
Handbook for African Journalists

With leaders in
African Journalism

Second Edition
1996

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Dedication

This handbook is dedicated to the journalists of Africa, many of whom are benefiting from an era of improved training and professionalism. With increased knowledge of clear, accurate and complete reporting, they are making major contributions to freedom and development in their respective countries.

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Preface

In Africa, recent years have brought major growth in media establishments, both governmental and private. In turn this growth has brought a parallel spurt in schools of journalism and mass communication to equip graduates with media skills.

These schools have been hampered, however, by a shortage of journalism textbooks, especially those produced with the special needs of African journalists in mind.

And so in 1987 the World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC) published a *Handbook for African Journalists*. That first edition, written by experienced African journalists, was distributed widely in sub-Saharan nations. The response was so enthusiastic that WPFC undertook a second printing of the first edition in 1988, just a year later. Continuing demand exhausted supplies of both printings.

In response, WPFC now—in 1996—has produced this second edition. It reflects the changing scene for journalism in Africa. It carries over lightly edited portions of the first edition. The biographies of first edition authors are unchanged. This second edition also contains new material written by other African journalists. Where a chapter author is not shown, the material has been adapted from another WPFC handbook.

This second edition, like the first, responds to a growing appreciation in Africa of the importance of journalism training and the flow of information.

The Handbook is a “How To” book written not only for journalism and mass communication students but also for both beginning and mid-career journalists in the continent.

Described here are not only fundamentals of journalism ranging from reporting to interviewing to writing and editing but also such techniques as advertising sales, newspaper distribution and radio and television broadcasting.

For African journalists already in the field, WPFC hopes that this book will help sharpen their professional skills, provide relevant information about their work and remind them of the principles, purposes and ethics of journalism.

This Handbook has been published by the World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC) and its George Beebe Fund, with the support of The Philip L. Graham Fund of Washington, D.C. See page 177 for additional information about the WPFC.

Obviously, it takes the encouragement and fellowship of a great many people to produce a collaborative work of this kind. Appreciation is expressed to the late George Beebe, vice chairman/projects and former chairman of the World Press Freedom Committee, and a prominent newspaperman, for his leadership in producing the first edition of this Handbook.

Gratitude is also extended to Callix Udofia, a Nigerian journalism educator who served as coordinator in Africa and co-editor of the first edition. His chapter on editorial writing appears in this edition.

We also are indebted to Gloria N. Biggs of Washington, D.C., an outstanding former newspaper editor and publisher, for her constructive criticism and excellent suggestions.

We thank Lateef Jakande, former International Press Institute president, for his good advice and encouragement and Hugh Lewin of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation in Zimbabwe, who helped produce the book *Reporting Africa*.

The Handbook editor thanks WPMC's executive director, Dana Bullen, for his suggestions and encouragement. Special thanks are reserved for Mary-Esther Dattatreyan for her painstaking and patient preparation of the manuscripts.

Not everybody can be a journalist. Like other professions, journalism requires dedication, talent and preparation. Africans who fulfill these requirements should enjoy working for the media.

It is hoped that this Handbook, published exclusively for African journalists, will make their profession even more rewarding and will help to bring about a high standard of excellence in journalism in all parts of the continent.

Malcolm F. Mallette
Editor

1

Role of a Free Press

Sentinel for the People

Richard S. Steyn holds bachelor and law degrees from Stellenbosch University. He practiced law in Natal and London, then served 15 years as editor of the Natal Witness, South Africa's oldest newspaper. He was editor-in-chief of The Star, Johannesburg, 1990-94.

By Richard S. Steyn

*In British playwright Tom Stoppard's play, *Night & Day*, set in post-colonial Africa, a world-weary press photographer has this to say, "I've been around a lot of places. People do awful things to each other. But it's worse in places where everybody's kept in the dark. It really is. Information is light. Information about anything is light. That's all there is to say, really".*

That's really all there is to say about why a free press is necessary—in Africa or anywhere else. In countries without a free press, people suffer. And Africa does not have a good record for its treatment of people—black or white.

Part of the reason is that governments across the length and breadth of the continent have ridden rough-shod over human rights—and journalists have been unable or unwilling to stop them.

In the trenchant words of a distinguished Ghanaian editor, "African journalists for the most part have developed a servile mentality which sees them at best as a footnote to the narrow

ambition of politicians. The press in many African countries exists only to defend the status quo; it has lost its independence and is happy to sing only its masters, the government's, sad song of betrayal of the dreams of the African people".

While it may be true that the press in Africa has too often regarded itself as the preserver of the status quo rather than a protector of the people, critics often overlook the formidable difficulties faced by African journalists: undemocratic and intolerant societies; brutal governments; thuggish security forces; an absence of constitutional and legal protection, poor training facilities and uneconomic and therefore dependent newspapers.

Courageous editors: A cause for hope

It is remarkable that despite these formidable obstacles, courageous editors and journalists have managed to preserve their independence and integrity. It is cause for hope that, at last, several African countries are moving in the direction of multi-party democracy.

Like most people, Africans do not take kindly to being lectured to about their shortcomings, particularly by Westerners whose culture, norms and standards may be entirely different. There are genuine differences among us over what constitutes news. Is it the unusual, the unpleasant, the bizarre, only? Or is it reports about development, progress and growth? Or does news comprise elements of both?

There are differences, too, over what the role of the press in Africa ought to be—a challenger and critic of the government of the day, or a partner of government in building the nation.

"Development journalism" of the kind that plays down awkward issues and plays up the performance of government has had a bad press lately. But in underdeveloped Africa there is a crying need for journalism of the educative kind.

Ignorance: Impediment to democracy

If the continent is to solve its most critical problems—over-population, low economic growth, low life-expectancy, illiteracy, unending political conflict—education is a crucial factor. And here the media, both private and public, have a vital role to play. Ignorance is even more of an impediment to democracy than tame, subservient newspapers.

A distinguished son of Africa, Commonwealth Secretary-General Emeka Anyaoku, asserts that the continent's most

important goals are a stable political framework in which its citizens can freely choose and experience just and honest government, and a higher quality of life sustained by improved social and economic conditions. If Anyaoku is right—and few would disagree with him—then these goals, surely, cannot be attained without a lively, critical and independent press.

Goals of an independent press

The responsibilities of such a press would be these:

1. To gather news and information and publish it without fear or favour.
2. To interpret the news and comment upon it.
3. To act as a channel of communication between government and the people and between people and government.
4. To act as a watchdog over the excesses of government.

To fulfill these responsibilities, we journalists must dig out and publish information that is accurate, publish it as dispassionately and objectively as possible, interpret it as fairly as human shortcomings and unconscious bias permit and give reasonable opportunity for reply to those who are attacked or criticised. (Publishing corrections promptly and prominently when mistakes are made is a good idea, too.)

To preserve our most cherished possession—our credibility—we should keep free of commercial or political affiliations that might compromise us or influence the way in which news and comment is presented.

Keep powerful interest at arms length

Likewise, we should keep at arms length powerful interests of any kind which seek to control the free flow of news and information—easier said than done in this age of multi-media tycoonery and satellite television.

In order to function effectively, journalists require an appreciation of their role in society—from governments as much as from their readers and listeners.

Readers and listeners benefit from lively journalism by having alternatives put before them, by being protected against the powerful and by being given choices that will set them free.

Governments benefit from independent, critical media because in order to make sensible decisions and govern effectively, they need to be alert to what is going on around them.

And the business community benefits by having access to reliable, up-to-date information on which to base investment decisions. It is no coincidence that the most successful economies are those which are well supplied with information and able to respond quickly to market signals.

Of course the press has always been important in the political life of Africa. Leaders such as Nkrumah, Kenyatta and Houphouet Boigny were former journalists who became politicians and learned quickly from their colonial overlords how best to control the media.

Despite their countries being members of the United Nations, they and their successors in outlook paid scant regard to the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights which declares, in Article 19, that everyone has the right of freedom of expression and opinion. "This right includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Governments control broadcast

Although free newspapers may be found nowadays in many parts of Africa, radio and television, almost without exception, remain under the control of the leader or government in power.

This is an untenable situation because—as every autocrat knows—radio is the single most powerful medium of communication in Africa, an important prerequisite for a free and fair election (and a contentious political issue) is equal access to air time on radio and TV.

How then might journalists in Africa operate in what is all-too-often an unfriendly, hostile environment? No group of journalists, on its own, can overthrow a despotic government, but we can help, over time, to delegitimise it.

As Africa begins to recognise the benefits of multi-party democracy, we journalists can give impetus to the process by reporting on the activities of a wide variety of groups and organisations, by identifying the issues that excite them and by disseminating information about their goals and agendas.

We can promote democratic values by encouraging public debate about contentious issues, and advance the growth of tolerance by being tolerant of those we disagree with.

And, by being well informed about the world at large, we can continually draw parallels between our own and other, more successful countries. Here, we can take comfort from the

experience of Eastern Europe where the revolution in telecommunications made nonsense of official efforts to conceal human rights abuses and suppress the spread of opinion and information.

A manifesto: Declaration of Windhoek

If African journalism needs a manifesto to hold up before governments, business people and the public, we need look no further than UNESCO's Declaration of Windhoek on free and independent media. Asserting that a free press is essential to economic development and democracy, the declaration in effect calls upon international organisations, aid agencies and professional associations to direct assistance only to those countries whose media are able to serve the interests of the society as a whole. (See Appendix B for an excerpt of the Windhoek Declaration.)

The Windhoek Declaration deserves to be prominently displayed in every African newsroom. If those who wield power—political, commercial or spiritual—were to honour its precepts, the future would be brighter for Africa and its journalists.

2

Reporting the News

In journalism, everything begins with the reporter. Good editors work wonders, processing stories and putting together under deadlines a lively newspaper that meets reader needs and wants. But editors can do their work only if the reporters have done theirs. First the news must be harvested.

Successful reporters need several skills and attributes, starting with integrity, a quizzical mind and a passion for accuracy. They need determination, tenacity and aggressiveness, which is not to say rudeness or brashness but continuing effort against resistance. They need to recognise news, that is, information relevant and useful to readers, and fragments that hint the existence of a story. They need to recognise linkages between facts that may at first seem unrelated but are indeed part of a greater whole.

Need for self-discipline

They need to know how to uncover facts that lie below surface information. They need to know how to encourage people to talk, how to delve into records, how to build a network of sources—people who know the desired facts or can say where the facts can be found. They need a high energy level, for reporting is hard work. They need what has been called “street smarts,” that is, to know how things work. On top of all this, they must be self-disciplined, able to shift smoothly from one assignment to another or even work on several at one time.

They must be constantly aware that facts do not necessarily add up to truth. There may be several truths, in the eyes of various sincere beholders. And omitted facts can warp the impression created by the facts given in a published story.

A few years ago, debate raged over the essentialness of objectivity. Many journalists concluded that objectivity is beyond reach—because the selection of each fact for publication is a non-objective process. Accordingly, most journalists now stress the importance of fairness—fairness to all persons or institutions that will be affected by the story. Reporters know, too, that pure truth often emerges only over time as additional facts are discovered under reportorial probing.

Going with what you've got

And of course there is usually the tyranny of deadlines. Often a reporter yearns for time to make one more telephone call or check one more document. But when deadlines loom, reporters (and editors) face two choices. One choice is “to go with what you've got,” making it clear where facts are missing—such as the death toll in an apartment house fire. On breaking news the decision is almost always to “go with what you've got.” The second choice is to hold the formative story for a later publishing cycle. Seasoned editors counsel this choice on investigative stories that require further checking.

A central tenet for reporters is to take nothing for granted. Healthy skepticism (though not cynicism) is a precious asset, for situations are not always what they seem to be. The reporter must dig beneath surface events and expose shortcomings or wrongdoing.

When the reporting is completed—or at least has reached a point of publishing, reporters must sort out the jumble of harvested facts (or apparent facts), discard the irrelevant or insignificant, piece together a clear narrative and commit it to paper, usually against that bugaboo deadline. In all this, reporters must never forget that a publication's greatest asset is credibility. The publication that is not trusted is soon out of business.

No end to learning

Those who choose to enter journalism usually possess many of these attributes innately. For fledgling reporters—often called “cubs,” an assignment can bewilder. With hard work it begins to sort out. A highly respected, prize-winning reporter once said he had learned 80 percent of what he knew in the first three years on the job. Then it took him 10 years to learn the other 20 percent. He meant of course that a reporter never stops learning.

Ideally, a reporter begins with a sound liberal arts education. Lacking that, the reporter can and must compensate, reading voraciously and learning as the assignments roll by.

A good basic education for a reporter ideally includes language study, literature, history, political science, economics, sociology, psychology, mathematics and science. As the world has become more complex larger newspapers have created specialised assignments—or beats—like education, health, environment, business, religion, etc. Journalists debate whether it is better to find an already trained specialist and teach him or her to be a reporter or to ask a good reporter to specialise and provide study opportunities. On this question, most editors say, “Give me the good reporter who knows how to dig out facts.”

The three sources of information

Reporters gather information from three sources: (1) records and documents, (2) interviews, and (3) personal observation. Each category is broad and deserves attention here.

Mention of records and documents probably brings to mind such obvious items as property deeds, wills, marriage licenses, death certificates, autopsy reports, diplomas, subpoenas, arrest warrants, police arrest and accident reports, licenses, divorce testimony, trial transcripts, governmental budgets and the like. But records and documents go far beyond those staples. The newspaper clipping is a document, so is a news or press release. Add in reference books, any publication for that matter, and you have a good start.

Assume a document exists

Most reporters quickly learn these obvious sources. Beyond that, a reporter must never forget that we live in a world of written words. Little of consequence is done without creating a trail of documents: a proposal, a study, an investigation, a report, an inventory, memoranda, bank statements, an audit. Somewhere there are documents that shed light on most in-depth stories. They may exist under unpredictable titles, but they exist.

So the overriding principle is this: Always assume a document exists.

You will soon know where to look for standard governmental records, and you will know them by their standard names. Not so for the one-time studies, the internal memos, etc.

Accordingly, you should inquire not by a title but by describing to the potential possessor what you are looking for. Sometimes, while your spirits soar, the person whom you are asking will say something like, "Oh, you mean the Study on So and So; I've got it right here in my files." Increasingly, of course, documents must be accessed from a computer data base.

Again, always assume a document exists. Documents are valuable in themselves. They also confirm or subject to question information you have gathered through interviews or observation. Further, a document is supportive if someone tries to discredit your story.

Interviews, the second source, come in all lengths and circumstances. A quote from a sweaty athlete in a dressing room is an interview. So is the call to a government clerk to learn about a meeting agenda. Reporters are forever questioning news sources. But usually the word interview conjures up an image of a full-scale question-and-answer session aimed toward a major story or a so-called profile. A separate chapter offers suggestions for conducting a successful interview.

In any interview, reporters should be certain that the subjects know they are speaking with a reporter. With standard news sources, this is no problem. It is a problem, however, when dealing with persons who are rarely if ever approached by journalists. They deserve to know that you are seeking information for a story that will be published.

Both reporter and the source need to understand the basis on which the information is being supplied. Government officials often will give information on the understanding that they not be identified by name and only, for instance, as a "high government official." Or they give it on "deep background," meaning you cannot attribute in any way.

Beware of "off the record"

More frequently, a source seeks to reveal information "off the record," meaning that it cannot be used. Reporters must be wary in such cases. Most of the time it is best not to accept information off-the-record because it ties your hands. If you later obtain the same information elsewhere the first source feels betrayed. Or the first source may want to tie your hands by getting your commitment to respect off-record.

Still, there are times when off-record information might help you in developing a story. Judgment is required. If in doubt, the reporter should consult the editor. Sometimes, a source is needlessly self-protective and will go on record under

prompting after first seeking to be off-record. At times reporters must tell the source quickly: "If it's off the record I don't want to hear it."

In this respect, relations with a source might suffer because the source has been unfairly treated by another journalist in the past and is now distrustful of all journalists. That can only be overcome by building your own reputation for integrity and professionalism.

The third broad source of information is personal observation. Illustrations are endless: the war correspondent at the battle, a reporter at the fire, a reporter at the athletic contest, or a reporter interviewing a public figure. In each instance, the object is to note specific detail that will take the reader to the scene. The reporter is the reader's surrogate, and specific detail is the mode of transportation for the reader.

Reporter assignments

Reporters are assigned to beats (or runs) or general assignment. The beat reporter has a specific area or areas to cover. Typical beats are local government, police, courts, education, health and hospitals, business, etc. On a small paper a reporter usually covers several areas. On large papers beats become more focused. General assignment reporters have no beat but cover a variety of stories that don't fall neatly into beats and are assigned by the editor. General-assignment reporters sometimes also substitute for a beat reporter.

Developing sources

Clearly, all reporters need to develop sources. This applies in particular to beat reporters. In covering city hall, for instance, the beat reporter should know the mayor and department heads and also secretaries and even janitors. Everyone is a potential news source or at least the source of a tip. Reporters must know various responsibilities of officials and how they are being carried out. They must probe behind public announcements and write about what is really going on. And they must write stories to let readers know how an action by mayor or council affects them.

Reporters are assigned to a certain newsroom department—city, sports, business, etc. On the smallest papers there is only one department: news. Usually the largest number of reporters work for the city or metro (metropolitan) desk, responsible for local news coverage.

Reporters receive assignments from their assigning editors, but assignments should not be a one-way process. As the eyes and ears of the newspaper, reporters should generate a constant flow of ideas beyond routine coverage. Such ideas are known as enterprise.

Reporters hold great power in a community. That power should be mixed with humility and a sense of duty to readers. Over time, successful reporters become known for the level of their accuracy, honesty, and fair play.

3

Sources of News

Working
to build
contacts

Tony Obiechina, Borno State correspondent for the Nigerian Tribune, an independent newspaper based in Ibadan, is a 1979 graduate of the Nigerian Daily Times Training School, Lagos. He was the editor of Borno Radio Television and Borno State Reporter for the Daily Times.

By Tony Obiechina

A reporter is often faced with the arduous task of extracting information from unfamiliar sources. For the cub reporter, especially one who has not been exposed to the various cultures in the continent, the three main needs are:

- Getting acquainted with the local sources;
- Finding contact persons;
- Identifying opinion leaders.

The reporter must contact persons representing various viewpoints and areas of knowledge to get a balanced story.

In most African countries the literacy level still is low and people often do not understand the role of a journalist. Help them comprehend the important work you are doing and why you need the information you are seeking.

There are other news sources apart from the local people and the opinion leaders. As a reporter in a metropolitan area, your initial duty will be to familiarise yourself with the public affairs establishments.

These include the state executive council or the government house, emirate council, the House of Assembly, federal and state secretariats, police stations, motor traffic division, security organisations, fire brigade, courts (sharia, magistrate and high), metropolitan council, marketing board, post primary schools, institutions of higher learning, staffs of the other media, chambers of commerce, banks, industries, customs and immigration departments, railway stations, airports, hospitals and major hotels.

The value of records

In addition, records are of paramount importance. They may be found in many places, from police stations to the House of Assembly. Look for them whenever possible as a check for accuracy and to gain supporting material in case questions arise.

The State Executive Council is the highest policy making agency of the government at the state level. In most African countries, it comprises the governor, deputy governor, commissioners, secretary to the government and others. The council usually is presided over by the governor. Matters such as the annual budget are discussed.

Don't wait for the government to announce its decisions. A reporter should check sources at government house as the council meeting progresses and try to open discussions with some members of the council. They may drop hints on some of the issues discussed.

The Emirate Council of Chiefs comprises traditional rulers in the state, and is an important news source. Here issues affecting the people at the grassroots level are discussed.

Traditional rulers are highly regarded in African societies. Therefore, whenever the council meets you should endeavour to be there. If you plan to interview any of the emirs or chiefs, arrange in advance for an interpreter.

The government Secretariat is the nerve centre of the civil service. It is here that offices of the secretary to the government and head of service, commissioners and permanent secretaries in the various ministries are situated.

News may be found daily at this place. You may also collect government press releases from the ministries.

Commissioners are the political heads of the various ministries. So they are important news sources. It is their duty to implement decisions taken at the executive council meetings.

The Chief Fire Officer may have an office in the Secretariat and details about fire incidents can be obtained from him. Regular visits to the fire station itself are important in order to assess the staff strength and the type of fire fighting equipment in use by the brigade. You may stumble on big news by familiarising yourself with labour leaders, and by paying occasional visits to the other media and to banks and industries.

Police stations

The police station usually is the first love of the young reporter. Here, there is the crime register from which you can extract information about suspects in police custody and the nature of their offences. You can establish rapport with the police public relations office and the Commissioner of Police, too. These people may be important sources of news for you during your career.

Motor traffic division

As the number of vehicles on the roads increases, so do accident rates. It then becomes imperative for you as a cub reporter to call regularly at the Motor Traffic Division (MTD) for accident reports. The Divisional Police Officer may refuse to talk to you. With time the relationship should improve.

Security organisation

Usually officials of the security organisation operate in plain clothes. They tend to be noncommittal because they don't want you to know what they are doing.

Reporters don't easily get information from African security officials. But you should try to establish a cordial relationship with at least some of them.

The department is a very good news source, for information gathered in the course of investigations may never get to the public unless the reporter uncovers it.

Handle with care if the information is on national security.

The courts

Covering courts often can be boring. But land matters, divorce and libel suits and cases of breach of contract that involve influential members of the community won't be boring to the public.

Also, study the location of the magistrate and high courts in the metropolitan area. In a predominantly Moslem society, there always are Sharia courts. Study the court system and get to know the court officials.

Metropolitan council

Apart from the State Executive Council, which directs the affairs of the state, there is the metropolitan council whose area of jurisdiction is the capital city.

To keep abreast of the day-to-day happenings within the metropolis, the sole administrator or the chairman and members of the council should be visited as often as possible.

The markets, motor parks, primary schools and other public institutions come under the direct control of the metropolitan council. Outstanding news stories emanate from these sources.

Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber of Commerce is made up of business leaders and industrialists who pursue a common interest. Their contributions to the improvement of the economic and industrial well-being of the state should be of interest to the public. It is therefore necessary to establish personal contact with officials and members of the chamber.

Customs and Immigration Department

Borders of most African countries are porous. Customs and immigration officials grapple with preventing illegal immigrants and contraband goods from entering the country.

Cub reporters or correspondents must acquaint themselves with this department. The area Administrator of Customs and the Assistant Director of Immigration are valuable new sources. Get to know them.

Airport-railway stations

Well-known personalities either in government or private business frequent the airports. They either are traveling or seeing off other personalities and business associates. Familiarise yourself with the airport, especially the VIP lounge. There you may find local or national celebrities for

impromptu interviews. Maybe you will be able to generate news from passengers whose flights are delayed or canceled.

Failure of an aircraft to land or take off due to bad weather and subsequent diversion of planes to another airport will be of interest to many readers, listeners or viewers.

Railway stations also should be on your list of places to visit regularly.

Hospitals

Regular visits to the hospitals will give you an insight into many types of stories. For example, the public will need to know if there is a lack of drugs or shortage of medical personnel and equipment.

Get to know the staffs of the maternity sections of the hospitals, the medical officers and other health personnel. Most will be glad to help a reporter. There may be scores of features on varying subjects from treatments to patients.

Conclusion

The few news sources presented here will certainly start off a reporter working in an unfamiliar environment.

Don't wait for press releases. Go out and hunt for news. Ask questions. A reporter needs the goodwill and cooperation of his or her contacts. Stories should be objective and balanced. Once you know your beat, you will have fewer challenges and more gratifications.

4

Interviewing

An interview can fail for many reasons. But it is almost certain to fail if the reporter does not prepare. The subject assumes that the reporter will arrive fully backgrounded. The unprepared reporter faces the danger of being misled and certainly will elicit minimal information. On the other hand, most interviewees respond positively to informed questions.

Accordingly, the reporter should first read anything available that has been written about the interviewee (or the topic being researched). For a personality profile, interview others who know the person. Of course there are times when a subject has not been previously a news subject. Even then productive advance inquiries can usually be made from family members, neighbors, work associates, teachers, etc.

