



LXV

SIXTY-FIFTH SESSION



PRESS CORPS

BERKELEY MODEL UNITED NATIONS



Introduction to Press Corps

In today's world, media plays an integral role in shaping public perception of events and society as a whole. Stories are found, interpreted, and packaged every day and sold to consumers in efforts to reveal the truth or, alternatively, for more selfish motives. At Berkeley Model United Nations, Press Corps is an opportunity for delegates to not only document the proceedings of different conference committees in the form of news stories but to also be challenged to think critically about the political biases, drive for profit, and deeply controversial moral questions that have accompanied media in its rise as a major global actor.



Influences in the Media

Bias, while a nuanced concept that appears in many different forms, can broadly be defined as “a prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another usually in a way that's considered to be unfair” (“Bias”) In other words, bias denotes that a previously held belief prevents impartial judgment off reality and instead serves to align with a certain worldview. Sometimes, bias can manifest itself in ways that are relatively harmless. Choosing chocolate desserts over all others, avoiding romantic comedies when searching through Netflix, and rooting for a favorite sports team are ways in which bias is exhibited in daily life without large impact. Bias can also take place on a larger scale. Patriotism is a bias towards one’s own country, the movement for green energy is biased against pollution causing practices, and people who campaign in election season are biased towards certain candidates or policies. However, bias can take on uglier forms. Racism, sexism, and other isms like those are all systems of bias that lead individuals to favor certain races, ideas of gender roles, ages, physical abilities, cultures, etc. above others. Oftentimes, these biases are held unconsciously and perpetuated without intent, though the groups in question can feel the effects quite tangibly.

Media, which is a transmission of reality filtered through the worldviews of journalists, editors, advertisers, government officials, and other persons involved in the news process, is particularly vulnerable to bias of many kinds. Choosing who to interview, what footage to show, what facts to present, and even what words to use creates a narrative that edits the events as they truly occurred. If a newspaper reports that several suspected terrorists were killed in a drone strike in the headlines but does



not describe civilian deaths until later in the article, or if a reporter chooses to describe people who collect supplies after a natural disaster as “looters”, or if a magazine puts an unflattering picture of a presidential candidate next to a flattering one of their opponent, then the narrative changes focus. This generates cues to the audience telling them what facts and values should be considered when analyzing the world around them.

Media in the Market

There is a widely held view that press operating in a relatively free market will lead to a media that is more diverse and presents a picture of reality closer to the truth. Compared to media outlets that are run entirely by the state and serve singular political agendas, outlets operating in a market may certainly encourage a wider array of voices and have more freedom to criticize powerful players. However, there are then other incentives to angle news in certain ways, and the competition of the market can both encourage the existence of bias in news stories and provide a check against it.

In a field of media outlets trying to capture the attention of consumers, reporting with a certain degree of bias is a way for products to become more distinct. Researchers have found that people tend to gravitate towards news stories that fit in with their previously held views (Hsu 2009). This can be referred to as confirmation bias, which describes the tendency to search for information that confirms one’s own beliefs and give less credit to information that challenges those beliefs (Heshmat 2015). Media can capitalize on that tendency and avoid competition by carving out a niche in a market and serving a certain group of like-minded consumers. Thus a nightly news show may align the reporting with certain political beliefs in order to target a very specific group of people or an online newspaper may omit details in stories that directly



challenge the general beliefs of its membership. In doing this, outlets can build their reputation in certain sections of the population and generate a loyal customer base (Yi and Sarvary 2007).

The drive for profit is affected by more than a desire to increase the size of the audience. Corporate and political donors can have an enormous effect on the way an outlet reports news as media owners will be keen to continue the stream of funding and may be will to trade favorable reports on certain issues important to their most generous patrons. For example, the head of an oil corporation may donate to a particular broadcasting company and then perhaps expect that coverage of alternative energy becomes less favorable.

The incentives to let bias infiltrate the news do have their limitations. The existence of several competing news outlets means that there are more sources of fact checking. If a newspaper publishes an article with erroneous information, other papers will race to correct the information and discredit their competitors. The higher the inconsistency with the truth, the higher risk a news outlet has of damaging its reputation. While many consumers are drawn to stories that fit their worldview, most people desire the truth and do not like being sold a false product. A damaged reputation lowers demand of the newspapers and thus decreases financial profit, something that the outlet will want to avoid. It should be noted that the feedback time of stories plays an important role when it comes to the question of whether or not to stretch the truth. Sports commentators and weathermen have less room to stretch the truth because their predictions are much sooner and more concretely falsified than stories about global warming or geopolitical events. In other words, it is much easier to be proven wrong



about whether or not a storm is coming in the next day than whether or not an action taken by a foreign government will have an impact on the national economy in the next ten years (Gentzkow and Shapiro 2005). Of course, outrageous lies and egregious omission of information can immediately be fact-checked by competitors and will therefore be avoided by outlets. While bias is an integral part of media in a liberal market, there are checks against a complete override of the truth, and consumers are free to crosscheck multiple news sources, though whether or not they choose to do so is an entirely different subject.

