

2009 News Literacy Conference at Stony Brook University

Day One

Welcome Remarks:

Shirley Strum Kenny, President, Stony Brook University
Alison Bernstein, Vice President, Knowledge, Creativity, and Freedom Program, Ford Foundation.
Howard Schneider, Dean, School of Journalism, Stony Brook University.

On Wednesday, March 11th, 2009 the Stony Brook University News Literacy Conference kicked off with a reception dinner at the Sunwood Estate, home of university president, Shirley Strum Kenny.

Journalists, academics, university presidents and administrators, and others came from across the country. President Kenny extended a particular welcome to the conference attendees who had traveled the farthest from Peru and the Asian nation of Bhutan. Domestically, forty-one universities sent either professors or administrators, said Kenny. Notable conference attendees included Ted Koppel, Vivian Schiller, President and CEO of *NPR*, Arthur Sulzberger Jr., Chairman and Publisher, *The New York Times* as well as four university presidents in addition to Kenny.

In her welcoming remarks, President Kenny spoke about how proud she was to have, “the first and only [undergraduate] school of journalism in the New York public university system.” She thanked the founding dean of the school, Howard Schneider, for all his work in establishing and running the journalism school after many years as the editor of *Newsday*. Kenny also thanked the many individuals and organizations that have invested time, energy, and money to make the program a success. Included in this list were the Knight Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the McCormick Foundation.

News literacy, said Kenny, is important because it enables students to discern fact from fiction. Understanding how to parse the news, how to dig into the assertions, facts, inferences, and evidence of a news story, is something that benefits journalists in training, but also, said Kenny, non-journalism majors.

The journalism school has to take on a new task. It should also serve to “train the next generation of news consumers,” said Kenny.

Kenny then introduced Alison Bernstein, Vice President, Knowledge, Creativity, and Freedom Program, Found Foundation. Bernstein said that the goal of this conference and of the news literacy movement in general, is to “create a national strategy,” for teaching “university and high school” students how to understand the news. “This goal is ambitious,” said Bernstein, “—and can be reached.”

Teaching news literacy is more important than ever, said Bernstein, given the explosion of online news and the adoption of the 24-hour news cycle across all news mediums. It's important for students to be able to distinguish entertainment and opinion from "dispassionate reporting," and, "credible from unreliable news."

She ended with a quote from Walter Lippmann, a warning about the consequences of a populace unable to parse the news: "When distant and unfamiliar and complex things are communicated to great masses of people, the truth suffers a considerable and often a radical distortion."

That, said Bernstein, was pertinent in 1955, when it came from Lippmann—"now it is urgent."

Berstein then introduced Howard Schneider, whom she called "the right dean" of the journalism school at Stony Brook.

In his brief remarks, Schneider set forth three goals for the conference:

1. To share what Stony Brook has been doing in its own news literacy course (which is available to roughly 10,000 of its 15,000 undergraduate students), and related projects.
2. To create a "community of interest" around the issue of news literacy.
3. To come away with collective and individual action plans for advancing news literacy courses as an educational movement at high schools and universities, for the general public, and for a global audience.

Day Two

Opening Remarks

All events on Days Two and Three took place at the Wang Conference Center located on Stony Brook's campus not far from the Journalism School.

The first speaker to address the conference which drew one-hundred-twenty four attendees was Howard Schneider. He began with a story about leaving *Newsday* in 2004, and starting the journalism program at Stony Brook. Early on in this process, Stony Brook President, Shirley Strum Kenny, asked Schneider to teach a course on the values and ethics of the American press to a broad range of non-journalism students at the university. While teaching that course, Schneider encountered an interesting range of responses to the news among his students. "I discovered after about three weeks that about a third of the students in this class believed everything that they read or saw that came from a news source," said Schneider. "About a third of the students believed nothing. Cynics at nineteen." And finally, "a third of the students didn't know what to believe."

The journalism school of the future, Schneider concluded, would need to expand beyond training journalists—it would need to take on a second mission: “to educate news consumers.”

That’s the genesis, said Schneider, of the News Literacy program at Stony Brook.

New Literacy at Stony Brook

In order to provide a framework for the rest of the conference, Schneider proceeded to cover the basics of the News Literacy program at Stony Brook, prior to taking questions from the audience.

He started his presentation with the slide that greets students when they first walk into the News Literacy class at Stony Brook: side-by-side portraits of Jon Stewart and Johannes Gutenberg. The students can always identify Stewart, but when asked about the Gutenberg portrait, “they usually say something like Ayatollah Khomeini,” reported Schneider.

The students are taught that “News Literacy is the ability to use critical thinking skills to judge the reliability and credibility of news reports, whether they come via print, television or the Internet.” Schneider pointed out that the difference between news literacy and media literacy is that news literacy is focused “like a laser beam” on news, and not on such topics as gender roles in advertising or how different mediums are used to send messages to society, for example.

News literacy training is necessary, said Schneider, because with the flood of information on the Web, it’s more important than ever for readers to be able to distinguish between news that can be trusted and news that cannot be trusted. Further, a healthy democracy relies on informed citizens.

The News Literacy course at Stony Brook entails forty-two hours long and is based on fourteen class sessions, said Schneider. The course itself focuses on five “Key Concepts” and five “Key Skills.”

Key Concepts:

- 1) Appreciate the power of information
- 2) Understand the nature and mission of the American press
- 3) Understand how journalists work
- 4) On the Internet, rank is not the same as reliability, and we are all *publishers* as well as consumers
- 5) Understand why news matters in both individual lives and collective life of the country

Key Skills:

- 1) Recognize the difference between journalism and other kinds of information

- 2) Recognize the difference between news and opinion
- 3) Analyze the difference between assertion and verification and between evidence and inference
- 4) “Deconstruct” news reports based on evidence and reliability of sources, and apply these principles across all media platforms
- 5) Distinguish between news media bias and *audience* bias

Schneider asked the audience to consider these ten items, and at the end of the conference to give feedback regarding the Stony Brook News Literacy course. Look at the course outcomes, he asked, with the development of a core national curriculum in mind. Schneider then guided the attendees who’d gathered in the Wang Theater through some of the lessons he teaches in his news literacy course. It was a rush through a forty-two curriculum in forty-five minutes, as he said, but the presentation included a broad array of multimedia and interactive lessons.

One of the lessons that stood out—both to this audience and, according to Schneider, undergraduate students—was a forty-eight hour “news blackout” that Schneider implements as the first assignment. For the purposes of the assignment, student are not allowed to access any news, including traditional new outlets (newspapers, television, radio) and new media outlets (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Blogs, etc), for two full days. No news, no weather reports, no sports scores, not even information second hand via friends and family. The students, said Schneider, go into the experience thinking it won’t be particularly difficult. But by the end, many feel “anxious that something is happening in the world and they don’t know about it,” he said. Schneider paused for a beat, than added, “They carry umbrellas around campus.”

A few of the quotes from students’ post-news blackout got the point across quite clearly:

“...the experience resembled withdrawal. It made me realize how dependent I am on having instance access to the news.”

“I feel by far that this has been the hardest task... through my years at Stony Brook.”

“I feel like an anxious bird in a cage.”

Depriving students of news, said Schneider, shows them firsthand how much they rely on various forms of news throughout each day.

Schneider also made use of technology, running the audience of academics and journalists through some of the interactive exercises he uses in the classroom. In one such exercise, he played a YouTube clip showing soldiers in Iraq, and asked whether the clip represented: a) unfiltered information, b) propaganda, c) news, d) publicity, or e) advertising. He then instructed the audience members to use the clickers, the TV remote-like devices, to select an answer by pressing the Send button on the device. The results were tabulated almost instantly—and displayed as a bar graph via a digital projector on the stage behind Schneider. The vast majority voted that the clip was

unfiltered information, which Schneider said was the wrong answer as the video had come from the Multi-National Force—an Iraqi Website, run by the Army. Therefore it was an example of propaganda. In another instance, Schneider showed a clip of the Daily Show and asked the audience to vote on whether Jon Stewart is primarily a journalist or entertainer. Most of the voters identified Stewart as an “entertainer.”

