



NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

COURSE CODE: MAC121

**COURSE TITLE:
INTRODUCTION TO NEWS WRITING AND REPORTING**



MAC121

INTRODUCTION TO NEWS WRITING AND REPORTING,

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MAC 121 (3 CREDIT UNITS)

COURSE GUIDE

Introduction

Welcome to MAC 121: INTRODUCTION TO NEWS WRITING AND REPORTING, which is a three-credit-unit course offered in the first year to students of the undergraduate degree programme in Mass Communication. There are 21 Study Units in this course. There are no prerequisites for studying this course. It has been developed with appropriate local examples suitable for the Nigerian audience.

This Course Guide is for distance learners enrolled in the B.A. Mass Communication programme of the National Open University of Nigeria. This guide is one of the several resource tools available to you to help you successfully complete this course and ultimately your programme.

In this guide you will find very useful information about this course: aims, objectives, what the course is about, what course materials you will be using; available services to support your learning; information on assignments and examination. It also offers you guidelines on how to plan your time for study; the amount of time you are likely to spend on each study unit, as well as your tutor-marked assignments.

I strongly recommend that you go through this Course Guide and complete the feedback form at the end before you begin your study of the course. The feedback form must be submitted to your tutorial facilitator along with your first assignment. This guide also provides answers to several of your questions.

However, do not hesitate to contact your study centre if you have further questions. I wish you all the best in your learning experience and successful completion of this course.

Course Aim(s)

The aims of this course are to give you an understanding of the role of the journalist in the society, the attributes of a reporter and an understanding of how to report for both the print and broadcast media. These broad aims will be achieved by:

- Introducing you to journalism, and the basic principles of news reporting.
- Demonstrating how these principles can be applied

- Acquainting you with the legal and ethical rules guiding your job as a reporter

Course Objectives

To achieve the aims set out above, MAC 121 has overall objectives. (In addition, each unit also has specific objectives. The unit objectives are at the beginning of each unit. I advise that you read them before you start working through the unit. You may want to refer to them during your study of the unit to check your progress.)

Here are the wider objectives for the course as a whole. By meeting the objectives, you count yourself as having met the aims of the course. On successful completion of the course, you should be able to:

1. Define what news is
2. State the roles of the journalist in the society
3. List the attributes of the reporter
4. Explain some theories of the press
5. Identify sources of news and how to gather news
6. Write news stories for the print and broadcast media
7. Understand Internet journalism
8. Know some laws guiding your job as a journalist
9. Differentiate between ethics and law
10. Discuss the Code of Ethics for Nigerian journalists
11. Discuss some ethical problems in Nigerian journalism.

COURSE MATERIALS AND STRUCTURE

The major materials you will need for this course are:

- i. Course Guide
- ii. Study Units broken down to (21) units
- iii. Assignments file
- iv. Relevant textbooks including the ones listed under each unit
- v. You may also need to listen to programmes and news on the radio and television
- vi. As a beginner, you need to read newspapers and interact with other mass media as often as possible.

In addition to the above, to complete this course, you are advised to read through this Course Guide to familiarize yourself with the structure of the course; read the Study Units and attempt all Self Assessment Exercises; complete and submit all assignments for the course, and consult recommended sources for further reading.

Each unit contains Self Assessment Exercises, and at points in the course you are required to submit assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of the course, there is a final examination. The course should take you about 60 hours to complete. You have to draw up your own timetable and allocate time to complete each Study Unit in order to complete the course successfully and on time.

All the components of the course are listed and explained below.

Course Guide

Study Units

There are 21 Study Units in this course and they are:

MODULE 1

TOPIC: ROLE OF THE JOURNALIST IN SOCIETY

Unit 1: The Reporter and Journalism	1 - 3
Unit 2: Attributes of a Journalist	4 - 6
Unit 3: Gathering the News	7 - 17
Unit 4: Theories of the Press	18 - 22
Unit 5: Journalistic Terminologies	23 - 27

MODULE 2

TOPIC: PRINT JOURNALISM

Unit 1: News and News Judgment	28 - 35
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MODULE 3

TOPIC: BROADCAST JOURNALISM

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Unit 3: Writing for the Ear: Five Principles	75 - 80
Unit 4: How to Make Your Copy Sound	81 - 84
Unit 5: Interviewing	85 - 90

MODULE 4

TOPIC: ONLINE JOURNALISM

Unit 1: What is the Net?	91 – 97
Unit 2: Computer-Assisted Journalism	98 - 100
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MODULE 5

TOPIC: THE JOURNALIST AND THE LAW

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MODULE 6

TOPIC: THE ETHICAL JOURNALIST

Unit 1: What is Ethics?	138 - 140
Unit 2: Ethics and Journalism	141 - 143
Unit 3: Codes of Journalistic Ethics	144 - 149
Unit 4: Ethical Issues in Nigerian Journalism	150 – 154

MODULE 7

TOPIC: WRITING FOR ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Unit 1: Writing Advertising Copy	
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Unit 2: Public Relations Writing

Course Summary

Module 1 introduces you to the role of the journalist in the society. It discusses the person of the reporter, his or her role in journalism, important attributes he or she must possess, and the process of news gathering. It also provides the theoretical framework and ends with a discourse of journalistic terminologies. In Module 2, the print aspect of journalism is treated, with particular references to news and news judgment, and the components of news stories: the lead and the body. Module 3 deals with broadcast journalism. It begins with the broadcast style book, facts about the broadcast copy and the principles of broadcast writing. Module 4 examines online journalism, its role and characteristics, while in Modules 5 and 6, the legal and ethical considerations for journalists are discussed. Module 7 completes the study material, focusing on a specialised area of writing – Advertising and Public Relations. There are 21 Study Units in this course. Each study unit consists of one week's work and should take you about three hours to complete. It includes specific objectives, guidance for study, reading material, and Self Assessment Exercises.

Together with tutor-marked assignments, these exercises will assist you in achieving the stated learning objectives of the individual Study Units and of the course.

Study Plan

This table is a presentation of the course and how long it should take you to complete each Study Unit and the accompanying assignments.

UNIT	TITLE OF STUDY UNIT	WEEKS/ACTIVITY	ASSIGNMENT
	COURSE GUIDE		COURSE GUIDE FORM
MODULE 1: ROLE OF THE JOURNALIST IN SOCIETY			
1.	The Reporter and Journalism	1	Assignment
2.	Attributes of a Journalist	2	Assignment

3.	Gathering the News	2	TMA 1-2 to be submitted
4.	Theories of the Press	3	Assignment
5.	Journalistic Terminologies	3	TMA 3-5 to be submitted
MODULE 2: PRINT JOURNALISM			
1.	News and News Judgment	4	Assignment
2.	Components of the News Story	5	Assignment
3.	The Lead	6	Assignment
4.	The Body	6	TMA 1-4 to be submitted
MODULE 3: BROADCAST JOURNALISM			
1.	Broadcast Style Book	7	Assignment
2.	Preparing Broadcast Copy	7	Assignment
3.	Writing for the Ear: Five Principles	8	Assignment
4.	How to Make Your Sound Good	8	Assignment
5.	Interviewing	9	TMA 1-5 to be submitted
MODULE 4: ONLINE JOURNALISM			
1.	What is the Net	10	Assignment
2.	Computer-Assisted Journalism	10	Assignment
3.	Characteristics of the Net	11	Assignment
4.	Legal Pitfalls on the Internet	11	TMA 1-4 to be submitted
MODULE 5: THE JOURNALIST AND THE LAW			
1.	The Concept of Press Freedom	11	Assignment
2.	Regulation of the Mass Media	12	Assignment
3.	Disclosure of Source of Information	12	Assignment
4.	Contempt of Court	12	TMA 1-4 to be submitted
MODULE 6: THE ETHICAL JOURNALIST			
1.	What is Ethics?	13	Assignment
2.	Ethics and Journalism	13	Assignment
3.	Codes of Journalistic Ethics	14	Assignment
4.	Ethical Issues in Nigerian Journalism	14	TMA 1-4 to be submitted
MODULE 7: WRITING FOR ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS			
1.	Writing Advertising Copy	15	Assignment
2.	Public Relations Writing	15	Assignment (TMA 1-2 to be submitted)
	Revision	16	
	Examination	17	
	Total	17	

*Now use this overview to plan your personal timetable.

References/Further Readings

- Harper, C. and the Indiana Group (1998), *Journalism 2001*, Madison: Coursewise Publishing
- Stovall, J. G. (2006), *Writing for the Mass Media*, New York: Pearson Education
- Bonder, F. F., Davenport, J. R., and Drager, M. W. (2005), *Reporting for the Mass Media* (8th Edition), New York: Oxford University Press
- Mercher, M. (2003), *News Reporting and Writing* (9th Edition), San Francisco: McGraw-Hill
- Moemeka, A. (2000), *Reporter's Handbook: An Introduction to Effective Journalism*, Kearney, USA: Morris Publishing
- Rich, C. (1999), *Writing and Reporting News: A Coaching Method* (3rd Edition), New York: Wadsworth Publishing Company
- Uyo, A. (1987), *Mass Media Messages in a Nutshell*, New York: Civiletis International

How to Get the Most from this Course

In distance learning, the Study Units replace the university lecturer. The advantage is that you can read and work through the course materials at your pace, and at a time and place that suits you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to a lecturer. Just as a lecturer might give you in-class exercises, your Study Units provide exercises for you to do at appropriate times.

Each of the Study Units has common features which are designed to aid your learning. The first feature is an introduction to the subject matter of the unit and how a particular unit is integrated with other units and the course as a whole. Next is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. You should use these objectives to guide your study.

When you have finished the unit, you should go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. Self Assessment Exercises are interspersed throughout each Study Unit and answers are given at the end of the course. These exercises are designed to help you recall what you have studied and to evaluate your learning by yourself. You should do each Self Assessment Exercise as you come to it in the Study Unit. The summary at the end of each unit also helps you to recall all the main topics discussed in the main content of each unit. There are also Tutor-Marked Questions at the end of each

unit. Working on these questions will help you to achieve the objectives of the unit and prepare you for the assignments which you will submit and the final examination.

It should take you about three hours to complete a Study Unit, the exercises and assignments. When you have completed the first Study Unit, take note of how long it took you and use this information to draw up a timetable to guide your study for the rest of your course. The wide margins on the left and right side of the pages of your course book are meant for you to make notes of main ideas or key points at which you can use when revising the course. If you make use of all these features, you will significantly increase your chances of passing the course.

Course Delivery

As an open and distance learner, you learn through several ways. You learn when you interact with the content in your course material in the same way as a student interacts with the teacher in a conventional institution. You also learn when you are guided through the course; however you are not taught the course. Instead, your course material is your teacher, and as such you will not be able to get answers to any questions which may arise from your study of the material. It is for this reason that, in addition to the course material which you have received, the delivery of this course is supported by tutorial, facilitation, and counseling support services. Although these services are not compulsory, you are encouraged to take maximum advantage of them.

Tutorial Sessions

The total number of tutorial hours for this course is 8 hours. Tutorial sessions form a part of your learning process as you have an opportunity to receive face-to-face contact with your tutorial facilitator and to receive answers to questions or clarifications which you may have. Also you may contact your tutorial facilitator by phone or email.

On your part, you will be expected to prepare ahead of time by studying the relevant Study Units, write your questions so as to gain maximum benefit from tutorial sessions. Information about the location and time schedule for facilitation will be available at your study centre. Tutorial sessions are a flexible arrangement between you and your tutorial facilitator. You will need to contact your study centre to arrange the time schedule for the

sessions. You will also need to obtain your tutorial facilitator's phone number and email address.

Tutorial sessions are optional. However, the benefits of participating in them provide you a forum for interaction and peer group discussions which will minimize the isolation you may experience as a distance learner.

Facilitation

Facilitation is learning that takes place both within and outside of tutorial sessions. Your tutorial facilitator guides your learning by doing the following:

- provide answers to your questions during tutorial sessions, on phone or by email;
- coordinate group discussions;
- provide feedback on your assignments;
- pose questions to confirm learning outcomes;
- coordinate, mark and record your assignment/examination score; and
- monitor your progress.

The language of instruction for this course is English. The course material is available in print or CD formats, and on the university website. On your part, you will be expected to prepare ahead of time by studying the relevant Study Units, and write your questions so as to gain maximum benefit from facilitation.

Information about the location and time schedule for facilitation will be available at your study centre. Time of facilitation is a flexible arrangement between you and your tutorial facilitator. You should contact your tutorial facilitator if:

- You do not understand any part of the Study Units.
- You have difficulty with the Self Assessment Exercises.
- You have a question or a problem with an assignment, with your tutorial facilitator's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

Counseling

Counseling forms a part of your learning because it is provided to make your learning experience easier. Counseling is available to you at two levels, academic and personal counseling. Student counselors are available at the study centre to provide guidance for personal issues that may affect your studies. Your study centre manager and tutorial

facilitators can assist you with questions on academic matters such as course materials, facilitation, grades and so on. Make sure that you have the phone numbers and email addresses of your study centre and the various individuals.

Assessment

There are three components of assessment for this course: Self Assessment Exercises and assignments at the end of each study unit; the Tutor-Marked Assignments; and a written examination. In doing these assignments, you are expected to use the information gathered during your study of the course. Below are detailed explanations on how to do each assignment.

Self Assessment Exercises (SAEs)

There are Self Assessment Exercises spread out through your course material. You should attempt each exercise immediately after reading the section that precedes it. Possible answers to the exercises are provided at the end of the course book. However, you should check the answers **ONLY AFTER** you must have attempted the exercises. The exercises are for you to evaluate your learning; they are not to be submitted. There are also questions spread through each Study Unit. You are required to attempt these questions after you have read a Study Unit.

Again, the questions are to help you assess your knowledge of the contents of the unit. You are not required to submit the answers for SAEs.

Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs)

There are four Tutor-Marked Assignments for this course. The assignments are designed to cover all areas treated in the course. You will be given your assignments and the dates for submission at your study centre. You are required to attempt all four Tutor-Marked Assignments. You will be assessed on all four, but the best three performances will be used for your continuous assessment. Each assignment carries 10% and together will count for 30% of your total score for the course. The assignments must be submitted to your tutorial facilitator for formal assessment on or before the stipulated dates for

submission. The work that you submit to your tutorial facilitator for assessment will count for 30% of your total course score.

Guidelines for Writing Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. On the cover page of your assignment, write the course code and title, assignment number (TMA 1, TMA 2..), and date of submission, your name and matriculation number. It should look like this:

Course Code _____ Course Title _____

Tutor-Marked Assignment _____ Date of Submission _____

Name _____ Matriculation Number _____

2. You should endeavour to be concise and to the point in your answers. Your answer should be based on your course material, further readings and experience. However, do not copy from any of these materials. If you do, you will be penalized. Remember to give relevant examples and illustrations.
3. Use ruled foolscap-sized paper for writing answers. Make and keep a copy of your assignments.
4. Your answers should be hand written by you. Leave a margin of about 1.5 inches of the left side and about 5 lines before the answer to the next question for your tutorial facilitator's comments.
5. For assignments involving laboratory reports of experiments, the following format is required for submission in addition to 1 above:

Experiment Report Sheet

- a. Observations.
 - b. Readings
 - c. Diagrams.
 - d. Graphs
 - e. Precautions
 - f. Results
 - g. Calculations
 - h. Sources of Errors.
- Conclusions.

6. When you have completed each assignment, make sure that it reaches your tutorial facilitator on or before the deadline. If for any reason you cannot complete your work on time, contact your study centre manager and tutorial facilitator before the assignment is due to discuss the possibility of an extension. Extensions will not be granted after the due date unless under exceptional circumstances.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination for MAC 121 will be of two hours duration, and will carry 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions which reflect the kinds of Self Assessment Exercises and questions in the Tutor-Marked Assignments which you have previously encountered. All areas of the course will be assessed. You should use the time between finishing the last unit and taking the examination to revise the entire course. You will find it useful to review your answers to Self Assessment Exercises and Tutor-Marked Assignments before the examination.

For you to be eligible to sit for the final examinations, you must have done the following:

1. You should have submitted all the four Tutor-Marked Assignments for the course.
2. You should have registered to sit for the examination. The deadline for examination registration will be available at your study centre. Failure to submit your assignments or to register for the examination (even if you sit for the examination) means that you will not have a score for the course.

Course Marking Scheme

The following table lays out the marks that constitute the total course score.

Assessment	Marks
Assignments 1-4 (four submitted, but the best three of all the assignments selected)	Three assignments, marked out of 10%, totalling 30%

Final examination	70% of overall course score
Total	100% of course score

4.0 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, all the features of this Course Guide have been designed to facilitate your learning in order that you achieve the aims and objectives of the course. They include the aims and objectives, course summary, course overview, self assessment exercises and study questions. You should ensure that you make maximum use of them in your study to achieve maximum results.

5.0 SUMMARY

MAC 121: Introduction to News Writing and Reporting provides you a theoretical foundation upon which you develop mastery in news writing and reporting. It is aimed at equipping you with skills for approaching news reporting with honed journalistic skills by introducing you to the key factors determining the news worthiness of events. Upon completing the course you should be able to identify and explain news determinants as well as exhibit an ability to meet the news reporting and writing needs of the different genres of media.

I wish you success with the course and hope that you will find it both interesting and useful.

**MAIN
WORK**

MAC121

INTRODUCTION TO NEWS WRITING AND REPORTING,

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 - 3.1.2 Functions of the Press
 - 3.1.3 The Reporter
 - 3.1.4 Attributes of the Reporter
 - 3.1.5 The Reporter's Language
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The principal actor in news reporting is the reporter. Therefore, it is not out of place to begin this course with an attempt to define a reporter in terms of who he/she is and his/her functions. He/she is the ear and the eye of his/her medium. It is what he/she reports that the audience will know about. He/she touches lives with his/her report. However, for him/her to perform well, he/she must possess certain attributes. Thus, in this unit, you will also learn about the attributes of a reporter. And finally, the reporter, in the process of doing his/her duty, uses language peculiar to his/her profession. This unit will also introduce you to some of the terminologies peculiar to journalism.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit of study, you should be able to:

- i. Define Journalism;
- ii. Explain who a reporter is;
- iii. Explain the functions of a reporter;
- iv. Enumerate on the attributes of a reporter;
- v. List some terminologies that are peculiar to journalism; and
- vi. Explain the terminologies in ordinary language that non-journalists would understand.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1.1 WHAT IS JOURNALISM?

News reporting and news writing fall within the field of journalism. Hence, we shall begin by introducing you to the word journalism.

As an occupation, journalism refers generally to writing for journals, but in particular for newspapers/magazines – though it also includes those who write for radio, television. However journalism has expanded in meaning and scope, to become the means by which you disseminate news and views, and by so doing has formed itself into a limb of social awareness; it has become an important social function, constituting the means by which the populace receive and give information from and to the world around them; assuming an ethical dimension and to some extent, requires legal accountability for its performance. As such, the journalist, in the performance of his or her duties, has to contend with various legal and ethical issues.

3.1.2 FUNCTIONS OF THE PRESS

According to Lasswell and Wright (1948), the press has four traditional roles to perform and these include:

- a. Surveillance of the environment;
 - b. Correlation of parts of society in responding to the environment;
 - c. Transmission of the social heritage from one generation to the next; and
 - d. Entertainment
- i. **The surveillance (information/news) function:** This function refers to the collection and distribution of information concerning events in the environment both outside and within a particular society. Simply put, this is the news function.
 - ii. **The correlation (analysis/interpretation) function:** This function refers to the interpretation of information about the environment and prescription for conduct in reaction to these events. This is the editorial/opinion/interpretation function.
 - iii. **Transmission of social heritage (cultural transmission) function:** This function focuses on the communicating of knowledge, values, and social norms from one generation to another or from one group to another, or from members of a group to newcomers. This is the cultural transmission/education/socialization function.

- iv. **Entertainment function:** This function includes communicative acts primarily intended for amusement or escape, irrespective of the instrumental effect they might have.

3.1.3 THE REPORTER

In the performance of these functions, the key personality is the reporter: he/she chronicles events as they happen and he/she is rightly termed, the unknown historian.

It is the reporter who goes out to get stories for the news, and stories behind the news. It is the reporter who generally attends press meetings, conferences, scenes of disaster or accidents, demonstrations and other happenings or developments which either make or explain the news (Alao, 1992:23-24).

It must be noted that in the modern art of reporting, reporters have their various areas of specialization. Special reporters are assigned to report crimes, sports, judiciary, labour, entertainment, business and economy, foreign beat and aviation, among others. Whether it is print or electronic media, the functions of reporters and editors are the same: to write and shape the writing to suit the needs of readers, listeners and viewers.

Randall (2000) lists some of the 'thankless' functions that the reporter is expected by the creed of his/her profession:

1. Discover and publish information that replaces rumour and speculation;
2. Resist and evade government controls, especially those put in place to prevent the public from finding out the true position of things;
3. Inform, and so empower, voters;
4. Subvert those whose authority relies on a lack of public information;
5. Scrutinize the actions and inactions of governments, elected representatives and public services;
6. Scrutinize businesses, their treatment of workers and customers, the quality of their products and their level of social responsibility;
7. Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, providing a voice for those who cannot normally be heard in public;

8. Hold up a mirror to society, reflecting its virtues and vices and also debunking its cherished myths;
9. Ensure that justice is done, is seen to be done, and investigations carried out where this is not so;
10. Promote the free exchange, especially by providing a platform for those with philosophies alternative to the prevailing ones.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Identify the role of the reporter in the society.

3.1.4 ATTRIBUTES OF A REPORTER

The following are some of the attributes of a reporter:

Nose for news: A reporter lives on news, he/she must have an instinct for news, and that is, he/she should be able to identify a newsworthy event. He/she should be able to generate news from anyone no matter how important or insignificant that person is. Randall (2000) explains that reporters must possess this attribute for the following reasons: One, in the positive sense of knowing what makes a good story and the ability to find the essential news point in the midst of dross; Two, in the negative sense of not wasting time by pursuing stories that are not worth much; and Three, ensuring that he/she does not miss details and make a fool of himself or herself.

Good command of written and spoken language of his/her medium: To do your job well, you must have a good training in the profession. This will enable you to learn as much about as many things as possible. The present trend towards specialization in news reporting makes it mandatory for the reporters to learn as much as possible on the subject they are assigned to such as politics, science, labour, economics and history.

Passion for precision: This means that to excel as a reporter in the business of furnishing the public with information, you must possess a knack for accuracy and precision which Randall (2000) writes as meaning three things: first, recording and writing accurately what information is gathered; ensuring that the details recorded accurately stand true to

the spirit and atmosphere of the situation or events – which means adding background and context; and lastly, avoid making any or all kinds of assumptions.

Speed and accuracy: As a reporter, you have to bear in mind that your medium is competing with others in the market. To meet a deadline, you need to race against time in gathering and presenting news. Remember the saying that journalism is history in a hurry.

Objectivity: You need to develop the ability to be impartial, impersonal, objective and dispassionate. You should not shift the emphasis, twist the angle or colour the story. While you can afford to be ruthless or remorseless in condemning unfair happenings in feature or editorial writings, news reporting differs; what the listeners, readers want in news is fact and not your opinion or emotional reaction.

Perseverance: As a reporter you need to persevere and go an extra mile while pursuing a story. Remember that there is a wide variety of people, while some may have news to offer, others may have, but may not be willing to, divulge news. As such, if you are in undue haste, it may damage your investigation by causing you to miss the vital part of the news.

Ability to establish contacts: As a reporter, it is not enough for you to know how to establish contacts; you should try to sustain contacts. Do not despise anybody; the office assistant or even the cleaner may be your best source in any organization. So, be friendly with them, as you would want to be with their boss.

Trustworthiness: As a reporter, you need to respect the confidence reposed in you by your source. On no account should you divulge your source of information. Many reporters/journalists in the world have gone to prison rather than divulge the source of their information. In Nigeria, such persons include Nduka Irabor and Tunde Thompson.

Knowledge of working tools: To facilitate your job, you do not only need to possess some aids, you must know how to use them. These include a camera and a computer. In fact, in this age of computer-assisted journalism, it will be odd for a reporter not to be

computer-literate and also know how to search for information on the Internet. Besides, the knowledge of shorthand will be an added advantage.

Ethics of the profession: Every profession regulates the conduct of its practitioners in terms of duty and ethical behaviour. Journalism involves the kind of trust that imposes strong obligations on all those who practise it. You should keep abreast of the ethics of the journalism profession (not only that you need to obey the ethics.)

Versatility: As a reporter you must have knowledge about the beat you are assigned to cover. Also, you need to know about the community where you are operating. This also means that, as a reporter, you must have a knowledge of about everything and must be able to apply yourself to whatever beat/use the editor or a particular situation may require.

Thus, take extra time to equip yourself with this quality, as no school of journalism will teach you that. A good reporter should also be pleasant and neat, as well as stay intellectually alert, optimistic and adaptable.

3.1.5 THE REPORTER'S LANGUAGE

Journalism has developed a language of its own, like every industry or profession. Many words have been adopted and given a new or different meaning in both the print and broadcast media. The list below gives some of these words.

You may need to read more in any of the recommended books on News Writing and Reporting.

Across the board: Programmes broadcast seven days a week at the same time

Ad: Abbreviation for advertisement

Add: Additional news matter to be added to a news story

Air time: The time at which a programme is broadcast

AM: Amplitude Modulation (Standard radio broadcasting)

Audio: Sound

Background: Information that may be used by a writer entirely on his/her own responsibility and cannot be attributed even to a "reliable source".

The writer presents the information as if he/she had gathered it from original research. Also refers to information upon which a story develops

- Beat:** Area assigned to a reporter for regular coverage: For example, police or airport.
- Beeper:** A telephone conversation or interview recorded for later playback on air
- Body type:** The type in which most of the newspaper is set, generally 8 point
- Budget:** An amount of news copy, as in “the budget for this broadcast”
- Bulletin:** News of the day
- Byline:** A line identifying the author of a story; name of the reporter who wrote the story
- Caption:** Synonymous with cut line. It is the explanatory lines above or below a newspaper photograph, illustration or diagram
- Channel:** A radio–spectrum frequency assigned to a radio or television station or stations
- Copy:** News manuscript
- Continuity:** All radio and television scripts besides commercials
- Cue:** Noun; a signal to an announcer, a newscaster or production personnel to participate in a broadcast.
- Cover:** To gather facts of news story
- Cub:** A beginning reporter
- Deadline:** Time by which a reporter, editor or desk must have completed scheduled work
- Dateline:** The name of the city or town and date, which are placed at the beginning of stories not of local origin
- Credit line:** The line that designates, if necessary, the source of a story or cut “By NAN–News Agency of Nigeria”
- Dry:** A period lacking in news
- Exclusive:** A story that is printed solely by one newspaper; also called a “scoop”

Fade:	Either physical or mechanical lowering of a voice or music to smooth a transition between sounds
Feature:	A story that is timely and interesting but is not strictly news
Feed:	A broadcast to a station to be recorded or sent to another station or other stations
File:	To sent a story to office usually by wire or telephone or to put news services on the wire.
FM:	Frequency Modulation: A method of radio broadcasting which has several advantages over standard broadcasting, like elimination of static and no fading
Freelance:	An unattached writer, reporter, photojournalist or artist.
HFR:	Abbreviation for “hold for release” material that cannot be used until it is released by the source or at a designated time. Also known as “embargoed”
Kill:	To eliminate from copy; to discard type as useless.
Lead story:	Major story displayed at the top of page one
Log:	Schedule of broadcasting
Make up:	The process of preparing a newspaper for publication by placing news stories and advertisements in appropriate positions in the newspaper
Masthead:	The heading on the editorial page that gives information about the newspaper
Must:	A designation placed on a copy to indicate that it must be run or published
More:	Designation used at the end of a page of copy to indicate there are one or more additional pages
Morgue:	The newspaper library, where published stories photographs and resource material are stored for reference
Not for attribution:	Information that should not be attributed to a specific source but can be ascribed to one who is identified generally, e.g. a reliable source
Off the record:	Information to be held in complete confidence. It is not to be printed under any circumstances or in any form

PM:	Afternoon or evening newspaper
Put to bed:	Closing the forms of an edition
30:	A designation used to mark the end of a story
Sacred cow:	Slang for a subject or story in which the publishers or editors are interested and which must be printed
Schedule:	The news editor's (or city editor's) record of assignments; the copy editor's record of the stories he has edited and headlined
Scoop:	See exclusive
Slug:	The word or words placed on a copy to designate the story
Stet:	Let it stand, restore
SOF:	Sound on Film Recorded simultaneously with the pix
SOT:	Sound on Tape. Recorded simultaneously with picture on tape
Tie back:	The sentence or sentences relating a story to events covered in previous stories
V/O:	Reporter's voice or a picture
VTR:	Video Tape Recording

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

List and explain 10 terms mostly used by journalists.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The reporter is that important individual that helps journalism to fulfill its role in the society. An event cannot be said to be news if it is not reported. As such, there is no way we can talk about journalism in the society without first looking at the reporter, his/her attributes, and his/her functions.

