

Ethical News

The newsletter of the AEJMC
Media Ethics Division

Division head
Vice head/Program chair
Secretary/Newsletter editor

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- Visit the MED home page at http://jcomm.uoregon.edu/~tbivins/aejmc_ethics/index.html
- Email the newsletter editor at stlee@ilstu.edu

Looking ahead to '08

Elizabeth A. Skewes
Division head

It's been a few months since a very successful conference in Washington, D.C., and what that means in AEJMC time is that we need to start planning for the 2008 conference next August in Chicago.

One of the big tasks ahead of us this year is a charge from Charles Self, AEJMC president, to conduct a "State of the Discipline" study. The idea, according to an e-mail from Self, is to "harness the power of the divisions to evaluate where we are from each perspective."

"This is also an opportunity for each division, interest group, and commission to reflect on its role in developing the discipline and as part of the association, what the future might hold, and what actions would best help prepare for that future," Self said in his e-mail.

The first task is to figure out



how to do this. We'd like to get input from each of you on the role that the Media Ethics Division should play in the future of journalism education, and rather than waiting until next summer, we'd like to find a way to kick off those discussions later this year

or early next year.

Would a discussion site on the Media Ethics Division home page work? (And if you haven't seen it recently, check it out at http://jcomm.uoregon.edu/%7etbivins/aejmc_ethics/index.html.)

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More ways to teach global media ethics

Bastiaan Vanacker
Teaching Chair

Perusing through issues of the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics* of the past couple of years, one notices the increased scholarly attention that has been given to international media

ethics. However, not all media ethics textbooks have followed suit and often times are lacking an international component. This raises the question whether or not this increased scholarly interest for international issues in media ethics ought to be transferred into our classrooms.

Most media outlets are focusing more and more on local news and rely on wire

services for their international coverage. Given this increasing trend towards the local, does it make sense to teach our students about global media ethics? What learning objectives does teaching our students about global media ethics really serve? Should we instead pay more attention to the ethical

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**Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
Media Ethics Division
Business Meeting Minutes,
Washington, D.C.,
August 11, 2007**

Division head Stephanie Craft of Missouri called the Business Meeting to order at 7:12 p.m. She reported that the Division membership has remained steady over the last year at about 340 members. She also reported that the Division budget balance was "average" for this period in the fiscal year at \$3,300. She noted that the Division has had fewer expenses in the past year, including the savings of several hundred dollars that previously was spent on postcard notification of the newsletter. Those notifications now use a Division membership e-mail list obtained from the AEJMC main office.

Craft also said AEJMC leadership is asking the Media Ethics Division to reaffirm its dues amount or notify it of any changes. Craft suggested that the Division dues remain at the current level, which was agreed by consensus of those present. Craft also moved that the Division follow previous years' practice and allocate \$500 to support the next colloquium co-sponsored by the *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*. Craft indicated that the expenditure would not pose a financial hardship on the division budget.

PRESENTATION EQUIPMENT

Wendy Wyatt of St. Thomas, research chair, said she has heard several requests that the Division consider purchasing its own digital projection or overhead projection equipment for presentations. This issue was briefly discussed. Craft indicated that conference hotels "would have a problem" with conference organizers bringing their own equipment. Tom

Send us your ideas

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What about a survey of MED members? Please send me any ideas you have for starting this self-study. You can reach me by e-mail at elizabeth.skewes@colorado.edu.

In addition to the self-study, we're already working on the panel programming for next year. Thanks to those of you who have submitted panel ideas. Patrick Plaisance, the division programming chair, is putting together a good slate for the winter chip meeting and we'll let you know how those panels line up as soon as we can.



But we'll need more help from all of you. The April 1 paper deadline will be coming up fast before too long, and we'd like to see lots of submissions this year. Last year's submissions held steady, and the division's acceptance rate

was just above 50 percent. But we do have room for a few more papers, so I'd like to encourage you to get started now on a paper for the Media Ethics Division, and let your colleagues and graduate students know that we'd like to see their work, too, next spring.