Schneider also showcased examples of non-news material being passed off as news: a blogger hired by a fashion company to review the company’s merchandise, a video news release on the “dangers” of iPods, paid for by Panasonic, a competitor to Apple. Using these examples, Schneider listed three things that set news apart from all other media sources of information:

- Verification
- Independence
- Accountability

“If you want to be informed, and you don’t find these three things, you’re lost,” he said.

Near the end of his talk, Schneider went over a list of “ten ways to be a smarter news consumer.” These reminders are what Schneider tells his students they should walk away with from his course—and use for the rest of their lives. They include:

- 1) Always know what information neighborhood you’re in. For instance, news, propaganda or publicity, etc...)
- 2) In the news neighborhood, differentiate news from opinion.
- 3) Follow a story over time.
- 4) Evaluate sources, evaluate sources, evaluate sources!
- 5) Always ask: “Did the reporter open the freezer?” This is a reference to a newspaper story that reported that bodies were being kept frozen in the Superdome freezer in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The story was false because the reporter took hearsay as truth. Though he had the opportunity, he never opened the freezer to check the assertion.)
- 6) On the Internet, rank and popularity do not necessarily mean reliability.
- 7) Be open to information that challenges your own biases and assumptions.
- 8) Remember: in the digital age, we are all publishers as well as consumers.
- 9) Be an aggressive news consumer—in the digital age, it is hard work.
- 10) Make time for the news.

The short-term goals of the New Literacy program at Stony Brook, Schneider said, were to teach ten thousand students and to conduct a two-year study to determine whether this course makes a difference in the ability of students to parse the news. Students are being tested before taking the course, shortly after taking the course, and a year after taking the course—and assessed on ability to evaluate the news.

The longer-term goal is to “become the nationally-recognized center for educating current and future news consumers on how to judge the reliability and credibility of news

reports.” Stony Brook’s Center for News Literacy is currently looking for a director, and Schneider asked the audience to spread the word.

In the very last part of Schneider’s talk, he asked the audience to vote on whether News Literacy should be: required for all university students, offered as an elective, included as part of high school curriculum, or delivered online to the general public. The most votes (based on only being able to pick a single answer) went to teaching news literacy in high school. Making news literacy a required undergraduate course was the second most popular choice.

The question and answer session focused on a few areas. Asked to explain the difference between literacy and criticism, Schneider said that news literacy, “is really a judgment on the reliability” of the news, rather than qualitative criticism of the news.

There were questions about diversity (it should be noted that most of the audience itself was white and over forty), which Schneider admitted is an area where the Stony Brook program needs improvement. Specifically, he noted a lack of Spanish language materials and coverage. And while he said the course covers gender and racial bias, it could include better coverage of these topics.

A slew of questions focused on where to offer a news literacy course, how it’s being offered at Stony Brook, and who it should be offered to. The opinions were as many as the number of questions asked. Some thought news literacy should be offered at high school (and to even younger students), others thought it should be offered as an elective course, and still others wondered whether or not the course should be first offered to faculty at universities before moving on to teach students. These are all areas that Stony Brook and this conference should address over the next few days, said Schneider.

The President’s Panel: How Can Universities Incorporate News Literacy into a Curriculum for the Twenty-First Century?

Moderator: Shirley Strum Kenny, President, Stony Brook University

Panelists: Nancy Cantor, President, Syracuse University

Brady Deaton, Chancellor, University of Missouri

John Lombardi, President, Louisiana State University

Sanford Unger, President, Goucher College.

Shirley Strum Kenny started the president’s panel by posing the question: Do the various university presidents think that what Howard Schneider talked about in his opening remarks would be relevant at the schools they each represent?

Nancy Cantor said that she thought news literacy was incredibly relevant for students at Syracuse. She said that she was particularly interested in considering news literacy in various other fields, “you can imagine news literacy in life sciences, news literacy in the law.”

Brady Deaton said he expected to see an “enormous national impact” from a news literacy movement, noting the importance of an informed citizenry for a healthy democracy. He also said he was convinced that any news literacy program was germane to continuing education for faculty. Deaton also called up the question of whether there should be a greater focus on research-based news education. “You know, we created land grant universities at a time when we felt that true research based knowledge was vital to the well-being of our society,” he said. “You really wonder today if we don’t need the equivalent of news grant universities or colleges.”

John Lombardi agreed that news literacy was an important concept, and that he too was interested in the idea of how news literacy could be blended into other disciplines, such as politics. But, he raised some cautions for this audience of “true believers.”

“On the other hand, I have a good time listening to people talk about making these curricular requirements. This of course is where the rubber hits the road at universities. We’re all for truth and justice and the American way, but we’d prefer that it be required,” he said in a wry voice.

Lombardi added that academics in the history department might scoff at the idea of making news literacy itself a curricular requirement; why not make history required instead? Same with the philosophy, or any other department at a university. He said that he felt news literacy is part of a bigger set ideas—and that it would be important to keep this in mind as the group moved forward with their plans.

Sanford Unger said his perspective was unique in that the rest of the panelists represented larger schools. Goucher college, where Unger is president, has roughly fifteen-hundred students with an average class size of nineteen. How, asked Unger, could he teach news literacy to every single student with such small class sizes? So, asked Unger, how else can this be packaged? How else can this be “seen and interpreted as something important in a curriculum.”

“I think that teaching news literacy,” said Unger, “would be teaching young people how to engage in critical thinking-- which I think is more necessary than ever before because there is so much of a tendency to come up with a set of principles,” and not consider conflicting information.

Unger also said that he sees a certain divide between academics and journalists. The academics think that journalism in schools snuck in when nobody was looking. He said that he thinks news literacy could help bring the worlds of academia and journalism closer together, so that both sides better understand how the other works—and why the other is important.

The panel next moved on to discuss the question of when and where news literacy should be taught. Cantor said that the group should consider implementing some kind of community link to journalism and news literacy. How about local academies that would teach community journalism? How about a “J-day” that would bring students from

outside the university into communications or journalism schools to foster an interest in journalism? She said that these would be ways for universities to accomplish some of the public good that they promise to the communities where they are located.

Deaton also joined in to say that his school and the communications department in general feel very strongly about being a public trust for society and that news literacy can help play a role in this. For instance, he said he did not feel well-served by the news media in the coverage leading up to the current Iraq war.

Kenny brought up the question posed by Schneider in his opening remarks, in which the audience voted that the best place to teach news literacy is in the high schools. She asked the panelists what they thought about this topic. Cantor said “we really have to have our students, very young, embedded in the sense of engaged democracy, and again, that’s what this is all about.”

Deaton said he agreed with Cantor, comparing news literacy to teaching foreign languages at a young age, but noted a tremendous need for faculty to take a news literacy course. Unger called teaching news literacy at the college or university level “remedial.”

Lombardi jumped into the conversation with a provocative challenge. “If we’re going to make this a required course that we’re all supposed to teach, and if it’s going to be the foundation of democracy and all that other good stuff, it seems to me that we have to get it away from the private property of journalists who claim to own the idea that they’re the only ones that can provide real stuff. And of course, I’m totally offended by this because A) I don’t like journalists that much, and B) I’m a historian. So the combination allows me to say that I’m not persuaded by the professional, guild-like, self-interested approach that says that only the journalists know about truth, and only the journalists can discern critical thinking within the media, and only the journalists can adjust to the news in any kind of intelligent way and we ought to promote that narrow view of professional journalists as the gospel truth of how to deal with information through a broad-based, hi-tech curriculum for everybody.”

Almost immediately, the entire panel spoke into their microphones until Unger’s voice took the lead and he said that he thinks the discussion thus far at the conference “represents a step towards abandoning that concept” of news literacy as a topic owned only by journalists. Cantor and Deaton heartily agreed with Unger’s declaration.

Cantor said that while journalism students at Syracuse take classes in every other department of the school, news literacy would provide a way to bring students and professors from other departments into the journalism program.

