

WASH

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Journalism



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Background: Why this reference material

WASH Ethiopian Movement is a coalition of representatives from government, non-government- and faith-based organizations, UN agencies, the media, and the private sector. The major focus of the WASH Ethiopia Movement is promoting Water, Sanitation and Hygiene issues throughout the country and contributing to reduction of existing high morbidity and mortality caused by lack of safe and adequate water, poor sanitation and hygiene.

As part of the Movement's multisectoral approach, WASH Media Forum was established under the WASH Ethiopia movement in September 2008 with the aim of bringing media professionals and WASH sector actors together. The Media Forum further aims to enhance the media's participation in process of increasing people's awareness about Water and Sanitation and improving their Hygiene behavior. Since its establishment the steering committee has organized two workshops in Addis Ababa and a field trip to Banja woreda of the Amhara Regional State.

One of the objectives of the forum is identifying gaps and opportunities to organize and facilitate capacity building trainings for journalists both inside and outside of the country. WASH Ethiopia Movement believes that the media has an important role in the development process of developing countries like Ethiopia as it provides the public with sufficient information. It is believed that training workshops helps members understand and participate actively in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) particularly with regard to water and sanitation.

As part of its capacity building activities, the WASH Media Forum has undertaken a capacity building workshop program for member journalists focusing on developmental journalism/communications and its role in promoting health sanitation and hygiene attitudes. The forum believes that organizing such kinds of training workshops will contribute to the quality and quantity of

journalistic work and enhance their contribution in the development process. The training workshop was designed to help journalists not only on how to use, think, analyze, and synthesize information but also to help them in setting and shaping the agenda for public debates and discussions in the overall development process.

This material is part of the subsequent effort from WASH Ethiopia Movement to help journalists refer back to what was covered in the workshop in their future coverage of WASH related issues.

Introduction to Development Journalism/Communication

News media are widely regarded as important tools for national development. However, the way development journalism is practiced in Third World countries has been problematic. A heavy dependence on official sources exists in gathering and presenting development news. Some critics regarded such journalism as the Third World countries' a disguised effort to manage the news content in order to give flattering publicity to political figures (McDaniel, 1986: 167). Lent (1978) termed this kind of news as "government-say-so journalism." Similar arguments are found in the *Manual of Development Communication*, the text that is widely used to train development communicators. It warns that

development communication in some countries is confused with publicity for government projects. The government as the chief designer and administrator of a country's development plans should rightfully tell people what is being done for them. But development communication is more than that. (Rajasundaram, 1981: 17-18)

Critics argued that development journalism should also present an alternative to official viewpoints. In development news

... the journalist... should critically evaluate and report the relevance of a development project; ... the difference between the planned scheme and its actual implementation; and the difference between its impact on people as claimed by government officials and as it actually is. (Aggrawala, 1978: 200)

Development is a complex phenomenon and development communication is the systematic use of communication for national development (Lent, 1979). Furthermore, how development journalism should be practiced depends largely on how the term 'development' is defined. As Singhal & Rogers (2001) note:

Development is a widely participatory process of directed social change in a society, intended to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom, and other valued qualities) for the majority of people through their gaining greater control over their environment. (p. 33)

What is development news then?

Ranging from environment to agriculture, from infrastructure to prevention of alcohol and drugs, development issues are very wide. To cut it short, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, for example, is definitely a development issue and there is a need for a professionally directed social change. And communication is a tool, a development tool, and an agent of change. That's why we say, development communication is a communication process in service of change.

Development communication has two schools of thought.

I. Success stories as told by the government (Government-say-so journalism)

Their main source of information in this kind of development journalism is government news/press releases, interview with government authorities or any implementing agencies. Failure of projects is a taboo word in this school of thought. To critically assess development process and report on its failures is considered as fault finding. Media in this school of thought is a channel that transports what it is told without having to be critical in its coverage and/or framing. This some argue is a cap on the freedom of information.

II. Reported as it really is from all sides

People in the other school of thought argue that we can make development communication a better tool by covering both success and failure of projects. They believe that media should direct implementers through alternative ways by studying international experiences and view points. In this case, journalists have a task to observe critically and report on the whole government development process, which included planning, implementation, impact and shortcomings as they were.