The new electronic submission system worked well last year, and AEJMC is doing some tinkering to work out any kinks. The advantage for submitters is that no one has to make a late-night run to the post office with an envelope full of paper copies.

It also works well for reviewers, since the evaluation process takes just a few mouse clicks. Before too long, Jack Breslin, our research chair this year, will be sending out a call for reviewers. When it comes, please step up – if you can – and volunteer to read some submissions for the division.

Also, please feel free to contact me or any of the other division officers if you've got any ideas for or concerns about the division. You can find the list of officers on the MED home page (the URL is listed above). Thanks!

Bivins of Oregon said individuals should be allowed to bring their own equipment if they desire. "I'm not going to let the hotel tell me I can't bring my own equipment," he said. Bivins offered to secure a projector from his university endowment for the Division if it could help with the cost.

Craft suggested that other Divisions may be interested in the use of such equipment as well. But several noted that use of such equipment may well conflict with hotel policies that are governed by labor contracts. Elizabeth Skewes of Colorado, program chair, suggested it might be a topic to address through the newsletter to see whether a consensus existed.

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION WORKED WELL

Wyatt offered a summary of this year's research paper competition. She said that as research chair, she has more reviewers than she needed. This

was the first year that the Division used an all-electronic submission system, and Wyatt said that it worked well overall despite a few glitches that have been communicated to the AEJMC leadership.

Wyatt said the Division had 42 submissions, which was the same number as the previous year. Of those, 20 were accepted, for an acceptance rate of just under 50 percent. Wyatt said she was particularly pleased that this year's special paper topic brought several new names to the competition.

Skewes noted that many of the Division sessions this year drew impressive crowds. She also said the Division's minipenary session with the representative of the Federal Communications Commission did not cost the Division a half-chip as such sessions normally do because Entertainment Studies provided a last-minute half-chip in lieu of a half-chip from MED, which remained as a co-sponsor.

Patrick Plaisance of Colorado State, secretary and newsletter editor, reported that he was able, as Craft noted earlier, to obtain an e-mail list of Division members to use to notify the membership when newsletter issues were posted on the Web site and available.

He said the e-mail list was effective but not quite comprehensive, with about 15-20 international members whose e-mail addresses were not available. Plaisance also expressed satisfaction that the newsletter issues offered a healthy diversity of voices, including new graduate student contributions on a variety of topics.

Craft noted that Skewes had made significant efforts this year to "pre-plan" session content by asking about specific areas of discussion and informing panelists beforehand to encourage more thematically unified sessions.

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GLOBAL ETHICS, Continued from page 1

issues that may arise when covering local communities, since this is what most of our graduates probably end up doing anyway?

While it is important to prepare our students for the work environment they will enter once they closed the doors of academia behind them, we cannot let our curriculum be influenced too much by the parochialism displayed by many newspaper publishers. The world our students will inhabit will be an interconnected one, and despite the increasing focus on the local by many of our media, an ethical awareness that stretches beyond the local will make them better equipped to work in the new media environment. Below I outlined a couple of topics and cases that can be used by teachers who want to add an international flavor to their ethics courses.

■ The Muhammad cartoon controversy can serve as a great case study in global media ethics. The stakeholders in this case were dispersed all over the globe. Muslims, American troops stationed in Muslim countries, European editors concerned

Don't let parochialism shape curriculum

about freedom of speech... all were concerned parties in this case, making this a truly global case in which culturally determined values and principles collided.

■ Another interesting case study is the Randal case, in which American journalist Jonathan Randal was subpoenaed in 2002

by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) to testify on the accuracy of an interview he had conducted with accused war criminal Radoslav

Brdjanin. Randal refused, setting the table for some interesting appeals at the ICTY, but apart from the legal issues, this case can serve as an interesting case study on the ethics of war zone reporting and on how to deal with international or supranational institutions.

The world our students will inhabit will be an interconnected one

■ A good activity or assignment is to have students explore news councils in different countries and compare them with the local news councils we have in the United States. These accountability tools can be good indicators of how ethical issues are addressed in various countries.