After a brief back-and-forth on Jon Stewart and the deficits in the journalism of the past few years, Lombardi rounded out the panel’s talk with a humorous punctuation of a speech in which he, perhaps grudgingly, defended the importance of journalistic specialization as a field. “We have to get people to understand that not only do they have to think critically in general, but they have to be able to do so in specific,” said Lombardi,

before closing in a deadpan voice, “So I don’t want you to lose your journalistic credentials. I think they’re worthwhile—even if I think you’re a pain in the ass.”

The first question raised by the audience was whether taking a critical view of the news might turn off prospective journalism majors. Kenny said that she didn’t think this would be a problem as the number of students pursuing journalism degrees is growing rapidly. And Unger added, half-joking, that the “virtually complete discrediting” of the law and medical fields hasn’t cut back on applicants to schools teaching those professions, nor has the exceedingly low approval of Congress caused fewer politicians to want to run for office. Some in the audience seemed to shudder at the comparison, no matter the intended levity.

To a question about seeking multiple voices and perspective in news literacy, and about engaging multiple fields outside of journalism on this topic, Cantor and Deaton strongly agreed that such approaches would be valuable.

Following a question on how to sell news literacy at institutions, like small liberal arts schools that won’t be able to make news literacy a required course, Lombardi was able to articulate a more complete version of what he had hinted at in his previous comments. What it comes down to, he said, was that in a time of cutting costs at universities, the question becomes: How do we get certain skills, like critical thinking and skepticism, indoctrinated into students in the most efficient and cost-effective way? On this count, he said, news literacy was a strong sell, since it could be an engaging, inexpensive, and popular way to teach core ideas applicable across multiple fields of study.

A Special Announcement

John Lombardi, President, Louisiana State University

Jack Hamilton, Dean, Manship School of Communications, Louisiana State University

Jack Hamilton took the stage immediately after the panel ended to make a special announcement. Standing alongside President Lombardi, Dean Hamilton announced that the Manship School of Communications is, with a generous grant, “creating a chair in media literacy that will be funded very shortly and we will be using that to hire someone who will work very closely with Howie [Schneider]. We’ve got things that they need to do with our program, but Howie is on the crest of a wave and he’s providing great leadership in this area and we figure that the best way we can use this asset is to team up with him.” Hamilton went on to specify that the position would focus on the nexus of media and politics. Lombardi called this chair a good example of how to get news literacy into universities.

Section 3: News Media Panel: What responsibilities do journalists have to educate their own consumers?

Moderated by Andrew Heyward, Former President, CBS News

Panelists: Neil Budde, President, Chief Product officer, DailyMe.com

Ted Koppel, Former Anchor and Managing Editor of *Nightline*, ABC News and Managing Editor, Discovery Channel

Vivian Schiller, President and CEO, National Public Radio (NPR)

Alexandra Wallace, Senior Vice President, NBC News

Andrew Heyward opened the panel by asking Ted Koppel how he thinks the news consuming audience has changed in the last few decades.

Koppel asked the audience to go back to 1968, when a new television program was born—"it was called *60 Minutes*." Somewhere around the sixth or seventh year, Koppel said, something new to the industry took place: *60 Minutes*, a news show, made a profit. The other networks took notice, and asked the question, *if they can do it, why can't we?*

"And so we had a biblical spate of begetting that took place. *60 Minutes* begat *20/20*. *20/20* begat *Prime Time Live*," and on and on. There was a new expectation that television news would become profit centers, said Koppel. And for the first time, television news started not just paying attention to content, but to drawing the most profitable demographics. This, said Koppel, has downgraded the quality of the news.

In counterpoint to Koppel, Alexandra Wallace, calling herself a "realist," said she came to the understanding that as a journalist all she was really doing was selling cars but that selling cars was what allowed her to do good journalism. Her point was that she's wary of saying that the commercialization of the news is necessarily a bad thing. "I haven't had to say 'No' to a story in years because of cost," she said, since the cars are paying for the news. Or were, until the recent downturn in the economy.

Wallace argued that a newscaster has to be entertaining, but that doesn't mean he or she can't be informative too. The reality, she said, is that good news shows have to compete directly with entertainment.

Vivian Schiller said that while she's only been in her current position with NPR for a little over eight weeks, she is realizing that radio is different from commercial broadcasts—mostly because of the medium. People listen to the radio while driving or doing other tasks.

Neil Budde, taking a cue from Koppel, wanted to bring the audience back to when the remote control was invented, allowing television consumers to have instant control over broadcasts. No longer would someone necessarily watch a whole program. If the fifth minute of a broadcast became boring—"click." Budde said that television allowed much better tracking of what consumers were watching, and when they turned away from a show. This aspect of tracking consumption has been dramatically expanded with the consumption of news and media on the Web.

Raising a new question, Heyward steered the panel to a discussion of Jon Stewart. "He's popular because he's solid, in the journalistic sense," said Heyward. Not only is he doing

work that other people aren't doing, but Stewart often produces reliable, verifiable work, and is backed by more resources—and uses those resources—than many news outlets.

Koppel, responding to a question about his perspective of the “Jon Stewart factor,” said that Stewart is analogous to a good political cartoon: you need to know the context and you need to read the front page to make sense of the cartoon. The cartoon alone is not enough. But Koppel is afraid that the people who watch Stewart think that they are getting a full newscast—but, of course, the full newscasts aren't providing full newscasts much anymore, he added. One exception, he said, is NPR with *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*.

Koppel said that he's worried about calling the news a business just like any other, because he doesn't agree with this sentiment. The news, said Koppel, has a fundamental role in American history—and is important for democracy. “I don't think you have to be dull to be substantive—but we have to be substantive,” he said.

After a little more back and forth on the question of substance vs. style, and how the Internet's ability to “unbundle” individual stories from the organization that produced the story, the discussion shifted to the so-called democratization of the news as exemplified by citizen journalism and blogging.

After Koppel called such democratization a dangerous thing, Heyward answered by playing devil's advocate, posing the questions: Isn't this just a bunch of older journalists holding back the news from whatever evolution comes next? Isn't this preventing the sort of citizen journalism that will rout out inaccuracy and highlight worthwhile stories in a very democratic way?

To which Koppel responded, “I'd say that you are probably going to get your wish. And you'll be sorry.” Koppel then mentioned turning on the TV earlier in the morning and seeing multiple cable stations showing helicopter shots of Bernie Madoff on his way to “the arms of justice.” But, he said, not one of those stations gave any sort of context or taught him anything new about Madoff—“Cable news seems to be in a desperate rush to be first with the obvious.”

Heyward next shifted to Wallace, asking her whether the mainstream media lives up to the standards of news literacy being discussed at this conference. There's plenty of fluff, said Wallace, but for the most part she said that mainstream TV news was standing up to these ideas in actual practice. This prompted some back and forth on the quality of different sources of news, and the hope for news literacy as a movement to aid news consumers, in the words of Koppel, “in discerning the difference between—pardon me—shit and shinola.”

Finally, Heyward asked each of the panelists what they thought news organizations could do, in addition to providing solid news reporting, to promote the news literacy goals being discussed at the conference.

Koppel said that he doesn't think that there is anything else to do besides producing high-quality news. And while he thinks this is happening on the network news shows, he's worried about the cable channels.

Wallace said that she agrees with Koppel, but gave a counter example, noting that Rachel Maddow is both a partisan, and produces intelligent news. Wallace called this a good thing, and said she was glad to see how someone like Maddow could be a part of bringing news to the public.

Schiller said that NPR doesn't have the same problems with commercialization and audience that some of the other media and institutions are dealing with. "What we have to do," she said, "is to figure out how to take advantage of the strength of every new platform to be able to deliver those stories in a way that resonates with the same quality and values as we deliver in our radio shows."

Neile Budde brought up the idea that one of the exciting aspects of making news available online is that "everybody can pick and choose what they want, and I think there's oftentimes when they select stuff that is often ignored in other media forms." Unlike TV or print media where editors are limited by time or space constraints, online news is a way to get around these constraints and provide good quality pieces that might normally not make it to print or broadcast. World news, he said, was an example of the kind of story that could benefit from the Web.