Communication for Development: Approaches and perspectives

The task of determining which communication approach and planning strategy to adopt in development communication projects is expected to be a deliberate and systematic endeavour. The execution of development communication programs and projects, therefore, takes as its starting point, both the "felt needs" at the social system level, and the "action needs" as identified by development planners. For example, the people **need** proper information as to why they have to use clean water, as to why hygiene and sanitation is important. Consequently, Wateraid or WASH Movement Ethiopia **needs** to provide relevant and timely information [which is action] to the people. The operational strategy for meeting these two sets of needs follows four stages of activities (Boyd, 1975).

The first, which Boyd called "**Diffusion Stage**" but which we think should be more appropriately called the "Formative Evaluation stage," is identifying and analyzing the innovations sought by the social system and those that development agents want to introduce: who is to do what; who is to benefit; when is it to be done; and with what material and human resources?

In the second stage, known as the "**Social Process stage**," the thrust of activities is toward determining how existing social, cultural, economic, political, and environmental factors, as well as indigenous communication processes would help or hinder the adoption of new practices or structures in the social system. If the communication process is intended to take place in Afar, for example, the planners in this stage would study how Dagu might help or hinder the intended communication process.

In the third stage, the "**Consistency stage**" efforts are geared toward identifying existing media facilities and how they relate to one another and to the people. Here, one looks at what combination of existing communication channels-

traditional, interpersonal, and mass media-can be used for communication 'feed' both into and from the social system.

Finally, after careful examination of these analyses, tailor-made communication programs are drawn up and implemented in phases with real action potential in the social system but also taking into account any available supplementary inputs from the outside.

It is only after such careful and critical examination that one can make a realistic decision as to which of the three basic communication approaches (Moemeka, 1989) to communicating development messages within a social system would be most appropriate.

These approaches are the 1) Interpersonal, which has two methods -Extension & Community Development and Ideological & Mass Mobilization; 2) the Mass Media, which also has two methods - Centralized and Localized; and 3) the Integrated, which combines all the approaches (and methods) in an appropriate ratio, depending upon the identified felt needs and the sociocultural, economic, and political realities of the social system.

Interpersonal Approach

Extension and Community Development Method. This is the oldest method of using communication to generate development. It is basically oriented to rural community development although it can also apply to suburban and urban development efforts. The main thrust of this method is the communication of useful and practical information on such issues as agriculture, home economics, health, civic responsibility, law and order, sanitation, and so on, through face-to-face and interpersonal (handbills, letters, telephone, etc.) methods of communication.

The utilization of the method is predicated on the assumption that the following basic conditions are present: (a) that the communities or social systems are interested in the new ideas and practices in order to improve their living conditions; (b) that there are necessary and sufficient resources to support the development endeavour, that is, to enable the people to apply available new information toward the development goals; and (c) that there is a group of educated, intelligent, and public spirited leaders within the community or social system who can motivate the masses to positive development-oriented objectives; these groups can be priests/community elders in northern Ethiopia, tribe leaders SNNPR, Somali and Afar or Gada leaders in Oromia.

The basic principles of the method can be summarized as follows:

- That there are no solutions to problems that are imposed on local communities from the outside; that the people must be the principal actors in defining and finding solutions to their problems;
- That the development communicator (social animator) is to be as closely identified with the local community as possible
- That he/she is to be nondirective in his/her approach
- That communication's chief role is to help define the problem, not give the solution
- That community participation and social action is the goal, and therefore feedback from the community is an essential element.

Ideological and Mass Mobilization Method

This is the second communication method that makes extensive use of interpersonal channels. In this method, the channels are activated not by development agents, but by political party cadres. This is because this method holds that development begins with a radical change in the political orientation of a social system, the ultimate result of which is the formation of new social

relations. The main function of development communication therefore is seen as that of promoting and heightening the political consciousness of the people. This method is still in use in some African countries.