Of course, language limitations are an issue, but there are numerous press councils in English speaking countries that can serve as sources for comparative research by the students.

■ When I was a Teaching Assistant for Bill Babcock at the University of Minnesota, I picked up an interesting in-class exercise from him that I still use in almost every class I teach. He asked students to blurb out names of cities in which they would want to have a foreign bureau if they were a news organization. Then, in reference to the

cut backs that have decimated the amount of foreign bureaus, he would ask students to vote on which bureaus to keep open and which ones to close. From fifteen, down to ten and ultimately down to three or four. Invariably, the cities the class would gravitate towards would be located in the Northern hemisphere. This exercise directly confronts students with their cultural biases and the global inequality in news flow that is being perpetuated by these biases.

■ Control Room, the acclaimed documentary on the Al-Jazeera network and its coverage of the American invasion of Iraq, is a good choice if one wants to engage students in a discussion on global media ethics using audio visual materials. The film raises the question whether the professional values and norms of the Al-Jazeera network are similar to those of the Western media or if the Western and Arab media have a different perspective on what constitutes truth telling, independence and objectivity.

These are just some suggestions on how to add an international flavor to your media ethics class. If you have any more, please feel free to share your tips and suggestions with me via email at bvanacker@luc.edu.

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BALANCE IN PAPER SESSIONS

Bivins raised the issue of a "balance" in sessions between papers with a pragmatic or practical focus and those with a more theoretical focus. He noted that in some sessions, the "imbalance" often was very apparent. He suggested that instead of trying to offer both in paper sessions, the Division might consider offering panels that explicitly offer a group of papers that focus on one area or the other. This issue was briefly discussed. Skewes said that in some cases, the original scope of a planned panel shifted when arranged panelists dropped

out in the planning stages. Holly Stocking of Indiana suggested that "balkanizing" practice and theory may suggest the implication that the two may not inform each other as scholars often insist. Craft also noted that co-sponsorship of sessions means that representatives of each participating division, each of which may have competing interests, have the right to name panel members, which often contributes to the perception of imbalance referred to by Bivins. Stocking suggested future consideration of "pairing" people to serve on panels in ways that provide a better balance of practice and theory. Skewes

suggested that good planning involved thinking early in the process about the makeup of panels, and to secure commitments early from panelists who may provide balance.

LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION

Craft raised the question of expanding the three-year leadership succession of the Division to include the research chair position. The issue was the basis of discussion. Wyatt and others questioned whether doing so might discourage members from serving at all if they were unwilling to make a four-year commitment. Sherry Baker of Brigham Young raised the possibility of remov-

ing the secretary/newsletter editor position from the line of succession. Bivins noted that it is important for the Division bylaws to provide escape clauses to provide needed flexibility. A discussion of the location of the bylaws themselves ensued, and by consensus members agreed to postpone a final decision until the Division examined the policies and lines of succession of other divisions.

Craft raised the issue of the Division's relationship with the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics (APPE). While members expressed the belief that the relationship is important to continue, Craft

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noted that the Division needed to appoint a new "point person" to coordinate Division activities with APPE. She noted that the Division received only three submissions for the media-ethics competition at APPE. Several proposals to increase activity were discussed, including ways to promote APPE as an opportunity for graduate students, and attracting a keynote media-ethics speaker for APPE. Wyatt volunteered to serve as the Division's APPE coordinator.

NEW OFFICERS FOR 2007-2008

Craft offered the proposed slate of Division officers for

2007-2008:

- Division Head: Elizabeth Skewes of Colorado;
- Program Chair/Vice Head: Patrick Plaisance of Colorado State;
- Secretary/Newsletter Editor: Seow Ting Lee of Illinois State;
- Research Chair: Jack Breslin of Iona.

The proposed slate was approved by consent. Stephen Ward of British Columbia suggested that the Division reconsider the leadership selection process, possibly by the use of a Division-wide e-mail balloting system, as a way to broaden participation.

