VIENNA, 23 November 2009 - The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Miklos Haraszti, welcomed today increasing media independence in Georgia and backed calls for pluralistic licensing and media ownership transparency in the South Caucasus following a regional conference in Tbilisi.

The Sixth OSCE South Caucasus Media Conference, which was held in Tbilisi on 19 and 20 November, brought together journalists, authorities and education experts from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia to discuss the challenges facing journalism and journalist education in the region.

“We are happy that our conference brought the OSCE back to Georgia, and I remain hopeful that our Organization’s activities in Georgia will soon be fully restored based on Georgia’s integrity and independence,” said Haraszti, opening the conference.

The conference demanded the immediate release of imprisoned journalists in Azerbaijan. At the same time, it commended the intention of the Azerbaijani government to decriminalize defamation. The conference also urged all three countries of the region to enforce ownership transparency in the media, and to issue further television licenses in order to make the media fully pluralistic.

Regarding Georgia’s media situation, Haraszti welcomed some positive developments encouraging media pluralism and independence.

“I note with satisfaction that two years after the criticized closure of Imedi TV in 2007, diversity in the television media is advancing in Georgia. I welcome the access granted to satellite for the oppositional channel Maestro TV and preparations to start a parliamentary and discussions channel in February 2010, as well as the growing number of invitations to all political forces to the talk shows on private channels,” said Haraszti.

During his visit, Haraszti met Giorgi Bokeria, the First Deputy Foreign Minister of Georgia, and David Darchiashvili, the Chairman of the Committee on European integration of the Parliament of Georgia. He also met former Education Minister professor Ghia Nodia, and Georgian journalists from both print and broadcast media.

“I am also encouraged by the assurances of the authorities to restore the ‘Georgian’ method of financing the Public Service Broadcaster according to which it automatically receives 0.15 per cent of GDP. This is an exemplary way to guarantee the independence of the Public Service Broadcaster,” he said.

The conference’s declaration on press freedom and journalism education in the South Caucasus will be available in English and Russian at [www.osce.org/fom](http://www.osce.org/fom).





## Media advisory

### **Sixth OSCE regional media conference on journalism education and press freedom to take place in Tbilisi**

VIENNA, 16 November 2009 - The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Miklos Haraszti, will open the sixth annual South Caucasus Media Conference in Tbilisi on 19 November.

The two-day event will provide a forum for discussion on media freedom in the region and on the challenges that journalism faces in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

More than 70 journalists, international experts, academics and representatives of civil society will come together to discuss this year's topic, existing education opportunities for journalists, and examine best practices for journalism education.

Conference participants are expected to develop and adopt joint recommendations in a Conference Declaration, to be used as a basis for follow-up activities.

**Journalists are invited to the conference, which starts at 10:00 a.m. on 19 November at the Marriott Courtyard Hotel, 4 Freedom Square, Tbilisi.**







*Conference participants*



*Miklos Haraszti, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, and his senior adviser Ana Karlsreiter at a meeting during the conference*



*Manana Aslamazyan, Executive director of Internews Europe, among other international experts at the first session of the conference*



*Boris Navasardyan, President of the Yerevan Press Club, delivers report about the political situation in Armenia and its effect on the media*