The Mass Media Approach

The mass media have become instruments not only for information but also for education and development. Because of their unique characteristics of speedy delivery of messages and extensive reach (wide-area coverage), they have been found to be particularly useful in the dissemination of development messages to large and dispersed populations, and, when properly used, in immediate follow-up with opportunities for exchange of ideas on the information/messages provided. In the main, mass media approach to the use of communication for development finds expression in two methods: the Centralized Mass Media method and the Localized, or Decentralized, Mass Media method.

Centralized Mass Media Method

This method emphasizes the control of both mass media infrastructure and the direction and flow of mass media messages by a central authority. If we were to construct a continuum with Extension and Community Development method at one end, Centralized Mass Media method would be at the other end. The method relies almost wholly on the mass media for its message flow, virtually ignoring the interpersonal system. Because it uses the mass media for dissemination, its area coverage strength is extensive; and because the content of its messages is usually of a general nature, there is always something of relevance, no matter how small, to different segments of the society. It is based on the assumption (Gunter and Theroux, 1977) that a "good and relevant message" is capable of being accepted by the individual on his/her own, irrespective of the origin of the message, and that the best way to attract and

hold a mass audience is to offer open, spontaneous, and continuous vicarious satisfaction (attraction) as well as education.

Centralised Mass Media is the method used by most countries in developing societies, especially in Africa. Many scholars argue that developing countries adopt the method because it is the cheapest to finance and easiest to administer. However, research has shown (Heshmat, 1967; Moemeka, 1987) that it is also the least effective in ensuring intelligent understanding and effectiveness of development messages.

Centralized Mass Media method calls for the planning, production, and dissemination of development programs and messages by experts and program officers in the urban headquarters of media organizations with little or no reference to the need for involvement of the receiving audiences. It does not matter which medium is being utilized (whether it is radio, which is the most accessible medium, especially for rural audiences, or the newspaper whose content is almost meaningless to the illiterate, or television-the urban elite medium-whose impact in Ethiopian rural communities is minimal), the procedure is always the same. The programs and messages are planned and executed without the direct participation of the audiences to whom the messages are eventually directed. The result of this non-involvement of the target audience has been that message contents are always at variance with the felt needs of the people, and therefore have little chance of gaining the acceptance of the people. Not only is there no organization at the reception end, but also, because of the desire to reach the largest number of people, the messages are always of a very general nature, barely fitting any desired solution. Effective development messages demand some sort of organized action at the reception end, and also demand specificity in message content to ensure relevance.

Centralized Mass Media method appears to have derived its operational strategy from the Development Media theory (McQuail, 1983) which requires the mass media to join the government in the task of nation-building and development. While the theory makes no reference to the people-the target audience-it requires control and sanction of the mass media by the government "in the interest of national objectives." This is why centralization of activities is seen by media personnel or organizations that use the method as imperative; such control helps to keep a sharp eye on everything that is done or not done, and therefore to avoid provoking the anger of the government.

The method is primarily concerned with what the government wants, and what ideas media personnel have to meet those wants, rather than with the construction of messages that would motivate the people to positive actions through intelligent understanding of their needs and of how to meet those needs. It is therefore no wonder that the result of using this method anywhere, especially in the developing world, has left much to be desired. It generally succeeds in generating effectedness of messages, that is, getting the messages to reach the target audiences; but it almost always fails in ensuring effectiveness of messages, that is, creating an understanding atmosphere in which the target audiences would accept the demands of the messages and act according to those demands (Moemeka, 1981:85).

Localized (Decentralized) Mass Media Method. Also very mass media oriented, this method draws strength from the Democratic-Participant Media theory (McQuail, 1983). It lays strong emphasis on interaction with the target audiences, and on the establishment of local media channels to provide access for the people. The starting point in this method is the identification of the problems of the people through personal calls, meetings, and discussions with the people by media personnel who are required to enter into the sociocultural contexts of the target audience or audiences. Because of the need for specificity in message content, Localized method calls for the establishment of local media-local radio

stations, rural press, television production/viewing centers. Each of these provides direct access and opportunities for target audience participation in the planning, production, and presentation of development messages. The method appears to be an appropriately relevant response to Rogers (1966) warning that:

Unless a communication strategy includes a two-way flow of messages, makes sure that rural people have access to adequate channels and can express themselves in freedom, and unless the authorities are willing to listen to the messages which come from the country-side (the people) and to learn from them, the 'best' of such strategies will come to naught.