Then the reporter should write out a list of questions, commit the main questions to memory and keep the list ready at the interview as insurance against memory failure. This list should not always control the interview, however. An early question and reply may suggest that the reporter take quite a different tack; there may be a much better story than the reporter earlier envisioned.

Face-to-face for best results

A face-to-face interview is far better than by telephone. For one thing face-to-face enables the reporter to note the person's surroundings, assuming the interview is held at the subject's workplace or home. An interviewer can work through a tense moment of an in-person interview. Over the telephone the subject may disconnect. End of interview.

The reporter should be appropriately dressed, pleasant but businesslike. It's important that the reporter remain in charge, bringing the questions back on track if the subject wanders into irrelevant areas. Remaining in charge is not always easy when questioning older persons who have gained authority or fame. Here again, preparation helps.

Press for replies of substance

Subjects skilled at being interviewed can seem to give replies when actually they are saying nothing of substance. Political figures are often adept at this. At such times, the reporter must rephrase the question or even say that the subject hasn't addressed the question.

Subjects inexperienced at interviews can be startled by a reporter's notebook or tape recorder. Often the subjects can be reassured by saying that you want to be sure to get the information correct. If using a tape recorder, which can fail, the reporter should also make selective notes.

If either notebook or tape recorder would frighten the subject, the reporter must sit down immediately after the interview—such as just outside the subject's office door—and reconstruct the interview, scribbling notes or speaking into the tape recorder. A tape recorder is good protection against a charge of being misquoted and also against inadvertent misquoting.

Interviews are usually one-on-one, reporter and subject. But there are times when it is prudent for two reporters to conduct the interview, one posing questions and the other aiding in note-taking. These times occur in wrapping up an investigative reporting project when evidence of wrongdoing is placed before the alleged wrongdoer for comment.

Getting the subject to talk

Almost always, extensive interviews are by appointment. Though he or she should be professional in manner, the reporter does well to open with brief pleasantries. The reporter should be certain he or she pronounces the subject's name correctly. To mispronounce the name would damage the interview severely.

The key to any interview is persuading the subject to talk. If the subject is reticent, you can sometimes succeed by saying that you are only doing your job and you want to do it right.

Additional tips on interviewing:

1. After a few brief opening pleasantries, begin with the easier or less controversial questions, saving the hardest questions to the end. At times you may have to extend the opening phase and let the subject talk for a while about what he or she wants to talk about. Then move into your easier questions once a mood and tone have been established.

2. Early, ask a question or two on which you know the answer. They will help test the truthfulness of the subject. Be skeptical of any reply that cannot be checked, however. The reason is that the subject—especially a public figure—may have a hidden agenda.

3. In addition to noting answers to your questions, note the subject's mannerisms, dress surroundings—specific detail that will help create the scene for readers of your story.

4. Be certain you understand all the answers. When in doubt ask for an explanation. If still in doubt, describe your understanding of the answer to the subject and ask if your understanding is correct.

5. Ask open-ended questions, ones that cannot be answered yes or no. Replies to open-ended questions are often more revealing.

6. Look for opportunities to ask “why” or “how” or “How did you feel at that moment?” or “Would you make the same decision again?” etc. These questions help you learn more about the subject.

7. A technique related to asking “how” and “why” is to ask, “What surprised you about [a certain situation]?”

8. Probe for anecdotes. Encourage subjects to tell stories about themselves. One approach is to ask “What’s the most difficult experience you’ve had with...?”

9. Always proceed as if you assumed a reply. Do not ask, “Do you care to comment...” The subject may say no. When feasible ask a question as if you already know the answer—or part of it.

10. If the subject evades a question, rephrase it and ask it again, although not as the very next question.

11. Drawing on your pre-interview research, ask such questions as “So and so says [whatever] about you. How do you react to that?”

12. Use the so-called pregnant pause. If the subject does not answer a question fully at first, wait silently and appear expectant. Often, as the seconds tick away, the subject will conclude that you want more detail and add to the brief answer. The trick is to silently outwait the subject.

13. As you near the close, ask the most difficult questions, the ones you think the subject will be reluctant to answer. By then the reluctance may not exist. If it does, you have most of your answers anyway.

14. Keep asking questions even after you've closed your notebook or turned off the tape recorder. That's an especially good time for candid replies.

15. At the end, thank the subject. Leave the way open for a later question, perhaps by phone. Create the most positive circumstances possible; you may need this person as a news source another time. If it is likely the subject will not see your story, send a clip upon publication.

5

Writing: A Process

By Malcolm F. Mallette
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For beginning journalists, life is rarely more stressful than when they face a blank sheet of typing paper or a blank video screen at deadline, while the editor screams for copy and the words won't come. Meanwhile, with seeming ease, experienced journalists nearby are cranking out stories at a blistering pace. At such times beginning journalists may wonder why they didn't take up a less pressurized career—skydiving perhaps.

Beginners will have less reason for despair if they understand that writing a news story is a process with five definite steps. Knowing the process helps beginners—and even veterans—recognise where they stand in the process and how to break out of their paralysis or bolster a sagging narrative.

One reason why beginners often despair is that good writing looks so easy. There are no signs in the finished story of the hard work, the search for a lead and supporting facts and often the countless revisions. And so as beginners peck out clumsy, halting prose they wonder if they can ever pay the rent as writers.

Can most persons learn to become good writers? In general, the answer is yes, for writing is a craft like cabinet-making. For the very best, though, writing transcends into an art.

Requisites for good writing

What does good writing require? The short answer is: intelligence and the ability to organise detail. Beyond that it requires practice and the use of a handful of basic principles,

not to mention a love for language and mastery of grammar. The principles must become so ingrained that they can be followed reflexively under deadline pressure.

Beginners will improve only as fast as they recognise what is bad in their writing. Of course hard work and practice are also essential. Shortly, we'll turn to some of the principles. But first let's examine the writing process.

As noted, the writing process has five steps. Especially for beginners they must be followed sequentially and with awareness of where one stands in the process. Sometimes the steps blend, or part of one step is taken while standing on another step. And sometimes with experience one sprints along the steps at a lightning pace, touching the steps almost without thought.

The steps are these: (1) conceiving the idea for the story, (2) reporting the story—gathering the facts, (3) analysing the facts and planning the story, (4) writing the rough draft, and (5) rewriting or polishing the story.

When writers encounter trouble, the likely reason is that they have not performed well on one or more earlier steps. In such cases, they need to backtrack and improve on the previous step or steps.

Following the steps sequence

Let's follow the sequence of steps for one particular story.

First, the idea, Step One. Often the idea is self-evident. A plane crashes or the town council meets and the newspaper covers it. On beat reporting, many ideas are unmistakable. But the first-rate reporter looks for stories beyond the obvious. For our examination, though, let's suppose that one day you notice that huge flocks of sparrows have settled on your town. Never before have you seen so many sparrows. Why should that be? Ah, you have an idea for a story, and you mention it to your editor.

Together you begin to plan how to report the idea. Who should you interview? One or more ornithologists? Is there one at the local university? A sampling of citizens who may also have noticed the increase and formed an opinion? The town health or sanitation department, which may face a problem of bird droppings, either the volume or the threat of disease? Have nearby towns noticed the same increase? Is there a plan to shoo the sparrows away? Has anything like this ever happened before; it's time to consult the newspaper library? Pictures? This is the time to plan for illustrations.

And so you flesh out the idea and form a plan for reporting the idea, thereby moving to Step Two.

In Step Two—reporting—you may well find your mind drifting into Step Three—planning the story—as you gather facts. An expert or a hunter or a housewife may utter a quote that could be worth the lead. You note it in mind or notebook. Each interview or observation leads you to other sources of facts.

You're keeping in mind that a story is a selection of facts carefully arranged and skillfully described. During this step you're not sure which facts you will later want to include in the story. So you gather all the facts that you can, with a particular eye for specific detail that will create in the readers' minds what you have seen or heard. And you're mindful that if you use every fact in your notebook or on your tape recorder that you've probably underreported.

Now you're back in the newsroom and moving to Step Three—analysing and planning the story. What is the essence of this story, you ask yourself? What is it really about? Sometimes it's helpful to state the story in one brief sentence. That's an exercise for yourself, to unclutter your mind.

Keep the editor informed

Orally, you then brief the assigning editor. After all, he or she will help decide the fate of your story—big display or small, long story or short. You tell the editor the approach you have in mind. If an approach eludes your stressed mind the editor can often suggest a good approach. Or if you're heading in a wrong direction, the editor can steer you to safety.

You must make several decisions in this third step. What are the salient facts? What reasonable questions will arise in the minds of readers and on which they will want answers from your story?

Oh, oh, you realise there is a gap in your reporting. You haven't learned, for example, when sparrows hatch their young or how many they typically hatch. You've interviewed an ornithologist who would know. You pick up the telephone and call him. You've filled the gap.

There are other decisions. What will be the tone of the story? If there is no health threat and the sparrows will probably leave soon, you may want to write in a light-hearted tone. If there is a potential health threat, the humorous tone won't do. Tone must be appropriate to the story.

And what about the structure? One choice is the inverted pyramid, through which the most important facts are concentrated in the lead and other facts follow generally in diminishing importance. The first paragraph or two of an inverted pyramid story cover the five W's—Who, What, Where, When and Why. Also How.

The inverted pyramid, used widely by the news agencies, permits chopping off the story from the bottom up. Broadly speaking, the other choice is the feature lead, sometimes called the delayed lead. The delayed lead has infinite variations and is often chosen when there is no danger that the story will be chopped off in order to fit available space. In any case, a structure must be decided upon.

Writers differ in the way they plan. Some produce an outline that at least faintly resembles the outlines you had to produce in writing school essays. Others prepare an informal outline by listing the “must” facts and ordering them by number—one, two, three, etc. Others may only mark, say in red ink, the chosen facts as scribbled in the notebook.

By whatever method, you must decide in what order to present the facts and group all similar facts so as to present them in a clump. A major problem in some stories is that related facts are scattered. Without a plan, you will surely falter. And if you decide on a feature lead, you should select the ending even before you write the lead, for you don't want your story to simply trail off at the end.

Writing is architecture

In Step Three you are tested on one of the two requirements for becoming a good writer: the ability to organise detail. Writing is architecture, and fancy wording will not offset weak timbers.

Now, with a structure decided upon, you face the daunting keyboard to write the first draft, Step Four. We're thinking of ideal conditions here, time enough to write and then revise. It's you and the blank paper or video screen.

The rule here is to get *something* onto paper or screen. You're not etching in stone. Drafts are just that, drafts to be changed or discarded. So what if your first five leads don't work. Scrap the paper or consign those screen images to electronic exile and begin anew.

One reason for writer's block is the fear of producing something not up to the writer's self-set standards. That's the nonsensical fear of etching in stone. Drafts provide a starting point. So write *something*.

Here in Step Four you might realise that your plan is inadequate, that you need to backtrack to Step Three and rework your architecture. Better to backtrack than to blunder onward, heading for journalistic disaster.

A discussion of Step Four is a good place to analyze that old saw to “write as you talk.” Not quite so. Rare is the person who speaks with the precision and brevity of skillfully written sentences. So the goal becomes to write to make it seem as if you were talking, without the usual “ahs” and the “know what I mean” interjections.

Hooray, now you’ve finished the first draft! But beware. Your emotions of creation link you to that draft like a mother and fetus are connected by the umbilical cord. It’s painful to alter your own creation. Better to build some emotional distance.

Writers speak of refrigerating the story, letting it cool. Tomorrow you can see flaws not evident today. But deadlines might not permit that luxury. Still, you might have minutes. Sip a softdrink. Read the comics. Make a necklace of paper clips. Do something to clear the emotional scales from your eyes. If your editor is free, ask him or her to offer suggestions. The editor’s counsel here can save chunks of time later.

And then—Step Five—revise your draft. You might need just a little polishing—or a total rewrite. Give it your best effort and keep polishing until the editor calls time. In revising think of the principles of good writing you will find below.

The ABC’s of good writing

The principles that follow will lead you to the ABC’s of good writing—*Accuracy, Brevity, and Clarity*. Accuracy because an inaccurate story is worse than worthless, it’s harmful. Brevity because vigorous writing is concise—no unnecessary parts. You owe the reader concision. Clarity because if a message can be misunderstood it will be; writing is one-way communications with no feedback.

Many times when I have found a story vague or confusing I have approached the writer knowing what will be said. “Well, you see what happened was...” The writer had failed to put on paper something he or she had in mind. Be sure the facts are on the paper.

And sometimes I have found a reporter who, under questioning, sheepishly admitted that he or she didn’t fully understand the subject or event he or she was trying to describe for readers. It’s a journalistic sin to confuse the reader because you didn’t understand the facts and tried to write around that lack of understanding. It never works.

If you have done your best on all five steps, there's a good chance that you have reached the goal of all writing: Accuracy, Brevity, Clarity.

A checklist for good writing

Writers develop as they learn to recognise what is bad in their writing. It follows that writers must learn to recognise their own shortcomings. This checklist, should help you find weaknesses in your writing:

- 1.** Use the active voice. It has more vigor than the passive.
- 2.** Rely heavily on strong nouns and verbs. Use adjectives and adverbs sparingly. Powerful verbs create pictures in a reader's mind.
- 3.** Write mainly with the simple declarative sentence—subject, verb, object.
- 4.** Use simple, short words.
- 5.** Avoid fad words, buzz words, cliches, bureaucratese, legalese and other jargon.
- 6.** Try for short sentences, but vary their length so as not to be staccato. One idea to a sentence. Keep average length under 18 words.
- 7.** Be sure verb tenses agree.
- 8.** Avoid clutter, especially in the lead. Move clutter elements to later paragraphs.
- 9.** Use specific, telling detail. Take the reader to the scene.
- 10.** Supply necessary background. Each story should stand on its own feet.
- 11.** Define any terms some readers may not understand.
- 12.** Use analogies to explain complicated concepts.
- 13.** When a person is introduced early in the story reidentify the person on later reference. Thus: "Jones, the accountant..."
- 14.** Leave no unanswered questions; try to answer a question as soon as it is raised.
- 15.** Raise no hopes that you don't fulfill. Thus if you speak of a person's wit, give an example.
- 16.** In stories of great drama, write with restraint.
- 17.** Show, don't tell. Not "He was angry," but "He hammered the desk with his fist, and his eyes flashed."
- 18.** Place the most important words in a sentence at its beginning and end.

19. Use direct quotes sparingly. Quote only when something is said in a distinctive manner or exact phrasing is important. Usually, a paraphrase saves words.
20. When quoting or paraphrasing a quote identify the source early.
21. Remove all unnecessary parts. Vigorous writing is concise.
22. Do not strain. Some stories should be told simply, briefly.
23. Use transitions to signal readers when you shift directions.
24. Read the story aloud. The ear will detect rough spots.

If you follow the above guidelines, your prose, which may have been wordy, clumsy and vague, will acquire vigor, brevity and clarity. Let's examine what a couple of the guidelines will accomplish.

"Powerful verbs create pictures in a reader's mind." Not, for example, "The vehicle hit the tree," but "The yellow Volkswagen slammed into the huge oak tree." The verb has more vigor, and specifics on the car and tree also aid.

Short sentences aid understanding

"Keep average length under 18 words." Studies show that reader understanding increases as sentence word count decreases. Not every sentence must be short, but certainly avoid compound, complex, run-on sentences. If you write such a sentence, search out the conjunctions—especially "and" and "but." Usually it helps to substitute a period for the conjunction, breaking the verbal mouthful into easily chewed morsels.

The other tips will also help to polish your writing. Make all of these guidelines part of you, so that you can use them reflexively even when writing at flat-out speed on deadline.

Strong structure is essential

Although the guidelines can work wonders in individual sentences and paragraphs, your stories will still fail if the structure is weak. Underlying any good story is sound architecture—and structure. Let's touch on structure again.

The structure for an inverted-pyramid story is largely self-evident. A lead summarises the central fact or facts of the story. Supporting facts follow. Writing an inverted pyramid

lead is simple enough if the story has one or two main elements. When several elements should be mentioned in the first paragraph or two an overly long compound-complex sentence should be avoided.

Improvement often results by breaking that run-on sentence into two or more sentences. Sometimes it is impractical to cram all the essentials into one paragraph, and the lead is really the first two or three paragraphs.

Here are two multi-element inverted pyramid stories, first day and second day, by the Associated Press that capsulize the factors smoothly:

LONDON—A fierce storm with torrential rains driven by winds of up to 110 m.p.h. cut a trail of destruction Thursday across southern England and into the Continent, killing at least 62 people in five countries.

LONDON—Crews scrambled to restore power to a million homes and clear toppled cars from cluttered highways Friday after a fierce storm flayed Western Europe with hurricane-force winds, killing more than 90.

When a complex story requires early mention of several facts the lead comprises more than one paragraph, as in this account of an historical occasion:

CAPETOWN, South Africa—Black nationalist leader Nelson Mandela walked out of prison today a free man after more than 27 years in confinement and told cheering supporters that their armed struggle against white-minority rule in South Africa must be intensified.

The 71-year-old Mandela, whom the government is hoping to engage in negotiations to end the country's bitter racial conflict, acknowledge the "integrity" of the man who ordered his release. President Frederik W. de Klerk, but said blacks "have no option but to continue" to fight for political rights. He also urged that international economic sanctions against Pretoria be maintained until its apartheid policies of racial separation are totally dismantled.

Now let's consider the myriad ways to begin the sparrow story delayed lead or feature fashion. Whatever the choice, the first four or five paragraphs, because they don't summarise the story, must build a sense of anticipation. Your words must make the reader decide that it will be worth his while to read on.

But the reader won't wait long. By about the fifth paragraph you must capsulize the story. This is often called the *nut graph*. Let's say your lead opens with the discovery by three

or four astonished persons of the swarms of sparrows. Ah, reader appetite is whetted. Then you write:

All over town the reports are similar. This area has been invaded by thousands of sparrows. Nobody seems certain where they came from or how long they'll stay, and they could threaten the community's health.

That's no prize-winner, but it conveys the idea. Now you are ready to address one by one the many questions you and your editor discussed in Step One of the writing process and the other questions that arose as you harvested facts.

In answering questions one by one you are using block structure, like stacking toy blocks on the floor. Arrange the questions and the answers in the most logical order that you can, so that one block of information flows smoothly into the next. In this story the first question might be where the sparrows came from. Then some context: do the experts know of similar phenomena, etc.?

A choice of structures

There are other structures. One is chronological, but chronology works only on certain stories. Another is to view a situation sequentially through several pair of eyes. Mutations are many. The constant is a strong underlying structure that holds the pieces together and groups related bits of information.

Whatever its structure, a good story is like a good highway; it provides a smooth ride to the destination. And changes in direction are signaled by unmistakably clear signs.

A reader needs to know when a writer is changing direction—moving on to a new train of thought. Paragraphing helps. But paragraphing alone is often not enough; a transition or transitional device is needed. Without that road sign—the transition or transitional device—the reader wanders off course, if only for an instant.

Words and phrases like these are transitions: and, but, thus, however, still, yet, of course, certainly, clearly, consequently, in fact, granted, admitted, obviously, therefore, furthermore, moreover, on the other hand, indeed, in addition, etc.

Sometimes something more is needed than the above words to direct the reader. One device is called a paragraph hook. The last word of one paragraph is hooked into the first sentence of the ensuing paragraph and used to introduce a new idea.

Without a strong structure, a story will wobble, even fall apart. Good writers work hard on structure. So should you.

6

Copy Editing

This article draws with permission on the American Press Institute booklet "Effective Writing and Editing."

Copy editors stand guard against errors, missing facts, unanswered questions, grammatical mistakes, verbosity, lack of clarity, poor taste and libelous statements.

No story should be published without editing by at least one person other than the writer. On larger newspapers, it is not unusual for a story to be edited by three or four persons.

Depending on the size of a paper, a reporter's copy passes through the hands of editors with various titles: copy editor, sub-editor, news editor etc., and, on major stories, managing editor or editor-in-chief. All stand guard in similar fashion. For simplification, all are referred to in this chapter as copy editors.

Experienced editors offer this advice on copy editing:

- 1.** Read a story completely before making any changes. It is important to understand what the writer is trying to say.
- 2.** Be sure the story is structurally sound, that it is arranged correctly. Decide what the most important point is. If the reporter failed to put the most important point in the lead, return the story for repairs or, against deadline or an unavailable reporter, make the change yourself. This applies more to straight news stories than to features, where the main point may not be in the first paragraph or two.
- 3.** Tighten the story. Decide which parts of the story can be omitted if necessary. Leave cutting until last.

4. Remove words, improve construction, smooth sentence flow and make other changes to make the story more pleasing.

5. Make sure that all reasonable questions are answered. First ask the writer (or wire service if wire copy) to make needed changes. If that is not feasible, attempt to find the answers yourself.

6. Be satisfied that the story is fair, that both sides of an issue are presented, that the accused or criticised person gets a chance to reply.

7. Be skeptical of every “fact” in every story. Weigh the probability of each statement. Is it likely to be true? If a column of figures is said to amount to so much, add it. Make sure of names, dates, times, places, middle initials, history, political affiliations, sums of money, criminal charges, titles, addresses.

8. Make it simple. Convert complicated and difficult sentences into simple ones.

9. Never let a word, expression or sentence get by if the reader might not know what it means.

10. Avoid excessive attribution. But make sure that controversial or disputed information is clearly attributed.

11. Make transitions clear. Avoid abrupt jumps in thought.

12. Be grammatical. Avoid slang, fad expressions, clichés.

13. Follow your newspaper’s style (uniform usage on abbreviations, spellings, capitalization, etc.).

14. Operate with a scalpel, not a cleaver. As copy editor, you are the writer’s friend. If the writer has a style, respect it within reason.

Tensions inevitably develop between reporters and editors. Tension or not, however, the copy editor must always stand guard for the newspaper—and the reader.

7

Writing Headlines

The importance of well-crafted headlines can scarcely be overstated, for headlines serve several essential purposes. Primarily, headlines should lead readers to body type—the stories themselves. But it doesn't always work that way.

Because readers differ in their interests and information needs, a headline that lures one reader might not lure another. Too, an effective headline might provide all the information certain readers want on given stories. They are the scanners, who are highly selective in stories they read in detail.

Headlines also grade the news, conveying to the reader by their size and placement the editor's judgment on the relative importance or interest of stories under various headlines. And they add to the display of news by separating the masses of gray body type and making attractive layouts possible.

Over the years, headlines have evolved through something of a cycle. A century ago, most newspapers used headlines with multiple decks. Those multiple decks consumed large amounts of editing time, not to mention newsprint.

Decks—or certainly multiple decks—virtually vanished over time.

Then two developments served to almost complete the cycle. The first was a flurry of newspaper redesigns, with the laudable object of making news display more attractive. All too often the redesigns were carried out by specialists who failed to understand that although design and content usually can and should work together in harmony, content must take precedence when there is conflict. As a result of this failure, some redesigned pages did not permit an adequate headline count—that is, the number of headline letters that could be squeezed in. Many vague, ineffective headlines resulted.

At about the same time, a second development emerged. Research pointed up the already-mentioned fact that many readers, through selective interest or lack of time, are satisfied with the information gleaned from a skillfully written headline and never reach into the story. For that reason, many editors now use one deck in addition to the main headline on certain stories.

Meanwhile, new technology has helped to rescue editors struggling to shoehorn the essence of a complex story into a short headline count. In the days of inelastic hot-metal type a headline that spilled beyond the assigned space was a so-called busted headline every time—meaning that the headline had to be written shorter. Now, with computer composition prevalent, a headline of, say, 48-point type, that runs too long at first effort can be electronically reduced, say, to 46 points, to attain the fit. Research shows that reader eyes are not bothered by these adjustments.

Downstyle headlines also help produce strong headlines. In downstyle, only the first letter of the first word and the first letter of proper nouns are capitalized. Because lower-case letters are narrower than caps the count is increased accordingly.

Writing headlines, however, requires far more than fitting type into assigned space. Headlines should capture the essence of the story. They should neither understate nor overstate the facts in the story. They must accurately reflect the story; many a libel suit has been filed because of misleading headlines.

Avoid non-specific words

Weak headlines result from non-specific words. Unskilled headline-writers often resort to padding to fill the assigned space. That previous space should be used for specifics. We'll look at several examples later.