Case Study

US Media and the 2016 Election

American media is known for being extremely varied, with a broad range of perspectives and coverage. The United States Constitution guarantees freedom of press, which means that media is largely unregulated. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) does regulate broadcast media like radio and television; some of its work involves promoting competition and innovation in broadband services and regulating broadcast time during political campaigns (FCC website). Although the FCC emphasizes competition as a goal, the United States Congress passed the Telecommunications Act of 1996. The FCC states that the goal of the law is to “let anyone enter any communications business -- to let any communications business compete in any market against any other”, when in reality, it has only allowed for increased cross-ownership of the media (Federal Communications Commission). In 1983, more than 50 companies owned media outlets; currently, the media is controlled



by just six companies (Lutz 2012). Comcast, News Corp, Disney, Viacom, Time Warner, and CBS control 90% of American media, so while consumers may feel the ability to choose their sources of information, the choice is an illusion. There is a narrow spectrum of views from which Americans can get their news; this phenomenon creates an ever-present foundation of media bias.

Another source of American media bias is partisan media. The right-wing Fox News and left-wing MSNBC are the two television channels that are typically used to illustrate polarization in news outlets. In his book *How Partisan Media Polarize America*, Matthew Levendusky discusses how Fox News and MSNBC reported on the Obama administration's decision to try the terrorist Khalid Sheikh Mohammed in civilian court. Fox News argued that the trial would reveal classified U.S. intelligence procedures and was a tactic to embarrass the Bush administration, while MSNBC argued that federal courts are much more effective at convicting terrorism suspects than military tribunals are. The author goes on to state that "from Fox News and MSNBC, then, one got vastly different accounts of the same event... while they do discuss the opposing side's arguments, it is mostly to criticize them". In addition to offering widely varying perspectives on the same issue, partisan media only further polarizes the political opinions of viewers. In other words, the mirroring and repetition of a viewer's opinions only further enforces their current beliefs.

Another issue includes the influence of private donations to media corporations. Examples include wealthy individuals and families donating millions of dollars to influence various organizations; one such individual is George Soros. Soros has contributed \$1.8 million to National Public Radio (NPR) and has other financial ties to



over 30 other liberal news organizations, including NBC, ABC, and the *New York Post* (Bell 2013). Many of his donations to liberal new organizations were aimed towards defeating President Bush in the 2004 election. Another example of influencers is David and Charles Koch; David Horsey states:

The brothers own Koch Industries, a Kansas-based energy and manufacturing conglomerate that rakes in \$115 billion annually... Over the years, they have dumped millions of dollars into think tanks, magazines, political action committees, candidates and attack ads—all of them staunchly conservative (Horsey 2013).

These men are only two examples of how both liberal and conservative media outlets can become biased based on which donations they accept.

While the causes of media bias are varied and well worth noting, so are its effects. In particular, media bias has had a strong and far-reaching effect on the progression of the 2016 presidential elections in the United States. Perhaps one of the most obvious and direct forms of bias is the tendency of news organizations to discuss the presidential candidates in positive or negative tones. Hillary Clinton, for example, has received the most consistently negative coverage throughout her campaign. This is not to say that Clinton does not receive positive coverage, but that the majority of her overall coverage is negative in tone. Thomas E. Patterson from Harvard University's Shorenstein Center mentions that "references to Clinton's issues and character, though only a small part of her coverage during this stage of the campaign, also contributed to her negative coverage. Such references were 8 to 1 negative to positive, by far the most negative of any candidate during this period" (Patterson 2016). Causes for this bias may include timing of the FBI's investigation into Clinton's emails, as well as the fact that the



media painted Clinton as doing “worse than expected” in the election as compared to Bernie Sanders, who was doing much “better than expected”.

Other reporting techniques also have the power to sway voters, including the relative amount of coverage certain candidates receive, and the style of presenting each candidate as either “winning” or “losing”. This win-loss tone is known as “game-centered reporting” and can focus too heavily on competition itself rather than the candidates’ qualifications and policies. Patterson states, “poll results, election returns, delegate counts, electoral projections, fundraising success, and the like, along with the candidates’ tactical and strategic maneuvering, accounted for more than half of the reporting” (Patterson 2016).

The report also closely follows the coverage that Republican candidate Donald Trump has received throughout the election. Because large, for-profit corporations are interested in reporting the best stories, and not necessarily the most relevant information to the election, Trump garnered an overwhelming amount of attention. Again, instead of focusing on his qualifications, the media mostly focused on his wins and losses; in fact, only 11% of the coverage was focused on policy positions, leadership skills, and professional history (Childress 2016). As a result, his national polls had the largest increases after his victory in New Hampshire and his Super Tuesday presence (Patterson 2016). Although Trump was one of four Republican candidates at the time, he garnered 44% of the coverage (Patterson 2016). In this case, the effect of the media’s selective coverage becomes clear; Trump gained the most media attention and was presented as the “prevailing” or “leading” candidate, a positive enough spotlight to raise his national polls.