5.0 SUMMARY

The reporter occupies an enviable place when we talk about journalism. He/she is the one that records and reports the events of the day. He/she possesses several qualities which include aptitude in his area of trade, astuteness in the use of the language of communication, and a nose for news. It must however be pointed out that in modern-day

journalism there is no reporter who can report on all areas of interest. Each reporter now has his or her area of specialization. He/she covers that beat regularly and, by doing so, becomes an expert on issues concerning his/her beat.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- I. Name 10 beats to which a reporter can be assigned.
- II. With specific examples from Radio/TV stations of your choice, explain the functions of the press in your society.
- III. A friend of yours who wants to be a reporter has approached you for advice. List 10 qualities of a good reporter to him or her.
- IV. Explain the following terms:
 - i. Air time
 - ii. Background
 - iii. Audio
 - iv. Beat
 - v. Bulletin
 - vi. Caption
 - vii. Continuity
 - viii. Dateline
 - ix. Freelance
 - x. Lead.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2: GATHERING THE NEWS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 The News Room
 - 3.1.2 Calls and Contacts
 - 3.1.3 Tip-off
 - 3.1.4 Other Mass Media
 - 3.1.5 Chasing the Facts
 - 3.1.6 Tools for the Job
 - 3.1.7 Note Taking
 - 3.1.8 Make Enquiries
 - 3.1.9 Dealing with People
 - 3.1.10 Be Fair
 - 3.1.11 Be Thorough
 - 3.1.12 Who to Ask and Where to Look
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Newsgathering is the process or art of collecting raw materials for reporting. It is an important aspect of news reporting. How does a reporter gather news? That is the focus of this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this unit you should be able to

- i. Name different sources of news for the reporters; and
- ii. Demonstrate how to generate ideas for news stories.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

3.1.1 THE NEWSROOM

The heart of newsgathering operations is the newsroom. Here, the news editor (or chief reporter) presides over the news desk, compiling the diary of jobs, briefing reporters, monitoring the day's (or week's) coverage, checking the finished stories, liaising with the photographers, answering queries, signing expenses and briefing the editor and chief sub-editor on the progress of operations.

Technology has changed the face of the newsroom. Reporters still have their desks but in place of the bedlam of typewriters and telephones there is the faint hum of computer terminals, with their near-silent keyboards, and the twinkle of telephone console lights. Instead of piled-up paper, news stories scroll across Visual Display Unit (VDU) screens as reporters bend over their terminals.

It is a change more apparent than real. Apart from the shift to on-screen writing, the reporter's role has not altered less than any other in the computerized newspaper industry. Newsgathering and news writing remain, as they always were, the heart of a newspaper's *raison d'être*.

The news editor, who has invariably been a senior reporter, briefs reporters in varying details on the requirements and expected length of stories to be covered. Many of the stories will be diary jobs - that is, jobs entered in advance in the newsroom diary. Under this heading come courts, councils, committees, tribunals, inquests, political speeches, weddings, meetings, arts events, sporting fixtures and opening ceremonies. Although the form of an event is known in advance, what actually happens or is said or done on the day makes the news.

There are also the unexpected events - deaths, accidents, fires, robberies, strikes, weather stories, crashes, sinking, and occasionally the odd fight or elopement. A third category of news jobs could be put together from tip-offs, i.e. information reaching the office, or a reporter could elicit potential news from contacts. Such stories might involve, or be about, a variety of human situations and achievements, tales of heroism or of unfair or shady dealing. Tip-offs often provide the newspaper with more spectacular and exclusive stories.

Some materials for a newspaper story - which are still referred to as *copy* - can be gathered via the telephone, and a good deal of checking and preparation can be done in the news room or the office library, where cuttings of stories are filed and reference books kept. For most reporters, however, work means being out of the office. In fact, being where the news is happening.

The news editor will expect check calls to be made by reporters from the job so that progress can be noted and briefings updated, as well as and also that copy deadlines are met.

Reporters, even new ones, quickly become aware of these routines. They will learn from bitter experience that, no matter how well they have written a story, if it misses the edition they are in trouble. They will learn also that there is not "just one deadline, but a deadline for each edition of the paper, and in some cases, special deadlines for particular pages".

STUDY ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Visit a newspaper house in your community and find out the following:

- i. How many full time reporters are there?
- ii. Sources of news for the organization.
- iii. Important beats covered by reporters in the organization.

3.1.2 CALLS AND CONTACTS

News can be gathered either through personal visits or by telephone, on known or likely news sources; for example, the police, fire officers, hospitals, council officials, MPs, undertakers and secretaries of organizations. Parliamentary journalists check what questions have been put down to be answered by ministers or attend press briefings.

Whatever your newspaper, make your network of calls as wide as time allows. Apart from your attending court sessions and council and public meetings, this might be your only contact with some important sources of original news. Since many calls may not receive favourable responses, there is a limit to the time worth spending on some of them. Such calls should nevertheless be made courteously, whether on the phone or personally.

Calls to religious ministers and secretaries of organizations often turn up more information about what is going to happen than what has happened. Make a note of these pieces of information.

Beyond routine calls, you need contacts. Make a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of your regular contacts.

3.1.3 TIP-OFF

Tip-offs can be a source of big stories that can make the front page of the next edition of your newspaper. Never shun the person who approaches you, even if you are busy and get a message that someone is at the reception wanting to see you.

3.1.4 OTHER MASS MEDIA

One source of news ideas other than diary jobs can be the news programmes of radio and television – often in the form of a passing mention of something that is going to vitally affect your area. You should read your own newspaper, as well, to know what topics are of current interest, and to find ideas for more news.

Also, remember to glance through the advertisement section, as it could be a source of news. If you get news from advertisements, check to ensure that they have not already been reported.

Besides your own paper, take time to glance at any papers you can lay hands on. Here's what you should be looking for:

1. Ideas for stories or future diary dates.
2. Local stories reported elsewhere that your paper has missed and need or require follow-up.
3. Ideas for pictures.
4. National news that may have local echoes - i.e. expeditions that may involve local people, marketing news in city and business columns that could affect local trade.
5. National sports items with local connections.

Other things to look for: letters to the editor, diary columns, show business items, news in brief, sporting briefs, job advertisements, wills, obituaries, academics, church and other appointments, news of industrial orders and technological developments.

Almost every pamphlet and piece of paper that comes into the office is worth a glance.

3.1.5 CHASING THE FACTS

When given an assignment by your news editor or chief reporter, it is up to you to produce the story. But remember that however accurate, fair and well written your account may be, its success will hinge on your perseverance in getting the facts. If you

are unsure of your briefing, ask questions before you leave the office. Be sure you know what is expected of you. Give yourself time to check reference books. Above all, check the library for any filed cuttings that relate to your assignment. Making use of the cuttings files should be second nature to a reporter. They can show if your story really is new, and can fill you in with previous references to the subject or to those involved. Press clippings as they are usually called are a good source for back-grounding your stories.

Nothing is more embarrassing than for a sub-editor to have to go back to the reporter and say: 'This is all old. It's been written about before. Haven't you read the cuttings?'

At the same time, do not spend too much time on the preliminaries. The informant you need to see may have gone for the day. Remember also the time it will take you to get from A to B. You might have three locations to visit; if you have a set time to meet someone, arrive a few minutes early rather than be late.

3.1.6 TOOLS FOR THE JOB

Don't forget your notebook - and mark the dates and reference it so you can refer to your notes three months after to check if someone queries your report. Your knowledge of shorthand is important. This may not be the laborious pitman shorthand, but your own self-invented type.

Always dress suitably; reserve your casual clothes for off-duty periods. Jeans, leather jackets and roll-up sweaters are not adequate for most engagements, but these may vary considerably even in the course of a day. People will have more confidence in you and your paper if you are smartly and appropriately dressed.

3.1.7 NOTE-TAKING

You may be attending a meeting, a court hearing or a dinner at which your main task is to watch and listen to what goes on. Check with an official afterwards if there is anything you do not understand. Ask the person for the names of speakers you do not know. Ensure you spell names correctly. Generally, people feel bad when their names are wrongly spelt.

At meetings, keep an ear open for unusual or interesting points of view, or for decisions of interest to your paper. If it is a provincial weekly, it will require at least a few

sentences from each speaker. One long quote does not make up for four or five not quoted at all. Your report should reflect the various points of view.

You may not need long notes to wade through afterwards, but you will need a verbatim report of every important statement you intend to quote. To keep your notes manageable, ignore the preliminaries, the platitudes and the funny stories (unless they are good enough to retell in the gossip column). Try to edit long-winding explanations.

Stay through at events to the end when possible. It is annoying to see an account of an event in a rival paper based on some dramatic incident that occurred five minutes after you left. For courtesy sake, try to explain to the secretary if you have to leave to attend another function or prepare your story in time to meet a deadline.

If a speaker refers to some published body of facts, check the reference afterwards. If a speaker is replying to something someone has said, ensure all speakers are quoted correctly. If a speaker makes an attack on someone not present, give the other person a right to reply. Reports of damaging statements without an opportunity for the other person to reply are a common source of grievance against newspapers.

Watch out for the unexpected. For example, when a person was cleared of a charge at a Newcastle court in the U.K., he was carried away shoulder-high by the crowd. A reporter who assumed the acquittal was the end of the story missed the high point of the story.

3.1.8 MAKE INQUIRIES

If your job is to make inquiries rather than attend a function, the cuttings library should be your first port of call. But do not assume that a cutting from your own newspaper is necessarily accurate. Match it against others - and look for mistakes that are copied from cuttings to stories which have themselves become cuttings.

Examine carefully the information you have. If necessary, talk personally to the persons named.

For example, a council has built a group of houses of an unusual kind. They are centrally cooled, have small courtyards instead of gardens, have a garage each and also a parking space. These spaces are behind the house; a footpath, not a road, runs along the front. You ask why the council decided to build houses of this kind, who designed them, what

are the aims of the design, why the idea of courtyards, and so on

3.1.9 DEALING WITH PEOPLE

Persuade people you interview to let you use their names and addresses. Anonymous quotes from 'a passer-by' carry little conviction. The readers might think that you invented them.

The danger in seeking personal views and statements is that you may cause embarrassment or be considered intrusive. The Code of Conduct of the National Union of Journalists reads: 'In obtaining news or pictures, reporters and press photographers should do nothing that will cause pain or humiliation to innocent, bereaved or otherwise distressed persons.'

Courtesy is the best policy. Explain your person and your mission. Do not ask questions in an aggressive or demanding manner. If your presence is unwelcome, leave. Never go to the house as a bearer of ill or bad news. Allow the police to do their work first. Be patient and sympathetic with people.

If you are dealing with people against whom allegations have been made you may need to be tougher. Point out that it is in their interest to make a comment rather than let a one-sided story go to the public.

You will discover that every person you talk to will shed light on a given situation in a slightly different light. Here you must rely on your judgment of what you have been told to make your account as balanced and accurate as possible. The basic facts of a situation often seem like a nut covered in shell upon shell. The reporter's task is to remove the shells to get at the truth.

Make your interviews in person if you can. People prefer to talk to someone they can see before them, rather than at the other end of a telephone. Besides, going to see your informants helps you to get to know them, which might be useful in the future. It makes it easier to listen and to seize opportunities for further questions on the spot. But do make proper appointments if there is time.

If you cannot get to the person you want to, think of someone else who might be of help.

Try to avoid being put off with promises of answers tomorrow or next week. Also, if you can, avoid confidences in case they get into print and cause embarrassment. If you are given confidential information be sure to honour it.

If people try to persuade you to keep your story out of the paper, tell them you will pass on their request to on the editor. Do not make any promises. Put your questions to them just the same. Do not be fobbed off by being asked to talk to someone else. The other person may be unavailable on the day.

3.1.10 BE FAIR

If your inquiry concerns local government affairs and is controversial, rather than do the routine, get in touch with the chairman of the relevant council committee. For example, the chairman of the education committee would be more useful than the education officer.

Where there are controversial matters, be sure to get on to people on both sides of the argument. If anyone is reluctant to give information, point out how damaging a one-sided report could be. Getting both sides of a story is your safeguard against the inaccuracy of prejudiced informants. One-sided stories can also be damaging and legally dangerous.

