

DEVELOPING DIVERSITY IN SOURCES

A Training Program for Foreign Correspondents

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Foreign correspondents find themselves on the frontlines of the current upheaval in news gathering and dissemination. Economics, technology and globalization count among the leading factors putting pressure on international journalists, as Richard Sambrook outlined in a 2010 report entitled “Are Foreign Correspondents Redundant: The Changing Face of International News,” published by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University.

Sambrook proclaims the virtual end of the model of foreign coverage that held forth for most of the 20th century. No longer is coverage coming primarily from salaried veteran foreign nationals based in well-funded bureaus located in major cities around the globe. Of course this 20th century model had its problems, including in terms of diversity. Many correspondents tended to be middle aged males from the relatively privileged classes of their native countries. Yet the model had its upside. It generally ensured that foreign correspondents had both the experience and the resources to go about their reporting in accordance with the prevailing professional and ethical standards of the industry.

Today’s foreign correspondents increasingly tend to fall into one of two growing categories. The first is comprised of foreign nationals who “self-select” to live in a foreign country. The second consists of locals with sufficient language skills to send dispatches to news organizations in other parts of the world. While there are still some staff positions available, especially at news agencies, most international reporting is done by freelancers who must juggle multiple clients in order to survive in a world of diminishing pay rates – not only in relative terms, given the general absence of cost-of-living increases, but often also nominally in many cases. To survive, many people who see themselves primarily as journalists need to accept “content creation” work for non-media clients.

As the landscape changes, it seems to be generating greater diversity in terms of ethnicity, national origin, age, gender, and other things. However, many members of today’s foreign press corps have limited if any experience in a professional newsroom. Generally operating independently from a home office, they rarely benefit from training or mentorship. Lacking expense accounts and scrambling to produce enough stories to pay the bills, they are often tempted to take shortcuts on their reporting.

There are few training programs aimed at this new group of independent professionals. Indeed many of the high profile mid-career journalism training programs discriminate against freelancers in their selection processes.

Why Diversity Training for Foreign Correspondents?

Most of the efforts to increase diversity in the media focus on one of two fronts: (1) to help individuals from groups that are underrepresented in news organizations obtain employment in the media, either by working with them to improve their skills or encouraging managers to adjust their hiring practices; or (2) to encourage journalists to seek out a wider range of sources as they go about their reporting. As the available

resources permit, this training program will address both aspects – the first through recruitment and the second through its content.

This handbook will primarily address the content. But first a short word on participant diversity. Since foreign nationals based in a particular place are generally there on their own initiative, as noted above, it is hard to alter the diversity of that group for a program held in a particular location without a substantial travel budget. However, efforts can be made to encourage the participation of a representative group of local reporters who are working as, or would like to work as, international reporters. This can be done in partnership with international and local news organizations, foreign press clubs, organizations of local journalists, and local journalism schools.

While improving the diversity of sources is laudable in its own right, the main benefit for journalists will be better quality reporting and the uncovering of “hidden” stories that may be ignored by the competition. By providing a framework to make it easier to generate a broader range of sources, the training program can help freelance journalists save precious time as they try to manage their often overburdened agendas.

Useful diversity training programs and tools for journalists have been developed and implemented in different parts of the world. Many of these are in the United States, where multiculturalism and diversity have long been high profile issues. Leaders in this field in the U.S. include the Maynard Institute for Journalism Education and the Diversity Toolbox of the Society of Professional Journalists. Similar initiatives have sprung up elsewhere. For instance, the Council of Europe collected a broad range of training programs and exercises and published them under the title, “Toolbox: Journalism Training, Discrimination & Diversity.”

As valuable as they are, these programs are invariably aimed at promoting diversity within a particular society. None of them address the specific needs and challenges of international reporters who must make sense of what is happening in one place and explain that to an audience that might have an entirely different world view.

Since this handbook is being produced under the auspices of the Council of Europe’s Mediane Exchange, we should make a note of that program’s support for journalists from different geographic areas who want to work on joint projects. We see this handbook as a direct extension of the concept behind the Mediane Exchange.

We have derived our inspiration and borrowed many ideas from the above mentioned initiatives and resources. In addition, it has been enriched by Bill Hinchberger’s experience teaching a course on French-Brazilian relations and cross-cultural communication at CELSA, the Sorbonne’s graduate school of communications.

The Program

Reflecting its location in earthquake-prone California, the Maynard Institute has developed a set of what it calls faultlines – elements such as race that often divide people, particularly in the United States. The institute’s diversity training workshops are organized around these elements.

Our program will be aimed initially at contributors and potential contributors to Associated Reporters Abroad (ARA), a Berlin-based news organization that takes a fresh approach to delivering foreign news. Like the Maynard program, it is organized around a series of topics that tend to be particularly sticky for foreign correspondents. The five-day program will focus on a different element each day:

- Cross-cultural Communications
- History – Finding sources who can provide historical perspective
- Culture & Society – Finding sources who can help explain one culture and society to another
- The local community – identifying community leaders and how to include the views of average citizens in your reporting
- Cultivating diversity – making a conscious effort to seek out sources among people who represent different viewpoints in terms of crucial elements such as race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, generation, geography, immigration status, class, language groups, subcultures, etc.

Day 1

Cross-Cultural Communications: Theoretical Background

Journalists often tend to dive right into things without much concern for the theoretical framework that holds things together. The module for the first day will take a step back and provide an overview of cross-cultural communications studies.

→ The society you are covering vs. the society of your audience

→ Lost in Translation – how language shapes our thoughts

Days 2-5

- Each day will be organized in a similar fashion, and each will focus on a single topic: History, Culture & Society, Local Community, and Cultivating Diversity. The schedule will look like this:

Morning

- Topic presentation and discussion – The trainer(s) will make a short presentation about the topic and lead a discussion. The discussion will include an analysis of a recent news report related to the topic.
- Press briefing with a local newsmaker – Someone with experience in the topic of the day will be invited to address the group and answer questions.
- Editorial meeting – The trainer(s) will lead an editorial meeting. Students will get assignments for their daily story.