Additionally, as the general election approaches, Clinton's coverage is becoming increasingly more positive. One theory on why this may be the case is that journalists and editors are generally more liberal than conservative; over 30 journalists now work for the Obama administration, a number not paralleled by previous Republican administrations (Carney 2015). Additionally, four of the six major corporations that control media are typically donors to Democratic presidential candidates. During the 2012 presidential elections in the United States, for the corporations "News Corp., Time Warner, Comcast, and the Walt Disney Co., donations made to Obama were roughly ten times the amount than donations made to Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney" (Shapiro 2012). Because many of these organizations generally support liberal candidates, their reporting may be skewed towards a bias in favor of a Clinton presidency. NBC, News Corp, Time Warner, and others have also contributed to the Clinton Foundation, a non-profit organization started by former president Bill Clinton and current presidential candidate Hillary Clinton (Gerstein 2015). Although the foundation has goals rooted in charity that are unrelated to Hillary Clinton's campaign, some believe that the donations establish support for her presidency. Other donors include individuals who are owners, shareholders, or other types of influencers of news organizations. Carlos Slim, the largest New York Times shareholder, and James Murdoch, the COO of 21st Century Fox, have both donated to the foundation (Gerstein 2015). Again, while charitable donations can be seen as purely philanthropic, others still consider the support for Clinton's organization as support for her political career, as well. These considerations play a role in how media can show bias towards different presidential candidates.



Overall, the techniques and actions of media organizations have direct influence on what information is readily available to the public. Considering that media is controlled by so few corporations, conversation about competition, wins, and losses heavily dominate the election coverage. Therefore, while freedom of press is still a readily exercisable right, media bias still taints the coverage through which Americans receive nearly all their information.



Press Freedom

In many corners of the world, being a journalist goes beyond meeting deadlines or trying to find the next big story. For some, the articles written have to comply with a predetermined political agenda and, for others, the occupation is an enormous risk and can lead to life-threatening situations. These are the journalists that work in environments that are hostile to independent media. Freedom House, a non-profit organization which releases a report each year on the press in countries around the globe, has recently stated that press freedom is at its lowest point in twelve years and that “only 13 percent of the world’s population enjoys a Free press—that is, where coverage of political news is robust, the safety of journalists is guaranteed, state intrusion in media affairs is minimal, and the press is not subject to onerous legal or economic pressures.” (“Freedom of the Press 2016”) This means that nearly 87% of the world’s population has access to media that is not considered to be free, and that there are many journalists under intense external pressure.

Sometimes, the lack of freedom can be seen primarily in the way the media is biased towards the government or a certain party. Research done on Mexican media has shown that private broadcasters and politicians often craft arrangements that involved trade of favorable stories in exchange for concessions from the government (Hughes and Lawson 2004). Thus, while there may technically be a media independent of the state, political players can purchase influence to make the media fit a certain political agenda. In China, where the ruling Communist Party keeps a tight leash on the media, journalists face a number of constraints that inhibit criticism against the state. Stories that place the government in a bad light are censored, blocked entirely, or



delayed until officials have time to remedy the problem in question. There may be a certain leniency when reporting on the corruption of local governments, which helps the Communist Party keep lower officials in check and creates a sense of free dialogue, but there are very few stories directly criticizing national leaders and policies. During times when stability is very important, such as national holidays or periods of increased social tensions, journalists face even more difficulties publishing stories with negative overtones. When it comes to legal disputes between the state and the media, the courts rarely rule in favor of the press. (Wang and Lee 2014, Lorentzen 2014) These are cases in which journalists are unable to strive for integrity of the press and instead must allow outside influences to affect the verity of the reporting. The audience, in turn, is denied access to different viewpoints of the world around them.

In more extreme cases, journalists are directly persecuted for their work. The Committee to Protect Journalists, an advocacy based non-profit organization, reports that in 2015 over two hundred journalists were imprisoned and a further seventy were murdered because of their occupation (CPJ.org). This July alone saw multiple such incidents. A journalist and radio manager was killed in South Sudan on July 11 by a group of armed men likely because he belonged to the same tribe as an opposition leader (Buchanan 2016). Last August, the president of South Sudan had said in a speech that “if anybody among them [journalists] does not know that this country has killed people, we will demonstrate it one day, one time,” a threat that has been followed through with several killings since then (Greenslade 2015). A journalist in Ukraine died in a car bomb on July 20. He was a vocal critic of government leaders in Russia, Belarus, and the Ukraine, and it believed that this was the motive for his murder (Luhn



2016). In Turkey, after the failed coup in early July, 89 arrest warrants were issued for journalists all over the country. 17 of those have now been accused as being members of a terrorist group and revealing state secrets (Johnston and Forsdike 2016). These are just a few examples of the dangers faced by journalists all over the world who try to report the truth in spite of enormous and life-threatening obstacles. The bias that journalists must incorporate into their work in these cases is a tool for survival rather than a way to increase profit, but the stories become skewed nonetheless.

The Changing Face of Journalism

According to many accounts, the art of journalism is on the decline. In the US, the number of journalists employed by media outlets has fallen by more than 25% in the last decade and a half to numbers not seen since the mid 1970s (Giles 2010). 18% less Americans report regularly reading a print newspaper than ten years ago (Heimlich 2012) and print newspaper revenue has fallen by more than half its value in the same amount of time (Mitchell and Matsa 2015). News outlets that can no longer raise enough revenue are sold to larger companies. In the 1980s, media ownership in the US was spread across about fifty different corporations. Presently, most mainstream sources of media are owned by a few mega corporations, such as Time Warner, General Electric, and Disney (Muir 2008). A cursory glance at such reports and statistics might lead one to believe that journalism, which for decades has been a hallmark of society, is indeed on its way out.