Similarly, when you are writing about a report or document containing allegations or criticisms about people, give them an opportunity to make their reply.

3.1.11 BE THOROUGH

You cannot be too thorough. You need to answer all the questions the reader might ask and all the questions you will ask yourself when you write your report. The name, occupation and full address of those from whom you obtained information is essential.

Do not be satisfied merely with recording opinions. Get people to give the facts on which they have based their opinions. For example, in a strike, what the two sides say about each other matters less than the facts of the situation that caused the conflict. You need these facts. It is interesting to see how the hard facts of a dispute can get lost in the midst of heated arguments.

There are other points of detail that may not be necessary but which will add life and

reality to your story: the feel of the place where an event happened, the colour of a suit...Get all the facts you can, when you can.

There is no substitute for facts. You can always prune down; but it is hard to add to facts when you have left the scene and the people have all gone home, and you have not made any notes.

3.1.12 WHOM TO ASK AND WHERE TO LOOK

Here is an alphabetical list of possible informants and useful documents in obtaining and checking information. Don't forget that a local university will have experts on a wide range of subjects. It may publish a list.

Accidents: Local police, Federal Road Safety Corps, ambulance station, hospitals, police press office, doctors, eyewitnesses (but beware of accepting allegations as fact), firms or persons owning vehicles involved, (speak to managers).

Air: Airport managers, operating companies, tour operators, travel companies, aircraft building and leasing firms, Ministry of Aviation.

Architecture: Owners or proposals of buildings, council architects, local architects, civic society, conservation society, Nigerian Society of Engineers.

Army: Public relations officers at divisional headquarters and major camps, press office of the Ministry of Defence, regimental depots (especially for history).

Arts: Librarians, art gallery and museum curators, secretaries of arts/music societies, arts departments at colleges, theatre managers, town or county arts and drama organizers, education officers or directors, festival organizers.

Betting and gaming: Bookmakers, club managers and secretaries, local council (for regulations), Acts of Parliament in public reference library.

Buses: Company managers, traffic commissioners (for licensing matters), local councils, consumer organizations.

Cars: Automobiles Associations and Royal Automobile Clubs, garages and dealers, police.

Children's welfare: Education officers or directors, school medical officers, directors of social services, chairmen of social services committees (for children in care), inspector of the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children, local secretaries or organizer of the National Society for Mentally Handicapped Children (Mencap), local health

authorities.

Churches: Clergy, ministers, bishops and their secretaries or chaplains, superintendents and district chairmen.

Elections: Council press office (size of electorate, number and names of nominated candidates), party agents and local secretariats, regional agents.

Electricity: Electricity-generating companies, power station managers, regional electricity companies, consumer bodies.

Education: Federal and State ministries of education, education parastatals and tertiary institutions.

Exports: Regional press office for the Department of Trade and Industry, export companies, manufacturers' associations.

Farming: Agricultural Development Programmes, Ministry of Agriculture, Farmers' associations

Health: Ministry of Health and health-related parastatals such as NAFDAC

Hospitals: Press officer of hospital trusts, hospital telephones (inquiries concerning casualties admitted), local health authority, community health council.

Houses: Local estate agents, surveyors and (for prices), housing associations, building society bulletins, council housing department, housing manager, chairmen of housing committees, Citizens' Advice Bureau, chief environmental health inspector, the Census (figures on houses without baths), council press office (improvement grants), council architects, engineers and surveyors, local builders, property developers.

Medicine: Doctors, local secretary of the Nigerian Medical Association, local family health services authority (complaints).

Mental health: Director of social services, local health authority, medical superintendent or consultant at psychiatric hospital.

Old people's welfare: Director of social services, secretaries of senior citizens' clubs, clergy, ministers of religion, Age Concerns.

Planning: State or city planning officers, council surveyors and engineers, chairmen of planning committees, secretaries of civic societies and civic trusts, Friends of the Earth.

Railways: Company public relations officers will be willing to help; for a quick answer approach a stationmaster, district manager or workshop manager.

Road transport: Road Transport Associations, Ministry of Transport

Schools: Chief education officers, chairmen of education committees, divisional education officers, school heads, local secretaries of the Nigerian Union of Teachers and National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers.

Scientific matters: heads of departments at universities and colleges of further education.

Shipping: Ship owners and lines, local offices of Shippers Council (employers), local representatives of National Union of Seamen.

Trade unions: Local contacts vital here for reporters – trade union representatives can be hard to find; most sizeable unions have regional offices but there may be only a clerk on duty.

Unemployment figures: Federal Office of Statistics, Ministry of Labour and Productivity

Weather: Meteorological office, geography departments at universities or polytechnics.

Youth employment: Careers officers for town or district, training and Enterprise Council.

Youth organizations: Local youth organizers, state youth organizers, chief education officers or directors of education, local secretaries, Scouts, Guides, Boys' Brigade, etc., secretary of the local youth clubs' association, youth chaplains and other clergymen, secretaries of local standing conference of youth organizations.

4.0 CONCLUSION

As a reporter, you need to know the various sources of news and also try to generate newsworthy ideas. Regular contact with your sources of news is also necessary.

5.0 SUMMARY

There are various sources of news to a reporter. They range from calls and contacts to tip-offs, reading newspapers and visiting institutions that are related to your beat. You however need to be thorough and fair in your search for news.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

You are doing a story on someone who died of food poison. Think, and make a list of relevant places you will visit before writing the story.

7.0 REFERENCE

Harris, Geoffrey and Spark, David (2001): *Practical Newspaper Reporting*: 3rd Edition, Oxford, Focal Press.

UNIT 3: THEORIES OF THE PRESS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 What is a Theory?
 - 3.1.2 Sources of Theory
 - 3.1.3 Types of Theories
 - 3.1.4 Normative Theories
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Mass media, as a social phenomenon, are dynamic. As they evolve in sync with society (or even ahead of society), there is the need to understand their operations and explain their functions. This is where media theories come to play. For a proper analysis of the press in any society, it is essential to understand the theories of the press that operate in that society. To a large extent, the theories of the press determine the mode of operation of the media in each society. This unit focuses on the Normative Theories of the Press.

2.0 OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

- i. Explain what a theory is,
- ii. List sources and types of theory,
- iii. Explain the various theories of the press,
- iv. Relate the theories of the press to what obtains in Nigeria.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

3.1.1 WHAT IS THEORY?

Definitions of theory have varied from one person to the other. Whichever person attempted to define it, one factor is clear: and that is the fact that a theory is a general statement which aims to aid understanding of why something happened or predict that something will happen. For Lewin (1958), a theory is a way of explaining the ordering and occurrence of various events. Kaplan (1964) says it is a way of making sense out of a disturbing situation while Mclean (1972) asserts that it refers to our understanding of the

way things work. McQuail (1983) adds that is a set of ideas of varying status and origin that seeks to explain or interpret some phenomenon.

Schramm (1963) and others look at it from a scientific point of view. Schramm (1963), for instance, says a theory is a “crap detector”, a sieve with which scientific statements are separated from unscientific ones. Severin and Tankard (Jnr) (1982) add a scientific twist to the statements of Mclean (1972) when they state that the ‘ways’ talked about by Mclean must have been tested and verified before they can be deemed acceptable; or at least, they must be testable and verifiable. They then proceed to define a theory as “a set of systematic generalizations based on scientific observation (and) leading to further empirical observation” – in other words, a theory comes from scientific observation (research) and must instigate further observation.

Based on the above, therefore, for a theory to be considered a good one, Folarin (1998) says it must possess the following characteristics:

- a. intellectual rigour, which helps ensure its testability and verifiability;
- b. dynamism, which means that a theory is subject to change;
- c. ‘datedness’, which means it is always a step behind reality as new facts always emerge as the theory is being formulated; and
- d. Economy, which means that a theory accounts for many cases with a few statements.

3.1.2 SOURCES OF THEORY

The main source of theories is what Folarin (1998) describes as the Scientific Method.

Traditionally, the process involves the following steps:

1. **Conceptualization:** The scholar starts with a ‘hunch’, a conceptual definition of the subject of inquiry.
2. **Operationalization:** This involves the translation of the generic statements into specific indicators or variables and the specification of the procedure(s) to be adopted, or as Babbie (1989) puts it, the process that goes on throughout the inquiry until conclusions or generalizations
3. **Observation:** This involves observing the variables that have been specified. Simply put, this is the research stage.

4. **Analysis:** This is the process of extracting meaning from the facts observed
5. **Testing:** This involves testing the hypotheses or answering the research questions, using the result of the analysis
6. **Generalizations:** Our findings usually lead to certain generalizations, regarding the subject of inquiry
7. **Theory:** The generalizations are what give birth to what can be called theories.

It is important to note that these steps may have slight variations but whatever the variations are, the most important thing to note that is scientific research is the root of theory, and the offshoot of theory

3.1.3 TYPES OF THEORY

Traditionally, students as well as some teachers of mass communication are familiar with “the Four Theories of the Press”, thereby echoing the title of the influential book by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1955). The authors made what Kunczik (1988) describes as probably the first attempt to develop systematic, normative views on the ways in which the mass media operate in different types of societies.

However, scholars of mass communication have realized that the so-called Four Theories of the Press belong to the Normative Theory. But there are other general types of theory beside the normative, as observed by McQuail (2000).

Also, there are at the moment, more than four normative theories of the press recognized in the literature (Folarin 1998). Others are the Social-scientific theory, Working theory and Common-sense theory. He notes that these types are more like categories under which related mass communication theories fall. He stated that, even though there was no way to agree on which theories fell under which category, the general idea was to place the various media theories into a context which could aid understanding.

Folarin (1998) lists and explains these types (or rather, categories) of theory to include:

- a. Normative Theory,
- b. Social-scientific Theory,
- c. Working Theory, and
- d. Commonsense Theory.

NORMATIVE THEORIES

The well-known four theories of the press belongs to this category. They seek to locate media structure and performance within the milieu in which they operate. These theories are the Authoritarian, Libertarian (or Free Press), Soviet-Communist, and Social Responsibility theories. Denis McQuail (2000) also draws attention to two other emergent normative theories, namely Democratic-participant Media Theory and Development Media Theory. The following will introduce you to each of these theories:

1. AUTHORITARIAN MEDIA THEORY

The Authoritarian Theory of the Press dates back to the 16th century. As Kunczic (1988) points out, it arose from the state philosophy of absolutism, in which recognition of the truth was entrusted to only a small number of ‘sages’ who exercised leadership in a kind of top-down approach.

Whether the ownership was private or public, authoritarian media existed to service the government in power, and were forbidden to criticize the government or its functionaries. The instruments of authoritarian control of the media are many and varied. They include heavy taxation, repressive legislations and direct or subtle state control of staffing.

The authoritarian theory aptly described the true situation of the 19th century England. Traces of this still exist today in countries where we have the press being controlled by repressive governments.

2. SOVIET-COMMUNIST MEDIA THEORY

Closely related to the authoritarian theory is the Soviet-Communist Media Theory prevalent in the old Soviet Union. According to this theory, the main task of the press is to promote the socialist system and maintain the sovereignty of the working class through the communist party. The media were under direct state control and treated as an arm of government. Outside government, orthodox and loyal party members could only use them.

The theory differs from the Authoritarian Media Theory in that it seeks to use the media to support development and change towards the attainment of the goals of the communist

party, whereas, the Authoritarian Theory seeks to use the media to maintain the status quo. Both theories subject the media to direct state control.

3. LIBERTARIAN THEORY (Free Press Theory)

The Libertarian (or Free Press Theory) believes that an individual should be free to publish what he or she likes and to hold and express opinions freely. The theory flourished most in the earlier half of the 19th century, during which reference to the press as 'The Fourth Estate of the Realm' became common (Folarin, 1998).

Libertarian media practitioners are well known for their philosophy of rationalism and natural rights. They exist to check on government and that requires that they be free from government control.

The theory does not, however, obliterate the laws of defamation, obscenity and invasion of privacy. It believes that human beings including journalists are rational and are able to distinguish between right and wrong. Therefore, censorship is not a requirement.

The First Amendment of the American Constitution, which forbids the Congress from making laws that infringe on freedom of speech or of the Press, is a good example of the Libertarian Theory.

4. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THEORY

Also associated with the western countries particularly Britain and Sweden, is the Social Responsibility Theory of the Press. This theory places emphasis on the moral and social responsibilities of persons who, and institutions which, operate the mass media. Such responsibilities include obligation to provide the public with information and discussion on important social issues and the avoidance of activities that are harmful to public welfare and security of the state. It admits no censorship, but depends solely on the maturity of proprietors, editors and reporters.

The main difference to the Libertarian Theory of the Press lies in the demand for social responsibility which, if need be, can be forced on the press by other institutions should it act contrary to the principles of social responsibility.

As appropriate as these theories were in describing the socio-political environment in

which the media have had to operate through the course of history, recent studies have revealed some of the inadequacies of these theories in explaining the current situation under which the media operate, and to answer for these inadequacies, media theorist, Denis McQuail proposed the following ‘modern’ normative theories:

5. DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPANT THEORY

The main thrust of this theory as enunciated by Denis McQuail lies on the insistence that the existing bureaucracy as well as commercial and professional hegemony in media systems be broken down, so as to guarantee easier media access to all potential users and consumers. In simple terms, the theory proposed that media ownership and by implication, media content should be participatory, that is, involving all that may be or are affected by the news.

It calls for freer access to the mass media for all potential users. In the pursuit of this, the theory advocates for decentralization and localization of mass media structure and control in order to ensure grassroots participation in media activities. It calls for sender and receiver, ‘service’ instead of the ‘command’ mode (Folarin, 1998).