When a headline-writer must reach deep into a story to craft a headline that means that the story itself is not properly focused. As the saying goes, the lead is buried.

Certain headline refinements are desirable. Strong verbs are a mainstay. On a multiple-line headline, the verb is most effective on the first line. It is best not to split a verb and its auxiliary (has, had, have, etc.) between lines. In the same vein, splits should be avoided on prepositional phrases, on adjectives and the modified nouns and on terms of several words that are read as one term—"ham and eggs," for example.

Cryptic abbreviations and acronyms should be avoided. Note, however, that an acronym that is cryptic at one time might become commonplace and thus clear to most readers. Most readers, for example, would recognise POW as meaning prisoner of war.

In seeking short words that fit into the available count, headline-writers often mis-state the degree of an action. For example, “rips,” which has only the merit of brevity, is sometimes used when “criticises” or “differs with” would be more accurate and appropriate. “Blasts” is another frequent over-statement. A headline-writer should develop a vocabulary of short words—but use them only appropriately.

Here is a helpful technique in headline-writing. First write one sentence in the usual narrative fashion that summarises the story—its details or theme. Then eliminate the needless words. Often a good headline remains.

Most headlines are written in the present tense to convey immediacy. There are exceptions, such as when headlining a historical event. Thus it would be “Galileo invented telescope” as part of a feature-story headline and not “Galileo invents telescope.”

Now let’s examine several weak headlines and consider how they could be improved.

Management policies questioned

Except for readers who had been following a continuing story closely and could make an educated guess at the story content, this headline offers no help. And it cannot be assumed that readers have read previous related stories. The headline count is inadequate to say that allegations against school officials were dismissed, the essence of the story.

Consider that if huge headlines built circulation and readership regardless of the stories underneath them every newspaper would employ studhorse type. Type size should be appropriate to the story and adequate in count to permit writing of a good headline.

Leaders to look at plan

This is the all-purpose headline and could be used on several stories each issue. The trouble is that it tells nothing. A headline needs key words. Which leaders? Which plan?

Water, sewer could breathe life into Dunkirk’s commercial district

Word choices must also be appropriate. “Breathe life” is hardly appropriate for a headline mentioning a sewer.

**Acupuncturist David Mercier
speaks at Rotary lunch meeting**

This headline illustrates several common faults. The story tells that the acupuncturist was a visitor and not known in the community. Thus his name is not essential to the headline. Either “lunch” or “meeting” is padding, taking up room that should be devoted to specifics. Worst of all, the headline fails to convey the essence of the speaker’s message. Out with generalities, in with specifics.

Man celebrates 92nd birthday

Not wrong, but not informative or inviting. A better lure to potential readers would be:

**At 92, Arthur Southard
still looking forward**

So, avoid padding, be specific, insist on an adequate headline count. Every headline should strive to see the story.

In the rush to meet deadlines, newspaper headlines are often given scant attention. That is a serious error, which defeats the purpose of writing the stories. On newspapers of high quality, headlines are often rewritten and rewritten again. A newspaper with outstanding headlines is usually outstanding in all respects.

8

Photo Journalism

Moments frozen in time

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By Charles Okigbo

Increasing use of offset printing offers great improvement in the quality of newspaper and magazine photos. So those who enjoy the craft and art of photography have increasing opportunities to use those skills.

A good newspaper photograph should:

- Draw reader attention immediately
- Tell a story
- Be relevant to the context

The best pictures not only tell a story, they also do so dramatically.

The quickest way to good news photography is through pictures of people.

If fire destroys a house, your pictures will be more meaningful to your readers if, in addition to showing the destruction, you also show those left homeless by the fire. If the victims are not available, photograph the firefighters, or even personal possessions of the victims.

If you cover sports events, take photos of the players, especially action shots. But don't forget the faces of the coaches and the spectators.

Factors to consider

Think of the reader when taking pictures. What will interest him or her?

Get your subjects close together to avoid wasted space.

Look for unposed pictures of people that have natural animation.

Don't let your subjects dictate the picture you take. Be polite but forceful in deciding what goes into the photo. Don't permit 15 club members into the picture when you seek only the three new officers.

Take pictures of individuals with the subject doing something. This is more interesting than a person just looking at the camera.

Pictures don't always need an accompanying story. They can be a story in themselves. Photos of babies, children and animals have wide reader appeal.

In covering routine events, occasionally seek unusual angles or a point of view different from that customarily seen by the reader.

Seek pictures that illustrate what the reporter will emphasize? Build a working relationship with the reporters.

Have only one focal point. For example, don't have people looking in different directions.

Make the faces in your photos clear and large enough to be recognizable? A face should be at least one inch in diameter.

If the reporter is not present when you are taking a photograph, and you have obtained information beyond your caption material, pass it on to the reporter or editor.

Captions and cutlines

Cutlines—sometimes called captions—the explanatory words appearing with an illustration or photographs, are a major responsibility for photographers.

Whether you are expected to turn in a finished caption or only the information for someone else to do the writing, the principle is the same.

Be accurate. Be certain every name is spelled correctly and that every title is precisely right. Be sure the sequence of the names in the caption matches the sequence of the faces in the photo.

Remember that the primary function of the caption is to explain the photo. Its secondary goal is to draw attention to the accompanying story, when there is one.

The caption should state explicitly what is happening in the picture, who are the people and, if space permits, relevant details of interest.

Captions should not point out the obvious. Words such as “pictured above” or “shown here” are not necessary.

Picture editing

When taking a photo, it is often impossible to get only those subjects or objects the photographer wants to show. When these elements cannot be eliminated at the photo-taking stage, they should be removed by cropping.

Cropping is the removal of unnecessary elements from a photograph to emphasise what's important. Cropping is the use of a grease pencil outlining the picture as desired or by marginal markings to delineate the dimensions to be printed. Cropping has been called finding the best picture in the photograph.

Here cropping Ls are helpful, two cardboard or plastic L-shaped units that can be moved about on the photograph to identify the best cropping.

Every photograph prepared for use in a newspaper should have four crop marks that set the dimensions of the published picture. Two crop marks set the width dimensions, the other two the depth dimensions. When these crop marks are absent, the production staff will assume that the entire photograph is to be reproduced.

News photographs also can be corrected by the production or art department. For instance, photos can be air-brushed to remove disturbing background or to highlight a desirable feature. However, distortion and creating false impressions must be avoided.

A common mistake is to prepare a page layout and select photos to fit blank blocks. It is better to evaluate the picture available for the stories first, and then determine what sizes and shapes are required to achieve the best visual effect. That way, the text and illustrations are positioned simultaneously and this will produce much better-looking pages.

Picture pages

A picture page can be a rewarding and challenging aspect of photo-journalism. It is an advancement from the single-picture strategy to the multiple-picture presentation.

There are three major types of picture pages—the picture story, the picture essay and the picture group.

The picture story gives a visual account of a single subject.

The picture essay revolves around a central point or theme, usually a single problem or issue to be analysed through illustration.

The picture group contains a potpourri of miscellaneous pictures on varying subjects. This is the commonest in African newspapers.

These pages are most effective when there is some text to explain the reason for the picture layout.

White space between pictures should be uniform—usually one pica. Don't trap excess white space; move it to the edges of the layout.

Proof reading

Accuracy in photo-production require that journalists see the proofs from photo engravers and lithographers early enough to make necessary corrections before production deadlines.

The commonest errors are:

- Wrong dimensions. The picture does not fit the space allowed for it.
- Incorrect plate dimensions. Pictures can be reproduced in the right size, but still contain elements that should have been cropped out.
- Incorrect captions. People in the picture have been wrongly identified. Sometimes captions are inadvertently transposed.

Pictures, like illustrations such as charts, maps and graphs are highly effective in getting information and ideas to people.

9

Typography/Design

Make it
easy on
the eyes

This article, and also Chapter 25 on Design for Advertising are condensed from the book "Designing the Total Newspaper" (Harper & Row), and published with permission of the book's author, Edmund C. Arnold. Professor Arnold has written a dozen books on design and related matters and redesigned scores of newspapers on three continents.

By Edmund C. Arnold

Readers demand a newspaper that is easy and convenient to read. This the newspaper designer must keep constantly in mind. *Typography* is the art and process of arranging typographic elements on a page. A *typographic element* is anything that puts an image on a piece of paper. These may be characters of the alphabet, numbers, punctuation, rules, borders and ornamentation or pictures of any kind.

These are our tools, and we need to know their strengths and weaknesses. Methods of creating those images have changed often, especially with recent revolutionary changes in typesetting and printing. But the principles of typography remain constant.

Problems of communication

The designer faces three continuing problems.

The first problem is the mechanics of reading. Reading is a learned and difficult skill.

The second problem, closely linked to the first, is the psychology of reading. Faced with the demands of reading, would-be readers often seek the alternative of broadcast news. Newspapers depend on repeat sales. To get them, newspapers must have good content. Content is far more important than the packaging.

In this chapter we'll always assume that the content is as good as we can make it. But typography is important in persuading potential customers to sample our wares.

The third problem is the economics of typography. The paper must be produced at a cost that allows it to be sold at a price that creates a margin of profit. Perhaps the most pressing budgetary factor—time—is frequently overlooked. Good typography must be possible within the structures of demanding deadlines.

Functional typography

The typical reader spends the same amount of time with each issue of a newspaper, daily or non-daily. Typography should assure that this limited amount of the reader's time—be devoted to receiving information. Any typographic device that disturbs efficient reading dissipates the budget of time. The solution—at least a partial one—is *functional typography*.

In our context, *typography* is the philosophy of the use of printing elements. *Layout* is the application of a constant set of guides to a specific situation: the arrangement of elements in an ad, on a page or within a section or an edition. *Functional typography* demands that every element do a useful, necessary job in the most efficient way.

Elements are tested for functionalism by demanding one or two answers. First: "Does this element do a useful, necessary job?" If the answer is yes, it is functional. Then a second question: "Can we do this job faster or easier or more economically?"

If the tested element does not do a useful, necessary job, then it is nonfunctional. At worst it is malfunctional, not only not doing a good job but doing something bad. An element that fails to attract readers will usually distract them. Throw it out.

How do we know when an element is functional or non-functional? Primarily by analyzing how the reader uses it. Communication occurs only when the spoken word is heard, the written word is read—and both are comprehended. We can't force the receiver to listen or to read.

On any printed page the starting point is the upper left corner. This is the *primary optical area*, the POA. By training from babyhood, the eye enters a page here and must be caught by a strong *attention compeller*. When the eye reaches the lower right corner, the page has been finished. This is the terminal area, the TA. This progression is based on the linear arrangement of the Latin alphabet. For the Semitic alphabets, Hebrew and Arabic, the POA is at the top right and the TA at the lower left.

The *reading diagonal*, from the POA to the TA, is often called "reader gravity." The eye doesn't follow the reading diagonal as if walking a tightrope. It can be lured off the path by *optical magnets*, placed throughout the page to lure the eye into every area. The *fallow corners*, top right and lower left, especially require enticement.

The eye doesn't like to go against reading gravity. Thus we must not draw the eye, immediately as it enters a page—down into the center of the area. If we do, it will be difficult to cajole the reader to go against gravity to the overlooked elements.

When the eye has finished a line of type, it must, move against gravity, to the left, to start the next line. The eye wants to come to a constant *axis of orientation*, the A/O, on that return empty sweep. The eye always returns to the A/O no matter where the next line of type begins.

The eye sweep is determined by the start of the first line. If type is "stepped," each line farther to the right than the preceding one, the eye returns to the A/O, looks for the second line, then reads it. This doesn't take appreciable time or effort. But it annoys the reader.

If the second line of type is to the left of the axis, irritation is compounded. So one axiom of a typographer is: "All type must be set flush left." Let's amend that axiom: "To serve your reader best, all type must be set flush left."

Nothing that a typographer might do is so horrendous that it will destroy all readership. On the other hand, nothing we do will assure 100 percent readership. So the editor must play the percentages.

Loss of readership is constant. We lose a potential reader between the headline and the start of a story. We lose readers at the end of every paragraph, every story, every column,

every page. With so much loss beyond our control, we must not willingly aggravate that loss by inefficient typography.

Functionalism means more than eliminating the non-functional. It means improving upon the functional.

Body type

Newspaper pages are best built upon standard columns. It has been determined that there is an *optimum line length* for body type, a line length or measure. Variations on a basic format are often attractive, but it should always be obvious that we've started with a consistent framework of standard columns.

The column width of a paper determines its basic format. And the column width is determined by the *body type*, the small type used for blocks of copy.

In body type we seek *readability*, a design that makes it easy for the reader to consume large masses of words. The highest readability is provided by the Roman race (*serifs*). An 8-point typeface is used by many newspapers, although some papers use body type ranging up to 10 points. But point measurements can be misleading. We seek a type face that's "big on the slug," that is, the *X-height* or height of letters without descenders and ascenders. The *lowercase alphabet length* (*lca*) conveys the roundness, thus readability, of the individual letters. The *lca* is the width of the alphabet (26 letters) measured in points. A good *lca* for 8-point would be 118 points. Extra spacing between lines called *leading*. Thus we may have, say, 8 on 9.

The most important variable in readability is the line length, or measure. Researchers have determined the validity of the formula:

$$O = lca \times 1-1/2$$

Once *O*, the *optimum line length*, has been determined, we can find the minimum and maximum line lengths that set the *readability range*.

$$\text{Minimum} = O - 25\% \quad \text{Maximum} = O + 50\%$$

This formula is for English in normal copy. It factors in the customary mix of wide and narrow letters. The *lca* is given in most type specimen books. This optimum line length gives a 6-column broadsheet format or a 4-column tabloid page.

Headlines

Headlines have four functions: They summarise the news; they grade the importance of stories; they are conspicuous elements in the design of a page; they lure the looker into becoming a reader.

There is a need to summarise and to grade news for those who read as they run. Thus page design is important, and the architect of the page needs a variety of building blocks. Capturing reader attention in a flash requires simplicity. Headlines should be simple in form and large in size.

In the past, second and third decks were often used. They have been largely eliminated because they don't do a necessary job. If the main head doesn't lure the reader, rarely will the deck.

Flush-left heads

The reading eye is most efficient when type has a constant axis of orientation. Therefore, headlines, as well as body type, should be set flush left. Spacing between words of a head should be 1 *em*: that's half the point size of the headletter measured horizontally.

Downstyle heads

In *downstyle* headlines, the first word of the headline is capped—as in body type—and so are proper nouns. Everything else is lower case. The reason for downstyle: we recognise words by their silhouette, primarily the top one. The silhouette of an all-cap line is a simple rectangle without distinction and thus low legibility.

Headline maximums

Headlines should be terse, and almost always in the present tense to create a sense of immediacy. A useful guideline says that the best headlines have a maximum of 45 characters and that each line of the head should have no more than 32 characters. A 2-line head, then, could have about 22 key strokes per line and a 3-liner could have 15. But a one-line head should have no more than 32. These numbers haven't been etched in stone, but if the maximums are exceeded by a wide margin the headline risks become plodding.

Headline schedule

Every newspaper should have a *headline schedule* (hed sked), a document that shows each head used by the paper. The headline schedule starts out as a list of written specifications. Usually, we begin with the 1-columnners and work up through the widest head, and usually with the heaviest head in each width. Actual heads should be printed and the schedule tested in actual publication for, say, a month. Then it can be revised and frozen. Thereafter only those heads may be used, thus giving the paper a uniformity in headline use.

Jump heads

Many editors minimize and some even prohibit *jumps* off front pages. But it is sometimes necessary to continue a page-one story on an inside page. The head on the jumped or turned portion of the story is important in building and retaining readership. The *jump head* has the same function as the page-one head. Many readers who failed to notice the story on the front page may be attracted by the inside head.

The newspaper constants

The content of a newspaper is transient. But some things aren't replaced every day. They are the constants: the *nameplate*, *slogan* and *ears* (if any), *folio lines*, *masthead*, *logos* and *headings*.

The nameplate, or flag, is the name of the newspaper in display form as it appears on page one. The nameplate is a trademark, but it is more like a coat of arms. A good nameplate should be legible, distinctive, appropriate and handsome. "Legible" might better be replaced by "recognisable." For the nameplate is rarely "read"; it is recognised as an ideogram.

Slogan lines (if any) usually run immediately under the flag.

Ears are small blocks of body type at either side of the nameplate. They are being used less and less, perhaps because ears are not widely read. The weather forecast is probably the most often used bit of information in an ear.

A page-one folio line conventionally includes the date and day, volume and number (a volume consists on one year's issues).

Logos are the labels that identify a section or a pager. Headings are labels that identify regular features. These are a visual string tying the various components of a newspaper into a single integrated whole.

The typeface in headings ought to be distinct from the headline schedule. Legibility is a requisite, so the more eccentric faces should be eschewed.

The reader's demand for greater "organisation" of the paper is served by section logos, not only on section pages but on many inside pages. A section logo should be subordinate to the paper's nameplate. It is possible to display the section name in large type while still giving adequate prominence to the flag.

Pictures

Editors should always think of words plus pictures to determine the best combination of the verbal and nonverbal. It isn't wise to set formulas for the use of pictures. But we should try for a picture on every page.

There are three basic categories of photographs used by newspapers: *spot news*, *planned pictures*, and *portraits*.

The spot-news picture is taken at the scene of an event. While the skill of the photographer is highly important here, the factor of luck is also great.

A great number of pictures in the typical newspaper are in the second category. To various degrees, they are preplanned. The most plannable are those not directly tied to a moment in a continuing event.

The third category is the portrait. It's convenient to have a permanent set up at the newspaper where the subject can be snapped without much manipulation. Portraits are often more effective, though, when taken on site.

Picture cliches

The list of photographic cliches is long and all on the list should be avoided when possible.

Grip-And-Grin is probably the hoariest. Two people, stretching their arms, clasp hands and smile dutifully at the camera.

The Check-Passer. Two people holding a paper in their fingertips to connote the purchase of something or other.

The Contemplators: Here three people sit or stand around a document of some sort on a table. Two gaze hypnotically at the paper while the third rolls his eyes toward the camera.

The Hardware Presentation usually combines a handshake with the transfer of a plaque, trophy or certificate.

Once the picture in the photo has been found, all extraneous parts of the photo are eliminated by *cropping*.

In cropping, a useful tool is a set of *cropper's Ls*. These are two L-shaped pieces of cardboard or plastic which are overlapped to define rectangles. By manipulating the Ls, the editor can find which area of a photo tells the story best. Pictures are generally rectangles of course.

Lines of force

Almost all pictures have at least one or more *lines of force*, which tend to direct the eye in certain directions. These lines are created by action, real or implied. A person looking or pointing will create a line of force. An object that usually moves—a car or an airliner—will create force in the direction it faces, even if shown at rest. The editor must detect these lines of force and place pictures so those lines direct the eye into type.

Pictures and words

Words can stand without art, but a picture cannot stand without words. So the ancient axiom tells us, "Every picture must be identified."

Pictures are identified by *caption material*. In newspapers we call the explanatory matter that runs with a picture *cutlines*. A cutline should be immediately recognised as the inseparable partner of the picture, and the type ought to be markedly different from regular body type.

Sans serif makes an excellent caption face, the perpendicular form especially. Many typographers choose boldface for caption material. The boldface of body type works well for cutlines. Caption type should be at least one and preferably two points larger than regular body type.

Cutlines should tell: (1) the news peg—the reason why the picture is printed here; and (2) the people in the picture, at least those who need identifying; and (3) a note that here is something important or interesting that the reader might not notice or appreciate unless attention were directed to it. And that's all. There is no need to recap the accompanying story in every set of cutlines.

Cutlines should be in the present tense. Reason: a picture is a moment frozen in time and the reader joins in that moment.

(Please see also a separate chapter on pictures.)

Using color effectively

Color is a potent attention-compeller for editorial or advertising use.

Color pictures should not be used just because they are available. Many a picture is actually stronger—especially in newspaper reproduction—in black and white. Not all pictures on a page or in a combination must be either all color or all black and white. The two mix nicely.

The front page

The front page gives the editor the greatest opportunity for typographic creativity and audience exposure. The first function of the front page is to impel the reader to grab the paper in eager hands. The next function is to convert the looker into a reader. It is always and only the news budget that determines how a front page must look. To change the content to fit the packaging is as unrealistic as packaging cornflakes in a bottle.

The newspaper must be instantly recognisable, so the designer must adopt a basic “look” for the paper. At the same time, the front page must look different enough from previous pages that the reader will instantly know that this is something new.

We should be wary of unnecessary restrictions. For example, some editors set a quota for the number of stories on page one. On the other hand, some editors ignore the *story count* and put all their eggs into one or two baskets. On rare occasion two or even one might be enough. **War Ends** can carry a whole page. But that isn't the stuff of which the editor must make the typical front page

Various usages erode front-page flexibility. They include an anchored page-one column, a *summary index* and a strip of *appeals*, tiny billboards across the top of the page to attract the reader to inside material.

The use of any but the simplest table of contents, or *list index*, on page one is debatable—and is debated vigorously with all the inconclusiveness of most journalistic arguments. The best procedure is for the editor to retain all the flexibility possible for using page-one areas.

Horizontal makeup

Body type should generally be arranged in horizontal areas. The wider a block of type in relation to its height, the smaller its mass appears to be. Because the reader is always more amenable to starting a short story than a long one, horizontal makeup is a definite lure. That doesn't mean we can never use a vertical element. Such a rectangle gives pleasant variety to predominantly horizontal shapes.

Placement of art

Proper placement of pictures depends to a large extent upon their lines of force. Unrelated art should be widely dispersed. Jamming photographs makes them compete with each other. It is wise to have a dominant picture rather than two or more of optically equal size that tend to set up their own galaxies and thus splits the page. Nor is it necessary to keep pictures off the fold. One exception: if there is fine detail in a picture, particularly a portrait, the abrasion that might occur during delivery could destroy much of the detail.

Jumps (turns)

Jumps off page one should be minimized if they cannot be avoided entirely. When a story jumps, 70 percent of the readers who are with it at that point will not jump.

Long stories can often be divided into a main piece and a *sidebar*. A *reefer* (from the word "refers") suggesting "More about TAXES on page 5" will customarily produce more readership than the jump line. Reefers don't disturb the normal reading progression; the reader doesn't feel obligated to turn to page 5 at once. If stories must jump, the best landing site is the last page of the section. Then the reader is spared folding and refolding the paper.

Spacing

Consistent spacing is important typography, and every newspaper ought to have a spacing chart at every paste-up station. Here is a suggested set of specifications.

- A. Use 1 pica of space: 1) under flag, 2) above any picture within the page, 3) between catchline and cutlines, 4) between cutlines and related head, 5) between cutlines and cutoff rule, 6) above and/or below sideless box, 7) at end of a story, replacing 30-dash, and 8) between 2-column lead and second leg of 1-column type.

- B.** Use 6 points of space: 1) between picture and catchline, 2) between headline and story, 3) between headline and by-line, and 4) between by-line and story.
- C.** Use 4 points of space: 1) under 14-point subhead.

Inside pages

The predominant need of inside pages is that they be organised. Readers want help with the plethora of information that deluges them daily. That help consists of good typography, good organisation of individual pages and section as well as the whole paper, good indexes and lots of summaries.

How much should—and how much can—a newspaper departmentalize general news? The question has been argued for many years, largely because when we classify information problems pop up. Many stories could be classified in several ways. But the trend is toward classifying. Of course, newspapers are more departmentalized than is often realised: sports, stock-market reports, food—all these and many more are grouped routinely.

The most important single element in a good inside page is a *dominant head*. Such a head is the optical nucleus for the page pattern. The dominant head must be obviously weightier than any other on the page.

The editorial page

The *editorial page* is second in importance only to page one. Its functions—to explain and interpret, to provide a forum for public opinion and to sound a rallying cry for the citizenry—all depend on good typography.

The first function of editorial-page typography is to distinguish the page as much as possible from news pages. This page is uniquely the newspaper's own. The distinction between objective news coverage and subjective news analysis is not always clear to readers.

So we must make a visual distinction between this page of opinion and those of hard fact.