The first question from the audience was on prior government regulations that once determined the amount of news a TV station had to provide—notably, as Koppel said in response, section 315 of the FCC code. This refers to requirements to use a broadcasting license to provide news as a public service as part of a station's or network's obligation. Both Koppel and Heyward came to the same conclusion that while such regulation might have been feasible in past decades, the rise of the Internet would make this kind of regulation impossible. There's simply too much to filter. Heyward added that he would feel uncomfortable letting the government regulate the press too heavily because the press functions as a government watchdog.

A question about reporting on foreign news sparked a discussion about how expensive it is to report on foreign events, why foreign offices of news institutions are being closed—and how detrimental it is to society when foreign reporting is cast aside. Wallace made a specific comment about what she called the "war" in Mexico—between the government and drug cartels—that is already spilling over into the United States, but hasn't received enough news coverage. "This is not trivial material we're talking about," said Koppel, who mentioned, specifically, a lack of coverage on what he said were 100 nuclear warheads floating around in Pakistan.

Both Budde and Schiller noted that the dearth of foreign reporting by most news institutions creates a competitive advantage to the few news institutions that can provide this type of reporting. To this point, Koppel suggested that news institutions should find

the smartest recent graduates, train them for 3 months on running a foreign bureau, pay them \$50,000 a year—and send them out into the world.

From foreign reporting, the conversation turned to local coverage, both in the geographic sense and in the sense of covering specific communities (like the various Hispanic communities). The panel agreed that there hasn't been enough coverage of these communities. They also agreed that with many local stations facing a significant decline in revenue, television coverage of local issues is in jeopardy.

Late in the question and answer section of the news media panel, the question of funding to pay for news coverage was raised—and the topic became difficult to avoid for the rest of the panel. No definitive answers came to the surface, but some of the topics discussed were whether or not it made sense to charge for access to online news and the challenge of devising business models that will pay for substantive news coverage.

Thursday's Lightning Round Session: Innovators in News Literacy

Presenters: Fabrice Florin, Executive Director and Founder, NewsTrust.net

Alan Miller, Executive Director, News Literacy Project

Susan Moeller, Professor, University of Maryland and Director, International Center for Media and the Public Agenda

During the lightning round, each speaker was given ten minutes to give a presentation about the project he or she represented, followed by ten minutes for questions from the audience.

1. Fabrice Florin, Executive Director and Founder, NewsTrust.net

Fabrice Florin called www.NewsTrust.net a “social news network.” The goal of the project, which is non-profit, is to help readers find high quality, reliable news using social networking technology. Users of the site are able to rate stories on a variety of measures having to do with fairness, quality of sourcing, and many other factors. Reviewers themselves also receive ratings from higher level members which gives the reviews produced by “trusted members” more weight in overall averages of the stories they rate. There are five levels of validation, from new visitors to the site all the way up to the staff level. And in order to join the ranks of the higher-level reviewers, a member of NewsTrust is individually evaluated by a staff member.

Visitors to NewsTrust.net see what looks like the front page of most online news organization—except next to each story is its aggregate rating, displayed as a yellow bar, and given a number between one and five. Clicking on the headline of a story, takes the reader to the full story on its parent institution's Website, and opens a second window, which allows registered members to give the story a rating.

This approach, said Florin, locates NewsTrust at the intersection of professional news organizations (*The New York Times*, NPR), amateurs (bloggers, Digg), and computer

technology (Google, Yahoo). Florin said that he believes the most successful approaches to disseminating news in the coming years will have to strike such a balance. NewsTrust also partners with media and other organizations, ranging from Stony Brook University, to *The Washington Post*.

During the question and answer section, Florin clarified that NewsTrust.net includes written media, as well as radio and video. He also mentioned that one of the strengths of NewsTrust is that its ratings also cover independent news sources along with stories from the mainstream press—so it allows for interesting stories a reader might not have come across to be seen (if it receives a high quality aggregate review).

In response to another question about how reviewers are themselves reviewed, Florin said that only “trusted members” can rate other members. But, he said, “ratings are a means to an end. The end is that we want to increase our news literacy skills in the digital age.” A major goal is for news consumers who use NewsTrust to become more news literate by engaging in the process over time. And there’s evidence, said Florin, to support the idea that this is happening.

Finally, Florin answered a question about how universities can partner with NewsTrust. He said that students would team up with a news organization, say NPR or PBS, and spend one week trying to find the best stories on a given topic. The students would use this “news hunt” to practice news literacy skills, and at the end of the week, their news hunt results would be posted on the NewsTrust blog.

2. Alan C. Miller, Founder and Executive Director, The News Literacy Project,
www.thenewsliteracyproject.org

Alan Miller introduced the News Literacy Project, which brings journalists into middle and high schools to teach students how to discern quality and reliability in news reports. The whole process includes a handful of classes prior to and after a journalist’s visit (around 6 to 10 total classes), which are coordinated and run by teachers already working in the schools that take part in the News Literacy Project.

Miller said that the News Literacy Project was based on these four “pillars”:

- Why does news matter?
- Why is the first amendment protection of free speech so vital to American democracy?
- How can students know what to believe?
- What challenges and opportunities do the internet and digital media create?

“Before the units, we hold orientation and training meetings with the teachers and journalists,” said Miller. “We then provide teachers with examples of the journalist’s work, to share in advance, so students start consuming quality journalism and are ready to ask questions. We give the journalists our menu of 20 activities, and ask them to brainstorm with our local coordinator and consult with the teacher.”

In some cases, the journalist-student connection goes further: at one school, journalist advisors are helping start the first student newspaper.

For the last part of his presentation, Miller showed a promotional video of the News Literacy Project in action. There were interviews with some of the teachers involved, shots of students in the classroom, and a song with the hook: “If you’re momma says she loves you—check it out.”

The first audience question was how the News Literacy Project could get up to scale, given that at the moment it’s only operating at a handful of schools. Miller said that the program is flexible, so he hopes to get all of its materials online, and then figure out individual plans for specific schools and journalists. At one school, multiple journalists could visit during the course of the class, at another, maybe the students could interact with the journalists through video. There are many possibilities.

Another notable question was about how much teacher training this program involved. Miller said that the teachers tend to respond positively to the program material, specifically the book, *The Elements of Journalism*. Hopefully, as teachers gain experience with the program, they will start to integrate some of the concepts in their other classes as well.

At the end of the question and answer section, Howard Schneider jumped in, and said that as far as scaling up the News Literacy Project, the database of journalists trained and willing to participate could be opened up to any teacher in the country who wants to teach news literacy. That way, teachers or schools would be able to work directly with the News Literacy Project to run a series of classes—or they could simply make use of the News Literacy Project’s human and coursework resources to design and run their own classes.

3. Susan Moeller, Professor, University of Maryland and Director, Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change - <http://www.international.umd.edu/studyabroad/3410>

Susan Moeller’s presentation focused on the Salzburg Academy on Media and Global Change, which was launched in 2007. Over 110 students and 22 faculty have come through the program so far. Unlike most of the other attendees at the conference, Moeller and the Salzburg Academy are dealing with global news literacy. The program brings roughly 75 people to Salzburg for three weeks and puts “them in cross-cultural pairs to create case studies.” People will only use your material, Moeller said, if they have some part in creating it. There has to be a sense of buy-in.

The Salzburg Academy curriculum is broken into two categories, the first on gaining media literacy skills, the second on supporting freedom of expression. Each category has three sections:

Global Literacy Skills:

- How to identify what “news” matters.
- How to monitor media coverage.
- How to understand the media’s role in shaping global issues

Supporting Freedom of Expression:

- Defend freedom of expression/defend freedom of the press.
- Promote media literacy by being responsible communicators.
- Motivate media to better cover news (research).