This theory is in consonance with tree-planting/forest management, which this paper regards as a group-anchored, culture-bound practice, in that it favours media pluralism and the establishment of localized rural community media, which can be used for community-based activities.

With specific reference to media effect, in the 50s and 60s, mass media scholars (Schramm, 1964 and Rogers, 1976), development experts and policy makers were intrigued by the seeming ‘direct-effect’ of the media, and by the notion that information constituted the critical resource input and an independent variable in the development process.

It believes that previous media theories have failed to deliver the expected results and therefore calls for grassroots participation in the control of the media.

6. DEVELOPMENT MEDIA THEORY

The Development Theory is the supporting theory for development journalism (or communication, as some scholars may put it), which concentrates on the economic development and nation-building efforts of impoverished societies. In the context of

western dominance in international news gathering and in cable news, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has also framed the Development Theory in cultural pluralist terms as the right to communicate and, most recently, as the defense of global cultural diversity.

This theory seeks to explain the normative behaviour of the press in countries that are classified as the 'Third World' or 'developing countries'. The major tenets of Development Media Theory, as postulated by McQuail are:

- i. Media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with naturally established policy.
- ii. Freedom of the media should be open to economic priorities and development needs of the society.
- iii. Media should give priority in their content to the national culture and language.
- iv. Journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks.
- v. In the interest of development, the state has a right to intervene in, or restrict, media operation.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISES

List the four categories of general social theory recognized by Mc Quail?

Which of the theories (or a combination of them) is operational in Nigeria?

SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC THEORY

This consists of generalizations derived from systematic observation and objective analysis of mass media variables, employing methods associated with empirical research in the social sciences – experimentation, field surveys, content analysis, and so on. Because of their faithfulness to the Scientific Method as discussed earlier in this unit, they are usually very powerful and economical – or they are expected to be so. They are supposed to be testable and verifiable in other environments, employing identical or modified instruments and methods.

However, the rigour involved in arriving at social scientific theories does not mean that they are unchanging laws. Because they are subject to the Scientific Method, it means that they are subject to change as new facts emerge from repeated tests and analysis. Some of the theories that fall under the Social Scientific category include the models of

communication such as:

- a. The Shannon and Weaver Model (1949)
- b. The Lasswell Model (1948)
- c. The Westley-McLean Model, and
- d. The De Fleur Model (1958);

and theories which include:

- a. The Instinctive S-R Theory,
- b. The Post-Instinctive S-R Theory,
- c. The Individual Differences Perspective,
- d. The Social Categories Perspective,
- e. The Social Relations Perspective,
- f. The Two-Step Flow,
- g. Perception Studies
 - a. Selective exposure
 - b. Selective attention
 - c. Selective perception
 - d. Selective retention
- h. The Uses and gratification Model
- i. The Agenda setting Theory
- j. The Cultural Norms Theory
- k. The Knowledge Gaps Theory
- l. The Mainstreaming or Synchronization Theory
- m. The Spiral of Silence Theory

WORKING THEORY

According to Denis McQuail, these groups of theories are called Working Theory because it consists mainly of guidelines, techniques, traditions and conventions that guide the work of media production. As these traditions, conventions, values and criteria endure through time, and especially as they are subjected to observation and analysis by scholars, they begin to take on the nature of a theory but, this time, a working theory.

COMMONSENSE THEORY

McQuail states that this encompasses the knowledge of media that people possess (by virtue of their experiences) as media consumers even though they may not have the scholastic expertise to crystallize these experiences into generalizations or theories. Commonsense theories however are not as 'common'. They involve ideas on how the media work, but this time, from the experiences of media consumers. These experiences are studied and from them, valid generalizations made that are now understood as theories.

Folarin (1998) gives some examples of both these theories to include:

- a. The Gatekeeping Theory
- b. The Socialization Theories
- c. The Environmental Theory
- d. The 'Hot' and 'Cool' Media Theory
- e. The Reflective-projective Theory
- f. The Play Theory
- g. The Hobby Approach, and
- h. The Social Reform Approach

4.0 CONCLUSION

To certain extent, the mass communication theory that operates in any society determines the degree of press freedom in that society. As a journalist, it is important for you to be abreast of the theories of the press so that you can be able to discern that particular theory or theories operating where you are working.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has discussed in detail the Normative Theory. These include the Authoritarian Theory, the Libertarian Theory, the Soviet-Communist Theory and the Social Responsibility Theory. Others are the Democratic-Participant and Development Media Theory and the need for the reporter to be abreast with these theories.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Compare and contrast the Authoritarian and Soviet-Communist Media Theories.
- 2a. Define the Development Media Theory.
- 2b. State two of the basic principles of the theories that you consider the most crucial.

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MODULE TWO: PRINT JOURNALISM

UNIT 1: NEWS AND COMPONENTS OF NEWS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 What is News?
 - 3.1.2 Determinants of News
 - 3.1.3 Components of News
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As a reporter who hopes to live on news writing, your ability to recognize a newsworthy event marks the beginning to your stardom in your career. How do you define news and what are the criteria for identifying a newsworthy event? This unit will take a look at the definition of news and how to recognize a newsworthy event.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Give your own definition of news,
- ii. Identify the traditional criteria for judging the newsworthiness of an event,
- iii. Explain the new trends in deciding the newsworthiness of an event,
- iv. Explain the components of news story, and
- v. Apply these components in writing your news story.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

3.1.1 WHAT IS NEWS?

Suppose you had the task of planning a newspaper and you had before you 10 reports which, began in the following ways:

- 1. The Prime Minister has announced the appointment of a new body to regulate company takeovers.
- 2. Fifteen people have been killed in a battle in Congo.
- 3. Bournemouth used 500 million cubic feet of gas last year.

4. Maureen Johnson, aged 17, was sitting in her bath when she heard a hammering on the door. 'What's up?' She shouted. 'The house is on fire,' came the reply.
5. The chief executive's exit has hit Toad shares.
6. The main opposition party in Lagos State People's Democratic Party (PDP) said yesterday that the Government's new housing policy might not be good for the town.
7. The chairmen of the Finance Committee and a 21-year old shop girl have disappeared from their homes. Both have left a letter to say they have gone together to Biarritz.
8. A 50 year-old home carer will meet the Duke of Edinburgh during his visit to Blank town next week.
9. Three memorable goals enabled Blank Town United to reach the semi final of the FA Cup last night.
10. Five hundred of the world's highest-paid scientists have gathered in Oxford to discuss elementary particles.

How would you assess the news value of these reports? Which would you use and which would you reject?

This is normally an editor or chief sub-editor's task, but a reporter should also be able to recognize what is news for the newspaper; to spot which aspects of an assignment deserve prominence in writing the story; to understand why a particular event is being covered.

What is it that makes an event or a set of facts news and what is it about one news idea that gives it a better rating than another? How do you assess news value?

Let us look again at the stories given above. You will notice, when you start to sort them that a lot depends on the type and readership of the paper you work for. If yours were a weekly, you would reject the Congo story and stress the local football club's success, the chairman's elopement and the home career story. Unless your weekly was very sedate, you would find a prominent position, too for Maureen Johnson's interrupted bath. A proportion of the non-football readers would identify with the Cup success, and many

would go for the human interest in the elopement, the home career and the bath time story.

If you worked on a regional or national quality morning paper, your choice would be different. You would give prominence to the Government's plan to regulate takeover bids. It is an important move. You would get in a paragraph or two about the battle in Congo, or several paragraphs if you were writing for a well-informed readership. If the battle were part of a well-reported crisis you might give it a much bigger show.

A national tabloid might run the elopement story, particularly if it could get a picture of the girl. It might, on a slack day, use a few paragraphs on an inside page for Maureen Johnson's bath, but the home career's story would not rate sufficient interest outside the local area.

A provincial morning or evening paper would use these three reports prominently if they were within its circulation area. If they were not, the elopement story and may be the bath story could be given space on a page of national news.

The Oxford elementary particles debate would probably be given coverage in the more up-market national papers and those circulating in Oxford and perhaps Cambridge. The local government election of Lagos local government report would rate a few paragraphs only in the Lagos paper.

The views of the opposition party would not arouse much enthusiasm among readers unless the story turned out to be more interesting than its opening. The Toad shares story was featured on several City pages. It could intrigue national papers. What on earth are toad shares?

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Ask 10 different people why they read newspapers. From their answers give your own definition of news.

Compare you own definitions with the definition you have in this unit.

ASSESSING NEWS VALUE

What can we learn from this exercise? Two important things:

1. It is fairly easy to define what news is
2. It is less easy to assess its value. Why? Because we are talking about two different things.

All 10 of the stories we have looked at passed as news because it was the first time the information they contained was being put before the reader; they were saying something new. If what any of them was saying was not new, then the story would not have been a news story, for newness is an essential quality of news.

The *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* has a useful definition for news: “Tidings; new information of recent events; new occurrences as a subject of report or talk.”

The term ‘information’ is important because it is the information or knowledge of an event rather than the event itself that news is concerned with. The event might already be known to the reader but not the new information that is being presented. A single event can go on generating news in this way for days and even weeks. A secret marriage can become news years afterwards because new information about it has come to light.

Many writers in trying to define what news is have got bogged down in the qualities that news stories contain. ‘News is people,’ says Harold Evans, former editor of *The Times*. Well, it frequently does involve people, but it can also concern legislation or an archaeological discovery, or all sorts of things.

News should be surprising; it should be dramatic, “it should”, said an American editor, “make people say ‘Gee Whiz!’” “All useful qualities if we can find them – and editors are crying out for such qualities in their papers’ stories – but a story can still be news even if it lacks them.

The crux of the matter is that to merit its place in a newspaper news should not only be news in an absolute sense of being new; it should also be the sort of news that the readers of the paper are likely to want to read – and there is an almost infinite variety of newspapers and readerships. A story’s news value is the value it has to the newspaper

printing it. This is why such variable answers were possible to the question we asked about the 10 examples at the beginning of this Unit (Harris and Spark, 2001).

3.1.2 DETERMINANTS OF NEWS

As a reporter, your news judgement or ability to determine newsworthy events is very essential. There are several factors that determine whether or not information is newsworthy. Using either of these determinants as a benchmark for ascertaining which information to use is relative, but there are general guidelines. An event may make news because of one or a combination of the following:

- a. **IMPACT:** This concerns the question: What effect does it have? News generally has impact if it affects a lot of people, which means that in making a decision as to what to report, generally opt for information that has the potential to affect a lot of people. For instance,
 - a proposed income tax increase has the potential to affect a lot of people, hence this has impact
- b. **TIMELINESS OR IMMEDIACY:** This concerns the question: Is it new? Information generally has timeliness if it happened recently, that is, an event that has just happened is new and probably news. Timeliness or immediacy refers to the currency of the news item. Nothing is as dead as yesterday's newspaper.
- c. **PROMINENCE:** Information possesses the quality of prominence if it involves a well-known person or organization. This refers to the degree of importance of the personality involved in the news. A person may be prominent either because of his name or as a result of his achievements, contributions, or the position he/she occupies in the society (for instance, information about the President of Nigeria will generally be newsworthy). However, an unusual event involving the man-on-the street may make him prominent, e.g. the case of Clifford Orji accused of cannibalism.
- d. **PROXIMITY:** Information has proximity if it involves something that happened somewhere nearby. This refers to nearness to the news source. It is important to

localize your news. Proximity can be geographic or psychological. “10 people killed in Lagos” is more newsworthy than “15 killed in Ghana”. Also, a report on the latest fashion in London will be of interest to a fashion designer despite its distance.

- e. **CONFLICT:** Information has conflict if it involves some kind of disagreement between people. Whether they choose to admit it or not, everybody loves a confrontation. Therefore, if information generally reflects some form of confrontation, it is usually regarded as newsworthy.
 - For instance, good democracy involves more civil conflicts over the nature of public policy, which is why political news is usually in newspapers’ delight because of its conflict-inherent nature
- f. **THE UNUSUAL:** Events that deviate sharply from the expected; that departs considerably from the experience of everyday life make news. Here, we are talking about the bizarre, the strange, and the wondrous.
- g. **CURRENCY:** Occasionally, a situation long simmering will suddenly emerge as the subject of discussion and attention. E.g. the matter of the Niger-Delta
- h. **NECESSITY:** The seven previous categories of newsworthiness involve people, events, and situations that call out for coverage – meetings, speeches, accidents, deaths, games, and the like. The final category is of the journalist’s making; that is the journalist has discovered something that is necessary to disclose. The situation or event, the person or the idea may or may not come under any of the previous seven categories of newsworthiness, or may meet one or more of those values. The essential element is that you, the journalist, consider the situation to be something everyone should know about and usually it is a situation that needs to be revealed or remedied.

While the definition of news varies among media people, there are some elements that are common to all conceptions of news. To be news, an event must be interesting to the

public. Secondly and equally important, it must be new (to the public). Also, it is important to note that it is the telling or the reporting that makes an event a piece of news.

3.1.2 COMPONENTS OF A NEWS STORY

These are also known as rudiments of the news story. These include:

3.1.0 ACCURACY: This is the quality or the state of the writer being precise, or exact, in terms of name-calling and/or data presentation in the news.

Words correctly spelt, the correct middle initial in names and the exact addresses of people in stories. Accuracy begins with the reporter's painstaking attention to every detail when gathering facts and information. Initials, spelling of names, correct addresses, exact quotes, precise number of deaths, should be checked and double-checked with a source or a reference when there is doubt.

3.1.1 ATTRIBUTION: Attribution means crediting the story to a source. All information and statements, except the most obvious, must be attributed to the source of the material. For example, the police reported two people were killed when....

President Olusegun Obasanjo today urged....

However, no attribution is necessary for these assertions:

"March 27 falls on a Monday", "Rain fell yesterday".

These are obvious statements that could be verified. Attribution does not guarantee the truth of the statement rather it places the responsibility of the material with the source.