One of the most effective ways of creating opportunities for access and participation for the people is through the provision of local media channels through which their views, opinions and desires can be freely expressed for the attention and action of the authorities. Through local media the people can talk to themselves, talk to the authorities, and participate fully in the construction and dissemination of development messages meant for them. Such interaction creates an atmosphere based on correct interpretation of the needs and aspirations of the people, and an understanding climate in which confidence, credibility, and willingness to make personal and community contributions are at their best.

The Localized, or Decentralized, method is utilized mainly in developed societies. It is what these countries are using in their social change endeavours. The fact that media infrastructure is already decentralized in these highly literate and developed countries makes the Localized method easy to operate. The situation is practically different with regard the developing countries because of the cost involved in providing the necessary infrastructure and because of the

political implications of the method (creating an open and free communication environment for rural populations, most of whom are illiterate).

Integrated Approach

This approach combines the Interpersonal and Mass Media approaches and links the combination with traditional channels and modes of communication. The approach recognizes that, in spite of their strengths, both the Mass Media and Interpersonal approaches have limitations. Their combination into one is therefore intended to help eliminate their limitations while improving on their strengths.

The mass media have the power to disseminate information and development messages rapidly and throughout a social system. This makes for awareness creation within the population. But they are generally not able to change people's attitudes. The fact that someone knows about efforts being made to ensure positive changes in society does not mean that he/she will automatically - change attitude or agree to participate in the change efforts. Without change of attitude, there can hardly be any change in behaviour, and without behavioural change, there can be no development or social change. Mere dissemination of information and development messages is, therefore, not sufficient to cause positive personal and societal changes. The communication mode which helps to bring about such changes is the Interpersonal. But, even though it is relatively very effective in inducing attitude change and effective development behaviour, it is highly limited in reach. It lacks the rapid and wide-area coverage abilities of the mass media. The notion of the integrated approach therefore is to utilize the mass media in providing relevant information to the entire population, and through the Interpersonal method, generate exchange of ideas and positive discussions which would lead to intelligent understanding of development objectives and each person's role in achieving

those objectives. As research has shown (Rogers, et al, 1977:363) not only are two media better than one medium for effective communication, but also a combination of the mass media and interpersonal communication is better than using either alone.

In its use of the mass media, the integrated approach gravitates more toward the Democratic-Participant Media theory, even though it does not completely ignore the Development Media theory (theory referred to according to the old school of thought about definition of development journalism). In other words, the approach incorporates more of the elements of the Localized (Decentralized) Mass Media method than it does those of the Centralized method. While the Centralized method is very appropriate for dealing with development and social change at the national policy level, and helps to crystallize the national objective at the cross-ministerial planning level, the Localized method is more appropriate for putting policies and objectives into practice, especially at the institutional and community levels. To be most effective, however, integration of all the approaches and systems must take into account existing traditional channels and modes of communication which are always a reflection of the sociocultural, economic, and environmental state of the social system. This would appear to find additional support in the categorical statement by Yu (1977:185) that no communication policy or strategy (that intends to succeed) can afford to continue to concentrate on the mass media while ignoring traditional and other channels of popular culture. In Ethiopia, for example, development agents and health extension workers have been able to reach the rural society at Churches and Mosques during the weekends and other holidays.

Information Need

Truthful and realistic answers to questions regarding information gaps can be more easily found through formative research, aimed at providing the information needs of communication planning. This is directed at establishing the condition of existing social, economic, cultural, political, human, and other contexts of the benefiting social system with a view to determining how each and all of them could affect the issues about which communication is to be planned, as well as how they might affect and be affected by communication strategies.

Goal Clarification

Of course, it is not enough to merely identify felt/action needs or social problems. The goal or goals aimed at in attempting to meet the needs or solve the problems must also be clarified. This involves making or writing down clear and carefully worded statements of expected outcomes possible with the available and/or expected resources. However, it is important to remember that goals are usually transitional because conditions are always changing. Changes in goal orientation are usually necessitated by changes in prevailing circumstances.