Of course, a closer look reveals a different story. The trends in the US cannot be accurately generalized to the rest of the world. Print newspapers in Colombia boast 70% readership while the newspaper industry in India is predicted to grow by 12% to



14% annually (Associated Press 2015). An estimated 2.7 billion people read newspapers in print, which is more than a third of the world's literate population (Henriksson 2016). Print journalism remains a vital part of communication in most areas of the world, in spite of claims that it is an industry in danger of extinction.

However, it can be certainly argued that print journalism is no longer the primary player in the world of news making. This is not a new idea, and the introduction of radios and televisions into the home already introduced the public to different sources of media that became wildly popular. Journalism had to adapt itself to broadcasting the news over the air and on the silver screen. However, those mediums, like print journalism, still allowed media outlets to keep control over the stories and transmit crafted messages to large number of peoples at definite times. This control is now being challenged by one of the most dynamic and newest mediums in the world -- the Internet.

The advent of the World Wide Web and the rapidly growing reach of social media have shaken the very foundations of the journalism industry in unexpected ways. In the beginning, many believed that the internet would simply be a platform for traditional media, in which journalists could simply copy the stories printed in newspapers or reported over the air to online spaces without changing content or style. The Internet was even best and most widely advertised by traditional media sources as such a new digital world required information and analysis (Oggolder 2012). In spite of the headlines devoted to the rise of the digital world, however, news outlets in the 1990s and early 2000s viewed web operations as a separate and inferior subset, and relatively little attention or resources were given to the move to the Internet (Singer 2010). Arguably



few preparations were made for the challenges to the industrial, rigid traditional media brought by the customizable, fluid web.

Journalists of today have to contend with a new media landscape characterized in part by an economic terrain that looks very different than in previous decades. News outlets originally believed that building up large online readership would be the key to maintaining and even increasing profit. This belief was built on an advertising model, which had been in effect for more than a century, that said the cost of advertising was directly proportional to views the ad would receive. For this reason, many media outlets uploaded their news content online for free in hopes of securing a large readership. While large portions of people do indeed now primarily get their news online and Internet advertising revenue has grown in recent years, the profit gains are not enough to make up for the losses from print advertising and sales. Internet advertising is relatively inexpensive, and advertisers do not need to rely on media outlets to post their advertisements online. (Singer 2010) News agencies gave away their stories in hopes that online ads would make up for revenue but now these same agencies see that this decision may have been a mistake.

Resulting financial pressures have forced media outlets to look for more creative solutions to keep business afloat. Some have begun to create pay-for-access plans that require online users to purchase memberships in order to access content. A recent study has found that 48% of American participants said that they would be willing to pay for an online news service, a number significantly lower than found in regions like Western Europe (Perez-Pena 2009). Other outlets have begun to operate like non-profit organizations and run on donations from individuals, corporations, and governments in



order to finance their news making. This model has its own challenges; there is always some uncertainty involved as initial grants will eventually run out or donors lose interest, and ethical concerns are raised when potential donors have their own agendas (Giles 2010). As of yet, no model for a journalistic organization has been found that successfully navigates the new digital world and creates steady and secure profit.

While large online readership does not automatically translate into a successful news business, outlets continue to engage in a battle for views, a competition that has changed the way that news is reported. One example of this is the time it takes for stories to be released to the public. The narrative structure of online journalism in contrast to traditional print journalism is much more open and fluid, and there is unlimited time a story can take place as audiences seem to understand that such stories are works in progress (Singer 2010). In a traditional professional newsroom, articles are carefully fact-checked by multiple people and reviewed by editors before being released to the public, a process that takes time. In contrast, many present day journalists can upload unedited articles with unverified information immediately. Rather than operating on deadlines, many journalists now post articles online as soon as they can and update the text as facts emerge and events unfold. The focus is shifting from getting the story right to getting the story first. This shift from valuing speed over quality worry many in the journalism industry who stress the importance of integrity (Sullivan 2012), but online users are accustomed to instantaneous access to information and expect the same from their news sources.

Another example of an impact the battle for views has had on news reporting is the concept of clickbait. Clickbait most often refers to links posted online with news



headlines that are purposefully vague and flashy in order to create enough interest on part of the user for them to click on it. Headlines with phrases like “you won’t believe what happens next” or “ten scientific discoveries that will change your life” are meant to create a curiosity gap that encourages people to visit certain pages and increase the view count. Oftentimes, the articles that are actually on the other side of the link include little substance and information that may not have been verified. (Hamblin 2014) While this was once limited to certain websites that had the sole goal of collecting one time views, many mainstream newspapers are beginning to engage in the same form of clickbait sensationalism on their online sites. Some even have business models that see journalists being paid based on the amount of views articles receive, a practice which critics say threatens the professionalism of news outlets (Frampton 2015).