The next typographic function is to make this page as attractive as possible. Pieces tend to run long, and readers shy from lengthy copy. Headlines here tend to be labels that lack the excitement and immediacy that help lure readers into news stories.

One way to make the editorial page look different is to use a different column format. If news pages have, say, a six-column

format, we might use a five-column format on the editorial page. A five-column page would usually keep us well within the readability range, especially if we use a body type a point or so larger than the regular news face.

Going to a larger body size, especially for the editorials themselves, is a wise move. Editorials also can be set in a distinctive measure like 22 picas and then using five other columns at about 14 picas or four at about 17.

The nameplate should be prominently displayed at the top of the editorial page. Editorials are the institutional opinion of the newspaper and should be so recognised. If ever a page requires a logo, the edit and *op-ed* pages do. In addition to the flag, a label that says EDITORIAL or COMMENT or OPINION or some version thereof ought to be prominently displayed.

A most important element on the edit page is the *masthead*. The masthead, listing the owners and other executives of the paper along with other necessary but unglamorous information is best carried at the foot of the editorial page and condensed as much as possible.

Tabloid format

Broadsheet typography needs no major adaptation to be used for the smaller page tabloid, which is one-half broadsheet size. Most tabloid formats are four or five columns. Tab heads tend to be a little bigger than those for larger pages, but there are fewer heads to compete against one another. Pictures, too, tend to be proportionately larger. Jumps will be required more often in tab format even if long stories are reduced to main pieces and sidebars. Jumps backward off the back page are not only necessary but also accepted by readers.

Page layout—front and inside—in tab format follows the principles described earlier.

10

News Agencies

Varied
clients
served

Omagbemi Ereku , a 1979 graduate in mass communication at the University of Lagos began his journalistic career with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), where he is now senior sub-editor of the foreign desk in Lagos. He previously reported for the agency in Port Harcourt and Maiduguri in Nigeria.

By Omagbemi Ereku

News agencies are commonly called wire services. This is because their offices or bureaus have historically been linked to their clients by wires and cables over which news and pictures flow. In recent years sophisticated systems have also employed satellite networks.

Information from these services is referred to as wire reports.

News agencies gather, write, edit and send news stories, features, analyses, commentaries and other material to clients—mostly newspapers, magazines and radio and television stations.

A news agency has been likened to a “man with a thousand mothers-in-law”. This is because news agencies have to serve—and satisfy—all sizes, shapes and political colorations of their clients.

Clients depend on the agencies for news or information that they cannot gather on their own, for economic or other reasons. They pay a subscription fee based on circulation and other factors.

It would, for example, be economically impossible for Radio Borno and Radio Rivers at the northern and southern extremes of Nigeria to maintain correspondents in each state of the country as well as in foreign countries.

By paying a relatively small subscription fee to the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), however, the two stations receive from NAN at regular intervals daily, the national and foreign news they require for their broadcasts. The same applies to newspapers, magazines and television stations.

Types of news agencies

There are three types of news agencies.

The first is characterised by The Associated Press (AP). Established in the United States in 1892, it is owned by a majority of the media and pools their coverage to get a wider distribution of news at less cost.

The AP maintains bureaus throughout the world and functions like a cooperative with each newspaper and radio/TV station asked to make its stories available to other members, via The Associated Press.

The second type is privately owned and operated, such as Reuters of Great Britain, Agence France Presse and United Press International.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN), like the Zambian News Agency (ZANA) of Zambia, belongs to a third type—the national news agencies owned and controlled in varying degrees by governments.

While some governments see their news agencies as instruments of state playing a vital role in national affairs, other news agencies exist because the media in those countries are financially unable to afford such an agency.

Several Third World agencies were organised to offset what was considered inadequate reporting about their countries by established agencies of the developed world.

PANA's goals

The Pan African News Agency (PANA) has two major goals.

The first is to reach the level where it can receive news from the media in one African country and send it quickly to the media in all other African countries. Then the continent would have its own communications network with PANA as its center.

The second goal is to become a major source of African news and photos for other countries around the world.

Neither of these goals has been reached. But PANA has been transmitting since 1983, with the national news agencies as both its members and subscribers and the chief source of its news stories.

Sources of wire reports

A major source of wire reports is from a news agency's staff or correspondents, feature writers, news analysts, columnists and photographers who may be residents in the country of the news agency or based in foreign countries.

While the staff spends much of its time gathering material directly from news sources, it also rewrites stories produced by newspapers, radio and television stations, researches reports and other publications, as well as from other foreign news agency reports.

It is especially important that a news agency reporter quotes the source of his or her story and makes every effort to confirm the accuracy of the stories rewritten from other sources.

Typical of a story's origination and usage is this example.

Port Harcourt, June 10 (NAN) A 35-year-old housewife at Angalapoku Village in the Brass local government area of Rivers State, was yesterday delivered of a baby boy with two heads, one trunk and three legs, the Nigerian Tide reported today.

The Nigerian Tide, a subscriber to NAN, is rightly given credit in the above example as the source of the story by the NAN reported based in Port Harcourt.

The story, apart from the possibility of being circulated all over the country through NAN's network, could also be transmitted by foreign agency reporters based in Africa for wider attention abroad.

Stringers broaden coverage

Stringers are reporters or writers engaged by a news agency or other media on a part-time basis to supply news stories or features in a geographical area not covered by a staff member.

An exchange arrangement with other news agencies is another source of wire material. This is done by one news agency entering into agreement with a foreign news agency for the exchange of wire reports.

Such exchange of programmes enables the less developed news agencies of the Third World to check the selective reportings of the larger Western news agencies.

In fact, one of the Third World's criticisms of Western news media has been that they often concentrate their coverage on disasters, social problems and political upheavals in reporting the Third World.

But studies have shown that Third World news agencies also carry more news about crime, internal conflict and disasters than about national development efforts.

Brevity and clarity needed

Basic principles in news writing apply to a wire service, except that more emphasis is placed on brevity and speed.

Wire reports must be condensed to save the high cost of transmitting reports hundreds or thousands of kilometers away; their clarity must not be sacrificed for brevity; and, most importantly, they must be transmitted immediately on completion.

The lead of a wire story should be short.

The lead should be in summary form, with few but precise words, telling what the story is all about.

Producing copy for radio or television requires even tighter, more condensed writing. In the print media, differences exist as to what length to expect from copy for a daily and that for a weekly or monthly paper.

Because wire reports serve both print and electronic media, there should be an effort to strike a balance, without sacrificing clarity.

Agencies as news merchants cannot afford to be partial or untruthful in their wire reports, or else they risk losing clients.

To survive in the usually fierce but healthy competition, a news agency must operate at a more than average level of efficiency and accuracy, particularly in speed and scope of coverage.

11

Selecting the News

What is the best mix of news, together with reader service information, for a newspaper to print? The question is eternal, the answer ever-changing. The optimum content for one newspaper may well be wrong for another. And what was right last year needs modifying this year because reader needs and wants are never constant.

Editors must strive continually to stay apace of readers. Again and again in some countries editors have introduced change only to find that their readers had changed even more.

Unceasing change

With reader needs and wants so fluid, newspapers of general circulation, large of small, daily or weekly, are wise to initiate unceasing evolution. Evolution usually serves better than occasional drastic change, which alters a newspaper's character and can chase away loyal readers. Building a newspaper's image is a slow, unending process, and the image can be damaged by uncharacteristic behaviour.

Editors must decide on the desired image and work consistently to establish that image. Newspapers have many faces: from low-key publications of record to lurid and sensational ones and many steps in between.

Amid these variables, there are still guidelines on content for the newspaper of general circulation. At the outset, editors must determine why readers buy their particular paper.

No typical reader

There is no such thing as the typical reader. All readers differ, though they can be broadly categorized. Serious-minded readers of a large metropolitan daily generally expect

a complete package of world, national and local news together with specialised coverage on the arts, sports, business, etc. Readers of a community weekly look for intensive coverage of their community and don't expect to learn about world issues.

In the battle for readers, metropolitan dailies often seek to include local community news and print regional pages or sections. This places a burden on community weeklies to cover local news even more intensely.

Critical for any newspaper is how it defines so-called local news. Happenings in a far corner of the world are local news if they will affect local readers. An example would be a serious drought in another country that drives up food prices for readers of the newspaper. Another example would be a medical breakthrough that will bring a certain disease under control worldwide.

Then there is the growing competition with radio and television news broadcasts, which for many persons have become a major, even principal, source of news. In this competition, newspapers must rely on their advantages: the ability to cover complex news in detail, the non-linear presentation so readers can pick and choose items, the portability of the newspaper itself, and the permanent record.

Why readers read

Now let's get more specific about the aforementioned guidelines. A good starting point is to list the reasons readers turn to newspapers—beyond the advantages mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

The reasons are fourfold:

1. Surveillance, which means to watch or look around. Many people want to know what's going on, near home and elsewhere. Unfortunately, there are those with little desire for surveillance, a fact that baffles journalists who are information buffs by nature. Because of the surveillance factor, newspapers must offer a broad range of information appropriate for their position in the marketplace. Remember that there is no typical reader. Thus the newspaper must be a cafeteria of information. And because surveillants have limited time the news must be presented efficiently, which is not to say that all stories should be short.

2. The social connection. Think how many times you have used a news story to open conversation, to break the ice, to find common ground with another person. These connections are made with news of great import and also inconsequential items that are unusual or funny. It's a promotion

plus for a newspaper when one reader says to another person, “Hey, did you see the story in the paper about...?” Therefore, editors do well when they include in the news mix stories of human interest.

3. Entertainment. The word entertainment is used here not in the sense of the theater or sports but in the pure joy of reading a well written and edited newspaper. Many of us find pleasure in a well-turned phrase or a catchy headline, a column with a point of view, or a sulfurous letter to the editor. The lesson here is to be professional—and never dull.

4. Help with decision-making. Or call it coping. Readers turn to newspapers for help of many kinds. They want to know the best shopping bargains, which is why advertising serves readers. So does consumer news in the news columns. They want to know how to repair a leaky faucet, when the trash will be collected or what the value of their money will be tomorrow. Our lives face myriad decisions that require knowledge. Newspapers are a friend in need when they print everything from the weather forecast (Should I wear my raincoat today?) to health columns to handyman hints to advice for the lovelorn.

An imperative: Cover government

In a free society the major imperative for a newspaper of general circulation is to cover the activity of governments and politicians fully and fairly. Such coverage is the very rationale for a free press: to provide citizens with information so that they can vote or develop pressures intelligently.

One way to build greater readership of governmental coverage is to report governmental news as the actions of individuals and not impersonal institutions. Further, news of government should make clear how actions will affect individuals, the readers. Will a new policy mean higher taxes or better highways or reasonably priced housing? The individual reader asks, for example, “How much is my tax bill going to increase?”

Breaking news: The foundation

Coverage of breaking news—spot coverage—is the main building block, but obvious events often do not tell the whole story. There lies opportunity for feature coverage, a look at the news behind the news or even happenings that have not yet made news. What are people worrying about or thinking about that will change lives?

Features round out the news

Editors must constantly ask themselves if their reporters are covering all activities that affect the lives of readers. In that respect, the term “features” for non-breaking news can be misleading. At their best, features are closely tied to breaking news. Beyond that, they report what is going on beneath the surface, or they pull together seemingly disparate facts that are in fact part of an important whole.

Newspapers start up and newspapers die. When in mortal danger, newspapers thrash about like a drowning person, trying different formulas on news and presentation. Several ailing papers moved toward a magazine format—fewer and longer stories, less emphasis on breaking news. The non-newspaper format only hastened their demise.

The lesson from the unsuccessful format change is that the greatest asset of newspapers is their immediacy. Yes, readers want it all—breaking news, features, etc., but most of all they want breaking news. That takes us back to the cafeteria analogy: newspapers should present a high story count and appeal to a variety of interests.

Reader interests: A checklist

Breaking news can touch upon a number of reader interests, but there are always gaps at least in the short run. Accordingly, editors do well when they list the major interests most of us have and then make certain that the newspaper reaches those interests on a regular basis. Perhaps you can add to the following checklist:

Food, shelter, family, education, health, jobs, money, sex and romance, self-improvement, clothing, transportation, religion, environment, weather and recreation/leisure.

Then of course there is the so-called reader service news: calendars of coming events, public records (property deeds, wills, court dockets, fire calls, births and deaths, etc.). Often printed in agate type, public records draw heavy readership.

And there you have the ingredients, guidelines, etc. All news and public service information requires attractive packaging. Above all, it requires constant tinkering if newspapers are to reach the changing readers.

12

Attribution: *Who said it?*

Ideally, readers or viewers should always be told the source of published or broadcast information. Only when they know the source of information can citizens judge its validity. In practice, though, attribution is not always simple.

In most stories, attribution/sourcing offers no problem. The mayor says this or the prime minister says that, and the business executive or athletic coach or eyewitness to a crime says something else.

Attribution/sourcing becomes more difficult when reporters seek information that will be given by sources only on the condition that they will not be identified. This is often the case on stories of wrongdoing or when someone who disagrees with a covert decision wants it made public.

Reporters must avoid being misled—sources sometimes want misinformation published for their own purposes. Some newspapers will not use unattributed/unsourced information unless it comes from at least two creditable sources.

Some editors believe that concealing the name of a source is sometimes justified, especially in stories of government and diplomacy. Other editors refuse to run any story in which sources are not named. That stance is easiest for editors who do not cover government.

The best attribution of course is to name the source. Next best is to name a group or organisation spokesman. The weakest choice is attribution to “an informed source” or even “sources.” Then the reader learns nothing.

When stories conceal a source, most newspapers require that the reporter reveal the name of the source to the assigning editor or a senior editor. Concealing sources usually has legal implications if a story results in a libel suit or subpoena. Beyond that, editors need to judge the merits of investigative stories before publication.

13

Ethics and Credibility

Making
readers
believe

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By Joseph N.E. Igbinedion

High standards of professional conduct are crucial to journalism everywhere—and most certainly in Africa, where journalism is often under suspicion. To be effective, journalists must be trusted by readers, listeners and viewers.

Public suspicion results in loss of faith in the media and hampers the contribution journalism makes to the economic and socio-political development of the continent.

To build public trust journalists must work at two levels:

- Establishing a high standard of professional ethical conduct, so the motivations for what they print are not suspect.
- Making certain that everyday coverage is complete, fair and unassailably accurate.

Here are steps to professional ethical conduct:

1. Monetary and material reward: Gifts of money, tickets or anything of value compromise your integrity as a

journalist. Some newspapers and stations list gifts a reporter can accept. Others warn staff members against accepting anything of value. Gifts are often intended to influence your coverage. Avoid them.

2. Conflict of interest: Journalists should not be members of organisations they may have to cover. There may be pressure by fellow members to conceal information that should be made public, or to publicise events that are not newsworthy. Avoid secondary jobs, political involvement or public office if they compromise your integrity.

3. Deceitful identification: Never falsely identify yourself to gain access to persons or places and then write stories on the experience.

4. Withholding information: You may be asked by government to withhold publication of a story until government has investigated the problem or acted on it. Sometimes you may have access to information on security matters. Some African absolutists say: print the story. In such situations, exercise caution. But don't hold back stories that protect government officers, not country.

5. Right to privacy: Respect an individual's right to privacy. Before publishing a story on a private person or a public official, ask whether the story is of value to the public. Many African journalists don't believe that a government official's private life has any relationship to his public life.

6. Morbid curiosity: Avoid pandering to morbid curiosity. Decide how much and why you need specific details in sex or crime stories. If you must use details, make sure they are necessary for the full understanding of the story.

7. Objectivity: Keep your biases and opinions out of news stories.

8. Upright reporting: Do not engage in shameful reporting methods. Hidden tape recorders, extorting information, or paying for information are repugnant practices. They cast doubts about the ethics and credibility of the publication or broadcast station.

Editors and reporters must be obsessed with accuracy. Everything must be done to ensure the accuracy of a broadcast and printed story, headline and photo caption. Here are ways of achieving accuracy:

1. Be skeptical of information. Double-check everything. There is a newsroom saying: "If your mother told you that, check it out."

2. No story should be published or broadcast without at least one—and preferably two—editors having read it.

3. Make sure sources know what they are talking about. Quote someone only if he or she is in a position to know and is close to the actual information.

4. During an interview, rephrase the person's response and give the interviewee a chance to verify or correct the statement as you understand it. This permits you to sort out questions of accuracy beforehand, rather than after the story is published.

5. Don't make assumptions. Don't guess, for example, on someone's middle initial.

6. Be wary of newspaper clippings. A reporter might have gotten it wrong 10 years ago. Keep references such as dictionaries and telephone books nearby.

7. Reread the finished story carefully. Watch for errors of context, emphasis, balance, as well as for spelling and other basic mistakes.

8. If you are wrong, admit it. Run newspaper corrections in a fixed and prominent page position. Don't bury corrections in the back of the paper.

9. Statements that are not self-evident or not universally accepted by readers or listeners should be attributed to the appropriate source.

10. A story can be factual but not fair. Do everything possible to get both sides of the story. Allegations against an individual require a response. Consider delaying publication, if possible, to make every effort to reach the other side for comment.

On ethics and credibility, one editor has written this summary: "Be fair, unbiased, accurate, complete, factual, professional, aggressive and compassionate."

14

Newspaper Planning

Some newsrooms face an eternal paradox: Everyone is so busy there is no time to plan and organise. And because there is no organisation, everyone is doomed to unending busyness.

The rule should be: get organised, then get to work.

The newsroom, must set coverage goals, long-and short-term, and establish priorities. This requires planning meetings. For a daily newspaper, a daily news conference of department heads is the minimum. A weekly meeting is also desirable, as are occasional critique and brain-storm sessions.

For all departments on any newspaper—daily or weekly—a future file is essential. In a drawer, place a folder for each day of the current month, one folder for each coming month, one folder for next year and one for years after that. In those folders, file clippings, memos, notes, anything that helps you as, say, city or metro editor, to not miss a coverage opportunity or forget an idea. If in July you think of a good year-end idea, dash off a note and place it in the December file. Place each scrap of paper so it will pop up a few days before needed follow-through.

At month's end, sort out the notes from the next-month folder into day-by-day folders. Daily, study each published story in your paper—the competition too—for possible follow-ups a week, month, even a year later.

The future file is a planner's best tool.

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Achieving Enterprise

The following article is adapted from one written by Arnold Garson, editor of The San Bernardino (California) Sun, for The Gannetteer and is used with permission of Gannett Company.

Enterprise reporting ought to be the lifeblood of newspapers. (Enterprise is the widely used term for digging out non-breaking hard news.) Enterprise ought to be our thing. If we do it consistently and do it well, we can have a real impact on our communities.

Enterprise reporting will not happen by itself. The top editors, and all the department heads and section editors, must be committed to it. A meaningful portion of the newspaper's resources—both staff and space—must be devoted to enterprise on a regular basis.

These ideas should help to sustain an enterprise routine.

- Devote a few minutes of your news meeting every day to talking exclusively about enterprise possibilities—long-term projects, stories that can be done within the next week, or even fast-turnaround pieces that can be done in a day's time for the daily newspaper.
- Assign a city-desk editor or a copy editor to be in charge of local enterprise for a week, on a rotating basis. It would be this editor's responsibility to make sure an enterprise story is offered every day, or twice a week, or at whatever interval may be right for your newspaper.

Once you've got the commitment and the routine in place, the biggest problem you're likely to encounter is maintaining quality control on major enterprise projects. There isn't any

sure-fire, 100-percent-guaranteed way of doing that. But here are a handful of rules that may help:

1. The idea has to be good. Good ideas can come from both reporters and editors. Be selective; not every project idea is a good one. A great series cannot emerge from a mediocre idea.

2. Plan, plan, plan. Begin each year with a rough plan for how many major enterprise projects you will tackle, by department, and a list of project ideas that might be done. Solicit staff ideas and meet with editors in framing this plan. Be subject to change as new ideas arise and conditions change. Intensive planning helps keep you on track.

3. Don't cut corners. Be prepared to have a portion of your reporting staff unavailable to cover the day's news, except in an extraordinary situation. You may have to slide a back-up reporter into a beat. Be sure to allow sufficient writing time and editing time.

4. Know the point of diminishing returns. Project reporting can go on forever; there's always one more document to review, one more interview to conduct. But at some point, the additional time can't be justified in terms of the likely return.

5. Always have something in the works. Have three projects in some stage of development. Don't wait until one project is completed before beginning to think about the next one.

6. Approach project reporting with a can-do attitude. I've always argued that there isn't any project that we can't do. Given enough time, we can do just about anything. The question we should ask is this: Is the final product likely to be worth the time invested? If the answer is 'yes,' do it.

7. Keep it manageable. This is the most important rule. The surest route to failure in project reporting is to let a project get out of control. You've got to be able to see your way through a project from the beginning, visualizing the shape it will take and how you will get to that point. Sometimes a little reporting time may have to be invested to arrive at this stage. But if you can't get to it at a relatively early point, be prepared to abandon the project.

16

The Editorial Page

Where
opinion
belongs

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By Callix Udofia

An editorial usually comments on or explains the significance of the news. Through editorials, a newspaper expresses its opinion on current issues, events or public figures and tries to stimulate the thinking of its readers. But sometimes editorials only seek to entertain. The editorial is the voice of the newspaper and rarely carries a by-line.

Whether you are writing an editorial to persuade, inform or entertain, these principles apply:

- The subject of the editorial should be current, significant or interesting;
- The reasoning must be sound, with all points supporting the conclusion and leading logically to it;
- There should be one major idea to present, and the writer should move quickly into the subject;

- The facts should be presented to support the thesis.

An editorial generally usually should have a news peg and an introductory statement which links it with a news development. Facts should be summarised. An editorial is usually a follow-up of an event or issue that already has been reported. But there should be enough background to make the issue clear even to readers who may not read the news accounts. Too, the basis for an editorial sometimes has not been in the news.

Editorials usually comprise three units. The first unit gives the news or facts on which the editorial is based. The second unit expresses the editorial writer's reaction to the news or facts presented in the first unit. The third unit gives the editorial writer's reaction and conclusion.

Types of editorials

A survey of some African newspapers reveals eight general types of editorials. The overlapping characteristics reveals the difficulty of classifying editorials. Any given editorial may have a combination of the characteristics.

- **Entertainment.** It could be a human interest story or an essay. It should be written in a very light vein since its objective is usually to entertain the reader.

- **Argument and persuasion.** Most editorials in African newspapers debate issues, hoping to persuade the government to take a definite action. Such editorials should take sides and attempt to convince the readers as well as the government. These editorials require balanced and mature argument.

- **Call for action.** There is a small number of this type of editorial in African newspapers. It should be written to urge a favourite team or athlete on to victory or success in a community effort.

- **Controversy.** This type editorial should discuss an undecided and significant issue without necessarily taking sides. Arguments should be advanced for all aspects of the controversy.

- **Interpretation or clarification.** Editorials of this type usually explain the meaning of a complicated event or issue.

- **Informative or illuminative.** These editorials should review certain facts and give background information about an event or issue. In so doing, an editorial of information should clear up some misunderstanding. Unlike the interpretive editorial, it should not draw conclusions.

- **Tribute or commendation.** These editorials usually praise an individual for an exemplary action.
- **Editorials of special occasions.** These should be written on significant occasions such as Independence Day, Id-el-Kabir, Children's Day, Christmas, Id-el-Fitri and New Year's Day. Such editorials are usually interpretive in nature.

Broadcast news commentary

Radio and television stations in Africa rarely deal in editorials. Rather, they often broadcast news commentaries, criticism and comment on a topical issue or event currently in the news. The commentator should be knowledgeable about the issue or event. It must be clearly identified for what it is. Also the station should state whose views the commentary reflects.

News analysis

News analysis should be written by someone knowledgeable about the topic. News analysis combines commentary and evaluation with factual reporting.

Conclusion

An editorial can be written to entertain, persuade, interpret an issue, inform or commend. It can also be structured to achieve a combination of objectives. Editorials are almost always anonymous. Situations, events and issues will dictate the type of editorial to be written.

17

Economic Reporting

New skills for media needed

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By Nixon K. Kariithi

This chapter aims to equip African journalists with skills in reporting and analysing economic news. Such skills will help journalists identify an economic agenda in Africa and improve awareness of economic issues among the general population. With improved understanding, media audiences will be better participants in their respective countries' economic processes.