Strategy Selection

This is selecting from among possible alternatives what is seen as the most appropriate way or ways of meeting the goals set in the plan. Strategies are best selected when the media, physical, and human resources, as well as the attitudinal and behavioural data collected under information needs, are fully taken into account. Sometimes, one strategy, for example, Localized Mass Media, may suffice; at other times, and for some project plans, more than one strategy is required. When more than one or two communication strategies are selected, then it becomes very important to carefully blend them together in such a way as to maximize their strengths and minimize their weaknesses, and to utilize them in positively complementary ways rather than to unwarily allow unnecessary overlap.

Operational Planning

This is the planning stage at which actions and schedules of activities are specified in detail, showing what is to be done, where, by whom, and when and what resources are required in what quantity, where, when, and for what activity. Operational planning calls for recording in painstaking detail the sequential order of activities, the hierarchical order of authority or supervision, and specific assignment of responsibilities. It also calls for broad guidelines as to how the assignments are to be carried out with respect to time (1987:132). This is why development communication is not persuasion-oriented, but interaction-oriented. Selected approaches, strategies, and plans, to be effective, must be the joint decision of development agents, development communicators, and the beneficiaries of the development activity-the people based on available resources,-both human and physical.

Development Communications, Journalism and WASH

Development communication is vital to the WASH sector, both for project communications and for media coverage of development work. Development communication intends to be two-way, facilitating dialogue between project implementers – the constructors of a dam, for example – and the people who are affected by the project, whether positively or negatively. The stakeholders, be they organizations or individuals, are considered vital to the success of any development project and thus are consulted for their thoughts, opinions and beliefs. This is the essence of development communications.

Development journalism in general is necessary to ensure that development projects or other interventions incorporate political, social and cultural diagnosis in their design and implementation. Communications need to support better development outcomes, real political participation in decision-making, the information base for policy design options, and serve as an instrument for creating awareness of development priorities.

Development journalism in the WASH sector challenges governments and all involved in policy making and planning to involve and listen to the views of ordinary people, to civil society in decision making and to recognize the important part the media can play in debating development issues and challenging government accountability. Done right, development journalism in WASH can:

- raise awareness on the significance and impact of water, sanitation and hygiene services;
- promote coverage of WASH issues in the local and national media of developing countries;
- promote a sustainable relation between the media and WASH sector stakeholders.

High quality development and investigative journalism is needed more than ever, particularly for issues like sanitation, hygiene and water that affect billions of people every day but traditionally aren't on the daily media agenda. Journalists who want to write or broadcast stories on the social development and environmental aspects of water and sanitation often find it difficult to do so in newsrooms where politics, sports and entertainment are prioritised. For journalists in developing countries, the situation is especially challenging.

Today, 2.5 billion people still lack access to basic sanitation and nearly 900 million to safe drinking water. The hugeness of those numbers blinds us to the fact that these are human beings with real lives, hopes, desires and dreams, not the least being an improved quality of life for their children. Poor sanitation and hygiene are either the chief or the underlying cause in over half of the annual 10 million child deaths. At stake is nothing less than the health and dignity of people, the quality of their lives, their economic well-being, and their living environment. WASH journalism can tell the story of these people.

But there are difficult challenges. For one, WASH issues – and the sanitation issue in particular – are not considered a 'sexy' topic. Pee and poo involves privacy and intimacy, and this is not something people often want to talk about – or editors or producers desire to cover in a story. Also, WASH issues – again, the sanitation and hygiene components of WASH above all – are not considered relevant in places where sanitation coverage is already high – mostly in developed countries. For journalists in these places, the connection between improved global welfare and sanitation is not clear. In this way, sanitation and hygiene differ from climate change and HIV/AIDS, two issues that impact the developed world or have the potential to do so. These issues have immediacy amongst developed country journalists. Other challenges: WASH coverage can be difficult given the practical realities in today's newsrooms, where financial

constraints are limiting what can or cannot be covered; it is overshadowed by other issues like those named above; and WASH is complex despite its supposed simplicity. One would think, for example, that the desire to have a toilet is an obvious desire, when in fact for many people around the world, it is not.