3.1.2 BALANCE AND FAIRNESS: By balance, we mean that both sides in a controversy must be given their say. In a political campaign, all candidates should be given enough space and time to present their major points. In a debate, each speaker is entitled to reach the reader.

By fairness, we mean that all parties involved in the news are treated without favoritism. Fairness also involved the honest use of words. Words like admit, refuse, complain have varied meanings and should be used with caution.

3.1.3 BREVITY: News writing is the art of knowing what to leave out and condense. The subject-verb-object (S.V.O) structure helps to cut sentences to the bone. Use action verbs, avoid adverbs and adjectives.

3.1.4 CLARITY: Ability to write clear and interesting story is a valuable skill. Tax rates, budgets, etc, must be translated into everyday English. To do this, you need clear thinking. You need to understand the event before writing. Don't hide your ignorance. Clear thinking extends to the writing as well as to the subject matter.

3.1.5 HUMAN INTEREST: Readers like the human angle to a story. The human element catches the reader's interest; it should be given prominence in the story. Reporters must include people, their reactions, their expectations, their concerns in their stories.

3.1.6 IDENTIFICATION: This means identifying the people you are writing about so that readers and listeners can visualize, locate and identify these people. The standard identifying format is **Name; Age; Address; Occupation**. If a story quotes a source as an authority, it is also essential that the source is identified by title or background to give the person the credibility to speak on the subject on which he or she is being quoted.

3.1.7 NEWSPOINT: Every story must have a point, and this point must be made high in the story. The newspoint is also the main theme of the story. It provides the spine of the story.

No reporter should begin to write without knowing what the newspoint is. The newspoint is consciously decided upon by the reporter usually at the scene of the event being covered or while the person is being interviewed.

3.1.8 OBJECTIVITY: Objective journalism attempts to present a complete report that is not coloured by the opinion of the reporter or the requirements of the prevailing government. Objectivity is not only as an impersonal 'balanced' style of newswriting but also as representing the broader claim of journalism as an important third party, the one that speaks for the general interest.

3.1.9 VERIFICATION: When a reporter checks his or her information against some kind of objective source, we say that the material has been verified. Verification is important, as it is recognition of the need for truth. The essence of verifying or confirming material is to assure the reader or listener of the truth of the stories. Accuracy is important, but it is not enough. The fact without the truth is futile; indeed, the fact without the truth is false.

3.1.10 COMPLETENESS: Complete stories are written by reporters who articulate and answer the questions their readers, viewers and listeners will ask, e.g.:

- The temperature reached an all-time high yesterday at noon
- While in college, she set records in 100 and 200 metre races

You would expect:

1. The temperature hit 102 degrees, breaking the record of 98 degree set on April 10, 1999.
2. Her times of 11.20 seconds in the 100 metre dash and 22.03 seconds in the 200 metre race remain standing at the college to this day.

3.1.11 RESPONSIBILITY: Responsibility is not a visible part of a news story. It is an attitude that the reporter carries to the job. It encompasses all the components we have discussed in this unit. Responsibility is the reporter's commitment to the story, to journalism, and to the public.

Responsibility demands of the reporter that the story be accurate, complete, fair and balanced, that it be so clear anyone can understand it. Journalism is a moral enterprise; it is a calling that should be practised with honesty and diligence within the limits of verifiable truth and scant time.

4.0 CONCLUSION

As a reporter, you need to look beyond the traditional criteria for judging the news value of an event. For some events that do not fall under those criteria may be newsworthy and yet not reported.

5.0 SUMMARY

Traditionally, reporters and editors have always looked at the news worthiness of an event from the point of view of audience, consequence, impact, conflict, human interest, novelty, immediacy or Timeliness. However, the new trend in Journalism has shown that some events may still be newsworthy and not fall under the traditional criteria for news.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKET ASSIGNMENT

1. What are the traditional criteria for judging the value of news
2. Check the item with greater news value, all things being equal, in each of the following pairs
 - a.
 1. City Council met from 8pm to 10pm tonight
 2. City Council increases fine for illegal parking by N5000
 - b.
 1. Drugstore robbed of N50, 000
 2. Shoe store robbed, N100 stolen, owner killed
 - c.
 1. Car kills woman hurrying home for Christmas dinner
 2. Car kills woman hurrying to dentist's appointment
 - d.
 1. Fifteen-year old boy criticizes governor's politics
 2. Governor criticizes 15-year old boy's politics
 - e.
 1. Five cases of malaria reported here, no deaths
 2. Five die from malaria in India
 - f.
 1. Two people found starved to death on Dec. 1
 2. Two people found starved to death on Dec. 25
 - g.
 1. Seventy-eight-year-old woman raped
 2. Twenty-eight-year-old woman raped
 - h.
 1. Eight-year-old found dead in collapsed building
 2. Uncle of eight-year-old found dead in collapsed building
 - i.
 1. New progress on cancer treatment
 2. New progress on flu treatment
 - j.
 1. Policewoman sues for sex discrimination
 2. Policeman sues for sex discrimination
3. List two important recent issues in Nigeria that have been given prominence by the press. Explain the reasons for your choice of the issues.
4. Differentiate between attribution and identification

5. Name different ways of identifying the people you are writing about.

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UNIT 2: WRITING FOR NEWSPAPER: THE LEAD

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 Functions of the Lead
 - 3.1.2 Hints on writing the Lead
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The news story consists of two main parts, the lead and the body.

The lead or intro is the beginning of the news story. It is usually the opening, single paragraph. The body is the rest of the story.

Usually, the lead presents the highlights of a story; the body reinforces this information with additional facts and details.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Identify the elements of a lead, and
- ii. Write a good lead

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

Usually news stories are written in the “Inverted Pyramid” style, that is, they begin with the most important pieces of information in the story, followed by additional facts arranged in descending order of importance. This contrasts with the normal style for narrative, which begins with introductory material and builds up to climax. The newspaper story starts so to say with the climax.

THE LEAD

The lead or the intro is the most important paragraph in the story. It can either make the reader want to read the story to the end or turn off at the next available opportunity. This means that the intro must be sharp and interesting, brief but well written enough to ignite interest in the story. In order to achieve this, the following points are worthy of note:

- a. The intro should be direct, uncluttered and unambiguous. Clear out any unwanted clutter such as needless detail, precise titles or attribution. These can come in succeeding paragraphs.
- b. The intro should be self-contained. It should be meaningful on its own and not dependent on the following paragraphs for exposition and explanation.
- c. Never start the intro with a subsidiary clause. This approach slows down the story by delaying the main point and, thus, raising questions in the minds of the readers
- d. Never start the story with numbers in digits. Spell them out instead or find another way of introducing the numbers. A good way of doing this is using ‘About’.
- e. Never start stories with official names of official bodies. Boring!!
- f. Except for effect, only rarely should you start the intro with quotes. Usually knowing who is saying what helps the story win over its readers; try as much as you can to start the story with the ‘who’ or ‘what’.
- g. Avoid the ‘it’ type leads, except for extreme instances where the ‘it’ is the catch of the story.
- h. Do not be obsessed with the rules regarding the length of the lead.

3.1.1 FUNCTIONS OF THE LEAD

- a. To summarize the story,
- b. To provide answers to the questions, **who, what, when, where, why** and **how?**,
- c. To provide quick identification of persons, and events in the news story for the reader, and
- d. To emphasize the most important element in the news story by placing that element in the first paragraph of the story.

3.1.2 HINTS ON WRITING THE LEAD

In writing the lead, you need to:

- a. Discover the most important element of the story;
- b. Decide on what lead element to emphasize among the five Ws and H;
- c. Use a single element if you find out that one element stands out uniquely in the story;
- d. Use the structure of the subject – verb predicate construction, and

- e. Go straight to the point. With the above points in mind, you can now start your lead with any of these elements of a lead: **Who? What? Where? When? Why** and **How?**

WHAT

The collection of tolls on a road in the industrial town of Agbara in Ado–Odo /Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State has triggered off misunderstanding between a firm, Agbara Estates Limited, and motorists.

A mixture of relief and repressed anger was the feeling expressed by Nigerians yesterday at the late suspension of the indefinite strike called by the Labour and Civil Society Coalition (LASCO) to protest fuel price.

(*New Age*, Wed, Nov. 17).

WHO: Person, organization, company and community; e.g President Olusegun Obasanjo has declared the Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF) unconstitutional.

Professor Wole Soyinka yesterday reiterated his call for a Sovereign National Conference to determine the corporate existence of Nigeria.

A **WHO** lead can also be used when a person is not widely known. What is featured in such a case is the person's occupation, gender, age and other distinguishing characteristics e.g. A 10 year old boy who ran into the side of a moving car is responding to treatment at a private hospital in Ikeja.

WHERE: Places sometimes dominate the lead

- i. National Stadium Surulere is the venue for this year's National Day parade.
- ii. Abuja Conference Centre will today host the 2nd West African Children Festival.

WHEN: A deadline, or the time of an event, sometimes presents a newsworthy angle to a story.

By next year, telephone users in Nigeria will smile, as the telephone network in the country would have undergone a dramatic change for the better.

Midnight tonight is the deadline for private car owners in Lagos to obtain their MOT test certificates, the Lagos City Council reminded car owners yesterday.

WHY: Once in a while, the news angle is the why of an event. The shortage of midwives has forced the Blue Cross Hospital, Ogba, to close its maternity ward.

HOW: Somewhat less common are stories centered on the how to an event.

Trapped by the seat of his new car, a young accountant was burnt to death on a highway in Lagos last night.

A backward pass by an Eagles' defender earned the Ethiopian junior team their only goal in yesterday's quarter-final played at Abeokuta.

Note: Deciding which of the Five Ws and H is best suited for a story lead is an exercise that gets easier only with time and experience. It is advisable for a beginner to look for the "WHO" or the "WHAT" angle. The reporter could then check his fact for any other angle that may be interesting or unusual enough to display: the who or the what.

LEAD WRITING STYLES

In addition to emphasizing one or the other of the Five Ws and the H in a story lead, reporters use several styles in structuring their leads. These include:

Direct lead,

Delayed lead,

Summary lead,

Effects lead,

Question lead,

Quote lead, and

Cartridge lead

3.1.3 TYPES OF LEAD

There is no rigidity as to the writing of a news story lead. However, the flexibility should ensure that the lead contains an expression of the story's strongest element. It should be able to answer the question "what is it". There are several ways of writing the lead of a news story, but we will concentrate on some examples of lead writing. Authors differ on opinion as regards types of leads. For Alao (1992) some examples of leads are Summary, Figurative, Oddity, Question, Dialogue, Descriptive, Bullet, and Staccato. Sonaike (1987)

lists the following: Summary, Effects, Contrast, Direct Address, Question, Quote, Cartridge, Double Feature, and Shirt-Tail leads.

In actual fact, writing a good lead involves the right combination of the Five W and H. However, in addition to emphasizing one or the other of the Five Ws and H, reporters use several means of structuring their leads. Some of the above-listed leads will be discussed based on the frequency of their usage:

The summary lead: The summary lead consists of a summary statement that answers the what, who, when and where of an event. With a history dating back to the early days of telegraphy, the summary lead is still being used by newspapers today. Simply put, this lead summarises the whole story and gives details later. It is brief and deals only with the key points of the story.

The figurative lead: This type of lead permits the extensive use of figures of speech or allows the use of words in the figurative sense rather than the literal sense. This lead is most times used in news feature writing

The question lead: The question lead raises a question and answers it. A question lead is commonly used in explanatory or specialized writing such as news feature writing. The question sometimes answers itself if it is a rhetorical question. While the first paragraph poses the question, the second usually explains the question to the reader, listener or viewer.

Quotation/quote lead: A quotation lead usually consists of a striking statement that could make the reader interested in the story. Because the quotation lead is easy to write, the general rule is to use it sparingly. It should be used only where the quotation is quite significant, and in cases where it could add drama to the story. Whenever a quotation lead is used, the explanation of such quotation should be made in the next paragraph.

Descriptive lead: A descriptive lead is commonly used when a news story is describing a scene. It tries to put the reader/listener at the scene of the event in terms of sight, sound,

smell and taste. It is very effective when a news story needs a description to stir up the reader/listener's mood such as the commentary of a football game.

Bullet lead: The bullet lead is almost like a headline. It is usually a short sentence, but if deployed effectively, can be of great effect.

Effect lead: This focuses on the effect or consequences of an event. This lead is effective because few readers can resist being drawn into a story that suggests the impact on them of an event.

Dialogue lead: Dialogue lead is useful as a break from the more routine method of beginning a story and can be very effective in getting the point of the story across. But unlike other types of lead, several paragraphs are used for the dialogue

Contrast lead: The contrast lead utilises interesting contrasts of situations to improve the newsworthiness of events. It employs the antithetic to great effect. The contrast lead grips the reader by combining facts in a manner that generates surprise.

Direct address lead: As the name implies, the direct address lead directs its statement squarely at the reader. With its informal, chatty approach, the direct address lead offers a refreshing alternative to the less personal style of the typical news lead. Its major feature is that it employs the term "you".

Double feature lead: The beginning of a news story may unite two separate ideas into what is called a double-feature lead. Another version of this lead is the shirt-tail lead. Instead of compressing the two ideas into one paragraph, the shirt-tail lead separates the two ideas into two sentences to avoid overcrowding.

However, as a beginner you may not need to worry with writing in any of these styles, as that would come with experience.

Therefore, the most important thing is how to write a good lead starting with any of the Five Ws and H.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Look for the WHO, WHAT, WHY, WHERE and WHEN in newspapers of your choice. Cut the stories and indicate each element of the lead on the cuttings. Submit them for assessment.