This chapter also seeks to explain economic events, the impact of those events and how African journalists could transform what currently may appear as complex economic trends into topical issues.

The chapter also encourages establishment of a business and economic news-desk in news organisations where such a

desk is still unknown.

Finally, this chapter underscores the role of African media in propagating an economic reform message.

Step No. 1: Demystifying economies

Policy makers often depict national and global economies as complex beyond general understanding. Yet the same economic arrangements greatly determine the public's everyday life. In Africa, the most pressing problems—social, cultural or even so-called political crises—usually have an economic interpretation. Yet economic issues are among the least understood and reported subjects.

One vital role of African journalism is to demystify economic developments, demonstrating how such developments often dictate the quality of life. In demystifying the economy, the journalist must accurately interpret national and global economic statistics and use such data to draw pointers to the future.

This is a daunting task; many journalists have limited understanding of economic concepts and statistics. However, such obstacles are easily overcome. The rule is: If you do not know, you should know somebody who does.

The most important aspect of demystification is reporting how national or global economic trends affect your readers or audiences. Reporting economic problems abroad is not as important as reporting their impact on the national economy (there are many ways in which such problems impact the national level, the most important being that of imported inflation).

Similarly, reporting a predicted rise or fall in national economic growth rates is of little meaning unless it also explains how the trend will affect cost of living, employment, the private sector and availability of public services. In dealing with socio-economic issues, it is important to remember such areas as health, education, housing, population and their impact on economic development.

Here are clues to demystification: The source supplying the initial information on the economy is the first source you should approach for an interpretation. Universities, national academic and research bodies, national business organisations, international organisations and diplomatic missions are next in line. Ask professional questions—including stupid ones—until you understand the issues at hand.

Ask the professional to interpret the issues “as simply and clearly as possible.” Charts and other graphics are often helpful, especially where statistics are involved. Emphasise the simplified explanation more than the technical jargon. Do not use slang. If this is unavoidable, say so. Aim at capturing the attention of the general public, not just that of the professionals in the area in which you are writing. Finally, do not hesitate to make such intelligent deductions as linking economic policy and performance to political systems. Such links exist.

Step No. 2: Report sectors

African journalists strive to demystify economic trends, they should also intensely report the productive sectors. Reporting the productive sectors should be somewhat easier, for the issues are enmeshed with the people’s everyday life.

Agriculture is the mainstay for most African economies. Thus, economic journalists should give attention to activities indirectly related to agriculture. Emphasis should be given to the annual agricultural cycle, that is, issues and activities from one harvest season to the next. Contrary to the feeling in many newsrooms, agriculture can be reported in attention-grabbing fashion. Table 1 shows a hypothetical budget of stories concentrating on agriculture that an economic journalist can pursue in addition to the daily flow of event-oriented stories.

The economy comprises other sectors besides agriculture. These also should be given attention. Dealing with the industrial sector, the following areas may be important: Economics/politics of manufacturing (location, labor availability, taxation, relevant legislation, political climate as it affects the industrial sector); technology of production; interpreting national industrialization policies; entrepreneurship; vocational and technical training; and industrialization in agriculture.

Closely related to industrialization is the issue of private enterprise, or in many countries, the governments divestiture program. Outside the question of government involvement in the commercial sector, stories on the extent of indigenization in the productive sector make interesting reading. Finally, attention is necessary in the private sector, particularly private sector performances, legislation, operation and regulation, company profiles, annual financial reports, and fair/unfair business practices.

Table 1: Budget of agricultural stories

Beginning of new crop year: Reviews of major issues in agriculture the previous year; analysis of pending national or international legislation or related issues; analysis of expected production and issues surrounding agricultural production during the year; international issues involving specific crops.

Early in the crop season: Progress in preparation planting; availability of essential inputs; the economics of pricing of such inputs; economics/politics of producer prices (especially for those countries where producer prices are fixed before the planting season); and weather patterns, actual planting and its timeliness.

Mid-crop year: Weather patterns; links between weather and anticipated harvests; issues involving specific crops; preliminary issues relating to harvest, transportation, bulk storage, marketing and export, agricultural output forecasting; commodity pricing and marketing systems.

Harvest and post-harvest issues: National performance in agricultural output; economics/politics of the market-place; export development; pointers to the next crop year.

News sources: National budget of the previous year, national development plans, economic surveys by the government or other bodies, studies by private or public institutions, data banks and publications from national and international agricultural organisations, interviews with professionals from government, private sector bodies, university professors, diplomats (especially for the international angle), public records, farmers organisations, research institutions, importers/manufacturers/dealers of agricultural inputs and equipment, past newspaper reports.

Step No. 3: Explain financial sector

The financial sector is one of the most important arms of the economy—and among the worst reported. There is widespread belief that the financial sector is too abstract for the average media audience. On the flip side, some people believe that they do not need much information on financial matters because such issues are either heavily personal or knowledge of them is a question of common sense.

Economic journalists must portray financial operations as matters requiring constant updates and interpretations. It is imperative that in-depth coverage is accorded to such areas as basic money markets concepts; individual/corporate banking and finance; the link between financial policy and the economy; the insurance industry; interpretation of data relating to financial sector operations

Further efforts may be necessary in securities markets, namely, stock exchange operations; public share issues; reading stock exchange indices; investigating public companies and insider trading; and analysing company annual reports.

Tips for better economic reporting:

- Maintain professional sources in as many areas as possible. University professors, staff in professional bodies, diplomats and technocrats are among the best and most reliable sources. Government officials might also be useful, but are often restrained by government policies from divulging information or discussing sensitive government matters.
- Maintain an annual calendar for the most important economic and business events. The national budget and annual economic reports are released about the same time every year. Similarly, annual meetings of large organisations or corporations are often held around the same time year after year. Such calendars offer an economic journalist good opportunities for preparation and, where possible, a series of curtainraisers.
- File clips of newspaper reports you find interesting in presentation or facts. It is important that economic writers constantly endeavor to use appealing writing styles, mainly because readers are easily dissuaded from reading copy that lacks creativity and a unique touch.
- Define technical terms. Indeed, where possible, avoid such terms because they put off many people.
- Accuracy. The journalist must understand concepts and issues regarding a particular topic before writing the story, or even interviewing experts. Economic journalism may often involve statistics. Hence journalists should familiarise themselves with basic statistical concepts. In economic journalism the journalist is the link between the professional economic world and the lay world of our audiences. Therefore our task involves digesting any technical or professional-packaged issue to a level that general readers can understand.

- Economic writing need not be that boring simply because it comprises issues that render themselves publishable in a topic-by-topic fashion. Instead, economic journalists should strive to peg information issues to current events. For instance, if a company announced that it was selling shares to the public, economic writers could use the opportunity to expound on the concept of securities markets and the whole business of going public. Also, the release of the annual economic survey by the government offers an opportune moment to discuss crucial policy issues.

Scores of economic stories await an inquisitive journalist. Well handled, they will be as interesting and important as many other stories that enjoy headlines today.

Too, great interest can be attained with articles that advise readers on how best to handle their personal economic affairs.

Economic journalism offers few shortcuts and can be frustrating. Economic journalism demands that the reporter bring readers to relate to the issues in a vivid manner. With repeated coverage of a range of economic issues, the reporter will find that concepts become clearer and simpler to expound on, and economic news becomes easier to find and “digest”.

18

Sports Reporting

Add color
to just
results

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By Lubasa N'ti Nseendi and John Fwah

The best sports reporting captures both the atmosphere and the facts of the game. Of course sports pages or broadcasts should embrace far more than just reports of sports contests. Coverage should include features, schedules, statistics, predictions, participant profiles and columns.

Columns are commentary, not just features in column format.

Style should be colourful enough to arouse the interest of even those readers with little interest in sports.

Sports reporting should not be focused on isolated facts alone. Here are two extracts of sports stories that give the readers little beyond results:

Laisi Wins in Knock-Out

The Nigerian and West African light heavyweight boxing champion, Joe Laisi, Friday in Lagos knocked out Ghanaian Napoleon Abbye in the second round. It was a disaster for the Ghanaian who had boasted to stop Laisi within the distance.

Plateau Wins Cycling Race

Plateau State last Tuesday won this year's Abdulkadir cycling race with a time of two minutes 43.17 seconds over 100 kilometers, bagging a cash prize and a giant trophy.

Bauchi came second in the competition, with a time of 2.50.15.

Lagos State took third in 2.52.46. Forty-eight cyclists from 12 states participated in the race.

These are just results. A reader learns nothing about the events themselves or the atmosphere in which this action took place. And if the reader has no background in these sports, he or she might not make sense of the facts as reported.

In the second example, even a well informed cycling racing fan learns little concerning the event itself.

On the other hand, a boxing fan who did not attend the event reported in the first extract, would have liked to read about what happened before, during and after the fight and how the knockout came about.

Sports and their rules

Africa's leading sport is soccer, which has a tremendous following. Other popular sports are boxing, basketball, volleyball and wrestling, as well as cycling, handball, judo, ju-ji-tshu (or self defense), karate and tennis. These sports have their own rules and jargons or technical words.

A sports writer should have working knowledge of the principles, rules and language of the contests he or she covers.

A sports writer, like any reporter, is a researcher. He should be an extrovert and outgoing person. This is particularly important for African sports reporters, who do not have the facilities available in developed countries.

While sports writers in the developed nations can collect some essential pre-and post-game information by telephone (or telephone their report) African reporters often cannot rely on this means of communication.

They therefore have to rely on their energy and ability to meet people from whom they want information and rush to the office to submit their reports for publication.

Pre-event reporting

Reporters need to know the background of the team and key players of a game they are to report. For individual sports like judo or boxing, they should know the significant characteristics of the participants, their strong and weak points and their records.

It is advisable to contact the team or the individual players a day or two before the game and report on their views and predictions. Pre-event reports stimulate sports fans.

Actual-event reporting

The event report can refer to the pre-event information and to post-game comments of players and the coaches.

Other elements which can be included in such a story are:

- The size of the crowd.
- The response of the crowd. A few quotes from spectators on what they thought of the game or bout, adds colour.
- The weather. If it was rainy or windy, how did it affect the playing field and performance of the players?
- The big plays—a last-second goal, a dramatic run, a bad judgment play that influenced the outcome of the contest.

Of course, there should be a summary of the scoring, and if a player is injured and carried from the field, the reporter should make every effort to learn the extent of the injury.

- The analysis of the game by both coaches.
- Comments from the stars and the losers.

A sports *columnist* can criticise the game or officials, for he or she is a sports editorialist. A sports *reporter* should stick to the facts. He or she is not a critic.

Spectators do not have access to the dressing rooms. Therefore reporters have exclusive facts to present to newspaper readers or broadcast listeners.

A sports writer should be well acquainted with managers, key players and officials. This saves time in getting information before, during or after a contest.

Never assume that a spectator who will read your account of the game, knows everything that happened, and that therefore you can omit many details.

Spectators are interested in reviewing what they saw. Often they are not certain who made the goals or scores. They are not sure why a certain play was disputed. They wonder who the injured player was who was carried from the field.

The reader who did not attend the contest also wants a complete account.

Quotes help any sports story.

The use of unfamiliar words, jargon or technical terms should be avoided. Where they are unavoidable, they must be explained for the benefit of readers not familiar with the game.

Most readers of the sports pages probably will be familiar with the rules and jargon of major sports such as soccer. But never assume that they are.

19

Media and the Law

Statutes
both help,
hinder

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By P.K. Fogam

Journalists must be aware of the basic principles of law affecting their calling. Laws that affect the media in most African countries are largely derived from the common law or civil law. Britain and France colonised most of Africa and gradually transferred their respective legal systems to their African colonies.

When the colonies regained political independence they maintained the inherited legal systems. The result is that today many African countries belong to the common law family of Great Britain or the civil law family of France.

Laws differ by country

In either case, laws differ by country. The main trends are presented below.

Legal problems that affect journalists as they go about their profession relate to such issues as:

- The right of access to information or gathering news
- Security laws and the use of information
- Disclosure of the sources of information
- Publication of defamatory materials,
- Use of copyright materials and writings that may affect administration of justice
- Contempt

This chapter examines basic principles of law on these issues.

Legal guarantee to press freedom

To perform its functions in society, the press needs to be free. Freedom of the press is the bulwark upon which democratic order and society are founded. This freedom is usually set forth expressly or implicitly in social covenants between the state and the individual.

In most African countries the constitutions provide the premier social covenants asserting the right of freedom of expression and more specifically freedom of the press. These countries acknowledge freedom of expression in the preamble or the substantive provisions of the constitution.

In countries with civil law background (i.e. former French and Portuguese Colonies), it is common to find the principle of freedom of expression in the preamble, affirming freedoms embodied in the United Nations Charter or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But declarations in the preamble do not guarantee any rights—because generally, a preamble only sets out facts and assumptions upon which the statute is based, and a preamble has no more than a moral force.

In African countries with common law background—i.e. former British colonies—the guarantees of a free press are commonly found in the substantive provisions of their constitutions.

A good example is the Nigerian Constitution of 1979 which in Section 36 guarantees freedom of expression including the freedom to hold opinion and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference. It further entitles any

person to own, establish and operate any medium (except television or wireless broadcasting) for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinion.

Kenya, Ghana, and even Morocco among others with similar legal systems also recognise this fundamental right.

These constitutional provisions thus create legal rights or obligations. Although the press may not be specifically mentioned in the freedom of expression sections of these constitutions, it is generally accepted that ideas and information are imparted by speech, printed words in publications or by motion pictures, radio and television.

These constitutional provisions therefore provide the legal basis upon which the press operates. But freedom of the press is not absolute. Journalists are also subject to the ordinary laws of the land. These laws usually come into play when they are gathering news or during the publication of a story.

No legal right to gather news

There is no direct common or civil law principle or enactment in any African country that gives journalists the right of access to news or information. Even constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression do not carry with them an unrestrained right to gather news. In many African countries there are restrictive policies or laws which inhibit the journalists gathering news.

Such laws protect confidential acts and records. Often, however, these laws are so variously interpreted by over-zealous public officers that they make it possible to withdraw virtually all public records from inspection.

Such laws restrict publication of news that may be of major public interest.

Protection of news sources

Another problem facing African journalists is the protection of sources of information. Often journalists are called upon to reveal their confidential sources of information and to surrender their unpublished notes, records, and tape recordings. A journalists code of ethics, however, urges them not to break confidences.

Common law and civil law usually provides doctors, lawyers and clergymen with the privilege to refuse to testify about confidential matters between them and their patients, clients or parishioners.

Journalists do not enjoy such a privilege. Journalists must therefore look to the constitution for protection.

In most African countries, especially those like Nigeria with common law tradition, journalists assert that the “freedom of expression” provision of their constitutions should prevent compelling disclosure.

They argue that if journalists are forced to reveal their sources then sources would dry up. This reasoning has been accepted by courts in many countries.

But the trend is that while journalists may not be compelled to disclose the source of their information, they do not enjoy absolute privilege against disclosure. Newsmen would still be required to divulge confidential source where this is considered essential to due administration of justice.

The protection of copyright

Journalists often use materials ranging from books to news clips from major news agencies. Other persons have spent time organising these books, magazines, newspapers, etc. Who owns these words? What amount can the newsman take without being accused of plagiarism?

Copyright protects from use by others the fruits of another person’s work. Copyright recognises that writers and authors should enjoy ownership of their creation. Often, however, authors will feel their rights are satisfied if quoted material is credited to them. It is best to check—and always to give the source.

Copyright laws of many African countries usually include literary, musical, dramatic, audio-visual works and sound recordings. Statutes give the owners the right to control the reproduction, broadcasting, and publication or communication in any material form, the whole or substantial part of the work.

Copyright does not protect facts, themes, ideas or news event. It is the literary style or manner of presentation of the news that is copyrightable. The message to journalists is thus clear: produce with independent sources of your own a work with some quality that distinguishes it from the raw materials used. Anything short of that might be in breach of copyright.

Publication and defamation

Legal problems associated with publishing news can come from defamation and contempt of court.

In defamation cases the reputation of a person is at stake. The law of defamation presents one of a journalist's greatest perils. This is because journalism deals with stories about people involved in specific incidents—criminal activities, domestic or matrimonial problems, political rivalries and disputes, litigations etc. Reporting these areas invariably touches the reputation of everyone in the story who can be identified. Unwarranted injury to their reputations may result in an action in defamation.

Defamation can consist of spoken or written words that expose persons to hatred, ridicule or contempt; or causes them to be shunned; or lowered in the estimation of right-thinking members of society generally or discredit them in their office, profession or business.

If a defamatory statement is written or in another permanent form such as a picture, it is *libel*. If it is spoken or is in transient form it is *slander*. Both libel and slander are governed by the same rules.

The three proofs of libel

But libel is the phase of defamation that journalists usually encounter. In defamation cases the plaintiff must prove:

- That the words are defamatory
- That the words refer to the plaintiff
- That the words were published to a third person.

In an action for defamation the words must be capable of carrying a defamatory meaning. Some words are defamatory on their face. Words like, "cheat", "fraud", "thief" etc. are defamatory. In this case the plaintiff need not prove that the statement is false or that there was an intention to defame.

Words or statements innocuous in themselves may nevertheless contain a secondary defamatory sense understood by persons having knowledge of the particular facts. For example for a newspaper to print that "X has given birth to twins" is not obviously defamatory. But if those who read the paper know that X had been married only a few weeks, such a statement might be held to be defamatory. Such a hidden meaning is referred to as *innuendo*. Journalists cannot escape liability by pleading they did not know the truth. Neither can they plead that they did not intend the meaning. The question is not what they intended but what reasonable readers thought was intended.

It is also generally required that identification of the individual claiming defamation be clear beyond reasonable

doubts. If the statement does not explicitly identify the plaintiffs, then they must prove that what they say are defamatory words refer to them.

Too, the words must have been published. This requirement is satisfied when at least one person other than the writer and the person who claims to have been defamed sees or hears the alleged defamatory material. However if the statement was published in a newspaper or broadcast on radio or over television, it is presumed that a third party saw, heard or read it.

Defenses against libel

To strike a balance between the right of individuals to have their reputations protected and freedom of expression the law provides certain defences for the person who makes an allegedly defamatory statement about another for an acceptable reason. If journalists knows the defences, they can use them to test the safety of what they intend to publish. The main defences are:

1. Justification: There is usually no liability where it can be proved that the words complained of are true in substance. This is the defence of justification—the technical name for “truth”. Defamation is based upon loss of a good reputation; no person can claim to lose that which he or she does not have. Thus showing the truth of the defendant’s assertion is a complete defence.

2. Fair Comment: This is a plea that the words complained of are a fair comment; i.e. something that can reasonably be inferred to be a deduction, inference, conclusion, criticism, remark or observation made in good faith on a subject of public interest. The root of this defence can be found in the long-recognised need to permit expression of critical opinions. Fair comment provides the most valuable protection to newsmen and writers. This defence requires that: the information upon which the comment is based must be true; the words must be comment or opinion on the facts; and the subject matter must be of public interest.

3. Privilege: In certain situations the law allows complete freedom of speech without risk of defamation. These occasions are said to be privileged. Privilege can be absolute or qualified.

In *absolute privilege* the law provides a complete defence to an action for a defamatory statement no matter how untrue, false or wantonly and maliciously made. Absolute privilege can be accorded the statements of persons involved in the

deliberations of the parliament, judiciary and executive arms of government.

In *qualified privilege* the law provides defence only when certain conditions are met. The statement must be made in good faith; on a subject in which the person communicating has an interest, or in reference to which he has a duty, to a person having a corresponding interest or duty. In general qualified privilege affords just as much protection to the journalist as absolute privilege provided the following conditions are met:

- The report must be fair and accurate.
- The report must be published without malice.
- Honest mistake.

Mitigating damage awards

Efforts have been made to protect newsmen who may incur liability for defamation through honest mistake. Most African countries have statutes which provide that full and prompt apology, correction or retraction following a defamatory publication will mitigate damages awarded the injured person.

In the event that a journalist is found guilty of an offense, he or she can often appeal the ruling, citing reasons the finding was not valid. Appeals are usually heard by a higher court, which then will render its own decision.

Contempt

While the law of defamation exists to protect reputation, the law of contempt exists to protect the administration of justice. Any conduct that tends to bring administration of the law into disrepute or interfere with litigation can be contempt of court. The power of judges to punish misbehaviour within or without the premises of the court is peculiar to common law countries. Judges in countries with civil law background do not have such latitude in dealing with disturbance, disobedience or disrespect.

Where contempt powers exist, the law recognizes two categories, *civil contempt* and *criminal contempt*. Journalists tangle with criminal contempt either directly or indirectly. Direct criminal contempt consist of words spoken or acts that interferes with the administration of justice. Two journalistic activities can result into direct criminal contempt. These are:

1. Taking photographs in courts. Judges often forbid taking pictures in their courtrooms or other parts of the building. Violations have led to citations in contempt.

2. Refusal to disclose sources: Courts would not ordinarily demand disclosure, but where they do the journalist decide whether to disclose his or her source or be booked for contempt. Reporters may find themselves in indirect criminal contempt if an article published in a newspaper or a broadcast demeans the court or impugns the character of the judge. Similarly, the court may order the press to refrain from publishing certain details of a pending trial. It may be possible to appeal from such an order, or convince a judge to reconsider his ruling. Violation of such an order can result in citation for contempt.

Other common laws

All countries adopt measures to protect order. Journalists and others who contravene them often are held to commit an offence under criminal law.

Most African countries, for instance, forbid seditious publications. *Sedition* is an attempt by words, deeds, or writing to promote public disorder or cause riot, rebellion or civil war.

Statutes also usually require the press to accept responsibility for its published material. In Cameroon, for instance, any person who propagates news without being able to prove its truth or show good reason to believe it to be true, commits an offence. The United Arab Republic and Nigeria also have laws prohibiting the publication of "false news". Furthermore, the Cameroon Penal Code, Section 198, prohibits publication of any court record, parliamentary and other proceedings unless the records are made public. This may also be applicable to other Francophone countries.

Most African countries permit fair argument and constructive criticism of a government officer. What may not be permitted is to criticise the government in a manner, calculated to bring them ridicule or disrepute.

A mix of freedom and restrictions

In summary, most African countries entrench freedom of expression and of the press in one form or another in their constitutions. But there are still legal, economic and socio-political restrictions that adversely affect the liberty of the press in these countries. Nevertheless, the press remains the only ombudsman between the government and the people.

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Press Releases

Use facts,
not false
praise

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By Babatunde Roland May

Press releases, also called *news releases*, are usually products of the public relations department of an organisation, either governmental or non-governmental. This chapter discusses press releases from the standpoint of both the preparing organisation and the receiving medium—print or broadcast.

The press release should portray accurately developments of possible interest to the public.

A press release should present only unembellished facts about an event or situation, product or service.

Press releases, however, almost always give a favourable view of a government or client or sponsor and their projects and products.

Consequently, releases never should be accepted at face value, unless they are mere announcements of appointments, meeting dates, awards or promotions.

An editor should determine if additional facts should be obtained to get the complete story.

The press release should be submitted in a journalistically acceptable form. The ability to achieve this greatly improves chances for use of the release.

To prepare a release

Follow these guidelines in preparation of a press release:

- A press release should identify where the release comes from—government office, business firm or public relations firm.
- It should be dated. That helps the editor determine how current it is. The editor of a media organisation may have to sift through dozens of releases in very limited time. The editor may judge stale an undated release.
- The release should include the name and telephone number of a person who can provide additional information.
- It should have a headline summarising the main point of the story. That helps the editor know at once what the release is about.
- The release should have a release date. Is it for immediate release or is it to be held for a given time?

The release should have an air of immediacy. Distribution of a release at a press or news conference sometimes helps to accelerate this process.

Lead with most important facts

As with a news story, the most important facts are placed first, with the rest of the facts following in a descending importance.

Rarely is a press release printed or broadcast in the same form as it is received. Usually it is checked and edited to conform to the standards of the particular news organisation.

The source of a press release should be sure that all information is correct. This is especially important if the release comes from a new or unfamiliar source.