But there has been growing success in recent years in terms of media coverage, and much of this is due to efforts from within the sector itself. The General Assembly of the United Nations established 2008 as the International Year of Sanitation (IYS). The IYS objective was to put the global community on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goal sanitation target. The IYS was a successful global advocacy and communications campaign that communicated five key messages: that access to basic sanitation improves health, generates economic development, promotes social development, helps the environment, and is universally achievable.

But, while political leaders were the natural focus, much IYS energy and advocacy was directed at audiences like the media – to help them to understand sanitation in clearer, more accessible terms. From the biggest global mass broadcasters, to the tiniest local newspapers, reporting on sanitation was good in 2008. The BBC World aired several sanitation-related specials, and opinion-editorial articles appeared in general publications such as the New York Times and more specialised ones like The Lancet. Much local coverage was generated, and many of these articles were submitted for the 2007-2008 WASH Media Awards, which were won by four talented female journalists from Africa and Brazil. They included Ms. Winfred Onyimbo, 33, Trans World Radio, Kenya, "Disease in bottle"; Ms. Cátia Toffoletto, 43, CBN - Radio São Paulo, Brazil, "Water, the waste condemning São Paolo"; Ms. Claudine Efoa Atohoun, 45, Office of Radio and Television, Benin, "Dassa, the commune of the 41 hills"; and Ms. Salome Gregory, 26, Mwananchi Communications Limited, Tanzania, "This is Same, where fetching water means children miss classes".

Still, in terms of numbers, articles, programmes and broadcasts made about sanitation in 2008 were about on par with media coverage generated by the International Year of the Frog and the International Year of the Potato. So there is still much to do.

But many actors and stakeholders are realizing this. In particular, the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council's network of "national WASH coalitions" is taking the mantle and encouraging WASH journalism. Particularly strong work is being done in Ethiopia, Nepal, Nigeria, Togo and elsewhere to take WASH messaging to journalists, to help build their capacity, and to get them interested in the nuances of an exciting and important topic.

Tools in development journalism

In-Depth Reporting

- Going beyond the surface facts of a story to give the reader detailed background information, interpretation based on the facts and background, and analysis as to the meaning
- Further development of the Why
- Rather than being one long story, it often can be several stories, including graphics (pictures, graphs, cartoons, or diagrams)
- Requires several days or weeks of research
- Not written in the inverted pyramid style
- The real success of an in-depth story depends on two factors: (1) the investigation the reporter has done to gather important and interesting information and (2) the way the information is presented – organization and style

Investigative Reporting: Definition and Process

What is investigative reporting?

- In the old-fashioned sense, investigative reporting is simply good reporting.

As a type of reporting, investigative journalism is...

- In-depth, long-term research & reporting
- Documentary research and use of public and private records, following the paper trail

- Extensive interviewing
- Crime-solving tools and methods (undercover reporting, hidden cameras, surveillance)
- Revealing information others want to keep secret or information not known to the public

Investigative reporting is also...

- belief in the watchdog role of the media
- focus on the accountability of institutions and individuals manipulating power
- the journalism of outrage: belief in the power of the media to catalyze reforms

Finally, investigative reporting is...

- determined
- patient
- careful
- fair

Investigative reporting is a process: Working from the outside in

Most often, investigative reporting involves investigating wrongdoing by individuals or institutions.

- Who is responsible for the wrongdoing?
- How was it done?

- What are the consequences?
- What can be done about it?

How to tell the difference

- Investigative reports often take a longer time to research.
- They reveal new information, not just the results of someone else's investigation.
- They are based largely on documents and extensive interviews.

Form a hypothesis

A hypothesis is a theory or premise to start your investigation.

- Example: From 1995 to 1998, Miniahil Abebe, Minister of Water Resources, received bribes from water reservoir contractors in the form of commissions ranging from 20 to 30 percent of the project cost. That resulted in poor quality/less durable reservoir.

The Investigative Trail

- The Paper Trail: Documents
- The Human Trail: Interviews
- The Electronic Trail: The use of computers and the Internet for research and reporting
- Field Work: Onsite inspections

Why invest in investigative reporting?