“The diverse media environments and political environments make it a necessity that the people who are going to use it help to create it,” said Moeller. She explained that since the Salzburg Academy is attended by people from around the globe, there is no one-size-fits-all way to design a course on news literacy. This way, the curriculum materials that are created can then be posted to the Salzburg Academy Website, and made available for anyone around the world to download.

The world needs a global news literacy program, said Moeller, and hopefully, the Salzburg Academy can help fill that need.

The first question for Moeller was what impact the program has had on American students who return to their universities afterward. Moeller gave the example of a group of students from Miami who attended Salzburg Academy and who “have taken our curriculum, and Miami has instituted a new media literacy course, which draws on the curriculum that we created. And they are partnering with us in a website called *Milieu*, that is a beginning of a social, participatory environment beyond what we currently do.”

Moeller also answered a question about how universities can partner with the Salzburg Academy. She said that some schools may want to send students and faculty to Salzburg for the program, but others can also use the Salzburg Academy website to download and access lesson plans. There’s also, she said, a place on the program’s website where people who have used Salzburg Academy lesson plans in their own schools can leave comments, suggestions, or modifications to plans that others will see.

Moeller said that she thinks of the curriculum being developed by the Salzburg Academy and its participants as “a clothes line.” A teacher or professor who is interested in using the curriculum could “go down the clothes line and pick up every single piece of clothing in the order in which we’ve got it.” Alternatively, if a teacher was teaching a class on the First Amendment, or new media, or Africa, that teacher could log onto the site and access only those lessons related to the class he or she is planning to teach.

There will also be print versions of the curriculum materials that can be distributed to places without Internet connections. And there are plans for excerpted materials to be printed as inserts in newspapers around the world.

Keynote Address:

Arthur Sulzberger Jr., Chairman and Publisher, *The New York Times*

Arthur Sulzberger Jr, opened his keynote address by calling this “a time of extraordinary change and challenge” for the news world. The Web and all the possibilities it brings to news and media creation, aggregation, and dissemination is shaking things up mightily. Economic and technological disruptions are generating profound changes in the way the news organizations must operate. Sulzberger noted that doing solid reporting—notably foreign reporting—is getting more and more expensive.

The immediate future looks grim, said, Sulzberger. But he wasn’t here to “wax poetic” about the past, “Nor am I here to bemoan our fate,” he said. “Quite honestly, I am tired of reading about the death of, take your pick: journalism, newspapers, engaged readers. Even *The Times* today was wondering out loud on the front page as to where newspapers were heading. ‘Et tu, Brute?’ My view is that what we offer, in all its iterations, is quite valuable and our profession will endure.”

Quoting *The New York Times* writer, David Carr, Sulzberger said: “News has always been the killer app.”

That said, Sulzberger declined saying that he had the answer to how to solve the funding/business problem confronting large news organizations like *The New York Times*. Part of the reason, he said, is that the answers aren’t yet clear. Nobody knows what they are. Another reason is that what works for one organization may not work for another. Micro-finance, non-profit backing, free online content, subscription online content, and many other models are all possibilities moving forward—and each should be given consideration by news organizations, he said.

The goal at *The Times*, said Sulzberger, is to find a way for digital revenues to increase faster than the loss of print revenue. To do this, he’s focusing on three things: “attracting more users, deepening their engagement and then earning revenue from their usage.”

Getting readers engaged is “the name of the game,” Sulzberger said. It’s a good thing when readers can blog, tweet, or “use our journalism as raw material for what they make,” he said.

But, even as overall demand continues, “we are still left in the paradoxical position of having a product that an *increasing* number of people use, but which has *decreasing* revenues and profitability.” In the short term, before solutions to this are figured out, and while the economy is still in crisis, reducing expenses will be necessary.

Sulzberger then went into a quick overview of how *NYTimes.com* has experimented with generating revenue. At first, international readers had to pay for access to the website, but on July 14th, 1997—“Bastille Day, a most fitting metaphor for tearing the online walls down”—the website was made free to everyone. A few years later, the *The New York Times* introduced TimesSelect, a service that charged users for online access to Op-Ed, news columnist, and archival articles. With 200,000 online subscribers, said Sulzberger, TimesSelect generated \$10 million in revenue a year. But TimesSelect came at a cost: it

greatly limited overall online readership, robbing the company of online advertising money. In the end, the *The New York Times* dropped TimesSelect, and once again opened up all of its content and archives to the world.

Sulzberger then posed the question: Does all of this discussion mean that print is dead? No, he answered, “print and digital can co-exist in the marketplace.” He called print a “popular and profitable medium,” saying that “[t]here are more than 830,000 readers who have subscribed to *The New York Times* for two years or more, up from 650,000 just over 2 years ago.”

Finally, Sulzberger addressed the idea of news literacy, calling it a necessary piece of education for coming generations. News consumers, he said, need to be able to make sense of the world around them—by understanding how to consume and make sense of the news.

“Your conference and other initiatives such as the News Literacy Project will help us teach this invaluable lesson and The New York Times Company is very proud to be part of these efforts,” said Sulzberger.

“Together we can create a future where quality journalism thrives, where it lives organically alongside the many new forms of user generated content, amid the chaotic and swirling global conversation taking place on the Web.

“Together we can ensure that citizens, especially our young people, understand the cornerstone attributes that make quality journalism important in their lives, such as verification rather than assertion; accuracy as opposed to speed and sensation; transparency and the idea of correcting one’s mistakes.”

When asked what single thing he would change about the media environment today, Sulzberger recalled the Titanic to issue a warning. He said that the fatal flaw of the Titanic wasn’t hubris, poor engineering, or a lack of lifeboats. “Even if the Titanic had made it safely to New York Harbor, it was doomed,” he said. “Because twelve years earlier, two brothers had invented the airplane.” The biggest challenge the news media faces is grasping the future.

Another notable question focused specifically on when print would disappear. Sulzberger returned to his belief that print will stick around. But, he said, we can’t predict where the technology is going to go, and how things will change in the future. If mobile devices are “as compelling as print” in five years, he said, maybe his answer will be different.

Day Three

Creating Politically Powerful and Engaged News Consumers: A Call to Arms

David T.Z. Mindich, Author, *Tuned Out: Why Americans Under 40 Don't Follow the News*, and Professor of Journalism and Mass Communication, St. Michael's College in Vermont

The third and final, day of the News Literacy Conference kicked off with a lecture by David Mindich. He started with an anecdote about the quick process by which Hitler converted “a chancellorship into a dictatorship,” using the Reichstag fire of 1933. This bit of history, said Mindich, “reminds us how tenuous democracy can be.” Next, he quoted former Supreme Court Justice, Sandra Day O’Connor: “It takes a lot of degeneration before a country falls into dictatorship, but we should avoid these ends by avoiding these beginnings.”

Mindich chose to start this way, as he said later on, because not enough media executives talk about democracy. And good quality news is a fundamental ingredient to a flourishing democracy.

Mindich focused on six key points during the course of his talk:

1. “Young people are probably more tuned out than most of us realize.”

In 1972, said Mindich, 50% of all college aged Americans read a newspaper every day; these days it’s around 20%. “Your news habits are codified in your early twenties,” said Mindich, referring to a study by Wolfram Peiser. He listed off a number of statistics: a) in a Pew Research Center poll, only 23% of people under 40 years old said they’d “miss it a lot” if their local newspaper disappeared; b) the median age of TV news on the major networks is 60 years-old (“Watch the evening news, not the news, but the commercials. It looks like you’re opening up a medicine cabinet of an elderly couple: Viagra, Metamucil, Fixadent, Depends.”); c) *The Daily Show* has a median age viewership of 34 years-old.

Mindich asked rhetorically, haven’t the younger generations always been tuned out? Citing the Pew Research Polls and Time-Mirror Center Polls, but not giving the audience the actual numbers, Mindich said, “The chances are that young people in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s were nearly as tuned in as their elders. And the gap started to widen in the 1970s.” That’s a problem, he said, because if you’re not informed, how can you vote in your own better interest? How can you be an effective participant in a democracy? After all, without knowing the details of the bills, both No Child Left Behind, and The Clear Skies acts sound like great ideas on the surface.