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Newspaper Structure

New technology has brought massive changes in the structure of newspapers and surely will bring more change. The organisation of a newspaper, however, depends not only on where it stands in technology but also on its size of circulation, frequency of publication and strategy for covering its market. Many newspapers today find themselves in evolving situations, with more technological advances still to come.

Anyone who last visited a newspaper 30 years ago would be astonished by a visit to most newspapers today. In the newsroom, clacking typewriters have given way to computer screens and silent keyboards. Noisy teletype printers that delivered wire-service news at 65 words per minute have been scrapped. Wire-service stories now pour in on barely audible high-speed printers or into a newspaper's computer.

Stories from reporters on remote assignments are typed on portable computers, dumped (filed) by modems over telephone lines and find their way into computer databases, to be called up on video screens.

Gone, too, is the traditional semicircular copy desk, with copy editors on the rim who reached for stories from a centrally placed basket, and a supervising editor, appropriately called the slotman, who sat in a slot on the flat side of the copy desk. Instead, copy editors and supervising editors stare at video screens, scroll electronic images and edit with keystrokes. Paper and typewriters are hard to find. So-called hard copy—stories on paper as opposed to electronic images—rolls silently out of a laser printer, but only on electronic command.

In the former composing room the hot-metal linecasters, which produced lines of type that were placed into galleys (trays) and pages were made up in page-size forms (chases),

have vanished. The resulting smaller composing room contains only a phototypesetter or two and tilted tables where pages are pasted up with photocomposed type and ruled paper layout sheets. Indeed as pagination—electronic page composition—advances and printing plates are produced electronically the composing room will also vanish. Already, some newspapers receive photographs from news agencies in digitized form, which has often replaced facsimile transmission.

Changes of equal magnitude pervade the newspaper. Still, an organisational chart for a modernized newspaper bears considerable resemblance to a chart of three decades ago.

It is unlikely that any two newspapers would have identical structures. On small papers, one person often conducts several functions that are assigned on larger papers to different persons. As a newspaper grows it adds functions that a smaller newspaper does not need or could not afford.

With these variables in mind, let's examine the fairly typical organisation of a daily newspaper of 20,000 to 50,000 circulation. Papers with far larger circulations would also have similar organisation. The point here is to describe the many duties found on a newspaper.

Publisher. The publisher is the chief executive, responsible for all newspaper activities. To simplify his or her span of control and free time for conceptualizing, only two executives report to the publisher. They are the general manager and the editor. The general manager delegates in turn to several other executives: controller, marketing director, business manager, data-processing manager and production director.

The big recent change was appointment of a marketing director, in keeping with adoption of the marketing concept. That concept simply states that a business should identify customer wants and needs and try to satisfy those wants and needs. In other words, the business tries to see itself through the customers' eyes.

Editor. The editor is responsible for all news and editorial page content. A managing editor is the front-line manager in the newsroom and coordinates closely with the editor. For the editorial page, the editor supervises two editorial writers and also writes editorials himself. Some papers have an editorial page editor who reports to the publisher. An executive editor or managing editor who oversees the newsroom also reports to the publisher. The advantage is the separation of news and editorial-page functions. Under this structure, readers are less likely to perceive editorial opinions as spilling into news columns.

Managing Editor. In the newsroom, the managing editor is hour-to-hour boss. He or she directs all news gathering and processing through newsroom department heads: news editor, metropolitan editor, regional news editor, features editor, sports editor, business editor, photo editor and Sunday editor.

Our newspaper has a modified universal copy desk. The term “copy desk” endures even though it now comprises staffers who sit at individual editing terminals. Stories are shuffled about electronically and editors need not work elbow to elbow. Many veteran copy editors say they miss the camaraderie and team spirit of the old copy desk.

A true universal copy desk processes news from all departments. In contrast, a departmental desk system has each department processing its own stories and laying out assigned pages. On our paper only the sports department edits its own pages. This modification was decided upon because sports requires knowledge of team standings, nicknames, etc. Also, the Sunday editor on our paper processes throughout the week certain Sunday pages—book reviews, travel, hobbies, etc.

After consulting with the managing editor, the news editor lays out the other pages and oversees the copy desk. Copy reaches the news editor from the wire services (through a wire editor) and departmental desk. The news editor decides on story placement and headline size. The copy desk does the final editing and writes the headlines.

Other key positions. Our paper has an assistant managing editor (AME) who takes charge when the managing editor is off. The AME has other duties day to day and does the preparatory work on the newsroom’s annual financial budget.

The metropolitan editor, called city editor before the growth of suburbs, has an assistant metro editor and two clerks. The latter answer phones, clip stories for the future file, etc.

A librarian keeps files of stories, reference books, etc. Once those files consisted of clippings stuffed into envelopes. Now past stories are recalled on a screen from a computer database.

All department heads prepare daily news budgets—lists of their major stories for the coming issue. Budgets are discussed at the managing editor’s daily news conference. Weekly, the ME also gathers department heads for long-range planning.

The news staff numbers 55 persons. A rule of thumb is one editorial person for each thousand of daily circulation up to

about 100,000 circulation. Above that size, the number of staffers drops below the number of thousands of circulation. Accordingly, a newspaper of 200,000 circulation might have a staff of 150.

On our paper, there are 2.5 reporters for each editor. With wire news rushing in on high-speed wires and the use of more news roundups and briefs that ratio is falling as the editing burden grows. Some larger papers have ratios of 1.5 or lower, reporters to editors.

Leaving out our paper for the moment, other changes wrought by new technology should be noted. Recognising the effectiveness of information graphics—maps, charts, etc.—newspapers are hiring more staff artists. These artists often prepare illustrations with computers.

Pagination has also brought major changes. Under pagination, editors discard paper page dummies and lay out pages on a video screen. Advertisements are also prepared by pagination.

The page is arranged in reduced size on the screen. Then the editor keystrokes the proper commands and a whole page is photocomposed as one unit, eliminating pasteup. Illustrations must be stripped in, but technology is working toward digitized pictures.

Our paper will probably move to pagination at some point. For now, the publisher's decision is to wait a while.

(See Chapter 24 on Desktop Publishing.)

Remember the composing room of old that shrank. There was reason for that shrinkage beyond the move from hot-metal to photocomposition. Proofreaders in the composing room checked for errors on galleys of hot-metal type. With electronic editing and pagination the guarding against "typos" has been shifted to the newsroom.

The saying is: "What you see is what you get." If the individualized story or headline or paginated page is correct on the screen it will be correct when photocomposed. Editors have always checked page proofs for errors, checking behind proofreaders. Editors were then the second line of defense. With electronic editing editors are now the only line of defense.

Electronic editing has also created a new position in the newsroom—the systems editor. The systems editor, usually a former sub-editor, has responsibility for creating the electronic codes and formats (instructions given the computer via keyboard), training the staff and trouble-shooting when the electronic editing system "crashes"—that is, fails.

General Manager. The general manager runs the daily business operations, everything except news-editorial. Mainly, he coordinates interdepartmental activities and carries out policy approved by the publisher. The GM's work becomes more apparent when we look at the executives who report to him.

Marketing Director. This person was formerly advertising director. He or she has broader responsibilities now. The marketing concept requires close cooperation among all departments that relate to sales and revenue. In the past, advertising, circulation and promotion managers reported separately to the general manager. Now they report to the former advertising director, who seemed the best qualified person for promotion to marketing director. Obviously, newspaper content has bearing on circulation, so the marketing director also works closely with the editor and managing editor, though they report to the publisher.

Advertising Manager. He or she is responsible for all advertising sales and service. Specialists who report to him are the retail manager (all local display ads), the national manager (all ads from national sources), and the classified manager.

Circulation Manager. He or she directs sales and service to the readers (that is, delivery) and collection for subscriptions or single copies. The newsroom and circulation keep each other informed on news coverage, particularly big stories, to facilitate sales. In particular, the newsroom is reminded of the need to meet deadlines; a late press run cripples the circulation system.

Data-Processing Director. All that computer equipment in the newsroom and throughout the paper needs installation, training of operators, and daily operation and maintenance. The responsibility lies here. This person must actually know how electrons scurry about in their black boxes.

Production Director. This executive oversees the manufacturing process except for keystroking and other functions performed in the newsroom. Production encompasses typesetting, page and printing plate production, printing the paper and in our case the bundling of papers for distribution. On some papers the bundling in the so-called mailroom, a term surviving from the past, is supervised by the circulation department.

Business Manager. The business manager and his staff take care of all matters not assigned elsewhere. They include accounting, purchasing, payroll, personnel records, etc.

Promotion Manager. The promotion manager and staff work closely with the newsroom, advertising and circulation

to generate information and activity that will increase circulation and readership, enlarge advertising revenue and create a favourable image for the newspaper through service to its community. The department searches out facts about the market: demographics, the economy, advertising effectiveness and how readers feel about news content.

And that's how our paper of, say, 50,000 daily (65,000 on Sunday) is structured. The structure has changed substantially in just the past 10 years, let alone 30, and will probably continue to change.

Growing circulation, everyone hopes, will bring additional changes. Years ago, this newspaper—along with most others—was fettered by inter-departmental walls that stifled cooperation. The publisher worked hard to tumble those walls.

Only through teamwork can a newspaper provide the best possible service to its advertisers and readers.

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Emergency Plans

Sooner or later, your newspaper will be faced with a big story: a plane crash, train wreck, violent storm, fire, flood earthquake, explosion—or a major political development. A well-managed newsroom develops news emergency plans in writing and makes those plans known to all staffers.

A news-emergency plan enables the paper to move quickly and not miss important assignments. The plan is a reminder of what needs to be done—and how to do it. It should offer both general guidelines and specific tips.

Let's assume that your paper has a plan, among others, for an airliner crash nearby, with major casualties. The plan might offer these guidelines:

- 1.** Who to call at your paper and in what order: publisher, circulation manager, pressroom, off-duty reporters, copy editors and photographers.
- 2.** Get reporters and photographers started to the crash scene and to hospitals, morgue and police headquarters. Name someone to be in charge at the crash site.
- 3.** Set up a plane-crash desk in the office, to handle nothing but crash news.
- 4.** Assign your best rewrite person to write the lead story as information pours in. Assign others to sidebars: eyewitness accounts, casualty lists, airline statements on the crash cause. Still others should gather biographical material on casualties and seek “mug shots”—photo portraits.
- 5.** Clear newshole space for the story. You'll probably need to add pages or jettison ads.
- 6.** If the crash is some distance from the newsroom, set up a command post close to the site.

7. Keep a reporter or two in reserve from the first rush out the door. They'll cover developing angles.

8. You can't get all the news in the first cycle's paper. The crash will be big news for days. Begin planning for subsequent issues.

9. Let routine local news drop for the moment. Hit crash coverage—or any big story—with your full muscle.

The foregoing is not all-inclusive. There is no substitute for a quick huddle around the city desk, a moment to think and evaluate. Then get going. At such times lists of phone numbers and a geographic chart of where staffers live are invaluable—one or more may live close to the crash site.

A newsroom should have several news-emergency plans, each looking to a particular kind of catastrophe.

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Facing Adversity

A calling
filled with
obstacles

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By Kenneth Y. Best

Journalism can be a risky and dangerous profession anywhere, but especially in developing countries. Yet each year thousands of young people seek to become journalists, through either formal training in colleges, or apprenticeship, learning on the job. And physical violence or imprisonment are by no means the only obstacles journalists face.

Given the risks, it is clear that most people who opt for careers in news media feel a calling that enables them to overlook possible pitfalls.

Common problems for journalists

Here are common problems journalists face—and ideas about how to deal with them.

There are four types of situations in which Third World journalists find themselves particularly at risk:

1. Democratic and/or quasi-democratic regimes where rule is authoritarian or autocratic.
2. Military or quasi-military regimes in which freedom of speech, of the press and other personal freedoms are either not encouraged or not tolerated.
3. Corruption-ridden regimes, whether military or civilian, where journalists are frequent targets of entrenched groups and/or government.
4. Countries engaged in violent conflict or social upheaval.

In the first category, electoral fraud is usually the order of the day. Such governments feel they owe the public nothing in terms of accountability. Journalists in such countries are often harassed and even jailed when they delve into stories the government deems troublesome.

In the second category the military or quasi-military rulers feel even less accountable. They ascended to power by bullets, rather than ballots. They are often brutal in treatment of journalists. Often such rulers ban journalists. They close newspapers by such means as arson. They imprison or even murder journalists.

The third category comprises states riddled with corruption, some dominated by drug lords. Here, journalists are prime targets. Their fate again ranges from imprisonment to murder.

Finally, there are those situations embroiled in violent civil conflict or social, political and religious upheaval. Journalists are targets either because of identification with some contending faction, real or imagined, or because they have exposed perpetrators of violence.

How to cope in these situations

How to prepare for these situations? Guidelines for journalists may be suggested, though they are by no means full protection.

First, we must achieve personal and group integrity. Our message and our manners must match. This must be especially true with the leader of the organisation. For when what is published or broadcast angers powerful forces those forces might try to discredit the organisation or members of it, especially its leader. If they find no blemish on which to pin disfavor, they often resort to brutal tactics.

Second, the media organisation should ensure that it has followed all laws governing its business. These include proper business registration; paying withholding and other taxes, social security, etc.; and making sure that the papers of foreign workers have been properly processed. Often this is one of the first places oppressive regimes target, leading in many instances to imprisonment, fines and deportations.

Third, high staff morale makes it more difficult to undermine the organisation. High morale stems from sound management practices. Sound management includes providing the staff with transport, pens, paper, tape recorders and cameras.

Avoid the perils of extravagance

Another morale booster is offering as many remunerative benefits as management can afford. Management must watch what it spends on itself, avoiding exorbitant salaries, expensive cars and perks that might harm the organisation's financial strength and cause the staff to feel cheated. Extravagance by managers has caused the failure of many African business enterprises.

Managerial extravagance would more wisely be ploughed back into the business for staff development, improved equipment, newsprint and a reasonable level of retained earnings. When employees believe that management is doing its best for them, they unite around management in times of financial, political or other occupational stress.

Fourth, engaging in on-the-job and other training, especially in journalism. There is no substitute for well trained reporters and editors.

Media leaders should train their staffs on laws of libel and slander. Many lawyers give freely of their time for this purpose; for lawyers often see the press as allies. When reporters give accurate court coverage, they gain the respect, if not the admiration, of both the Bench and the Bar.

Training can save the day

Possible loss of personnel is one reason to train as many journalists as a communication medium can afford, and to hire free lance journalists. In the sudden loss of personnel, for whatever reasons, free lance journalists can carry much of the workload, especially if they are loyal to the organisation. When, therefore, a media organisation can organise a journalism training workshop, it makes sense to

invite the competition to participate. Sharing is always good practice. You never know when such largess might pay off.

Publish in the public's interest

A fifth pointer on coping in adverse situations is through social responsibility. Whatever is published or broadcast should be in the best interest of the public. In other words, there are times when the public interest would not be served by publication of a particular piece of news—or pictures.

Two examples come to mind. The first was a ghastly murder in Monrovia, Liberia, in 1990 of a young civil engineer. Troops loyal to Samuel Doe surreptitiously entered the engineer's home at around 2 a.m. and cut his throat. He evidently resisted. The Daily Observer photographed the macabre murder scene.

When we requested a photograph of the victim, his mother obliged. But she asked that we not use the horrible photographs. We could have sold several thousand more newspapers the following morning had we carried the pictures. But we decided that we would not further distress the aggrieved mother. We may also have angered the public by carrying the gruesome photos. Therefore we did not.

A second example of the public interest relates to our stumbling upon a scoop at the Daily Observer in Banjul, The Gambia, in 1993. We learned that the country's only five-star hotel had unexpectedly gone into receivership. The hotel's European financial backers pleaded with us not to carry the story just yet. They were negotiating to keep the hotel open, and save the hundreds of jobs that were at stake.

We held the story until the negotiations were concluded. The hotel did not lay off a single employee. At that point we came out with a comprehensive story saying that the hotel would remain open.

Our decisions in the cases of the murder and the hotel were relatively simple. But there are instances in which the decision to publish or not to publish are far more serious, in particular on matters of national security. Sometimes an editor or reporter lands a scoop affecting national security; for example an attempted coup. Does the editor rush to publish, though the newspaper cannot disclose the source of the story?

A decision not to publish just yet would certainly evoke charges of self-censorship. Still, it is often better to hold a story until official confirmation has been given, rather than

risk being accused of causing public panic. If no confirmation is forthcoming, it might be prudent to kill the story, but watch for related developments.

Sixth, making sure that the newspaper or media institution keeps as close as possible to the ordinary people. When the chips are down, it is the people who can rescue any institution that they believe pursues their highest interests.

Public respect and support in crisis

True, many publics in Africa have proven apathetic about asserting their own rights. And yet, when a media institution has won the public's respect and appreciation the public tends to demonstrate, even if subtly, their support in times of stress. When newspapers have been closed in some countries, readers have sometimes refused to buy other newspapers, especially if these are believed to be compromised. Readers also make their views known in public utterances and through direct contacts with the authorities. None of this will happen if the public has not developed confidence in the medium in question.

But being on the public's side is no guarantee of anything. In some societies, apathy and cynicism have taken such deep root that it is difficult for the public to react to anything. Still, the media must remain at all times both the keeper and defender of the public trust.

Bread-and-butter issues

Persecution is not the only adversity journalists face. Media throughout the world, like any other business enterprise, must deal with bread-and-butter issues—profit and loss, inflation, equipment maintenance, newsprint and other supplies, and dwindling circulations. How effectively media management handles these issues will determine whether the enterprise survives.

Financial viability depends heavily on how a project was conceived. Many news organisations started as fly-by-night enterprises. Some of these have succeeded to a surprising degree. People with business savvy sometimes sense a void in the media and score huge successes. They need foresight, prudence, hard work and good luck.

Analysis of market wants

However, the more scientific way to start an enterprise, be it media or another other, is first to determine whether there is a market, what the market wants, what it will take to fulfill the needs of that market, and finally, whether the whole exercise will be profitable and how long this will take.

Once a decision is made as to the feasibility of the enterprise, then there is a question of how to finance it. Some media entrepreneurs have their own money to invest. But most entrepreneurs will have to find the money. Some individuals, though not many, and some banks are willing to lend money for media development. But they have to be convinced that the project is feasible. And given the rough political roads on which the media must travel, especially in the developing world, few individuals or financial institutions are willing to invest in media. But they can often be found.

When a bank agrees to lend, it will ask for collateral. This, in the eyes of many property owners, is even more difficult than asking for money. In case of loan default, persons providing the collateral lose their real property.

New technology lowers start-up costs

Desktop publishing technology has made it easier and cheaper to start a media organisation by leasing computer equipment and software, possible in many places. Many newspapers in war-torn African countries were started by computer leasing. (See Chapter 24 on desktop publishing.)

If there are fairly efficient printing presses around, one does not have to invest immediately in printing equipment, which is far more expensive than a printing contract. Broadcasting equipment is a different proposition. Anyone entering the electronic media has to find money for equipment, staff, training, programming, engineering and maintenance.

Foreign exchange for supplies

Supplies—newsprint, films, chemicals, photo paper, etc.—also need careful consideration. The cost of newsprint has increased in recent years. It makes sense to import newsprint and other supplies, rather than buy locally. To do that, however, one needs foreign exchange; credit in Africa is not easy to come by. One also needs a reliable agent in the supplying country who can get the lowest prices and guide the materials to the ship.

Building reasonable circulation or listening audience is a brain-teaser for media. A medium that seeks the interest of ordinary people has a better chance of attracting mass support than one which seeks special interest groups, especially among the rich and privileged. Yet the latter group has the resources and possibly controls the advertising strings. The best course is a delicate balance in the attention one gives to all groups, not of course compromising basic principles of journalism. This means covering the news accurately, comprehensively and fairly.

Bottom-line defense

The bottom line of our defense comprises commitment to truth, the highest standards of journalism, and selfless service to the people.

As communicators, especially in Africa, which is at once the very bottom of the development ladder, and yet pregnant with hope and possibilities, we must remain agents of change. We must help point the way to a brighter future. Unlike many colleagues in the West, we cannot assume we have no part to play in development. The African journalist has an inescapable role to play in national and continental development. We are not simply the medium, but an intrinsic part of the message—of light and hope.

Development journalism, however, does not mean that the press should be passive observers of government. This was the failed concept of the press in the 1960s, '70s and '80s in many African countries. The press should be as independent as possible, critically covering society, exposing its ills while helping to chart the way to a better future.

A threat to entrenched interests

Journalists are bound to be seen as a threat to entrenched interests that thrive on the misery and backwardness of the people. Therefore, journalists must be strong intellectually, morally, spiritually and physically. It will take all of this to help them meet the challenges and dangers inherent in the vocation to which they have been called.

24

Desktop Publishing

Costs fall,
thanks to
computer

David Hume, a writer, publisher and journalism consultant has trained journalists in Latin America, East Europe and Africa. Before establishing his own consulting firm, he was associate director of the Center for Foreign Journalists, in Reston, Virginia. He was a Washington correspondent for Reuter news agency for eight years.

By David Hume

Desktop Publishing—electronic publishing with computers small enough to fit atop a desk—has had enormous effect on the publishing industry around the world. The reason: It makes possible publishing a newspaper, magazine or book at a fraction of the cost of earlier methods.

Desktop Publishing (DTP) was born in the 1980s as a result of developments in the microcomputer field. These include a printer engine for laser printers, technology that allows rendering high-resolution graphics on a computer screen, and computer language for printing high-quality text and graphics on laser printers.

Apple's Macintosh computer was the early leader in DTP but today both Apple and IBM-compatible computers are used. Many publishers use both types of systems.

This chapter provides an overview of DTP technology so that journalists will understand what is involved. Another chapter—better yet a small booklet—would be needed to describe the steps in DTP operation

A basic Desktop Publishing system

The basic needs for a one-person Desktop Publishing operation include a personal computer; a laser printer, preferably with at least 600 dpi (dots per inch) resolution; a flatbed scanner; and software programs for word processing, page layout, and graphics. (See Appendix A for a glossary of DTP terms.)

In the United States, where most equipment is made, the cost of a basic DTP system was \$7,000 as this was written. That amount would buy a computer, scanner, printer and software. African journalists can buy the basics at somewhat higher costs but often face steep tariffs. However, equipment costs have been dropping.

The personal computer, the most important component, has three components: 1) the central processing unit (CPU); 2) memory (storage and operation); and 3) peripherals.

CPU. The CPU controls instructions given to the computer. It can be a single computer chip in small microprocessors or a large piece of equipment. The speed at which the CPU processes instructions is measured in megahertz (MHz). The prospective publisher should buy the fastest computer and the largest memory he or she can afford; how fast the computer works determines how fast the editor can lay out pages.

Memory. Memory holds (remembers) data entered into the computer.

There are three types of memory: Read-Only Memory (ROM) are instructions embedded in computer chips that tell the computer how to respond. This memory cannot be changed.

The program memory is called Random Access Memory (RAM). This chip stores temporary instructions while work—such as writing a story of designing a page—is performed. Instructions held in RAM are lost when the computer is shut down.

The third component is storage memory, usually a hard disk (drive), where software programs and work are stored for future use.

Each computer chip contains millions of cells, or bits, the smallest unit on information a computer deals with. Memory is measured in thousands (Kb or kilobytes) or millions (Mb or

megabytes), or thousands of millions (Gb or gigabytes) of bytes. Each byte is equal to 8 bits. This means that a computer with 640K of memory is capable of storing 640,000 pieces of information, or characters.

Peripherals. Peripherals are hardware devices attached to the computer. They include external hard drives, printers, scanners, CD-ROM readers, and most importantly, the computer's monitor.

The monitor, CRT (cathode-ray tube), VDT (video display terminal), tube or screen are all names to describe the device that displays the video signals.

The higher the resolution of the monitor, the crisper the image. Resolution is measured in the number of horizontal and vertical pixels displayed. A pixel is the picture element that creates characters and graphics. Another measure of crispness is the dot pitch, which measures the actual size of a pixel in tenths of a millimeter. The smaller the dot pitch, the crisper the image.