While many of these changes brought by the Internet have led news outlets to struggle to adapt and keep their reputation, media companies like BuzzFeed have thrived in the digital age. BuzzFeed is known for its list articles and extensive use of memes, which have led to huge amounts of views and a loyal readership. Articles on BuzzFeed employ clickbait articles and are often posted without large amounts of editing by writers who may lack any kind of formal training. However, BuzzFeed is in the process of using the success from its lighter articles in order to create a branch that operates as a professional news source. The company has hired a team of trained journalists to report on hard-hitting national and international news. These articles receive more oversight and careful review than the non-controversial ‘fluff’ pieces posted on the site, but rely on the strength of the BuzzFeed label in order to attract



readers (Fisher). This is an example of a way in which a media outlet can survive and even thrive in spite having broken form with traditional media practice.

Citizen Journalism

Perhaps the most significant change to modern journalism is its relationship to the public. In traditional mass media, the content accessed by the views is decided on and curated by others. The new media, namely the Internet, is interactive (Gilmore 2012). Journalists can link other articles and relevant information, and then anyone can comment on the story, challenge it, and add on their own version of events (Singer 2010). Rather than a lecture or a one-time report, online journalism is more like a dialogue in which the public can take part. Sometimes, the primary source of news even originates from the public, a phenomenon that has been called citizen journalism.

Citizen journalism can be defined as the collection, analysis, and circulation of information by citizens without formal training in the field of journalism. Ordinary people can use modern tools such as cameras, recorders, and mobile phone in order to upload their own version of events online for the public to view. (Barnes 2012)

There are several important distinctions between traditional journalism and citizen journalism. Traditional journalists generally undergo training that not only covers how to collect information and write articles but also teaches a system of values that are integral to professional journalism. The collection of accurate information obtained in ethical ways that is then synthesized as objectively as possible and edited by experts are the components of a traditional article. Citizen journalists do not have that training nor are they beholden to the same system of values. Information can be uploaded with strong bias and untrue facts without necessarily any consequences. Citizen journalism



is often anonymous with stories coming from a crowd of different reports from indistinguishable individuals. Traditional journalists, on the other hand, have an identity and are held responsible for the articles that they release out into the world. (Barnes 2012)

Citizen journalism certainly has its benefits. Bloggers and other informal sources of news add diversity to the field of opinions because they are not under the same restrictions as traditional journalists in regards to what they can write about (Muir 2008). Citizen journalism also has the advantage that it can collect and release news instantly. Many disasters in recent years, such as 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the Arab Spring, show the value of social media in producing news in areas where traditional journalists may not immediately have access (Barnes 2012). Citizen journalism has also been integral in many social movements. Social media platforms allowed activists to connect with one another, rally support, and ensure that protest tactics remained fluid and flexible. Videos on YouTube, comments on Facebook, and posts on blogging sites like Tumblr allow the public, including people not directly involved in the issue, to remain aware of proceedings and of ideas being rallied around. People can participate from the comfort of their homes, and if physical protests do occur they can be organized within a matter of hours. In many ways, citizen journalism has become a vital part of modern democracy.

Traditional journalism, though no longer the only source of information, arguably still plays an important role in present day news making. The place of journalism now seems to be in the synthesis and interpretation of information that the audience already knows (Singer 2010). Citizen journalism releases information in bits and pieces usually



without a coherent structure or overarching narrative. There is space for journalists with formal training to review what the members of the public have posted, corroborate claims, follow up with sources, and analyze what the whole of the information means and what consequences may follow. However, in order for this new role to work, traditional media outlets must recognize the need for more citizen involvement in shaping stories and for more collaboration rather than competition (Houston 2010). Media outlets can still be gatekeepers for news and information, but they must be prepared to open the gate for the common individual.



Case Study

Haitian Earthquake

On January 12, 2010, the people of Haiti were victims of a catastrophic 7.0 M earthquake. The earthquake left Haiti in ruins as buildings were destroyed and an estimated 200,000 people were killed. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, numerous reports and descriptions of what was transpiring in Haiti began to surface. However, the news was being covered not just by big news agencies. Instead, the world got to see what was happening in Haiti through the lenses of its citizens.

When the earthquake first hit, there were not many journalists from big, international news agencies available to cover the story. However, the lack of journalists did not stop the spread of news, as the people of Haiti were posting online what was happening in their homeland. In fact, Haitians with Twitter accounts were an important information source that offered some of the first words out from Haiti on what was happening. Given the lack of initial on-site journalists, big news agencies presented the Haitian earthquake story using these citizen-generated materials. The *Los Angeles Times*, for example, compiled a list of Haitians tweeters to give its readers insight into what was happening. Additionally, the *New York Times* blog, The Ledge, created a thread that encouraged Haitians, or people in contact with someone in Haiti, to post details of the transpiring events.

Consequently, the world was exposed to two distinct types of storytelling. While the big, traditional news agencies were offering quotes from officials on the facts and figures, like estimated death tolls, the citizen journalists were also offering their own candid accounts of the devastation in Haiti. Videos posted onto YouTube provided



dismaying clips of the destruction. Photos uploaded onto Twitter and Facebook showed snapshots of the unspeakable damage. Blogs, such as “Haitifeed,” delivered a continuous stream of posts by Haitians that kept the outside world updated. Skype calls allowed people in Haiti to give eyewitness accounts to media sources (Lewis 2010).