Craft also presented this year's awards:

- Top Faculty Paper: Ray Murray of Oklahoma State for "Stalking the Paparazzi: A View from a Different View"
 - Professional Relevance Award: Jack Breslin of Iona for "Ethical Guidelines for the Media's Coverage of Crime Victims"
 - Top Paper, Special Call: David Allen of Wisconsin-Milwaukee for "The Trouble with Transparency: The Challenge of Doing Journalism Ethics in a Surveillance Society"
 - Carol Burnett Award for Journalism Ethics Research: Soo Jung Moon of Texas for "Salience of Stakeholders and The Attributes in PR and Business News."
- Tom Cooper of Emerson provided a brief summary of the

Media Ethics Summit that was hosted by Middle Tennessee State University February 27-March 2. He said the resulting report was communicated to Congress, federal agencies and selected media leaders around the country.

NOTICES FOR DIVISION WEBSITE

Bivins urged Division members to submit notices to him to post on the Division Web site. He said the announcement section of the site was not current and was intended to serve as a timely bulletin board for everyone

Mike Kittross announced he was soliciting contributions for *Media Ethics* magazine.

The meeting adjourned shortly after 9 p.m.

Jack Breslin
Research Chair

Whose reality?

An ethical reflection of Kenyan news media

Over the summer I participated in Karibu, a month-long, cross-cultural immersion program with the Christian Brothers in Kenya and Tanzania, thanks to my employer, Iona College, founded by the Brothers.

Outside of the program, I sampled daily electronic and print media in both countries, and spoke with several Kenyan journalists, educators and community leaders to gather information for a required "reflection" paper on an African theme.

During those informal chats and media monitoring, one dominant theme kept surfacing: the mainstream Kenyan media did not frequently or accurately report the political, social and economic problems which we were witnessing on our immersion experience, particularly in Kibera, Sub-Sahara Africa's worst slum.

Only one journalist, a section editor for the leading newspa-

per, insisted that the nation's media truly reflected the realities of Kenyan life. The rest agreed that the media focused on politics, crime and middle-class values, rather than the true needs of Kenya's poor.

So would a tourist get a true reflection of life in Kenya by reading the daily newspapers or watching evening news cloned from the American genre (i.e., male anchor, female anchor, sports guy, weather person and happy talk)?

From a media ethical perspective, I reflected on several questions, which I posed to the journalists. Does the Kenyan news media misrepresent the daily lives of their readers? In setting the news agenda (i.e. telling the people what issues are important), why do the Kenyan media play up politics

and crime, while ignoring poverty and unemployment? Are the Kenyan news media leaders in cultural and social development or handmaidens of the government by seeking favor and profit over social reality? Do they crusade for social change and investigate corruption or simply favor the status quo and avoid harsh criticism of governmental and political leaders?

In reading the major Kenyan newspapers, listening to Nairobi radio and viewing national TV news programs, I found few stories addressing the issues that concern the people of Kibera or other Kenyans below the poverty level. With a general election involving 134 registered political parties coming in December, the print and electronic news media were

dominated by multiple stories on politics and government affairs.

Yet despite this obsession with politics, the media, except for opinion columnists, offer sparse analysis, much less any criticism of the government, particularly President Mwai Kibaki. The next most popular story issue was crime, particularly the more violent, followed by business, sports, lifestyles and entertainment.

Political stories followed the traditional "inverted pyramid" news writing style, but lacked analysis and detail. Even stories with a hard news element frequently sounded like a rewrite of a political campaign news release.

In my informal discussions with five journalists and several speakers from our Karibu sessions, most expressed a general dissatisfaction with the news media. They criticized the news media for not taking an aggressive role in exposing scandals or investigating corruption. Instead, they complained that major media owners used their influence to curry political favor and increase profits.

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A review of the book ...

... you won't see reviewed in JMCQ

Chris Roberts

Professional Freedom
& Responsibility Chair

Drew Curtis never studied journalism, or else he'd know the error in the title of his book, "It's Not News, It's Fark: How Mass Media Tries to Pass Off Crap as News."

By turning "media" into the singular, he lumps the planet's disparate news organizations into a singular entity as they create fark.