How Desktop Publishing works

Journalists use personal computers to write and edit stories using word processing (also known generically as text-editing) software programs. The most popular brands are Microsoft Word, Word Perfect, Nisus and WriteNow, although there are many other programs. These programs also allow journalists to format their text for publication, i.e.: select typefaces (fonts); select type sizes and line spacing; set line lengths and column widths; adjust word and letter spacing (tracking and kerning); and choose the text alignment, whether justified, flushed, ragged or mixed.

The latest word-processing programs include spell checkers (dictionaries with thousands of entries); thesaurus; word-count capability; even a feature that checks and rates the journalist's grammar.

In most newspapers and magazines that have embraced Desktop Publishing, the same types of computers are used to create graphics and design/layout pages, sometimes called pagination.

There are two types of graphics software programs: bit-mapped and object-oriented. Bit-mapped programs, such as MacPaint or Corel PhotoPaint, are the most flexible. They turn the screen into a freehand canvas. The software understands each pixel (the picture element that creates characters and graphics) as an atom unto itself, rather than as part of a larger entity. Pixels can be manipulated with ease.

Images in bit-mapped programs have a ragged edge, especially around curves and objects. The computer makes a map in its memory to correspond to the pixels and each pixel has its own site. However many pixels the designer or artist uses to create a graphic, that is what he or she will get out of the printer.

Object-oriented graphics programs, on the other hand, reduce every line and figure to a formula. It defines shapes, not pixels, and allows designers to work with clearly demarcated objects. Object-oriented programs, commonly known as draw programs, smooth out shapes so that text and graphics are crisp and attractive. Some of the most popular object-oriented software programs are MacDraw, Intellidraw, CorelDraw; Adobe Illustrator and Aldus Freehand.

Graphics programs are used at many newspapers and magazines to create display advertising. Other newspapers use dedicated software programs for display advertising, such as Multi-Ad Creator. Still other publications build display ads in page layout (pagination) programs.

Photo departments at many newspapers and magazines also have embraced DTP by using desktop flatbed or drum scanners to scan and digitize photographs. Scanners are sold with software loaded into the computer's memory. Scanners can read a variety of media, from halftones, to color photos and color slides. These scanners have optical resolutions 300 dots per inch to 9,600 dpi, and can capture more than one billion colors or 1,024 shades of gray.

Newspapers and magazines also use desktop scanners to capture line art, logos and other artwork for building display ads. Additional software is needed to manipulate digitized photos and artwork. A widely used program in publishing is Adobe Photoshop. Ofoto is another good program.

Layout programs gather the parts

Page layout is where everything comes together. There were two main page layout programs in use in newspapers and magazines as this was written: PageMaker and Quark XPress. Both are excellent but work in different ways. PageMaker works much the same way a paste-up artist works, by placing the different elements—text, headlines, photos, ads—at one side of the page before pasting them. Quark XPress, on the other hand, works much the same way a page designer works on paper. Page designers on computers define text areas and graphics locations with preset rectangles and boxes on the page, and then place the text, headlines or pictures into those boxes.

The next step following page design is the output of camera-ready copy from the computer screen to a laser printer or high-resolution bromide imagesetter. Laser printers and imagesetters store the dot pattern for the page they are printing. The printer works much like a photocopier. It creates an image on paper using a black powder or liquid called toner. The printer receives dot-by-dot instructions from the computer in the form of on-off commands. "On" means print a dot, "off" means leave white space. At the "on" command, a laser beam flashes onto a photosensitive drum, the drum becomes electrically-charged, attracting toner. When the signal is "off," no toner sticks to the drum.

The most common laser printers offer resolutions of 300 dots per inch (dpi), which is not typeset-quality reproduction, although only a trained eye could tell the difference. That difference is more noticeable when reproducing halftones. Laser printers of 600 dpi to 1,200 dpi offer better results for newspapers.

Bromide imagesetters, such as Linotronic offer resolutions of up to 2,540-dpi for high-quality reproduction on coated stock used by many magazines. Both laser printers and imagesetters now output paper and film. A recent development has been the direct-to-plate imagesetter.

Finally, desktop computers used by reporters, editors, graphic artists, photographers, advertising departments and page designers need to talk to each other for the sake of workflow. This is called a local area network (LAN).

A final word

Desktop Publishing allows journalists to publish newspapers and magazines at a fraction of the cost of conventional means. Technology changes quickly, but publishers can continue with older equipment if they so wish.

DTP systems now most commonly laser-print pages of 8-1/2 by 11-inch dimensions. Other printers output 11 x 15 or 11 x 17-inch pages. As laser-output size increases printer costs increase accordingly. Even laser printers for full broadsheet output are available—at a cost.

Training a DTP operator, assuming basic computer skills to start with, can be accomplished with competent instruction in three days. Several training books have been written. Vendors can offer guidance on these texts. In some regions, so are workshops or another publisher with trained personnel.

Publishers should buy equipment that allows for expansion. They should also ask the vendor about service availability. It

helps to make a designated staff member the in-house expert on DTP.

DTP is a great step forward. But journalists should note that Desktop Publishing is only a tool. It does not make for better reporters, better writers or better designers. It merely improves the efficiency and quality of a product.

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Advertising Design

By Edmund C. Arnold

There are two kinds of advertising, *display* and *classified*. In display there are *national ads*, and *local*, or *retail*. National advertising is prepared by an agency. Local advertising may be produced by the advertiser.

Classified ads are the familiar “want ads.” Most classified is set in a small type face, usually agate, and with little attempt at display. *Classified displays* are just like any other display ads; the only difference is in the pages on which they run.

It is often thought that newspapers must accede to any typographic malfeasance because “the advertiser pays his money and can do what he wants to.” This is a palpable falsehood. Newspapers have set various rules for their advertising.

The newspaper should educate its merchant-clients to good advertising techniques. The more successful an ad is for a merchant, the more successful it is for the newspaper.

An advertisement must persuade the reader to do something, usually to buy merchandise or service. An individual ad has three functions. First, it must bring the reader into the store. Second, and many erroneously think it’s the first function, is to sell specific items. The third function is to sell the “image” of the store.

A good ad should produce both short-range goals, and the long-range continuing one. Each individual ad does this by performing the steps that the “AIDA formula” reminds us of. This formula says that an ad must:

- Capture **ATTENTION**;
- Focus **INTEREST**;

- Crystallize **DESIRE**; and
- Motivate to **ACTION**.

Each element in the ad should accomplish at least one and preferably more of these functions.

The *copy block* is best written before the headline. At least the copy block must be clear in the writer's mind. The copy is the final, persuasive communication that must motivate the reader to the action desired by the advertiser. The headline is a distillation of the copy block, and illustrations are auxiliaries to the written word.

The copy block must meet the same requirements demanded of a good news story; it must tell the five Ws; who, what, where, when and why.

"Who" is "Who's talking?" and the answer is given by the *sig cut*, the advertiser's signature, or logo, in distinct display form.

"What" is "What do you want people to do after reading this?" Words and pictures help here.

"Where" and "When" are integral parts of the signature. The store's location, hours of business and duration of a sale should be clearly defined.

"Why" is the most important W. The ad must give enough reasons so readers will buy the product or do the desired action.

An ad must profit three separate parties: the newspaper, the advertiser and the public.

The public likes, wants and needs advertising. Many readers avidly read advertisements even before editorial matter.

Nonfunctional ads

A good way to learn to create good ads is to look at the commonplace poor practices.

A common nonfunctionalism is to run type diagonally: a headline, subheads, copy blocks, or even the whole ad. Type is meant to be read on a horizontal, straight line. Any variation cuts legibility. Type arranged vertically is almost impossible to read.

Type should not be set in curves. Nor should it be *stacked*, one line sitting right on top of the other. *Negative* spacing, where space between letters is so reduced that letters may touch or overlap also destroys the intrinsic legibility that a good type creator worked hard to build.

Avoid boxes and especially boxes within boxes. When we box something in, we also box something out—the reading eye. When the eye hits a barrier such as a box, its tendency is to carom upward and to the right. Circles and ovals are just as nonproductive.

Also deleterious is the *reverse*, a plate that gives the effect of white characters on a black or gray background. Not all reverses are anathema; they often make excellent ad signatures, for instance.

Functional ads

Having considered “don’ts,” it is constructive to consider a larger catalog of “do’s.”

Type is the most important ingredient in almost all ads. Body type should be at least 10-point. Copy blocks in ads are generally short, so sans serif may be used more often than on the news side. If there is much copy, though, the typographer is wise to specify Roman for maximum readability.

Body type should be set within the readability range. *Ragged right* is a favorite style for advertising. Ad copy can—and should—be set line-for-line, and it should be written so that there are no confusing breaks of phrases between lines.

Stick to one body type throughout an ad. You may use bold-face on occasion and *italics* on rarer lines, but don’t switch type families.

Ad heads

Headlines should also be in the same type family. The same headletter should be used not only within any single ad but also in all the ads of one retailer. The aim is to create a style so distinctive that even without a signature cut the advertiser would be recognised.

Every head and copy block should be surrounded by a generous area of white space.

Advertising art

Artwork plays a major role in advertising, a more important role than it plays in the news columns. Art should be used functionally with the AIDA formula as the guideline.

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Advertising Sales

This article is condensed with permission of the National Newspaper Association from a chapter by Morley L. Piper in the book "The Newspaper," published for the NNA by Prentice-Hall.

By Morley L. Piper

No two clients of newspaper advertising are exactly alike. Each client has a different problem, a different sales goal. The newspaper advertising person demonstrates how his newspaper can contribute to the advertiser's needs.

Successful newspaper salespeople meet three criteria: **1.** Ambition, drive and desire, **2.** Selling effort; nothing replaces plain hard work, **3.** Dedication.

Greater sales will result if the salesperson:

- 1.** Knows the newspaper and its market.
- 2.** Knows the accounts and their problems.
- 3.** Knows the competition.
- 4.** Plans his or her order selling.
- 5.** Makes a sufficient number of sound sales calls.
- 6.** Is persistent.
- 7.** Asks for the order.
- 8.** Keeps reselling and asking for the reorder.
- 9.** Provides creative service to the accounts. Selling time is the salesperson's most valuable asset. Thus, preparation for the call is essential. To avoid lost time:

1. Organise material for calls, by the day and week.
2. Make a call only when fully prepared.
3. Be considerate of the client's time; a "drop-in call" is often unwelcome.
4. Telephone for appointments.
5. Be prepared with other appointment dates in case the first date is turned down.
6. Use the whole day, devoting early morning to organise and later afternoon for processing sold ads.

Developing new business

You must continue to develop new business. Advertisers come and go, increase space or decrease space. New business is necessary to sustain total volume. Salespeople should develop a list of non-advertisers. Prepare advertising plans for those prospects to consider. Be persistent. It usually takes many calls to sell an account.

In space sales you must consider the client's problems. Understanding of a client's business is essential. Have material to show, an idea to present, something to leave with the prospect. Clients want to know these facts about the newspaper: market coverage and penetration of households, editorial content, readership data related to editorial and ad content, response to advertising success stories, technical data—rates, deadlines, contracts, and services offered—copy/layout, typesetting, tearsheets.

Sales presentations

Successful selling is usually creative selling. Creative selling shows in the sales presentation. A sale is made by a series of positive impressions on the prospect. A good sales presentation must:

1. Arouse attention.
2. Create desire.
3. Stimulate that desire.
4. Convince and persuade.
5. Promote action.

People learn more through their eyes than their ears. A good presentation uses visual material early. (See the checklist on sales presentations.)

Without question, the weakest area in selling is failure to close sales. Surprisingly, many salespeople do not ask for the order, or attempt to get agreement on selling points they have sought to establish. Salespeople must learn how to ask for the order.

Opportunity to close a sale may come at different stages in the sales interview. Questions on rates, copy deadlines, best advertising days, position in the paper or charges for layout services may indicate a closing situation. When you perceive the signal, ask for the business.

Your questions to the client can lead you into the close. "Have I covered everything to your satisfaction?" Does this make sense to you?" "Can we schedule your first ad for next week?" "Can I work up copy and layout for a series of ads?" And so on.

Lead-in questions ask the prospect to make a decision. If the prospect doesn't respond favourably, he or she will at least disclose objections you must handle before you can close a sale. If one type of close fails, try another.

Handling objections

Avoid arguments but don't sidestep valid objections. Don't contradict the prospect. If he or she objects to the idea of advertising, cite the ample evidence that advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.

The surest way to combat questions about cost are to stress that advertising is not a cost but an investment, that it can help a business to grow, that it builds store sales and store traffic, that rates are based on effective circulation coverage for advertiser, that advertising is necessary to maintain a level of business and ward off competition.

Seeking to attract advertisers from competitive media often fosters difficult objections. "We're completely satisfied with what we're doing now" is frequently heard. This affirms that the competition has sold effectively. Thus emphasise the possibility of greater sales by adding your newspaper to the ad program.

"I'll think it over" is another familiar objection. It suggests that you have more selling to do. Then say that you may not have covered all the points adequately and ask if there is anything more the client needs from you to make a decision. Better to receive a firm decision, even if negative, than to be stalled indefinitely.

In handling objections, keep replies short and to the point. Answer as truthfully and succinctly as possible, then return to the original purpose of the call.

A sales presentation checklist

- 1.** Understand your prospect's objectives before developing a presentation.
- 2.** Think in terms of customer needs. You must show him or her how your paper can help the business.
- 3.** Extract the single most important point about your newspaper that fits your customer's needs. Put this theme in writing and leave it with the customer.
- 4.** Relate all facts about your paper to this concept.
- 5.** Supplement basic material with special data of importance to the target account.
- 6.** Tell your basic story before the prospect has set a budget for the next year or quarter.
- 7.** Be brief. In general, a presentation should be no longer than 20 minutes.
- 8.** Avoid complicated charts and statistics. Most people don't understand them.
- 9.** Handle competitive data carefully. Your competition is undoubtedly making a presentation, too. The prospect will be weighing any conflicting claims.
- 10.** Underplay rather than overplay your claims. Your prospect will likely reject overstatements.
- 11.** Include cost in your sales story. But this is only one element. Sell the quality and coverage of your paper first.
- 12.** Be prepared to talk about your weaknesses while stressing your strengths. Your competition has probably hammered at your weak points.
- 13.** Anticipate questions. Be ready to deal with them quickly, positively and expertly. In fact, encourage questions, as a way to start discussion.
- 14.** Rehearse before your boss or fellow salesman. Get their reaction and make adjustments.
- 15.** Leave a summary of what you've said behind. Always leave a copy of the paper and your rate card.
- 16.** End hard. Summarise briefly everything you've said. And don't forget—ask for the order.

27

Circulation Tasks

Sell,
deliver,
collect

Joseph B. Forsee is a retired former executive director of the International Circulation Managers Association.

By Joseph B. Forsee

A newspaper fails in its purpose until it reaches the readers by some method. Newspapers everywhere have basically the same options. In many countries a newspaper circulation department is responsible for (1) selling, (2) delivering, and (3) collecting.

There are two main methods of accomplishing these functions: home delivery and single-copy sales.

Home delivery represents a relatively stable, identifiable list of subscribers, useful in selling advertising, establishing press runs and consistent sales.

Single-copy sales are often thought of as impulse sales, but a high percentage of repeat purchasers obtain newspapers through these outlets.

The basis for a successful home-delivery operation is the method of delivery. Systems fall into the following categories: (In categories one through three, carriers may be adult or youth.)

- 1. Independent buy-sell carriers:** here the carrier buys newspapers from the publisher, then sells them to customers to earn a profit.

2. Independent per-piece carriers: carriers are paid a “per-piece” rate for delivery, and in some instances, a commission for collection.

3. Employee carrier: an employee of the newspaper.

4. Mail: newspapers are delivered through the postal system. Mail is often the main system used by small newspaper, non-dailies especially.

Single-copy sales are accomplished through three main methods:

1. Live sales: sales at kiosks, street corners, shopping centers, etc., by persons, either adult or youth.

2. Newsracks: coin-operated vending machines at strategically placed sales points.

3. Dealers: business places selling newspapers, magazines, related items.

Selling of the newspaper for home delivery is usually accomplished through:

1. Carriers: using various incentives including prizes, cash, trips (and of course, increased profits for increased business).

2. Telemarketing: soliciting new subscribers by calling prospects on the telephone.

3. Crew sales: a “crew” of solicitors under supervision of a “crew chief” go door-to-door asking for the order.

4. Direct mail: solicitation offer mailed to prospects.

Efforts to increase single-copy sales include proper merchandising and, most importantly, timely delivery. Additionally, point-of-sale signs and indicators, attractive displays, including headlines, clean newsracks and live sellers, placement of newspapers in stores and newsracks in high-traffic areas, etc.

Collections for home delivery are made by carriers in most instances. Increasingly, however, with the ability of the computer to maintain records and generate statements, payments for subscriptions are being made directly to the office. This not only increases cash flow, but provides better statistics on customers.

Customer Information Systems (CIS) are maintained by many newspapers. Using a computer, complete lists of subscribers, and in most instances, non-subscribers as well, are maintained. This provides instant access to subscriber history, current status, and other valuable information when contacted by a customer. Subscriber and non-subscriber lists

are used for specific marketing of the newspaper and/or advertising material.

Newspaper prices are based on market factors, including history. Usually, to encourage home delivery subscriptions, these rates are somewhat less than the sum of the same number of newspapers purchased at single copy rates.

Profit margins of independent carriers are mainly in the range of 25 to 30 percent of retail rates. Pay to employee carriers is somewhat less.

To accomplish these tasks, a circulation department is maintained which is headed by a circulation director or manager who reports to the general manager or publisher. Depending on the size of the newspaper, he or she may have several assistants to handle areas of home delivery, single copy, administration, trucking, mail room, etc.

These people usually supervise people doing specifically assigned tasks, i.e., the home delivery manager would probably supervise several district managers (people who recruit and supervise home delivery carriers).

In many instances, the circulation function starts when newspapers are delivered from the press. Therefore, the circulation executive assumes responsibility for the "mail room" where employees bundle and prepare newspapers for transport to various destinations.

From the "loading dock," employees or independent contractors load trucks and/or automobiles for transporting bundles of newspapers to other destinations, including carriers and single copy outlets. Usually, this is a somewhat complicated, but efficient, system to rapidly deliver newspapers to the reader. Time is important at every stage of the newspaper operation.

The circulation executive must work closely with other departments of the newspaper to coordinate proper newspaper objectives. Particularly is this true with the editor, for the circulation person must sell the news product produced by the editor and his or her staff. Conversely, this newspaper product is worthless unless received by the reader. Exchange of information between circulation and news on what the customer (reader) wants and will purchase (the very essence of marketing) is imperative.

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Broadcast Writing

Achieving
clarity
on the air

This article is condensed from the book "Writing for the Mass Media" by James Glen Stovall, a journalism professor at the University of Alabama, and is printed with his permission.

By James G. Stovall

The qualities that a person needs to be a success in broadcasting are intelligence, diligence, dependability—and the ability to write. Even though broadcasting is a sound and visual medium, just about everything you hear or see in the way of news or entertainment (except for broadcasting of live events such as athletic contests) is written down.

The occasions for ad libbing before the camera are rare; broadcasting time is too valuable for such chancy moments. The broadcasting industry is always looking for people who can write clearly, concisely and precisely.

Broadcasters want people who are willing to research their subjects thoroughly and report on them with clarity, who do not mind working hard and are willing to rewrite their work and have it rewritten by others. They are particularly interested in people who can write under pressure and meet deadlines.

Much that is written for broadcasting is like that which is written for the print media, but there are some important differences. Those differences concern the way news is selected

for broadcast, the characteristics of writing and story structure and the style with which the information is presented.

Broadcast news reporters, like print journalists, are interested in events that have an impact on many people, prominent people who are often in the news, current issues, events that happen close to home and events that have conflict or an unusual element.

Because of the opportunities and limitations of their medium, however, broadcasters are likely to view events in a slightly different way than print journalists. Some of the factors that broadcasters use to select news are discussed below.

Timeliness

This news value is even more important to the broadcaster than to the print journalists. Print journalists tend to work on daily cycles; broadcasters work on hourly, or less, cycles. A news broadcaster has to “go to press” many times a day, particularly if he is working in radio. The news must be up to the minute. News that is more than an hour old may be too stale for the broadcaster.

Information, not explanation

Broadcasters look for stories that do not need a lot of explanation in order for listeners or viewers to understand them. They prefer stories that are relatively simple and that can be told in a simple, straightforward manner.

The maximum length for almost any story on a television newscast is two minutes; the more normal length is 20 to 30 seconds. This is not enough time to explain a complex story in detail. It is only enough to give the listener or viewer a few pertinent facts.

Of course, some stories are complex and important and explanation cannot be avoided. These are the ones the broadcaster must wrestle with, and it takes practice and talent to condense these stories to their essence.

Audio or visual impact

Broadcasters want stories that their audience can hear or see. Pictures of a flood are more likely to be watched than an anchorman’s description of it. Broadcasters often choose stories for their newscasts because they must have sounds or pictures, even though the stories themselves might not merit

such attention otherwise. This is one of the major criticisms of broadcast news.

Characteristics of writing

The United Press International Broadcast Stylebook says that while print journalism has the Five W's (who, what, where, when, why) broadcast journalism has the Four C's—correctness, clarity, conciseness and color. These four C's serve as the basis for broadcast writing.

Everything that a broadcast journalist does must contribute to the telling of an accurate story. Even though the broadcast journalist must observe strict rules about how stories are written, these rules should contribute to, not prevent, an accurate account of an event.

Because of the factors discussed in the previous section, writing news for broadcast has some important characteristics that are different from print journalism. These characteristics require the broadcast journalist to approach stories in a slightly different way.

One important characteristic of writing for broadcast is the emphasis on the immediate. Broadcast news must be up-to-the-minute. It should also be written as if it is up-to-the-minute. While the past tense for verbs is preferred in broadcasting, the present tense is preferred in broadcasting. Consequently, while a newspaper story might begin something like this:

The president said yesterday that he will support some limited tax increase proposals when Congress reconvenes this week...

the broadcast story would begin like this...

The president says he's for higher taxes.

Another important characteristic is that broadcast writing requires conversational style. Even the clearest, simplest newspaper style tends to sound stilted when read aloud. Broadcast writing cannot sound this way because people will be reading it aloud. Broadcast news should be written for the ear, not the eye. The writing style can then be a little more casual than it would be for print.

The tight phrasing characteristic of broadcast writing is one of its chief assets. Because time is so short, the broadcaster cannot waste words. The broadcaster must work to constantly simplify and condense. There are a number of techniques for achieving this

Build on nouns and verbs

Eliminate all but the most necessary adjectives and adverbs. Build on nouns and verbs, the strongest words in the language.

Avoid using the passive tense. You may say either that a meeting “is held” or that an organisation “holds a meeting.” A broadcaster would choose the latter—and the good broadcaster would then change the verb to “meets.”

Use short, simple sentences. Broadcasters do not need the variety of length and type of sentences that print journalists need to make their copy interesting. Broadcasters can more readily fire information at their listeners like bullets, in short, simple sentences.

Clarity is an absolute requirement for broadcast writing. Listeners and viewers cannot go back and re-read a news broadcast as they might re-read a newspaper (although print journalists shouldn't count on their readers to do that either). Listeners must understand what is said the first time. Broadcast writers achieve this kind of clarity by using simple sentences and familiar words, by avoiding the use of pronouns and repeating proper nouns if necessary and by keeping the subject close to the verb in their sentences. Most of all, they achieve clarity by thoroughly knowing and understanding their subject.

A final characteristic of broadcast writing is its almost complete subjugation to deadlines. Unless broadcast writers are able to meet deadline, their compact, understandable prose will never be heard.

For the print media, most straight news stories are written in an inverted pyramid style—that is, the most important information is presented at the beginning.

Broadcast journalists do not use the inverted pyramid story structure. In its place, they use something called the dramatic unity. The *dramatic unity* structure has three parts: climax, cause and effect.

The climax gives the listener the point of the story in about the same way the lead of a print news story does; it tells the listener what happened. The cause portion of the story tells why it happened—the circumstances surrounding the event. The effect portion of the story gives the listener the context of the story and possibly some insight about what the story will mean in the future. The following example shows how dramatic unity works:

Climax

Taxpayers in the state will be paying an average of 15 dollars more in income taxes next year.