4.0 CONCLUSION

As the first paragraph that whets the appetite of your readers, the lead of your story is very important. It must give your readers the most high point of your story and must also be interesting.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has highlighted the importance of the lead, hints on how to write the lead and examples of leads starting with each element of the lead.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Re-write the following leads:

- a. UBN Merchant Bank Limited was established in 1995 when Union Bank of Nigeria Plc acquired controlling interests in Citi-Trust Merchant Bank Limited. The bank is today a key player in the wholesale and investment banking sub-sector. As part of its current strategic re-positioning programme, UBN Merchant Bank Limited has changed its name to Union Merchant Bank Limited. The repositioning which started at the beginning of the year has occasioned changes, not only to the bank's corporate identity, but also to its vision, mission, human resources, processes, information technology and overall strategic direction.
- b. Recently, Ahmadu Bello University Alunmi Association, Lagos State Chapter held its general meeting at the VIP section of the National Arts Theatre, Iganmu, Lagos, at the end of the meeting, a new set of executives were elected to run the affairs of the association for the next two years. These include Mr. Jimmy Atte (Chairman), Mr. Wale Akintade (Secretary-General), Mr. Isuwa Dogo (First Vice-Chairman), Mrs. Bilikidu Umar (Treasurer) and Ms. Damaris Maa'j (Financial Secretary).

- c. The Group Managing Director/Chief Executive Director of Union Bank of Nigeria Plc, Mr. Godwin Ahabue Thompson, has said that the bank would be willing to assist the governments of Edo and Delta States in their development efforts.
- d. There was a fire outbreak yesterday. It broke out at the PENTAGON RESTAURANT, Ikoyi, at 11.35pm. There were an estimated 80 persons eating at the eating at the popular joint at the time. The restaurant's manager, Ms. Maureen Alero, said the patrons left quietly and that none was injured. Firemen put out the conflagration in 25 minutes. The restaurant will re-open for business in a week's time. Damage has estimated at N2.5m.
- e. The Cross River State Command of the Nigeria Custom Service paid a courtesy call on the State Governor, Mr. Donald Duke, last week. The State Controller of Customs Service, Mr. David Ochoma, led a delegation of officers and men of the customs to the governor's office. He said that the Cross River State Command of the Nigeria Custom Service raked in about N490 million as revenue while seized goods worth N160,000 were also recorded as at November last year.

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UNIT 4: THE BODY

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 Transitional devices
 - 3.1.2 Quotations
 - 3.1.3 Other tips for writing the body
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The news story has only two parts, the lead or intro, and the body. The body of a news story is that part that adds more information to the news story. How do you build up the body of your news story? What are the ingredients needed to build up the body? These are the focus of this unit.

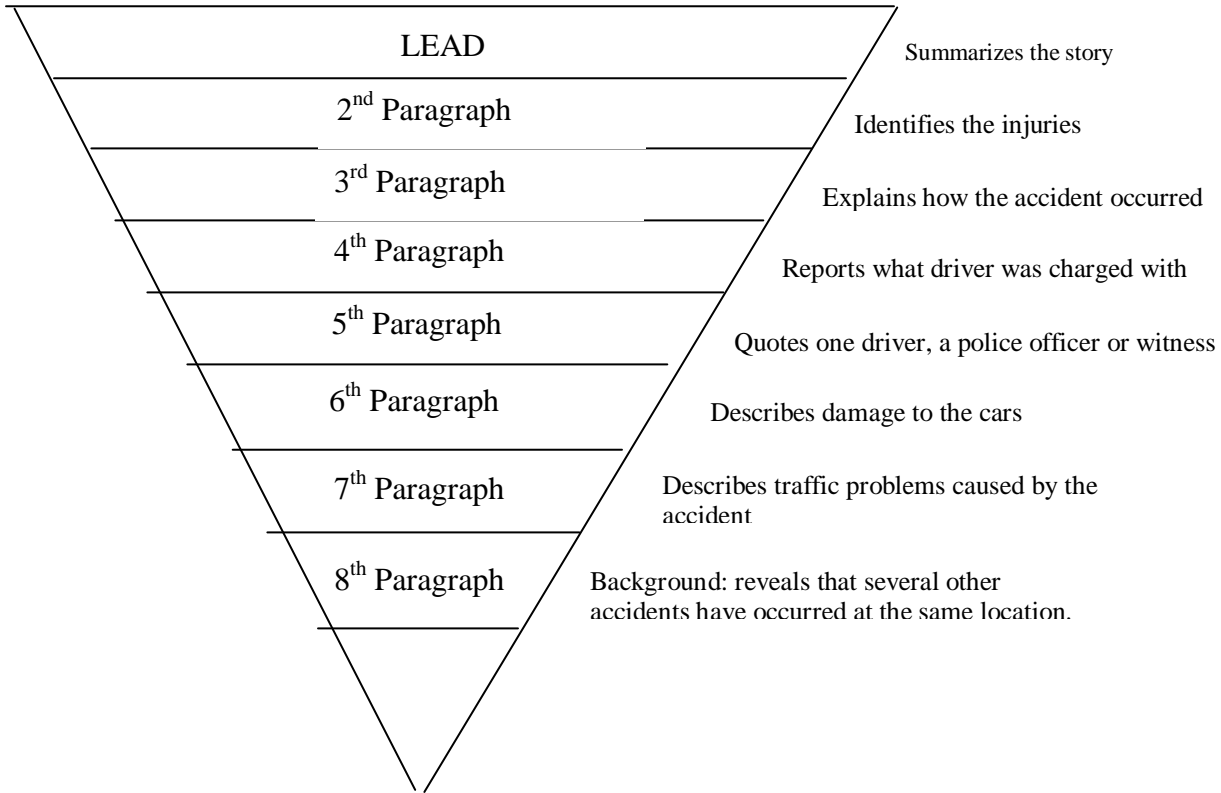
2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Identify the means of amplifying a news story, and
- ii. Properly use transitional devices and quotes in building up a news story.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

The portion of a news story that follows the lead is called the “Body” and it normally presents facts in descending order of importance. Essentially, the body amplifies the story by providing additional information. This could be names, descriptions, quotations, conflicting viewpoints, explanations, background data and so forth. News stories end with their least important details, never with any type of conclusion. e.g. If two cars collide, injuring several peoples, an inverted pyramid story about the accident might contain the following sequence of paragraphs:



3.1.1 TRANSITIONAL DEVICES

Most news stories run into several paragraphs and, may develop several ideas and themes. Transitional words, or phrases, are used to achieve a smooth flow through the different themes. Thus, transitions help stories move in a smooth, logical order from one field to the next.

Transitional devices that emphasize the time element in the different aspects of an event are among the most common. Here are a few: Earlier, Later, Next week, At the same time, Meanwhile, Soon after.

Equally common are transitional words and phrases that highlight the location angle: in the state capital, At their home, On Main Street, At another point nearby.

Some transitional words suggest the picture of an action. Turning to, Suddenly, Grabbing his hand.

Some linkage words emphasize contrasts: However, Conversely, But, Nevertheless, In spite of, Despite, On the other hand.

Other kinds of devices for linking ideas or aspects of an idea include: For example, Therefore, Likewise, In addition to, Namely, Whereas, As a result of, etc.

3.1.2 QUOTATIONS

Reporters get much information by listening to other persons, and they can convey such information to readers in the form of:

(1) Direct, (2) Partial or (3) Indirect quotations.

Indirect quotations do not use a source's words and consequently are not placed inside quotation marks. Instead, reporters use their own words to summarize or "paraphrase" the source's remarks. Partial quotations use key phrases from a source's statement and quote them directly. Direct quotations present the source's exact words and consequently are placed entirely in quotation marks:

INDIRECT QUOTATION: Mrs. Ambrose said journalism students should deal with ideas, not mechanical techniques.

PARTIAL QUOTATION: Mrs. Ambrose criticized the "trade school atmosphere" in journalism schools and said students should study ideas, not mechanical techniques.

DIRECT QUOTATION: Mrs. Ambrose said: "Journalism students should be dealing with ideas of a social, economic and political nature. There's too much of a trade school atmosphere in journalism schools today. One spends too much time on minor technical and mechanical things, like learning how to write headlines".

Reporters use indirect quotations when their sources have failed to state their idea effectively. By using indirect quotations, reporters can rephrase their sources' remarks, stating them more clearly and concisely. Reporters are free to emphasize the sources' most significant remarks and to reword or eliminate remarks that are unclear, irrelevant, wordy, libelous or otherwise unprintable.

Reporters use partial and direct quotations for statements that are important and interesting and that require no rewording. Direct quotations are particularly appropriate when sources say something controversial or state their ideas in an unusual or colourful manner. Quotations bring the sources alive, reporting their opinions in their own words,

with all their original flavour, emotion, colour and drama. Quotations give a sense that readers have talked directly with the sources.

3.1.3 Other Tips for Writing the Body

In writing for newspapers, it is apt to note that newspapers are not literature, thus writing for newspapers is different from writing a novel or a short story. There are, however, certain points of similarity: both require writing that is clear, easy to read, uses fresh language, is stimulating and entertaining. To achieve this, different authors recommend different steps. It is however important to note that these steps are not sacrosanct. A good reporter/writer should be able to carve out his/her personal style and thus, make his/her job easier. The steps below are the basics:

Planning: The most important part of writing is what happens inside your head between finishing the research and putting the first word down. This implies that before the story is ‘birthed’ in words, an outline must exist in your head; in other words, you must have a plan on what you will write and how, what part of the information will form part of your story and why, what style you will present the information in, etc. You must sort this part out in your mind before you begin to write. It is also helpful to jot down the outline in your mind so you do not forget but always note that good writing is a blend of the planned and the spontaneous – don’t hesitate to make a few changes to the outline if the need arises.

Needless to say, planning is the all-important step. If done properly, your news story, feature, opinion article, etc will come off easier and more suited to the purpose for which it was written. More so, planning helps you achieve these important features of a good story fit for publication:

Clarity: Each story must be clear in thought, organization, language and expression. This is important in newspaper writing because newspapers, more often than not, are read in uncomfortable environments; environments that are distracting and noisy, and the readers often have other demands on their time, hence they watch out for key points to guide them through the story. If they don’t find them, they abandon the story. To achieve clarity, the following are important to note:

- a. Be clear in your mind before putting pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard, as the case is these days). It is easier if you have satisfied your mind as regards the direction of the story before you start writing.
- b. Be careful to include each stage in a narrative, each event in a sequence and each step in an argument. This makes it easier for progression in thought, and, finally, clarity of expression.
- c. Don't assume readers have special or prior knowledge. Avoid terms that they are not familiar with; try to provide as much information on the subject as possible without clutter. Avoid jargon.
- d. Ensure your sentences are totally clear. Try to make sentences as free from ambiguity as possible.
- e. Avoid tricky writing and tricky language. Do not attempt to impress the readers with pompous writing. Use words that are simple and easy to understand. However, in the bid to be simple, don't be too simple. It insults readers and leaves your article in bad taste.

Fresh language: The object of a news story is to provide information, details, observations, insights, and the like that were up till the point of publication, unknown. It is therefore an unforgivable waste if this 'fresh' information is packaged in language that is stale, tired, worn-out and over-used. Writing that is guilty of this often leaves readers feeling that the newest materials has an old, familiar ring to it. To achieve freshness in your writing, please note the following:

- a. Regard each story as an individual, new thing. Do not attempt to pigeon-hole a new story into already existing, "he said, she said" categories. Try as much as possible to write the story as if it is happening for the first time. This mentality can be helpful to achieving freshness.
- b. Avoid all clichés. This, no doubt, requires a good deal of self-effort because clichés come easy. Identify all forms of clichés and remove them from your story and replace them with fresh substitutes.
- c. Avoid all automatic words. This is common with the use of adjectives in stories. For instance, describing a murder is rather automatic, and consequently, the impact that the word would have had on the story.

- d. Be careful with puns. Play on/with words has a way of making your story interesting, but they also have their downside. Usually, puns lose the interest effect they introduce into stories when they have been over-used and have become obvious.
- e. Work hard at creating new similes, metaphors and phrases. This might be difficult to achieve given the convention of newspaper writing, coupled with the knack of editors to keep things simple but it is worth attempting. Think hard about the real nature of what it is that you are trying to convey and find a phrase that relays that thought perfectly, or near-perfectly at worst.
- f. Beware of the fashionable word or phrase. Or, simple, try as much as possible to avoid the 'in vogue' words. Use your own phrases and create your own 'vogue' vocabulary.

Honesty: There are situations in the journalistic process that compromise truth. Deadline pressures sometimes impede the information collation and presentation process and, to add to that, the 'need' to write a strong news story sometimes results in reporters writing stories with fact that are either far from the truth or a coloration of the truth. This must be avoided if the maxim 'news is sacrosanct' is to be strictly adhered to. Achieving honesty is sometimes difficult, but the following points could help:

- a. Write only what you know to be true. Expunge assumptions, suppositions, hearsay, or opinions from your story.
- b. All stories should be a conscious effort to be balanced and true to both the detail and the spirit of the material. Ensure that all sides to the story are fairly and accurately represented.
- c. Do not hype. Try not to make the story sound any better than it actually is. Hying sometimes results in placing a value judgment. It is better to let the facts speak for themselves. It is also good to avoid hyping because it sometimes bears no relation to the language real people use.
- d. Beware of using simplistic, black-and-white headline language in stories.

Precision: Journalism is an enemy of imprecision. Stories should be written to answer questions in the readers' minds, not raise doubts. The best way to achieve precision is to

answer correctly the Five Ws and H: what, who, where, when, why, and how? Other points to note include:

- a. In all cases, be particular. Use of abstraction only helps to confuse readers. So, instead be specific with words, names, places, details, etc.
- b. Use known quantities rather than unknown ones.
- c. Be careful with using 'up to' and 'more than'.
- d. Do not use vague adjectives.
- e. Avoid euphemisms.