Fark, as he explains in his first sentence, is "what fills space when mass media runs out of news." (There's that pesky singular/plural problem again.) "Fark is supposed to look like news ... but it's not news," he says.

Curtis is right, of course. He's a non-journalist who says he has read "nearly 2,000 articles a day since 1999" to sort the journalistic wheat from the chaff – and print the chaff. Nearly 1.7 million readers a day, 80 percent of them men, revel in the chaff at www.fark.com. They go there to poke fun at news stories, talk

about women and beer, and take part in Photoshop contests. They write sophomoric headlines that are consistently funnier and usually more truthful than the original. (An example of an original newspaper headline: "Stripper gets compensation for pole-dancing injury." The fark.com headline: "Stripper receives workman's comp. No word if it's one dollar at a time.")

His book, based on eight years of serving "not news" to his Web audience, defines eight categories of stories that look like real news.

Here are his terms (and the academic definition, where appropriate):

- Media fearmongering, in which audience members are told to be afraid of bad stuff that likely won't harm them. (We call that cultivation theory, don't we?)

- Unpaid placement masquerading as actual article, in which public relations and advertising releases show up in news copy.

- Headline contradicted by actual article, usually a function of bad editing or headline hype.

- Equal time for nutjobs. (Objectivity?)

- The out-of-context celebrity comment, in which a famous person draws more attention on a topic than a bona-fide expert. (Is there such a thing as "parasocial news interaction?")

- Seasonal articles, because Christmas and the Super Bowl are news every year. (It's clear he's never read Emile Durkheim on religion and ritual.)

- Media fatigue, in which a story stays in the news long after the news has faded.

- Lesser media space fillers, often involving stories in New York because that's where most national news organizations are based.

Curtis is exceedingly critical of news organizations, even as he notes that journalism is hard work that he'd never want to do. There's a certain amount of hypocrisy in what he does – selling ads off news stories he didn't produce and lambasting the sorry state of news media while making money off it. (Note to Drew: Call me if you're looking to endow the "Fark.com Professor of Journalism.")

Fortunately, Curtis also notes

the hypocrisy of his audience and most news consumers, too. "Everyone claims to want real news, but no one really does," he writes. "The great unwashed masses want the titillation Mass Media provides."

In an epilogue with prescriptive advice, he ends with at least one suggestion that deserves attention from media ethicists: separate fluff news from real news. His advice: "Either embrace the dark side and throw away all pretense of being a serious news media outlet, as some have already done, or retrench and become a leader of real honest-to-god serious information."

News organizations can do both, he says, by physically separating news from "Not News," whether it be a separate newspaper section or different Web site or separate TV channel. Curtis would never use the stuffy academic term "gatekeeper," but his challenge to news organizations is to meet the ethical challenge described in the social responsibility model of mass communication.

The challenge to mass communication ethics educators seems evident but not simple: To help journalism students hone the ethics of news judgment, including how to find the Golden Mean between giving news consumers what they want and what they need. Or, at the very least, we can teach students that "media" are plural.

Curtis, D. (2007). *It's Not News, It's Fark: How Mass Media Tries to Pass Off Crap As News*. New York: Gotham Books.

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(Since most discussions were not conducted as on-the-record interviews for publication, I am not using any real names of the journalists, educators or community leaders. My interview with *Big Issue Kenya* was for publication so the real names appear.)

"The media is [sic] interested only in themselves," said Kathy, a human rights attorney. "They are only interested in

which political party is fighting each other."

Similar to the American news media's fascination with celebrities and staged news events bringing attention to social issues, the Kenyan media will follow politicians anywhere. For example, *Daily Nation*, Kenya's largest daily newspaper ran a photograph of three NBA basketball players on a politician-guided tour of Kibera, which did not include a clinic for the local youth.

"The only time when the media comes is when a political leader comes to a slum like Kibera to give out blankets or something," Kathy explained. "Then the media comes to cover it, then goes away."

A cultural studies professor at Tangaza College, echoed that sentiment in a lengthy critique of the Kenyan news media. Business profits and political ties take precedence over objectivity and investiga-

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Politics, crime dominate the news

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tive reporting.