Investigative reporting makes an impact by ...

- Reversing policy
- Causing the resignation/firing of erring officials
- Focusing attention previously neglected issues & areas
- Enriching public debate

Investigative reporting also...

- Helps sell newspapers and news programs.
- Widens the scope of journalistic freedom and opens new avenues of access to information.
- Enhances the capacity of the media to play a watchdog role.

Key Skills for Investigative Reporters

- Interviewing
- Observing
- Chasing Documents

Useful Tips

- Know the law
- Know the procedures
- Focus your research
- Follow the money

- Just keep digging

Review of Process

- First Lead, Tip or Hunch
- Sniff
- Form an Investigative Hypothesis
- Follow the Investigative Trail: Paper, People and Electronic Trails
- Organize information
- Fill in the Gaps: More data or interviews
- Write the Report
- Fact Check
- Libel Check

Please search youtube with the following keywords to hear directly from Bob Woodward, one of the two journalists that reported on Watergate scandal, about investigative journalism.

“Tips from Bob Woodward on Investigative Journalism”

The but why strategy

This exercise helps journalists exhaust ‘why’ part of a story. The following example helps understand the situation.

Hypothesis: there is water shortage in Addis Ababa while there is enough underground water in and around Addis Ababa.

- BUT WHY:
- 1) Lack of budget
 - 2) Population growth
 - 3) Lack of awareness among the people even if there is water

- 1) Lack of budget
 - a. road construction consumed budget
 - b. hospital construction consumed budget
 - c. less tax collected in last fiscal year
- 2) Population growth
 - a. lack of birth control methods/unmet contraception needs
 - b. rural-urban migration
- 3) Lack of awareness among the people
 - a. Low media coverage about water, sanitation and hygiene...

Computer Assisted Reporting or **Database journalism** was born in the 1950's.

Since then, computers have spread across the world, to the point that database journalism in its original meaning has come to merge with the very definition of journalism.

Computer-assisted reporting is the use of computers to gather and analyze the data necessary to write news/feature stories.

The spread of computers, software and the Internet is swiftly changing how reporters work. Reporters now routinely collect information in databases, analyze public records with spreadsheets and statistical programs, study political and demographic change with geographic information system mapping, conduct interviews by e-mail, and research background for articles on the Web.

Collectively this has become known as computer-assisted reporting, or CAR. CAR's greatest growth has been in recent years, coinciding with the adoption of computers for everyday use. Its roots, however, go back decades. One researcher argues the "age of computer-assisted reporting" began in 1952, when CBS television used a UNIVAC I computer to analyze returns from the U.S. presidential election. One of the earliest examples came in 1967, after riots in Detroit, when Philip Meyer of the Detroit Free Press used a mainframe computer to show that people who had attended college were equally likely to have rioted as were high school dropouts.

Since the 1950's, CAR developed to the point that databases became central to the journalist's work by the 1980's. In his book, *Precision Journalism*, the first edition of which was written in 1969, Philip Meyer argues that a journalist must make use of databases and surveys, both computer-assisted. In the 2002 edition, he goes even further and states that "a journalist has to be a database manager".

The techniques expanded from polling and surveying to a new opportunity for journalists: using the computer to analyze huge volumes of government records. The first example of this type may have been Clarence Jones of The Miami Herald, who in 1969 worked with a computer to find patterns in the criminal justice system. Other notable early practitioners included David Burnham of The New York Times, who in 1972 used a computer to expose discrepancies in crime rates reported by the police; Elliot Jaspin of The Providence Journal, who in 1986 matched databases to expose school bus drivers with bad driving histories and criminal records; and Bill Dedman of The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, who received the Pulitzer Prize* for his 1988 investigation, *The Color of Money*, which dealt with mortgage lending discrimination and redlining in middle-income black neighborhoods (The Color of Money is included in the CD).

In the last 15 years, journalism organizations such as the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting (NICAR, a program of Investigative Reporters and Editors) and the Danish International Center for Analytical Reporting (DICAR), have been created solely to promote the use of CAR in newsgathering. Many other organizations, such as the Society of Professional Journalists, the Canadian Association of Journalists and the University of King's College in Halifax, Nova Scotia, offer CAR training or workshops.