2. “It’s not the fault of young people, or the media.”

Young people are as “idealistic,” “intelligent,” and “engaged in their lives,” as their parents were, said Mindich.

Corporate and political influence, and media bias are all real, but “good, important, hard-hitting, citizen empowering journalism happens every day in every city,” said Mindich.

“So we can’t just say that the media suck and therefore it’s the media’s fault that we’re in this position.”

3. “Entertainment is surely a culprit here... The shrinking news footprint, in the media universe, is surely a culprit as well.”

Significantly more people of all ages can name at least three or more of the Three Stooges (there were multiple configurations of the act, resulting in more than three stooges, though only three at any given time) but have trouble naming three or more Supreme Court Justices, said Mindich, attempting to demonstrate that entertainment has always been distracting from news. But the effect has only grown.

Mindich said that decades ago, when someone like Walter Cronkite said something profound during a broadcast, much of the country heard the message. Today, the news is scattered, there are no jobs like the one Walter Cronkite had with such influence, and national news dialogue is limited.

Mindich also mentioned Facebook. On one hand, Facebook is a massive distraction, he said. On the other hand, Facebook might be a good tool for disseminating news and information and organizing citizens. “We should be remember,” said Mindich, “that it took more than 150 years after the birth of the printing press for the first newspapers to arise. These things take time. Facebook is only a few years old and the political potential is only becoming apparent to us now.”

Mindich called today the “era of distraction,” citing a staggering 77% of sixth graders who have televisions in their own rooms. “And they’re probably not watching the news.”

4. “We need to pay attention when young people are paying attention.”

The most recent presidential election, said Mindich, provided some good news. The youngest voting demographic increased its participation compared to during previous elections, and in some cases the younger demographic actually knew more about each candidate’s stance than older demographics did.

The question, asked Mindich, is whether youth excitement over the election, and inspiration at having a new president, will “translate into holding leaders accountable.” Will young people hold President Obama accountable with as much rigor as Jon Stewart held the previous administration accountable over the past eight years?

Mindich asserted that it’s crucial to note that his students respond when they see hard-hitting journalism, like coverage of Hurricane Katrina, or Seymour Hersh’s Abu Graib story. The message, says Mindich, is that journalists and executives at journalistic institutions, should focus on serious news because it can actually draw young people.

5. “Journalism can do a better job of reaching young people.”

“A student of mine once said that, ‘Following the news is like entering a math class half way through the semester.’ And I think the journalists have to think about that guy when they’re writing their stories,” said Mindich.

One of the most effective ways to get youth attention on the news, said Mindich, is for news institutions not to talk down to young people. Jon Stewart is effective not only because he holds people accountable, but because he treats watchers like sophisticated consumers who can follow complex ideas when well presented.

Mindich then proceeded to repeat an analogy he had posed to a CNN executive in an off-the-record meeting a while ago. Mindich had heard that some of his students ate Jell-O shots (shot-glass sized Jell-O made with vodka or some other liquor) for fun, so he proposed serving Jell-O shots to his college students in order to raise his popularity. Of course, said Mindich, the idea was a terrible one. Maybe a tiny percentage of the class would think it was cool, but the rest would be turned off: students didn’t come to him for Jell-O shots, they come to learn. His message was that swapping out hard news for the news equivalent of Jell-O shots actually turns away younger news consumers.

6. “The most important changes don’t need to be made in the newsroom, but in the classroom.”

Mindich recalled the experience of going to the Bishop Perry Middle School in New Orleans, which teaches mostly African American boys whose families are below the poverty line. When one of the eight graders brought up Donald Rumsfeld, Mindich was shocked. “How do you know Rumsfeld?” he asked.

“I read about him on *The New York Times* online,” replied the student.

“You read *The New York Times* online?”

“Yeah, my teacher assigned it two years ago.”

As he heard this reply, Mindich noticed that most of the boy’s classmates were nodding in agreement. They had all been reading *The Times*. “It had really invigorated this curriculum to make it political, and to make these kids really active participants,” said Mindich.

How about a civics test for all college seniors? How about a portion of the SATs on civics? These questions were raised by Mindich, along with his belief that “we can also socially engineer good news habits.”

Mindich went on to say that he was very impressed with how the news literacy movement was taking shape at Stony Brook University and during this conference. He said, also, that he supported the idea of teasing apart news literacy from the bigger

umbrella of media literacy. “We want to breed skeptics,” he said. “Cynics don’t believe anything. Journalism survives for the skeptics.”

The danger, said Mindich, was that “recent polls have shown” that citizens trust the government and military more and more, and the press less and less. “And when these two lines cross, we’re in danger. When we trust the watchdogs less than we trust the government, then we’re in trouble.”

The question and answer session was varied and quick: Is affluence and consumerism part of the problem? Yes, primarily consumerism. What is the message for secondary school teachers in all of this? “If you assign it they will read it.” Can the news media do a better job of engaging with new media outlets like Facebook, Myspace, and Youtube? “I think that [Facebook] should be welcomed by journalists, and encouraged.”

Friday’s Lightning Round Session: Innovators in News Literacy

Presenters: Howard Finberg, Director, NewsU, The Poynter Institute and Marcy McGinnis, Associate Dean, the School of Journalism, Stony Brook University
Evelyn Messinger, Director of Link TV’s *Know the News* Project and Series Producer of the Link TV news comparison series *Global Pulse*
Siok Sian Pek-Dorji, Executive Director, Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy

Like the first lighting round session, the second session gave each presenter ten minutes to talk, and ten minutes to take questions.

1. Howard Finberg, Director, NewsU, The Poynter Institute and Marcy McGinnis, Associate Dean, the School of Journalism, Stony Brook University
<http://www.newsu.org>

Howard Finberg introduced NewsU, which is four years old, and consists of 85 “self-directed, interactive training” modules for learning about news, news literacy, and journalism in general. At first, NewsU was designed to train journalists, but the organization realized that students were also interested in the materials that NewsU was offering.

There are currently over 100,000 members of NewsU, said Finberg, with the breakdown of members being predominantly journalists, then students, followed by teachers. These members, said Finberg, give high marks when asked if the modules were “useful to extremely useful in their work” (70%), or “helpful to extremely helpful in getting better on the job/classwork” (61%).

There are currently three news literacy modules on NewsU, two of which come from games at the Newseum: *Be a Reporter*, and *Be an Editor*. The third module is called *News Sense: Building Blocks of News*, which introduces the basics of reporting and producing a news story.

The latest project NewsU is taking on is called *Watching TV News: How to be a Smarter Viewer*. This module is being produced in partnership with Stony Brook University, and allows students or other NewsU users to “deconstruct” a TV news broadcast.

Marcy McGinnis demonstrated the *Watching TV News* module. McGinnis, who teaches a two-week segment in the Stony Brook News Literacy course on how TV news is different from other media forms, said she took those lessons and, working with NewsU, brought them to the Web in an interactive way. She gave an example, showing a video news clip played in a Web browser. On the second playing of the clip, a color-coded timeline appeared below the clip. As the clip played through the timeline, it paused at certain moments, calling attention to aspects of the broadcast. In the example McGinnis showed, the clip - about FEMA trailers after Hurricane Katrina - stops after the reporter says the phrase, “unregulated experiment.” A message alongside the clip tells the viewer that such a phrase is “judgmental language,” and explains why.

McGinnis said that modules like this work well directly in the classroom—but have the potential to reach thousands of people beyond classroom walls. Finberg also noted that NewsU is “kept open to the general public.”

What’s next, said Finberg, was an expanded interest in forming partnerships, including something called NewsU International.

The video clips shown on NewsU are currently operating under Fair Use, and most of the NewsU modules are free, McGinnis and Finberg said during the question and answer period. Teachers and students can sign up for free accounts and it can be used for free by a school system, en masse, said Finberg.

Another question was on whether NewsU would produce news literacy modules covering more than just broadcast TV news. Finberg answered by saying that he had “big, ambitious plans,” but that much rested on financing. NewsU has a number of modules in the planning stages slated to cover print and Web news as well as other new media formats, said Finberg.