The personal reports struck a chord in people's' hearts and quickly mobilized the public. People from all over the world swiftly took to the Internet and posted on Facebook or tweeted on Twitter about the urgent need for donations to help the people of Haiti. In the time span between January 12-14, 2.3 million tweets were recorded that included the word “Haiti” or “Red Cross,” and among those 2.3 million, 189,204 tweets included the numbers, “90999,” which is the number people could use to text a donation to Red Cross. More than 2 million people answered the call for help and texted to donate money to the American Red Cross, which ultimately raised over \$20 million for relief efforts (Livingston 2010). On Facebook, over 14000 users joined a group called “Earthquake Haiti,” where people supported one another and offered updates on Haiti (Brainard 2010). In the end, CNN reports that within the short time span of one week, social media helped generate \$8 million dollars in relief aid for Haiti (“Social Media Aids the Haiti Relief Effort”).

However, social media is not perfect. Although a big benefit of social media is its convenience and fast-paced nature, its speed can also be problematic. Facebook posts or tweets are typically short in length and topical in nature. In other words, they struggle to cover more than just the surface. The magnitude and severity of what is really happening can be hard to capture in confinements like Twitter’s 140-character limit. While a tweet or a post asking for donations can undoubtedly be helpful, they do not



cover the fundamental issues in Haiti. Ultimately, the whole narrative of what is going on in Haiti, not just its present predicament with the earthquake, but its longstanding history of poverty and problematic infrastructure, cannot be fully grasped and comprehended with short tweets or posts. The New York Times raised the point that when San Francisco was hit by 7.0M earthquake back in 1989, only 63 were killed, which is a stark contrast to the thousands killed in Haiti (Livingston 2010). While, social media was exceptional in its ability to evoke compassion from the world, however, it was lacking in its ability to tell the whole story. To make matters worse, the fast paced nature of social media means that important matters can fade away from public interest quickly. While the Haitian earthquake did initially make headlines, over time the story started to wane and the relief efforts quickly dropped off. As social media continues to develop its role in disaster relief and charity, several adjustments must be made to ensure the effects are more enduring.



The News Agencies

Here is a list of the news outlets you may be working with during the conference. Note that all of them either operate mainly as print journalism or have a main branch dedicated to newspapers. This does not mean that you will be bound to the print medium, however. You will get the chance to use tools like social media to report the news, just as print journalism has had to adapt to doing.

Name	Headquarters	Year Founded	Owner	Political Affiliation
<i>Süddeutsche Zeitung</i>	Munich, Germany	1945	Südwestdeutsche Medien Holding	Progressive Liberalism
<i>People's Daily</i>	Beijing, China	1948	Communist Party of China	Chinese Socialism
<i>Le Figaro</i>	Paris, France	1826	Dassault Group	Liberal Conservatism
<i>O Estado de S. Paulo</i>	São Paulo, Brazil	1875	Grupo Estado	Classical Liberalism
<i>The Punch</i>	Lagos, Nigeria	1973	Ajibola Ogunsola	Independent
<i>The Times of India</i>	Mumbai, India	1838	The Times Group	Center Right
<i>Reforma</i>	Monterrey, Mexico	1993	Grupo Reforma	Independent



	Mexico			
<i>Daily Afghanistan</i>	Kabul City, Afghanistan	2006	Afghanistan Group of Newspapers	Independent
<i>To Vima</i>	Athens, Greece	1922	Lambrakis Press Group	Center Left
<i>Daily Nation</i>	Nairobi, Kenya	1958	Nation Media Group	Independent
<i>Zaman</i>	Istanbul, Turkey	1986	Seized by state in May, 2016. Formerly owned by Gulen Movement.	Pro-government
<i>Wall Street Journal</i>	New York City, USA	1889	News Corp	Center-Right/ Economic Liberalism
<i>El Universal</i>	Caracas, Venezuela	1909	Epalisticia S.C.	Pro-opposition until sale in 2014
<i>Bangkok Post</i>	Bangkok, Thailand	1946	Post Publishing Public Co. Ltd.	Independent



<i>Yomiuri Shimbun</i>	Tokyo, Japan	1874	Yomiuri Group	Conservative
<i>Moscow Times</i>	Moscow, Russia	1992	Moscow Times LLC	Independent
<i>Gulf News</i>	Dubai, United Arab Emirates	1979	Al Nisr Publishing	Independent
<i>Maariv</i>	Tel Aviv, Israel	1948	Eli Azur	Centrist
<i>The Sunday Times</i>	Johannesburg, South Africa	1906	Times Media Group	Independent
<i>The Australian</i>	Sydney, Australia	1964	News Corp Australia	Right Wing

Writing Your Articles

Content: You are representing a certain news outlet based in a certain country. You will not be writing articles as yourself but rather taking on the character of a journalist from that outlet. What you choose to write about and the details you include should reflect that. If you are operating in a country that censors criticism of the government, then you should avoid a diatribe against the policies your country's delegates present in a committee. If your outlet has a particular political bias or very influential donors, then that should be taken into account during the writing process. You will also want to focus on interviewing delegates from your country when you walk around and observe committees.