In 2001, computers had reached a critical mass in American newsrooms in terms of general computer use, online research, non-specialist content searching, and daily frequency of online use.

This shows that computers and computer-assisted reporting have become very common in most Western news organizations. Using computers and databases is even, according to some, part of the definition of a journalist. Therefore, database journalism as a form of computer-assisted reporting has, by the beginning of the 21st century, come to merge with journalism.

Checking reliability of information

Information is available from many different places and in a wide variety of formats. But the reliability of that information also exists within a wide range!

Reliability

Perhaps the best way to think of the reliability of information is to think of it as existing on a continuum, rather than falling into the categories of reliable or unreliable. Information can range from very unreliable to highly reliable and also anywhere in between.

How can you judge the reliability of the information that you find?

Judging Reliability by Comparing Sources

One way is to **compare** the information about the **same topic across multiple sources**.

Testing Information Quality

Testing information quality is another way to judge the reliability or credibility of the information that you find. Use can use the following important questions about the source that will help to judge its trustworthiness.

1. Is it clear who has written this information? (Who is the author? Is it a **person** or an **organization**?)
2. Can this individual or organization be trusted? Why? Are their qualifications or credentials **given** or are they **implied**?

3. What are the **goals** of the information (or of the author or organization)?
4. Who is the **intended audience** for this information?
5. Does the author have a particular **point of view** on this information? Does the author have a **reason for wanting you to think a certain way**?
6. Does the author use **opinion words** within the information such as **good, bad, best, worst, all**, etc.? These words help us know whether he has opinion or point of view.
7. **When** was this information published? Is it **up to date** for this topic? Does its **currency matter for this topic**? There are some topics for which currency matters less.
8. Can this information **be checked or verified across multiple sources**? Where else could you check these facts? Does it state if it has a primary source, or trusted secondary source? Are those sources findable?
9. Is **consideration** given to **other points of view** on the topic? Fairness/balance?
10. How might someone use this text? **For what purpose**?

You can practice using these "test" questions. Use Google to find a biographical article about your famous person. Google search hint: Type in your famous person's name in double quotes followed by the word biography.

It is important to remember that anyone can publish on the Internet. That makes it especially important to be careful with the information that you obtain from websites. Often it is a good idea to examine print sources first, or at the same time that you are researching a topic on the Internet. Print sources tend to be higher on the reliability continuum because they are usually checked by editors

before they are published, and a publishing company's business often relies on its reputation for credibility. However, this does not guarantee that print sources will be free of bias.

Points to consider

How is the information I learned about the person in my biography book different from the information I found on one or more web sites?

How is the information I learned about the person in my biography book different from the information I found in one or more reference books?

Does any of the information that I found through my research conflict with information I have read in the biography? Why might that be the case?

Which source seems the most reliable? How am I making this judgment?

What life lessons can I glean from reading the biography book? Are there additional ones that have been made clear through my research?

Story telling strategy: Designing a Story

Storytelling is the conveying of events in words, images, and sounds often by improvisation or embellishment. Stories or narratives have been shared in every culture and in every land as a means of entertainment, education, preservation of culture and in order to instil moral values. Crucial elements of stories and storytelling include plot and characters, as well as the narrative point of view.

Storytelling has existed as long as humanity has had language.

How can this age-old tradition of storytelling be used for development communication purpose. The new storytelling technique requires a little bit of knowledge and skill. This is well defined and discussed as follows:

THE STORYTELLING PROCESS

Steps of the process:

1. Issue: what we are talking about.
2. Communication Objective – what behaviour are we trying to change and why?
3. Target audience: who are we intending to reach with our messages
4. Key messages: what key points are we trying to make
5. Medium – which media best fit our target audience and message
6. Format – news, feature, drama, songs
7. A- Creative Solution: “The Story”
 B- Reinforcing the message – mediated use of the product
8. Production Process

Characteristics of a good story:

- A single theme, clearly defined
- A well developed plot
- Style: vivid word pictures, pleasing sounds and rhythm
- Characterization
- Faithful to source
- Dramatic appeal
- Appropriateness to listeners