2. Evelyn Messinger, Director of Link TV’s *Know the News* Project and Series Producer of the Link TV news comparison series *Global Pulse*
<http://www.linktv.org/knowthenews>

Link TV, Evelyn Messinger said, is a satellite TV channel that does all global television, from news, to documentaries, to world music. As part of the channel (and offered online) *Global Pulse* is a “meta news program,” at four minutes long, that compares a topic from multiple, global news perspectives.

Know the News, which was inspired by *Global Pulse*, is comprised of three applications (*Latin Pulse Remixer*, *News Breaks Remixer*, and *Global Pulse Remixer*). The application that students are using the most, *News Breaks Remixer*, allows an individual to re-edit a news story by cutting together clips from all over the world that focus on a single news

event or trend. It is, in essence, a very simple video editing platform that is pre-loaded with clips (which teachers can request to cover specific events), and allows the construction, comparison, and re-editing of the news.

The concept, said Messinger, is to allow students to see firsthand how different editorial choices, such as what clips to show and in what order, can have a major impact on the message the news broadcast makes. It gives students the opportunity to “experience the editorial process directly,” said Messinger. And it gives students to the opportunity to experiment, for instance, with creating a one-sided news report (like a broadcast on abortion that only shows one side of the debate). Experiments like these can help students comprehend what biased reporting is and learn, therefore, how to avoid producing such flawed journalism. *Know the News* is currently being used by several universities.

Know the News, said Messinger, during the question and answer period, does not have archival news clips dating back to events from previous decades—but does have two years of clips from around 30 or 40 news shows around the world, based on thirty minutes per day, five days per week for each show.

3. Siok Sian Pek-Dorji, Executive Director, Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy
<http://www.bhutancmd.org.bt>

Siok Sian Pek-Dorji introduced her talk by telling the audience about the nation of Bhutan—“the world’s newest democracy.” The mountainous country is embedded between India and China, with small villages “scattered all over,” limited infrastructure for communication, and small, isolated language groups in some areas, said Pek-Dorji. With 670,000 citizens, Bhutan has a far smaller population than NPR has listeners. The literacy rate is 54%, and most of the people are farmers.

Bhutan became a democracy on March, 24 2008, when the King abdicated the throne and held elections. Bhutan has also been in the news for its development philosophy: Gross National Happiness (GNH). Pek-Dorji said that GNH has been misunderstood by many people outside of Bhutan. GNH “is not a promise by the government to make people happy. Basically, the idea is that the role of government is to create an environment in which people can find their own happiness.” The four pillars of GNH include:

- Socio-economic development
- Environmental conservation
- Culture and traditions
- Good governance

Good governance, said Pek-Dorji, uses democracy as a means to an end, not the end itself. In this last aspect, quality media, and a news literate populace, will play a “crucial role.”

Other details that Pek-Dorji talked about illustrated how “young” Bhutan’s modernization process is: the first radio station went live in 1984, the first newspaper in 1986, and there wasn’t television or Internet until 1999.

In the last half a decade, said Pek-Dorji, the Bhutanese have shifted from going to TV or other media formats for information and news to wanting to use these resources to access entertainment, like the recent hit show, *Bhutanese Idol*. There’s also a cultural shift going on, as the means of communication is transitioning from oral to visual. There has been a virtual invasion of media in the last ten years which led Pek-Dorji to wonder if Bhutan’s citizens are “consumers or consumed.” She also noted that her country imports most of its media, primarily from India.

“Inspired by what is taking place at Stony Brook,” said Pek-Dorji, the Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy is hoping to start “media clubs” in high schools and universities. The initial goals include putting together a curriculum and a resource book for students.

An audience member asked Pek-Dorji if she thought Bhutanese schools were receptive to including news or media literacy in their curricula right now. Pek-Dorji said that the schools have expressed a strong interest in the topic, but curricula are planned years in advance, and there would be difficulty weaving news literacy in so quickly. That’s why, she said, they are focusing on clubs to start building interest and experience first.

In response to a question about who would be the best people to teach the teachers about news literacy in Bhutan—or if there is potential for a global framework on news literacy—Pek-Dorji said that sitting through the first part of the conference, she realized that something like the Stony Brook course should be available to Bhutanese journalists. But, she said, it’s difficult to bring in frameworks from another nation given that the role of the media, and the expectations of news consumers, varies across borders. She did like the idea of a global forum so that journalists and educators from across the world could share ideas.

Working Lunch: Recommendations for Next Steps from Breakout Group Leaders

During the course of the conference, attendees and presenters split into six groups, and each group had two “breakout group” sessions in which to brainstorm specific ideas for moving news literacy forward. During the last lunch session of the conference, the groups presented two sets of recommendations specific to the theme the group was investigating. The first was to come up with three recommendations for moving news literacy forward in the next 12 months. And the second was to suggest where to spend \$1 million in hypothetical (and perhaps, real) grant money.

The following represents the final recommendations of each group:

Group A:

How can universities rapidly develop and approve News Literacy Programs.

Group Leader: Jack Hamilton, Dean, LSU Manship School of Mass Communications

Recommendations on how to think about moving this forward (not necessarily in 12 months):

- Each school will need to find its own way to do this; it will have to be sui generis. Let 100 flowers bloom.
- Thinking about moving forward quickly is probably not the best approach because of slowness and bureaucracy at academic institutions. That said, using a special topics course or honors course to test the waters may be something that can be implemented quickly.
- To really solidify a news literacy course or program at a university, one needs a combination of: presidential support, senior and upper administrators who think it's worthwhile, and enthusiastic lower administrators. It takes time to build this support, and it's necessary to go through all the steps if the concept is going to have any longevity.

Where to spend \$1 million:

- Fund a broad approach to getting new models in a variety of academic settings with the centerpiece focused on the news. The concept of news literacy could be taught in conjunction with a variety of different disciplines, including: social sciences, law, physical sciences, etc
- Invite several institutions to put forward proposals for models of how they might teach news literacy in these disciplines. There could be courses/questions like: How scientists read the news; How political scientists read the news; How lawyers read the news? Any institution that agreed to do this, would commit to sending administrators/professors to trainings (maybe at Stony Brook) to see what news literacy is—and some of the methods used to pass news literacy knowledge on to students. And any course materials developed via this process could be used by other institutions.
- Another idea is to take some of the presentations from the conference at Stony Brook on the road. Go to events where provosts and other upper administrators meet (conferences, for instance), and present the concept of news literacy there and demonstrations of the possible ways to implement teaching it at the undergraduate level.

Group B:

How can news media organizations partner with universities and high schools to create and support news literacy initiatives?

Group leader: Jonathan Landman, Deputy Managing Editor, *The New York Times*

Recommendations for moving this forward in the next 12 months:

- Create a database of people/journalists so that schools would have access to these folks for their initiatives. This would have to be kept up to date.
- Create a database of course materials and of practical examples (case studies). This has to be kept up to date. Requires a full-time job to find video, find clips, get access, outtakes, etc.

- Encourage news organizations to give students the outlet to publish their own work. This could include publishing blogs, such as the burgeoning use of community-journalists to cover hyper-local events (see: NYT).

Where to spend \$1 million:

- Create the various databases.
- Hire someone(s) full-time to keep the databases up to date.
- Hire regional coordinators to work with specific news outlets and schools in each area.

Group C:

How can journalism schools take on a new university-wide role in news literacy?

Group Leader: Charles Beirbauer, Dean, College of Mass Communications and Information Studies, University of South Carolina.

Recommendations for moving this forward in the next 12 months:

- Provide seed grants to journalism programs at schools and colleges. Specifically those schools that are ready to move forward with news literacy programs that reach beyond journalism majors. Give \$25K per institutions, and spread the money around.
- Set up a clearinghouse so that schools can collectively use, participate with, and share some of the ideas already coming into play at Stony Brook.
- Develop external partners with professional and academic organizations.
- Bonus recommendation: Before President Kenny leaves, get her to write a letter to other university presidents. Presidents can be a force at other institutions.