Afternoon

- Reporting
- Writing and/or production
- Editorial meeting to review the results of the day's work

Articles for Discussion

After the first day, each module will include a review of articles related to that day's subject matter. We plan to use dispatches that have come through ARA. If we were going to do this today, these are the ones we would use:

History

- Excavating one of the Nazis' first concentration camps, The Atlantic, Aug 21, 2013
A husband-and-wife archaeologist team begins excavating at one of the Nazis' earliest concentration camps
<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/08/excavating-one-of-the-nazis-first-concentration-camps/278877/>
- Struggling Romanians yearn for Communism, Washington Times, Aug 30, 2012
A flailing economy 20 years after free-market reforms leaves many Romanians nostalgic for the communism of former times
<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/aug/30/struggling-romanians-yearn-for-communism/?page=all#pagebreak>
- Normandy's love of America: French province will never forget sacrifices in D-Day assault, Washington Times, June 5, 2014
Natives of Normandy remain steadfast in their love for the United States as their liberator from Nazi occupation, no matter what <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/jun/5/normandys-love-of-america-french-province-will-nev/>

Culture & Society

- Being gay in Pakistan: Where anti-gay serial killers are applauded, Global Post, May 12, 2014
A serial killer targeting gay men has scared the LGBT community in Pakistan, but earned the respect of many others
<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/asia-pacific/pakistan/140509/being-gay-pakistan-where-anti-gay-serial-killers>
- Sweden shaken as riots continue in immigrant suburbs, USAToday, May 25, 2013
Days of rioting have left Sweden searching for answers, wondering what went wrong in a nation welcoming of foreigners and proud of its tradition of tolerance and social equality.
<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/05/25/sweden-riots-violence/2360211/>
- Sub-Saharan Students in Morocco: Both Welcomed and Shunned, Al-Fanar, July 25, 2013
Students from Sub-Sahara struggle with racism in Morocco and feel shut out of society.
<http://www.al-fanar.org/2013/07/sub-saharan-students-in-morocco-welcomed-and-shunned/>
- Japan aims to return to Walkman glory days, July 11, 2013
Japan pushes to return to its tech giant status, but its own culture gets in the way of innovation.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/economy/canada-competes/japan-aims-to-return-to-walkman-glory-days/article13111982/>

Local Community

- Tatars of Crimea say they stand with Ukraine, USA Today, March 6, 2013
Crimean Tatars affected by Russia's annexation continue to support Ukrainian Maidan movement.
<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/03/06/ukraine-economy/6090567/>
- Fed up' French Muslims mobilize to unseat Sarkozy, Washington Times, April 19, 2012
France's Muslim community moves to reject (then) President Nicolas Sarkozy in Sunday's election to punish the conservative leader for his anti-immigrant and anti-Islam rhetoric.
http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/apr/19/french-muslims-mobilizing-to-unseat-sarkozy/?utm_source=RSS_Feed&utm_medium=RSS
- Saving lives in Athens austerity clinic, Deutsche Welle, October 5, 2013
A doctor starts treating hard-up patients for free after austerity measures hit health benefits
<http://www.dw.de/saving-lives-in-athens-austerity-clinic/av-17136364>

Cultivating Diversity

- Aspiring media players tackle diversity deficit, Deutsche Welle, April 9, 2013
A Berlin theater strives to keep performances multicultural by training up young people with international backgrounds.
<http://www.dw.de/aspiring-media-players-tackle-diversity-deficit/a-16728465>
- Sunnis fill rebel ranks, but also prop up Assad regime, USA Today, August 1, 2013
Sunni Muslims may be fighting Bashar Assad's Alawite regime in Syria, but some Sunnis have thrown their weight behind Assad in the spirit of pragmatism.
<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/08/01/syria-sunnis-assad/2599927/>
- Growing roar of Putin: Voices of dissent in Russia increasingly muffled, Washington Times, May 12, 2014
Voices of dissent in Russia are drowned out by a wave of pro-Putinism after the Crimean annexation.
http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/may/12/growing-roar-of-putin-voices-of-dissent-in-russia-/?utm_source=RSS_Feed&utm_medium=RSS

Out of and into the Comfort Zone

One of the main goals of the week-long program will be to get the participants to get out of their comfort zones. This can be addressed in novel and counterintuitive ways. For example, among diversity proponents, the very existence of ethnic media is considered a positive thing. Some people might believe it to be insensitive to criticize them too much or force them to face their own potential biases. Going against the grain in this regard, the US-based New America Media, an organization that provides support for the ethnic

media, launched a campaign designed to “help break the taboo against any mention of same-sex marriage in California’s ethnic minority and immigrant communities.”

Follow-up Mentoring

If resources are available, the trainers will be available as mentors to interested participants for a period of time after the week-long workshop.

Potential Partners

Any undertaking of this scope is bound to be expensive and complicated. Therefore we believe that it would be good for ARA to work together with partners who have similar goals. Partnerships could take many forms, but at this point we have limited ourselves to creating a contact list. Here it is:

- American Society of Journalists and Authors
- Centre for Investigative Journalism
- European Journalism Centre
- International Journalists’ Programme
- Institute for Policy Studies (Washington D.C.)
- Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE)
- Journalismfund.eu
- Knight Foundation
- London School of Journalism
- National Union of Journalists (UK)
- Maynard Institute for Journalism Education
- New America Media
- Poynter Institute
- Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism
- Society of Professional Journalists
- Thomson Reuters Foundation
- UNESCO