"The media are owned by rich men," the professor said. "The shareholders of the major media houses are ministers of government."

Citing the experience of a cousin employed at a major media outlet, he explained that writers, reporters and electronic "presenters" are pressured to write stories that promote their employers' political interest, not the key social and political issues facing Kenya.

"In the Kenyan media, once you're employed, you are told this is how we want the story," the professor said. "The editors are told by the owners to promote their man in government."

"The role of the media then is not to educate the people, but to promote political agenda."

Two radio journalists, employed at a national radio network, cited the political change to multi-party politics as a crucial element in the role of the news media in Kenya.

"Under one leadership, the Fourth Estate could be sued for libel or arrested, so there was light criticism of the government," the male radio reporter said. "The advent of multi-party politics, the media were challenged to look at issues – AIDS, the environment, scandals – more objectively. The media changed."

"Today there are multiple stations, many voices. Some are pro-government; some are anti-government, some moderate. Some are sympathetic; some are critical."

Yet some journalists struggle with editors who edit or even kill a story that does not favor his/her political friends, he added.

"There are so many stories

waiting to be told," said the male reporter, who won an award from UNESCO for his reporting. "The large media forget that the average Kenyan is struggling to make a living. For big media, it's politics, politics, politics."

Despite the influence of politics on the media, some journalists, do focus on key social issues, the female radio journalist stated.

"The media is [sic] a success story," she said. "With the founding of new media houses, there are more reports on more issues of the common people, such as getting information on HIV and A I D S . There is a freedom to report in a way that will benefit the c o m m o n person."

A middle-level editor at the *Nation*, the country's best-selling and most influential newspaper, contradicted the criticisms of the other journalists and our speakers. He maintained that his paper does sharply criticize the government and political leaders. The focus on politics reflects the interests of most viewers since "politics is the favorite sport of Kenya," he explained.

As in any business, the news media must be concerned with the bottom line, namely making a profit by increasing revenue. But the business concerns do not affect editorial content or eliminate objectivity as a journalistic value, he insisted.

Circulation figures and informal interviews with Kenyan citizens conclude that most get

their news from radio, followed by newspapers and television. Even in Kibera, many families have battery-operated radios and some have television sets. A surprising number of those interviewed did not get their news from any news media, but from friends who follow the news more closely.

According to the *Nation* editor interviewed, the *Nation* sells an average of 160,000 copies during the week and 200,000 on Sunday, while dominating the advertising market. The *Standard* lags with 70,000 daily sales, followed by the *Kenyan Times* with 50,000 daily sales. A newcomer to the Kenya newspaper market, the *Nairobi Star*, a sensational tabloid first published in early July, prints 50,000 copies, but only manages to sell 25,000. Daily newspapers in major cities, such as

Mombasa, Eldoret and Kisumu average below 25,000 copies each.

The population of Kenya is estimated at 32 million and the capital city of Nairobi at 8 million. With the daily circulation of the four national daily newspapers just exceeding 305,000 copies and perhaps twice that number in actual readership (a single newspaper is usually read by more than one person), only a dismal ten percentage of the target audience reads a daily newspaper.

Other factors affecting low newspaper readership are cost and literacy. When a family below the poverty-level must

budget for food, fuel and water, spending 50 to 60 shillings for a daily newspaper is not a budget item (1 US dollar=66.9 Kenyan shillings). Those precious coins could be used to buy enough maize or beans to feed a family of five for several days.

In my five treks deep into Kibera, I did not see a single news stand selling newspapers and magazines. The only newspapers I saw there were those pasted to the insides of mud-brick walls in an effort to keep out the cold and noise. In the City Center, however, I spotted sidewalk vendors and stalls every block selling to the office workers and other bus commuters.

Many adult Kenyans do not possess the level of literacy necessary to read and enjoy a daily newspaper. Instead, they opt for "free media," such as radio and television, which only require a receiver and antenna.

Even those with a high school education or higher admitted that they do not regularly buy or read a newspaper because of the over-emphasis on politics and crime. The Kenyan news media does not report stories that affect their daily lives, they stated.