Style: The art of writing in a journalistic fashion takes years of training to fully master, and we in no way expect you to be experts and write flawlessly. What we are looking for instead is your willingness to assume the character of your news outlet, think deeply about the topics we cover, and practice researching and crafting different kinds of articles.

That being said, here are some guidelines for what we would like your articles to follow:

Writing a news article is not like writing an essay or short story. It is rarely ever the time to show off your impressive vocabulary or present your poetry skills. The readers want you to get to the point in a way that they can understand without putting in too much effort.

- *Do not say something in twenty words that could be just as easily said in five.*

Choose brevity over complexity.

- Example: “On the eve of Friday, a small and otherwise unremarkable spark born from a not yet extinguished cigarette turned a heap of cardboard behind a local diner, beloved by locals and tourists alike for decades, into a towering and roaring fire which stretched its bright and terrifying flames across the property and consumed everything before it until only a sea of ash was left,” vs. “A fire likely set by an unextinguished cigarette reduced a beloved local diner to ash on Friday night”
- *Note:* There is definitely a place in the world of journalism for storytelling and heavy description. However, those articles tend to be



written after much in depth research, long interviews, and site visits, whereas the articles you will be writing will be written in relatively short amounts of time and be focused on relaying the facts rather than constructing a feeling heavy story.

- *Do not use complicated words that the average person does not know.*
 - Example: “It is oft a sign of superciliousness to employ terms that are recherché” vs. “Using obscure words is often a sign of arrogance”
 - *Note:* You have to know your audience. If you are writing an article for an online site frequented by businessmen, then that is a different vocabulary available to you then if you were writing articles for BuzzFeed.
- *Do not use slang unless you are writing a story about slang or quoting someone using slang.*
 - “The Prime Minister’s speech was raked over the coals by tons of people who were totally over all the recent policies and just wanted the government to chill out,” vs “ The Prime Minister’s speech was criticized by attendees who were frustrated by the recent policies enacted by the government”
- *Be aware of the words you choose. Words might technically have similar meanings, but can create very different tones.*
 - “The family collected some supplies in neighboring houses before they tried to escape from the disaster zone” vs “A gang of people stole belongings from their neighbors and then attempted to flee the area”



- *Be clear. What is most important is getting information to the audience.*
- *Check online for a summary of the Associated Press journalism guidelines.*

Inverted Pyramid Structure: This is a form of writing that places the most important and interesting facts of an article first, usually in a one to two sentence summary, and puts the less relevant and exciting details later. This is meant to catch the attention of the reader and immediately give them a rough idea of the topic of the article. While there are many other ways to structure articles depending on what the story requires, this one will likely be most useful for the material you write during conference.



Works Cited

Associated Press. "Even in This Digital Age, Newspaper Industry Is Booming in India."

The New Indian Express. N.p., 21 Mar. 2015. Web. 10 Aug. 2016

Barnes, Corrine. "Citizen Journalism vs. Traditional Journalism: A Case for

Collaboration." *Caribbean Quarterly* 58.2/3 (2012): 16-27. *JSTOR [JSTOR]*.

Web. 11 June 2016.

Bell, Larry. "Billionaires Battle Over Media Influence: Koch Bros./Murdoch Vs.

Soros/Buffett/GE." *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 5 May 2013. Web. 25 Aug. 2016.

"Bias." Def. 3b. *Merriam- Webster*. Encyclopedia Britannica, n.d. Web.

Brainard, Curtis. "'New' Media Crucial in Aftermath of Haitian Earthquake." *Columbia*

Journalism Review. N.p., 13 Jan. 2010. Web. 15 July 2016.

Buchanan, Elsa. "South Sudan: Radio Journalist Allegedly Gunned down by Armed

Men 'for Being Nuer'" *International Business Times RSS*. IBtimes Co., 14 July

2016. Web. 10 Aug. 2016.

Carney, Timothy P. "Liberal News Media Bias Has a Serious Effect." *The New York*

Times. The New York Times, 21 Dec. 2015. Web. 29 Aug. 2016.

Childress, Sarah. "Study: Election Coverage Skewed by 'Journalistic Bias'" *Frontline*.

PBS, 12 July 2016. Web. 25 Aug. 2016.

Fisher, Marc. "Who Cares If It's True? Modern-day Newsrooms Reconsider Their

Values." *Columbia Journalism Review* n.d.: n. pag. Print.

Frampton, Ben. "Clickbait: The Changing Face of Online Journalism." *BBC News*. The

BBC, 14 Sept. 2015. Web. 10 Aug. 2016.

"Freedom of the Press 2016." | *Freedom House*. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 Aug. 2016.