Cause

The state senate defeated several delaying amendments this afternoon and passed the governor's controversial revenue-raising bill by a 15-to-4 vote. The bill has been the subject of intense debate for more than a week.

Effect

The bill now goes to the governor for his signature. Estimates are that the measure will raise about 40 million dollars in new revenue for the state next year. Most of the money has been earmarked for elementary and secondary education. Passage of the bill is seen as a major victory for the governor and his education program.

Broadcast journalists should think of their stories as completed circles rather than inverted pyramids. While the pyramid may be cut without losing the essential facts, the broadcast story, if written in this unified fashion, cannot be cut from the bottom or anywhere else. It stands as a unit.

Stories should be written to fit into an amount of time designated by the editor or news director. For instance, an editor may allot 25 seconds for a story. The writer will know this and will write a story that can be read in 25 seconds.

Broadcast news stories must gain the attention of the listener from the beginning. The first words in the story are always extremely important. Getting the attention of the reader is sometimes more important than summarising the story or giving the most important facts of the story. The broadcast news lead may be short on facts, but if it draws the reader into the story, it has served its purpose. Here's an example:

The lame duck keeps limping along.

Congress met for the third day of its lame-duck session today, and again failed to act on the president's gas tax proposals...

The first sentence has little in the way of facts, but it gets the listener into the story. This sort of story structure is only appropriate for certain stories, however. If the facts of the story are strong enough to gain the listener's attention, they should be used to open the story. For example:

The five-cents-a-gallon gas tax is law.

The president signed the bill authorizing the tax today while on vacation...

In both examples, the writer has attempted to tell the whole story in the first sentence. Rather, the stories are structured so that they have attention-getting leads and are supported by details in subsequent sentences. This structure for broadcast news writing is a common one.

What a newspaper can devote 10 column inches of type to, a broadcaster may have to say it in 20 to 30 seconds. The broadcast writer must remember that certain facts and explanation must be omitted from the copy if the story is to fit into the allotted time.

Style and writing tips

Broadcast writing style differs somewhat from the style of print journalism. Here are some major differences in form and style:

1. Titles usually come before names. Most people mentioned in broadcast stories need to be identified. Titles almost always precede a name. Consequently, while a print story might have "Winston Churchill, the former prime minister," the broadcast journalist would say, "former Prime Minister Winston Churchill."

2. Avoid abbreviations, even on second reference. Only the most commonly known abbreviations should be used in broadcast writing. UN—for United Nations—is an example.

3. Avoid direct quotations if possible. Unless a direct quote is essential, a paraphrasing is preferred. Direct quotes are hard to handle in broadcast because it is awkward to signal the listener that what the broadcaster is saying is a direct quote. When a direct quote is essential, the writer should avoid the awkward "quote...unquote" and use phrases like "in his own words," or "as he put it."

4. Attributions should come before a quotation. The listener should know where the quotation is coming from before hearing the quote.

5. Use as little punctuation as possible. Excessive use of commas, dashes and semicolons will not help the news-caster.

6. Numbers and statistics should be rounded off. A print journalist will want to use a figure as exact as possible. But in broadcast the \$4,101,696 in print becomes "more than four million dollars."

7. Personalise the news when possible and appropriate. One of the story examples above might have begun, “Gas is going to cost you five cents more a gallon...” Personalising is a good way of getting a listener interested in a story.

8. Avoid using symbols when you write. The dollar sign, for example, should never be used. Nor should the percent sign be used. Spell these words out so that there will be no mistake on the part of the news reader.

9. Use phonetic spelling for unfamiliar and hard to pronounce names and words. “A car bomb exploded in downtown Caracas (ka-RAH-kus) today...” Note that the syllable emphasised in pronunciation is capitalised. Pronunciation to the broadcast writer is like spelling to the print journalist.

10. Avoid pronouns. And when you have to use them, make it clear to whom you are referring. Putting too many pronouns in a story can be an obstacle to clarity.

11. Avoid apposition. An apposition is a word or set of words that renames a noun. In “Tom Smith, mayor of Midville, said today...”, “mayor of Midville” is an appositional phrase. In broadcasting, these phrases slow the newscaster and often confuse listeners. Listeners do not have the advantage of those commas. They may hear the example above as “Midville said.” Broadcast writers should keep subjects and verbs as close together as possible.

12. Use the present tense when it is appropriate. Using the present tense (“the president says” rather than “the president said”) brings immediacy to broadcast writing. But, for instance, if the president made a statement yesterday, the broadcast news story should not have the attribution in the present tense.

13. Avoid dependent clauses at the beginning of sentences. Such clauses tend to hid the subject of the sentence. For instance, “Stopping on the first leg of his European tour today, the president said...” can be very confusing for the listener. The simple sentence—subject, verb, object—is the best format.

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Tips for TV

Walking cluttered pathways

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By Mohamed Amin

Electronic news gathering in Africa is not easy. Numerous obstacles clutter the path of a television news team. Firstly, there is the bureaucratic side. It takes time to get filming permits, equipment, licences, and entry permits into “sensitive” areas, and to haggle with local authorities once you have made it into these “sensitive” areas.

In short, one hand of Africa’s bureaucracy has no idea or interest in what the other is doing.

Then there is the physical danger of covering news events in Africa. A mob hell-bent on destruction recognises neither friend nor foe. It is easy to be caught in the midst of a riot where your camera protects you against one group, but makes you a victim against another.

Once you have the story “in the can”, or in today’s language, “on tape”, the next major obstacle is how to get it on the air. Most African countries, often sensitive, have only one satellite uplink, located in the government-controlled TV station and closely monitored. The option is to disguise your material and hope it is not spotted while being satellited, or persuading the

engineer on duty to keep his eyes closed while the material is being transmitted. A final resort is to hand carry the material on the first flight out of the country.

Get in, yes, but get out, too

- 1.** Television broadcasters working in Africa must be wary of information being fed to them. Sources must be checked and re-checked and cross-referenced with other people. They must be able to separate truth from exaggeration.
- 2.** They must let the pictures tell the story and, in Africa especially, never, ever get involved in what you are shooting or reporting. Africa is a hotbed of persecution, with executions, riots and public demonstrations often taking place for the benefit of the cameras. Never try to stop an execution—or you could be at the receiving end.
- 3.** It's not always easy to get around in Africa. So make sure you have adequate transport and food to get you to a trouble spot and, more importantly, to get you out.

Appendix A

Media Glossaries

Journalism, like other professions, has its own vocabulary and jargons. These may differ in Africa from one country to another and from one newspaper or broadcast station to another. The following terms, nevertheless, are common for most newspapers.

Following the newspaper terms are terms for, next, desktop publishing, and then radio and television. A radio and television glossary starts on page 169.

Newspaper Terms

Ad: Abbreviation for advertisement

Add: Copy to be added to a story already written

Advance: An advance story of a news event

Angle: A particular slant on, or aspect of, a news or other account

Art: Any newspaper or magazine illustrative material

Assignment: A reporter's task, usually temporary

Backshop: Mechanical Department

Bank: A part of a headline, also called a *deck*, usually used to designate a secondary part of a headline. Also, a table for hot type in the composing room

Banner: A headline, usually the width of the page

Beat: The regular stops made by a reporter; a scoop or an exclusive story

Binder: A small banner head across an inside page usually used with the full text of a speech or a long story or to tie in several related stories

- Bleed:** A picture “bleeds” when it runs to the edge of a sheet
- Blind Ad:** Classified ad that does not reveal the identity of the advertiser
- Blotter:** Police department records of arrests
- Blow up:** An enlargement of any printed matter.
- Body Type:** Type in which the news is set
- Border:** Strips of type used to form a box around a story, headline or ad
- Box:** An item ruled off on all four sides with a rule or border
- Break:** The point at which a story turns from one page to another or especially from one column to another. Also the moment at which a story happens
- Brief:** A short news item
- Broadsheet:** A page the full size of a rotary press plate, usually applied to a newspaper’s size as distinct from Tabloid
- Bromide:** Camera prepared art work screened for printing
- Budget:** A statement of the day’s stories in hand or expected
- Bulletin:** A short lead of an important or last-minute news story
- Bureau:** A subsidiary news-gathering force operated by newspapers and press associations at important news centers
- Business-Office Must:** A must story ordered by the business office, such as a page-one box devoted to a promotion
- Byline:** Line containing the name of the author of any written material
- Caps:** Capital letters
- Caption or Cutline:** Explanatory material with an illustration or photograph
- Caps and lower case:** If a sentence is set *C LC*, the first letter of each word is in caps, the remainder of the words in lower case letters
- Catchline:** A word or phrase at the top of a sheet of copy for later identification and reproduced on the galley proofs
- Centre:** To set a short line of type so that an equal amount of space appears to the left and right of it
- Chase:** In hot type, a metal frame in which type and blocks are assembled and then locked for printing
- Classified:** Small ads, consisting only of type and classified by subject, e.g. house sales, motor car sales
- Clean Copy:** Copy requiring little revision
- Clean Proof:** Proof requiring few corrections
- Column:** Vertical area in a newspaper page usually 10 to 15 picas in width. Also the output of a columnist
- Column Inch:** A standard unit of advertising space, one column wide and one inch deep

Composing Room: Section of the production department devoted to the composition and paste up of ads and news

Copy: Editorial material prepared for setting

Correspondent: A reporter who submits out-of-town stories to the newspaper

Cover: To be responsible for writing about a particular news event

Credit line: A line acknowledging the source of a story or picture

Crop: To cut away portions of a photograph to a desired size

Cub: A beginning reporter

Cut: As a noun, any photograph, illustration or diagram or any art that has been prepared for use in a newspaper. As a verb, to reduce the length of a story

Cuttings or Clippings: Extracts from newspapers filed in a newspaper library

Dash: A short horizontal line used to separate parts of a headline

Dateline: The place from which a story originated and the date it was sent

Dead: News matter that has been killed

Deadline: Time when copy or artwork must be in for a particular edition

Deck: A part of a headline, usually its subsidiary section

Display Ads: Advertising matter other than classified

Double Truck: A two-page editorial or advertising layout made up as one, hence eliminating the gutter

Dummy: A plan, usually in miniature, of the ads and/or copy to run on a newspaper page

Ear: Spaces at the top of the front page on either side of the nameplate

Editorialise: To express opinions in a news story or headline

Em: The square of any given size of type. A standard unit of measurement equal to 12 points (the pica em)

Embargo: The fixed time before which a story should not be published

End: Symbol required at the end of the final sheet of copy

Filler: Short items of copy that can be used to fill small holes in inside pages

Flash: A short message of not more than a few words giving the first information on an important news story

Flush: Aligned with the column margin on either left or right

Folio: A page or page number

Follow-up: As a noun, a second-day story. As a verb, to get new information

Font: A complete assortment of type of a given design, style and size

Format: The size, shape and style of a page, section or book

Fourth Estate: Traditional name for the press

Galley: A metal tray on which hot type is assembled

Galley Proof: A proof of a galley of type

Gutter: The margin between facing pages

Handout: A press release supplied by a public relations department

Hard News: News that has just happened or is expected to happen

Head: Headline. Should briefly summarise highlights of a story

HTK: Copy mark meaning *head to come*; indicates that the headline will be written later

Insert: Later information to be inserted in the body of the story

Intro: The introduction of a story

Inverted Pyramid: A news story form with the facts in descending order of importance

Jump: Continuation of a story from one page to another

Kill: To remove material from copy or invalidate it

Layout: The newspaper page designed by the copy editor and sent to the compositor for guidance

Lead: The first paragraph or paragraphs in a news story giving the main facts

Leader: A newspaper editorial, its official view of events

Letterpress: Printing process in which ink is applied from a raised surface

Libel: Written defamation

Local: A local news story

Localise: To play up a local angle in wire copy

Lower Case: The small letters in a font, as distinct from capital letters. Capital letters are referred to as *upper case*

Make Up: The general appearance of a page, its style and arrangement

Masthead: Statement of name of paper, its ownership and rates, usually on the editorial page

More: Written at the bottom page of copy to indicate more copy follows

Morgue: The newspaper's repository for clippings, cuttings, photographs and reference materials; also called Library

Must: A copy mark indicating that the story must run that day

Nameplate: Sometimes called the *flag*. It designates the publication's name on the first page of the cover

Newshole: The space available for news

Newsprint: Paper on which newspapers are printed

Obituary: A report on the death of a person. *Obit* for short

Offset: Lithographic printing whereby the impression is transferred to a rubber blanket which in turn transfers it to the paper

Overset: Type that has been set but cannot be used because of lack of space

Paste Up: Preparation of copy by putting the elements onto a preparation sheet before photographing

Pica: Twelve points or one sixth of an inch

Proof: An inked impression of type and engravings taken for purposes of checking and correcting, if necessary

Query: Summary of a story sent to the newspaper by a correspondent including estimated length. The editor states the number of words desired

Release: To permit the publication of a story at a specified date. *Press releases* or *news releases* are sent by organisations to the media

Revise: A second proof made after the first has been corrected to check for possible errors in the corrections

Rewrite: To write or revise a story to improve it

Rough: A preliminary layout, sketch or design

Run: Another term for a reporter's regular beat. A press run or edition. To print a story

Running Story: A story that develops over a period of several days or more

Sacred Cow: A subject or personality that always receives favourable news treatment in a given newspaper

Sidebar: A story connected with another more important story and usually run beside the main story

Slant: To emphasise a certain aspect of a story

Slug: Word or two to identify news story, date, last name of writer and page number

Soft News: Usually interpretive pieces and features about people or places

Spot News: News obtained at the scene of the event, hence fresh, live news

Spread: A large story with many illustrations

Standing Head: Regularly used captions

Stet: A proof reader's term meaning *let it stand*; disregard change indicated

Stringer: A correspondent who is paid by the inch

Tabloid: A small-size newspaper

Think Piece: A background or opinion article

Type: Slang for typographical error

Wrap up: In general; finish

Desktop Publishing Terms

Bit-mapped: Made up of individual dots

Cut and Paste: To remove material from a page or story and place it in another location

dpi (dots per inch): The density of the units that make up an image. The higher density, the clearer and more detailed the image

Font: A member of a typeface family. For example, Times bold or Bodoni italic are fonts within the Times and Bodoni families

Format: As applied to publications, the overall size, layout, type-style and ordering of the material

Hard Disk: A disk fixed inside the computer (internal) or outside the computer (external) to store information

Imaging area: The area on which a laser printer or imagesetter can place a mark, usually smaller than a full sheet of paper

Kbyte: Kilobyte. A unit of computer information, roughly equivalent to half a page of text.

Mbyte: Megabyte. A unit of computer information roughly equivalent to 500 pages of text

Mouse: A small device attached to the computer which you roll around in order to move a pointer on the screen

Operating System: Software that controls the flow of information inside the computer between keyboard, mouse, screen and printer

Pixel: A picture element. The smallest unit in a screen display that the computer can control

Resolution: The sharpness and clarity of an image produced on a computer screen and output to paper or film

RIP (Raster image processor): A device that takes the output from a layout program and converts it into a pattern of dots for printing.

Scanner: A device that converts an image on paper into digital form which the computer can work with

Style sheet: In desktop publishing, a specification of how each element—headlines, text and so on—are to look in a page

Tiling: Creating a page larger than the size limits of a given laser printer by laser-printing the page in several parts, then assembling the parts for proofing or shooting a negative.

WYSIWYG: What-you-see-is-what-you-get. Used to describe programs that show you on the computer screen exactly what you will get when printing.

Radio and Television Terms

Ad Lib: Comment made extemporaneously, not from a script

A/cass: Abbreviation for audio cassette

Ambient Sound: Natural sound that occurs at a location where a broadcast or recording is being made

Analyst: A commentator who analyses major news stories

Audio: Sound. Major sound sources for radio are live material, cassette tapes, cartridge tapes, reel-to-reel tapes and disc recordings. Television uses the same sources in addition to sound tracks on film (SOF) and videotape (SOT)

BG: Abbreviation for background sound

Black: A blank screen

Break: Station break when the station is identified

Bridge: Copy written for the announcer to read as a verbal transition between two or more related actualities

Bulletin: Programmed newscast read on the air

Camera Script: Script for television programmes listing camera movements, telecine and video tape as well as the spoken word

Cart: Abbreviation for cartridge tape. Also abbreviated CT. Audio tape housed in a plastic container

Character Generator: Abbreviated CG. Equipment used to prepare printed materials electronically for use in a television programme

Console: The switching desk in the control room at which the vision mixer works

Control Room: The room from which the director controls a programme, equipped with monitors and electronic switchgear

Cue: A signal for a programme or performer to begin

Cue Cards: Outline script giving cameramen their technical cues

Cut: Change from one picture to another

Cutaways: Audience reaction shots. Also scenes filmed separately by the interviewer after a recorded interview and then inserted in the interview before transmission

Cyclorama: A light-blue or grey background cloth in a television studio

CU: Abbreviation for close up; showing the subject at close range

Dead Air: A momentary silence during a broadcast

Directional Microphone: Microphone that picks up sounds from one direction only. Also referred to as *unidirectional mike*

Dissolve: Moving from one picture to another

Dolly: A movable platform on which a camera is mounted which can be raised or lowered for high or low-angle shots

Dub: To duplicate a film, videotape or audio tape

EC: End cue. Usually the last few words of an actuality. Also referred to as DC or out cue

ENG: Electronic newsgathering. Electronic newsgathering involves use of portable videotape recorders and transmission systems for field reporting

Established Shot: Camera view of the entire scene

Feed: To transmit a programme electronically to other stations or to the public

FF: Freeze frame. A single frame or film or videotape held on the screen for several seconds

Floor Manager: Studio Manager

Graphics: Words and figures used on television screen, often especially drawn as titles, illustrations, statistics

Keylight: Predominant direction of studio light

Live: Abbreviated LV. A performance transmitted as it takes place; not recorded

LS: Abbreviation for *long shot*. A camera shot generally used to establish location and atmosphere

- Minicam:** A portable videotape camera used for field reporting
- MS:** Abbreviation for *medium shot*. A camera shot with more detail than a long shot but less than a close up
- Monitor:** Television screen in control room or studio which enables producer, performers and technicians to see what is being transmitted
- Network:** A group of stations that are linked together
- OB:** Abbreviation for outside broadcast i.e. live transmission from an outside studio
- OC:** Abbreviation for *out cue*. Indicates when a newscast should end
- Pan:** To move a camera from side to side
- Producer:** Executive who plans a television transmission and may not be the director
- Promo:** An announcement by the station of a forthcoming programme
- PSA:** Public Service Announcement for which fees are not charged
- Reel to Reel:** A tape recorder on which magnetic tape moves from a feed reel to a take-up reel
- RT:** Abbreviation for running time; the total length of a story
- Shot:** Picture taken by a television camera e.g. long sheet, medium and close-up shot
- SIL:** Abbreviation for *silent*
- SOC:** Sound on cartridge
- SOF:** Sound on film
- SOT:** Sound on tape
- Spot:** A commercial or public service announcement
- Super:** Superimpose
- Tag Line:** Copy written for the air person to read after an actuality has ended
- Talk-Back:** The producer's sound system by which he communicates from control room to studio
- Take:** A scene that has been filmed or taped. Also a directive from the director to go to a particular camera for a quick change
- Telecine:** Equipment that feeds prepared film into television programmes

Teleprompter: Machine mounted beside camera lens for printing electronically on the camera lens itself, by means of which a newscaster or performer can read a script unrolling

Tease: A brief and deliberately vague reference to an upcoming story

Theme: Identifying music at the beginning or end of a programme

Tight Shot: A closeup that moves directly in on the subject

Tilt: To move a camera shot up or down

Titles: Introductory or closing captions for a television programme

Tripod: A metal pedestal on which a television camera is mounted and moved around by hand

Two Shot: Two persons framed together by the camera

VO: Voice over. Usually refers to copy read over silent film or videotape with no sound track

VOF: Voice on film. Also sometimes used to refer to videotape with a sound track

VTR: Videotape recording or videotape recorder

Appendix B

Declaration of Windhoek

Below are excerpts from the Declaration of Windhoek.

We the participants in the United Nations/United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Seminar on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, held in Windhoek, Namibia, from 29 April to 3 May 1991...

Declare that:

- 1.** Consistent with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation, and for economic development.
- 2.** By an independent press, we mean a press independent from governmental, political or economic control or from control of materials and infrastructure essential for the production and dissemination of newspapers, magazines and periodicals.
- 3.** By a pluralistic press, we mean the end of monopolies of any kind and existence of the greatest possible number of newspapers, magazines and periodicals reflecting the widest possible range of opinion within the community.
- 4.** The welcome changes that an increasing number of African States are now undergoing towards multi-party

democracies provide the climate in which an independent and pluralistic press can emerge.

5. The world-wide trend towards democracy and freedom of information and expression is a fundamental contribution to the fulfillment of human aspirations.

6. In Africa today, despite the positive developments in some countries, in many countries journalists, editors and publishers are victims of repression—they are murdered, arrested, detained and censored, and are restricted by economic and political pressures such as restrictions on newsprint, licensing systems which restrict the opportunity to publish, visa restrictions which prevent the free movement of journalists, restrictions on the exchange of news and information, and limitations on the circulation of newspapers within countries and across national borders. In some countries, one-party States control the totality of information.

7. Today, at least 17 journalists, editors or publishers are in African prisons, and 48 African journalists were killed in the exercise of their profession between 1969 and 1990.

8. The General Assembly of the United Nations should include in the agenda of its next session an item on the declaration of censorship as a grave violation of human rights falling within the purview of the Commission on Human Rights.

9. African States should be encouraged to provide constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press and freedom of association.

10. To encourage and consolidate the positive changes taking place in Africa, and to counter the negative ones, the international community—specifically, international organizations (governmental as well as non-governmental), development agencies and professional associations—should as a matter of priority direct funding support towards the development and establishment of non-governmental newspapers, magazines and periodicals that reflect the society as a whole and the different points of view within the communities they serve.

11. All funding should aim to encourage pluralism as well as independence. As a consequence, the public media should be funded only where authorities guarantee a constitutional and effective freedom of information and expression and the independence of the press.

- 12.** To assist in the preservation of the freedoms enumerated above, the establishment of truly independent, representative associations, syndicates or trade unions of journalists, and associations of editors and publishers, is a matter of priority in all the countries of Africa where such bodies do not exist.
- 13.** The national media and labour relations laws of African countries should be drafted in such a way as to ensure that such representative associations can exist and fulfill their important tasks in defence of press freedom.
- 14.** As a sign of good faith, African Governments that have jailed journalists for their professional activities should free them immediately. Journalists who have had to leave their countries should be free to return to resume their professional activities.
- 15.** Cooperation between publishers within Africa, and between publishers of the North and South (for example through, the principle of twinning), should be encouraged and supported.

The World Press Freedom Committee: Its Aims and Achievements

The World Press Freedom Committee (WPFC), which produced this publication, represents 34 journalistic organisations on five continents and has both print and broadcast affiliates. Organisations of media workers belong to the WPFC and participate as actively as do owners, managers and editors.

The Committee's main purpose is to unify the world's independent media to meet major threats to a free press.

An important phase of its effort is to give a cooperative hand to the Third World media and journalism schools, at their request, to help improve their professionalism and production capabilities.

The World Press Freedom Committee, funded entirely by the news media, their associations and foundations, has made 150 grants for training programs, seminars and consultants and other assistance projects. Where possible, it also has provided donated equipment.

Its program has been especially effective in the Caribbean, where the WPFC helped produce the *Handbook For Caribbean Journalists*, edited by Gloria N. Biggs, which was so well accepted that it also went into a second printing. WPFC has also produced a *Handbook for Journalists of Central and Eastern Europe*. It, too, has been well received and is now available in 10 languages.

Callix Udofo, of the University of Maiduguri in Nigeria, saw a copy of the Caribbean Handbook and told the WPFC: "This type of how-to book is urgently needed in Africa. Will the WPFC help us produce one?"

The book you hold in your hands, now in a revised edition, is the result.

We are indebted to The Philip L. Graham Fund for helping to make the present, revised edition possible.

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