Where to spend \$1 million:

- Don't limit yourself to five schools. We think you can accomplish something on forty campuses with \$25K grants
- If you're anxious to spend \$1 million, create a refereed, online, news literacy journal, which would solve problems, like: Will teaching a news literacy course help me get tenure? How do we communicate our findings and what works? It would also be a way to spread interest beyond the group of people already interested in the subject.

Group D:

How can high schools introduce news literacy into current curriculums?

Group leader: Gloria Sesso, Direct of Social Studies, Patchogue-Medford Schools, Long Island, New York. Findings presented by Rita Marie Murphy who is a teacher at the Patchogue-Medford Schools,

Recommendations for moving this forward in the next 12 months:

- Create an action group to advocate to the state that we need news literacy as a standard in our schools.
- Collect data on programs, and post results of studies on news literacy.

- Integrate news literacy into existing K-12 courses by focusing on news literacy skills. Take what is learned here (and in the future) back to professional development programs to share with others.

Where to spend \$1 million:

- That money would go very quickly, so spend some of the seed money on a grant writing component.
- -Train teachers about news literacy, and train journalists how to teach students.
- -Train teachers, as a first step, on how to use existing technology to incorporate news literacy lessons in the classroom.
- Create a website with a set of news literacy standards for use by anyone—with suggestions on incorporating this material into an existing curriculum.
- Create an elective course. Elective courses are the first to go in rough financial times, but a pilot study using an elective course would let us collect data to show effectiveness.

Group E:

How can digital technology help shape news literacy courses?

Group Leader: Andrew Heyward, Former President, CBS News; Senior Adviser, the Monitor Group. Fabrice Florin of NewsTrust.net presented the findings.

Recommendations for moving this forward in the next 12 months:

- Online resource center: clearinghouse for best practices. News literacy lesson plans and guidelines. Case studies of best and worst coverage examples. Materials for news providers. Tools to aggregate, rate, compare news. Social networking connections and discussion groups.
- Training for teachers: All grade levels, K-12 to college. Learn applications as well as technologies. Collaborate with students, peer-to-peer. Access to tools like computers and digital technology. Tech support.
- News Application for Students: Helps student make choices as editors. Based on news literacy principles. encourages peer-to-peer comparisons. Learning through game-like interactions. Progressive skill development over course. Help to express and compare student worldviews.
- Worldview Construction Kit: Online multiplayer application. based on students' current news consumption. Auto-track what news you view and link most. Sort your news links (facts vs. opinion)). Express your worldview with best stories. Compare and contrast different worldviews. Sixty second, student newscasts. Game-like rewards and user interface. Publish weekly broadcast with best newscasts. Built-in instructional and training materials.

Where to spend \$1 million:

- Online resource center
- Training for teachers
- News application for students

Group F:

How can news literacy be developed for diverse and global communities?

Group leader: Susan Moeller, Director, International Center for Media and Public Agenda, University of Maryland

Recommendations for moving this forward in the next 12 months:

- Focus on basic skills and standards that are global common denominators (recognition of distinct characteristics unique to particular locations)
- Focus on information literacy (or news literacy/media literacy as appropriate)
- Attention to different audiences (social classes, ethnicities, religions, cultures/customs) which have distinct access, experiences, needs and interests (development of multilingual/multicultural plans: vocabulary of news literacy not always translatable (reliability/trust))

Where to spend \$1 million:

Part 1

- -\$300K to create media literacy lesson plans in Spanish and English, with a focus on local-regional case studies
- \$50K for Knight fellows from Latin America and Salzburg partner universities to conduct assessment of what lesson plans should be created (12+ lesson plans)
- \$150K for Salzburg Academy special track to create lesson plans: Knight fellows join Salzburg partner universities
- \$50K for editing and translation of lesson plans

Part 2

- \$575K for regional sessions to train the trainers/trainers. Knight Fellows and Salzburg Academy partner universities work to identify local partners. High school and university teachers, schools, school systems, Ministries of Education, media implementers/trainers, ICFJ, Internews
 - o \$175K: Texas/Border region
 - o \$100K: Mexico/Mexico City
 - o \$100K: Argentina/Buenos Aires
 - o \$100K: Chile/Santiago
 - o \$100K: Peru/Lima

Part 3

- \$125K for media outreach: help children connect with families and read newspapers. Coordinate with WAN/NIE to create newspaper inserts out of one of more lesson plans.

Special Announcement:

At the end of the working lunch, Howard Schneider said that prior to introducing the final speaker of the conference, he was going to “exercise a prerogative and introduce another idea into the conversation.”

Calling it a way of having a “hundred flowers bloom, but doing it very quickly,” Schneider presented the idea, which he attributed to Deborah Gump, of the Committee of Concerned Journalists:

“We hire 50 to 100 unemployed journalists. We get \$10 million -- \$5 to \$10 million. We train those journalists, some of the most talented journalists in the country, here, in news literacy. We partner with 25 universities who will accept two of those people to teach news literacy beginning next year. We start by going to Washington and trying to get some stimulus money. And Deborah identified areas in the stimulus bill, which she thought might apply to this project. And, we go to some funders and ask them if they will match that money or help jumpstart this process. This would take some of the most talented journalists in America, now out of work, and give them a mission, and have them critically teach students and jumpstart this process at perhaps 25 universities in the next six months.”

Schneider told the audience that such a grant would pay for the training and salaries of these teachers, but he’d need some kind of commitment from enough universities—in the next few weeks—to be able to try to move this idea forward. “To get this stimulus money,” said Schneider, “we’re going to have to put an application in by April 30th.”

Special Remarks:

Alberto Ibarguen, President, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Alberto Ibarguen said that he shouldn’t have been surprised that Dean Schneider set him up to hear the breakout groups’ recommendations for a hypothetical \$1 million grant. “I’m actually delighted to hear” the ideas that were presented, he said.

Ibarguen said that it was an interesting time in the news media world, and that he isn’t sure how the ideals and ideas being discussed will eventually translate into best practices in the digital age. But, he said, when Schneider first pitched the idea of a news literacy program, he immediately knew it was an excellent idea.

It was a good thing, said Ibarguen, that Schneider wasn’t able to get the news literacy course made a required course at Stony Brook, because it forces everyone involved to work out what it will take to make such a course a requirement—and those struggles will pay off in creating a better course, and aid in establishing news literacy at other universities.

“Not to put too fine a point on it,” he said, “last fall we lost \$800 million.” But, said Ibarguen, the Knight Foundation is still going to be the biggest funder of journalism programs in America. The focus is on start-ups and experimental projects, and a continuing interest in journalism education.

Ibarguen said that the Knight News Challenge “tells you something about the direction of [the] Knight Foundation.” It is a request to deliver news and information to geographically defined communities on a digital platform. “Information is a core need in a democracy,” said Ibarguen, and the local community level gravely needs information.

In closing, Ibarguen thanked those in attendance for presenting their ideas on advancing news literacy.

Closing Remarks by Dean Howard Schneider:

In the last minutes of the conference Dean Schneider spoke about what comes after the conference ends.

In the short term, all attendees will get an email summing up the findings of the conference. Attendees will also be reminded that the Center for News Literacy at Stony Brook is currently looking for a director—and that qualified candidates should be sent in Schneider’s direction. There will also be a program to bring 50 high school teachers to Stony Brook to be trained in teaching news literacy.

Also, there will be a multimedia report on the conference that will be sent to all attendees and to hundreds of others not able to attend. A group will be set up using Base Camp to keep the conversation going once the conference is over, said Schneider.

The longer term goal is to hire a director for the Center for News Literacy by the fall, said Dean Schneider. Stony Brook will begin to build a “robust” website, “a clearinghouse for what’s happening all over the country.” The website will have case studies, lessons, curricula, and other resources. The website will also be a repository for news literacy examples in near real-time. It will have weekly examples of “news literacy, in motion, in the news, and make those examples available to every teacher in high schools and universities across the country.”

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