- Gentzkow, Matthew, and Jesse Shapiro. "Media Bias and Reputation." *Journal of Political Economy* 114.2 (2005): 280-316. *JSTOR [JSTOR]*. Web. 11 June 2016.
- Gerstein, Josh. "Clinton Foundation Donors Include Dozens of Media Organizations, Individuals." *Politico*. Politico, 15 May 2015. Web. 25 Aug. 2016.
- Giles, Robert H. "New Economic Models for U.S. Journalism." *Daedalus* 139.2, On the Future of News (2010): 26-38. *JSTOR*. Web. 23 July 2016.
- Gilmore, Eamon. "Democratisation and New Media." *Irish Studies in International Affairs* 23 (2012): 5-12. *JSTOR*. Web. 23 July 2016.
- Greenslade, Roy. "South Sudan Reporter Murdered, the Seventh Journalist Killed This Year." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 21 Aug. 2015. Web. 10 Aug. 2016.
- Hamblin, James. "What Is Clickbait? Everything." *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, 11 Nov. 2014. Web. 3 Aug. 2016.
- Heimlich, Russell. "Number of Americans Who Read Print Newspapers Continues Decline." *Pew Research Center RSS*. N.p., 11 Oct. 2012. Web. 10 Aug. 2016.
- Henriksson, Teemu. "World Press Trends Survey 2016." *Wan-iffra.org*. Wan-iffra, 12 June 2016. Web. 1 Aug. 2016.
- Heshmat, Shahram. "What Is Confirmation Bias?" *Psychology Today*. Sussex Publishers, LLC, 23 Apr. 2015. Web. 2 Aug. 2016.
- Horse, David. "Koch Brothers Want to Make Your Newspaper Their Megaphone." *Los Angeles Times*. Los Angeles Times, 30 Apr. 2013. Web. 25 Aug. 2016.
- Houston, Brant. "The Future of Investigative Journalism." *Daedalus* 139.2 (2010): 45-56. Web. 13 June 2016.



Hughes, Sallie, and Chappell H. Lawson. "Propaganda and Crony Capitalism: Partisan Bias in Mexican Television News." *Latin American Research Review* 39.3 (2004): 81-105. *JSTOR [JSTOR]*. Web. 11 June 2016.

Hsu, Jeremy. "People Choose News That Fits Their Views." *LiveScience*. TechMedia Network, 7 June 2009. Web. 4 Aug. 2016.

Johnston, Chris, and Josy Forsdike. "17 Turkish Journalists Charged with Terror Group Membership." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 30 July 2016. Web. 10 Aug. 2016.

Levendusky, Matthew. *How Partisan Media Polarize America*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 2013. Print.

Livingston, Geoff. "5 Social Media Lessons From the Haiti Earthquake Relief Effort." *Mashable*. N.p., 20 Jan. 2010. Web. 15 July 2016.

Lorentzen, Peter. "China's Strategic Censorship." *American Journal of Political Science* 58, no. 2 (April 01, 2014): 402-14. Accessed July 23, 2016. JSTOR.

Luhn, Alec. "Car Bomb Kills Pioneering Journalist Pavel Sheremet in Kiev." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 20 July 2016. Web. 10 Aug. 2016.

Lutz, Ashley. "These 6 Corporations Control 90% Of The Media In America." *Business Insider*. Business Insider, Inc, 14 June 2012. Web. 25 Aug. 2016.

MacLeod, Lewis. "New Media Vital in Breaking Haiti Earthquake Story." *BBC*. N.p., 22 Jan. 2010. Web. 15 July 2016.

Mitchell, Amy, and Katerina Eva Matsa. "The Declining Value of U.S. Newspapers." *Pew Research Center RSS*. N.p., 22 May 2015. Web. 1 Aug. 2016.



Muir, Janette Kenner. "Closing the Gap: Media, Politics, and Citizen Participation."

Harvard International Review 30.1 (2008): 54-57. *JSTOR*. Web. 23 July 2016

Oggolder, Christian. "Inside – Outside. Web History and the Ambivalent Relationship

between Old and New Media." *Historical Social Research / Historische*

Sozialforschung 37.4 (142) (2012): 134-49. *JSTOR*. Web. 23 July 2016.

Patterson, Thomas E. "News Coverage of the 2016 Presidential Primaries: Horse Race

Reporting Has Consequences - Shorenstein Center." *Shorenstein Center*.

Harvard Kennedy School, 11 July 2016. Web. 25 Aug. 2016.

Perez-Pena, Richard. "About Half in U.S. Would Pay for Online News, Study Finds."

The New York Times. The New York Times, 15 Nov. 2009. Web. 10 Aug. 2016.

Shapiro, Rebecca. "Money, Politics And The Press: Media Political Donations To

Democrats." *The Huffington Post*. The Huffington Post, 6 Sept. 2012. Web. 31

Aug. 2016.

Singer, Jane B. "Journalism Ethics amid Structural Change." *Daedalus* 139.2 (2010):

89-99. *JSTOR [JSTOR]*. Web. 11 June 2016

"Social Media Aid the Haiti Relief Effort." *Pew Research Centers Journalism Project*

RSS. N.p., 21 Jan. 2010. Web. 15 July 2016.

Sullivan, Margaret. "Getting It First or Getting It Right?" *The New York Times*. The New

York Times, 22 Dec. 2012. Web. 10 Aug. 2016.

"Telecommunications Act of 1996." *Federal Communications Commission*. N.p., 20

June 2013. Web. 25 Aug. 2016.

Wang, Haiyan, and Francis F. L. Lee. "Research on Investigative Journalism." *China*

Review 14.2 (2014): 215-51. *JSTOR [JSTOR]*. Web. 11 June 2016.



Xiang, Yi, and Miklos Sarvary. "News Consumption and Media Bias." *Marketing Science* 26.5 (2007): 611-28. Web. 9 June 2016.