Our Karibu guides in their early 20s whom I observed reading a newspaper only glanced quickly at the news stories and features.

Even with a high school education or higher, they instead focused on the employment advertisements, followed by sports, puzzles and entertainment pages.

When I asked why they rarely read or bought a paper, their response was similar to many young American readers – the major Kenyan media do not report on issues or stories focusing on their age group or lifestyles.

Most television viewers reside in Nairobi and the other major

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"The editors are told by the owners to promote their man in government. The role of the media then is not to educate the people, but to promote political agenda."

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Kenyan cities. Despite a lower percentage of viewers compared to the general population, television is a major factor in socialization, especially among children. In many households, cultural mores and traditional stories are not passed down by parents or grandparents, but by television.

"My daughter comes home and she wants to watch television," Irene, a professor of African studies at Tangaza College, complained. "She does not want to hear stories from me. She wants to watch the fake people on television instead."

One hopeful sign of media involvement in promoting social awareness and advocating change is the efforts of community-based journalism.

During his twenty years in Kenya, Father Renato Sesana, an Italian Catholic missionary priest popularly known as Father Kizito, founded Koinonia Media Center, which publishes *New People* magazine and operates Radio Waumini, the first Catholic radio station in Kenya.

His latest venture is *Big Issue Kenya*, a community-based street magazine, which has published five issues since January, averaging 3,500 sold copies. Having joined the International Street Paper Foundation, the project receives funding from Lloyds TSB Foundation and the Scottish National Executive Foundation to cover printing costs.

The major motivating factors behind the project are creating job opportunities for the 60 percent of Kenyans who are unemployed, particularly in slums such as Kibera, and creating social awareness and eliminating poverty.

"Primary idea is to create some employment for vendors and create awareness of social issues that many people are not talking about," Father Kizito



A vendor selling copies of *Big Issue Kenya* near a shopping center in Karen, a suburb of Nairobi. The community-based street magazine, which aims to create awareness of social issues and create jobs for Kenyans, is the latest venture of the Koinonia Media Center founded by Father Renato Sesana, an Italian Catholic priest.

explained. "There has been a deterioration in the Kenyan press over the last decade. They are taking care of the upper class in Kenya.

"They write stories about slimming down, going to the gym because you're too fat, focusing on the upper middle class. Write about things about food and dieting much more than ten years ago. We talk about different problems."

So far *Big Issue Kenya* has created job opportunities for more than 130 unemployed Kenyans in Nairobi and three other cities.

"If a vendor sells 5-7 per day, averages 200 copies a month, that person can make 10,000 KSh, not even a salary person could make that," said *Big Issue's* social development director Cosmas Nduva, 23, also a Karibu guide. "So selling *Big Issue* is a major opportunity for the 18-25 youth,

especially those in the slums. Fifty percent of the vendors are from Kibera."

Despite a lack of advertising sales and problems with the Nairobi City Council's insistence that *Big Issue's* vendors be licensed, the editors are confident the project can succeed.

"Operating philosophy of the *Big Issue* worldwide, the vendor gets 50 percent of the cover price so they don't beg," said *Big Issue* editor Zachary Ochien, who also produces *News from Africa*, an on-line publication with *Big Issue* managing editor Clement Njoroge. "They actually earn a living without begging on the streets."

Several media members and our Karibu speakers applauded the new effort of *Big Issue Kenya* and the contributions of community-based journalism.

"The contribution of com-

munity-based media lies in solutions," the cultural studies professor said, citing the reporting of genocide in Rwanda as an example. "National radio and TV will support the status quo.

"We need community-based journalism. They encourage religious and civil groups to use media, not to sell an agenda, not to promote ethnocentrism, but to promote social change and peaceful solutions."

Community-based newspapers can also provide an alternative news source for the "voiceless" in Kenyan society.

"There is a need to see the human aspects of people," the professor said. "They come up with better features. They tell stories in the simplest way possible that people will understand. They can tell stories without fear of being edited.

"They give voice to the so-called voiceless people."