Suitability: This involves ensuring that there is a match between the style, pace and tone of the story and its subject. It would kill the action of a story if when fast-paced, it is reported in passive voice. A few ways to ensure suitability in your news report include the following:

- a. Stories of action and movement should be written with real pace. Use active verbs, direct sentences and sparse adjectives.
- b. If the events in the story are stark and horrific, resist the temptation to over-write. Present the information, no matter how important or extraordinary it may seem, and let them own the tag of 'extraordinary' or 'important' on their own.
- c. If the story deals with strong emotions, understate rather than overstate. This does not mean you should leave anything out, but avoid language that strains for effect.
- d. Beware of humour.

Efficiency: To put it simply, this means that as much as possible, as few words should be used to tell the story. The following rules can help achieve efficiency in news writing:

- a. Make every phrase and sentence count. They must either convey fresh information or help the cause of the story. If they don't, then they should have no place in the story.
- b. Avoid wasteful constructions.
- c. Write without looking at your notes. First ensure that the story is clear in your head first before writing, and write from there. You can check your notes for corrections, etc.
- d. Be on the lookout for all obvious and silly remarks and remove them.

- e. Use the active, not passive voice.
- f. Use bullets and lists to itemize points in a story.
- g. Avoid meaningless modifiers.
- h. Avoid tautology.
- i. Do not use quotes to restate points already made in reported speech.
- j. Get to know the words that can be used instead of long phrases.

Finally, you have to be your fiercest critic. It is essential that you read back what you have written, looking for flaws and correcting them. In making revisions, answering the following questions can help:

- What am I trying to say?
- What words express it?
- What image or idiom will make it clearer?
- Is the image fresh enough to have an effect?
- Could I put it more simply?

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is not enough for you to write a good lead. You need to know how to write the body of the story. And to achieve this, your knowledge of transitional devices, quotations is essential.

5.0 SUMMARY

After writing your lead, details of the news story must be given in the body. This is done through transitional devices and quotations. The quotations can be direct, indirect or partial. What is important is that they are essential elements needed to expatiate the lead of your story.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Look at the *Guardian* and *ThisDay* newspapers of today, examine the stories at the back page of each of the newspapers. Underline the transitional devices used in the lead stories.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Name at least five transitional devices that could be used to join one sentence to another.
2. Write a good news story from the following facts:
 - a. A book entitled, “Courage and Conviction: New Nigeria, the first 20 years”, was launched at Arewa House, Kaduna yesterday.
 - b. The occasion witnessed prominent Nigerians including two PDP stalwarts, Chief S. B. Awoniyi and former Vice-President Alex Ekwueme.
 - c. The party stalwarts used the occasion to assess President Obasanjo’s administration.
 - d. Among those who were physically present were the Etsu Nupe, Alhaji Sauda Ndayaku, the Emir of Suleja, Alhaji Muhammed Amral, and the Dan-Iya Adamawa, Alhaji Adamu Bello, who also represented the Vice President, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. Awoniyi, who was recently reinstated as a member of the party’s Board of Trustees, said that Obasanjo had ‘shamefully’ wasted two years – all in the name of ‘learning process’. He called on the press to be more vigilant than ever.
 - e. Dr. Ekwueme said the administration was okay. He said that after the prolonged military rule, it was necessary that we all have to learn ropes. It is therefore too early to criticize the present civilian government. He urges the media to contribute their own quota towards achieving national integration by reporting accurately and objectively events as they unfold.

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UNIT 5: COVERING SPEECHES, MEETINGS AND NEWS CONFERENCE

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Speeches
 - 3.1.1 Locate the Theme
 - 3.2 Meetings
 - 3.3 News Conferences
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As a reporter, even in regular place of assignment, meetings, speeches, conferences may be major sources of news. Therefore, this unit provides you the essential points you need to know in covering meetings, speeches, conferences, and symposia.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Write publishable news from meetings, and
- ii. Cover conferences.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 SPEECHES

Speeches are not the most exciting stories a reporter covers, but they are major part of your day-to-day work as a journalist. In writing a story from a speech, you need to find out the following: what was said, who spoke, name and identification, the setting or circumstances of the speech and any unusual occurrence.

Any of these can provide the lead and the theme of the story, although most speech stories emphasize what was said.

3.1.1 LOCATE THE THEME

The most difficult task you face on speech is finding the theme. A tip-off to the theme may be the title of the speech. Often, the speaker may pound the podium, raise their voice

or suddenly slowing down the delivery to drive home their major points. Sometimes, the main point is in the summary at the end.

When you are not sure of the theme, try to interview the speaker after the talk. However, when combining material from a speech and an interview, you should tell the reader or listener where the information came from. Otherwise, those who attended the speech or heard it on radio or television will find the story puzzling.

Occasionally, you will find a lead in what the speaker considers the theme. Based on what you have been taught in news judgment, you should lead with what you consider the more important element but summarize high in the story what the speaker considers the major theme.

A speech consists of spoken words. So must the story. Unless there is an incident during the talk that would make the circumstances and the setting the most newsworthy item, your story must emphasize what was said with ample quotations.

Other important points to note when writing a story from a speech is to always commit the following to mind:

1. A speaker usually makes a point and follows it examples and supporting materials,
2. Then, he/she moves on to another point, followed by illustrative materials and so on.
3. In doing so, the speaker moves toward a climax, which is usually at or near the end of the speech. The climax, however, is usually what can make the headline or lead in the story, so watch out for it. This however is not hard-and-fast. The key point may be expressed within the speech, at the beginning or at the end.
4. Never report a speech chronologically, like the minutes of a meeting.
5. Avoid this sort of boring writing:
 1. “The speaker began by saying...”
 2. “Then she told the audience...”
 3. “Next, he pointed out...”
6. Either include in the lead, or immediately following the lead, the speaker’s identification in full (name, place of residence or employment, position, and so on). This identification should be as brief as clarity permits, yet as complete as

- possible. Giving the name or identity of the speaker, especially when more than one speaker is named in the story, is critical. Dropping in the name or identity is often enough to remind readers or viewers who are saying what and that statements being reported are not the reporter's opinion but are statements of the speaker being quoted. Be careful however not to over-attribute. You need not attribute everything if the attribution is obvious from the preceding paragraphs
7. Present the story with fairness. It may be tempting to praise the speaker, especially if you agree with the person. Avoid it. Do not use adjectives that hint at how you feel (such as value-laden words like 'well-known' or 'prominent' or 'beautiful'). Just tell the story about what was said and let your audience draw its own conclusions
 8. Quote in accurate exact words. A quotation is just that, a statement of the speaker's exact words.

Things to guard against when writing from a speech are:

- a. Watch spelling of names. Names of speakers and guests sometimes have unusual spellings, so always ask for correct spellings. Do not assume. If you are not sure about the names, ask about the guest list or ask around.
- b. Watch use of trade names of firms, products, and other special usages.
- c. Edit your own story. Catch the mistakes before someone else does. You are your own editor since you know what you mean.
- d. Write an appealing lead. Get the audience interested. However, be careful about leads that do not even summarize the main points of the speaker/speech.
- e. Pay attention to organization. Generally, it is best to organize the story in an inverted pyramid fashion.
- f. Get the facts straight. Do not confuse the audience with contradiction. Check everything. Do not assume.
- g. Watch vagueness. Avoid using words that have unclear meanings in the context used. Say exactly what you mean.
- h. Write what is necessary. Watch stories that are particularly short. If a story is short, ask yourself if you have included sufficient explanation and detail to tell the

story correctly. If it is a particularly long story, ask yourself if you have been wordy or redundant.

- i. Support all generalizations. Present direct quotations, sound bites, actualities, and paraphrases about the points the speaker made with direct quotations. If you said the speaker was hostile towards the audience, quote him/her saying something to indicate that. It helps to drive home your point.
- j. Ask the speaker questions. If something said in the speech was muddled to you, then find the speaker afterward to ask. If you cannot find the speaker, ask someone else in an authoritative position to explain things to you.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What are the major points you should bear in mind when writing story from a speech?

3.2 MEETINGS

Meetings provide newspapers and broadcast stations with enormous amounts. Public bodies such as school boards, city councils, legislatures, directors of corporations, shareholders and private groups conduct much of their business at open meetings.

To get good stories from meetings, you need to check the clips to get past stories on subjects the meeting will consider, obtain the agenda ahead of time, and write out questions for interviews. At the meeting, look for the offbeat and unusual and think about the people affected by a decision or policy. Let the following points guide you in writing the story: major business transacted; voters decisions; adoption of policies; purpose, time and location of the meeting; items on agenda; length of session; quotes from witnesses and experts; unusual departures from agenda; agenda for next session.

To be able to write a complete meeting story, Garrison (1990) points some time-tested tips to make things easier:

1. Get oriented. When you get the assignment, find out what you can about the organization that has called the meeting.
2. Get to the point. What is the most important part of the meeting that will be important to the audience?

3. Do your homework. Do some research in advance. Get the agenda for the meeting.
4. Get briefed. Some organizations will hold media briefing sessions in advance of a major meeting. Attend this if you can. At least, make some calls in advance to key individuals to get an idea of what may occur.
5. Arrive early. After you know what to expect, go to the meeting with time to spare.
6. Look around. Check for telephones, lights, sounds, etc.
7. Find official sources. The members of the organization holding the meeting are your key sources. Be keen to catch for 'a few words' either before, during or after the meeting.
8. Find the real sources. Not every member of the organization is competent enough to give you information, so find members of the organization or people outside the organization that would provide information on the subject of the meeting.
9. Take good notes. Do not rely on a tape. Make sure your notebook is handy and write down as much as possible.
10. Listen for quotations and sound bites. A meeting story can be very dull, so try to liven it up with quotations and sound bites from debates and discussions during the meeting among the key players. Quotations will help your story get specific when you might be writing mostly generalizations about what occurred.
11. Focus on action. In the end, ensure that your story focuses on the action of the meeting.
12. Decide how to write it. In writing your story, most meetings are best written in a summary style with the inverted pyramid structure.
13. Roundup approaches work.
14. Don't forget contact numbers. You must try to get numbers of key contacts whom you can call and get additional information.

3.3 NEWS (PRESS) CONFERENCE

It permits an individual, group or organization to reach many reporters at one time with an announcement that will receive more attention than a press release because of the

photo possibilities and the staging, and it is an efficient and economical way for the media to obtain newsworthy material. Usually the news conference has a prescribed form. A prepared statement is read or distributed to the reporters. Then, reporters ask questions.

Story from news conference must include major points of speaker, name and identification of speaker, purpose, time and location, background and major point in statement as well as major points in question and answer period.

There are some basic steps to covering the press (news) conference:

- a. Get there in time. It might not start on time – some don't – but you can't afford to risk missing an opening statement or announcement or get to meet the special guests before the event starts. There may be a shortage of press kits and handouts if the media turnout is large. You will learn from experience which organizations will start on time and which ones will not.
- b. Contact the right person once you get there. Find the organizer or press relations contact. If you do not know who is running things, ask.
- c. Allow time to set up. If you are working in radio or television, arrive in time to set up your equipment.
- d. Listen for the opening statement. A statement usually opens the press conference. It will probably contain the key news of the day. The person holding the conference may be introduced by an aide or press representative.
- e. Be ready to ask questions. When the formal statements are finished, you can ask questions for more information not covered in the statements. There may be a time limit on questioning and, depending on the number of reporters present; you may need to be selective in question asking.
- f. Be aggressive in questioning. You may not be called on if you are not aggressive. If there are not many reporters present, wait your turn and you will get a chance. If it is crowded, you must attract attention – by standing, waving your hand, or even shouting.
- g. Wrap ups are important. Fill in the information gaps by asking questions at the end (either in the group or alone with the source if given the opportunity). You may find press aides to help you fill in holes if the primary source is not available.

- h. Leave yourself an out. In the event you must re-contact persons involved in calling the press conference, take down a phone number where you can call later in the day.
- i. Write the story. Usually press conference stories are written in one of three ways. The inverted pyramid remains most popular. Chronological approaches are sometimes useful, but be careful not to bury key news if you use this plan. A third approach would integrate information from the press conference with additional information from other sources in roundup style organization.
- j. Remember to exercise your news judgment. Keep in mind that you might not write anything from a press conference. Some are only for background purposes and some are purely emotional.

3.4 PANEL DISCUSSIONS

In symposia and panel discussions, the presence of several speakers can pose a problem. But experienced reporters usually make their way through the tide of talk by emphasizing a thematic approach. They find a basic theme from which they write their stories. For example: Four members of the local bar agreed that probation is no longer a useful means of coping with criminal offenders. Although the speakers disagreed on most matters at the symposium on “How to handle crime,” they did agree... When there is disagreement, it can be the theme of the story as long as it is newsworthy. After the theme is developed for a few paragraphs, each speaker is given his/her say. Obviously, the more newsworthy statements come first. When one speaker says something clearly more interesting and significant than what the others are discussing, the newsworthy statement is the lead rather than the general theme.

3.5 CONVENTIONS

Conventions have always provided newspapers and broadcast media with a wide variety of stories and increasingly, they are becoming the focal point for major news breaks. Planners often schedule a particularly newsworthy speaker to attract the attention of news people as well as delegates. Speakers frequently use the convention platform to announce

new scientific discoveries, plans for world peace, or formation of a new political party or pressure group, or even new policy directions of government.

Handling the stories generated by a large convention can be a major undertaking for any reporter. A big-scale convention is in reality a series of meetings that offer the reporter a wide variety of features and frequently requires the writing of multiple new stories.

Many news organizations make special effort to ‘cover all angles’ of a large convention, frequently devoting more space to it than that warranted and this can be attributed to reasons including the fact that the delegates at the convention/seminar are potential buyers of the paper, and also that newspapers usually give coverage to such matters as a matter of civic spirit.

Seminars are like conventions, only they are shorter in duration and more focused. They usually involve one speaker and deal with one or two themes. Successful convention and seminar stories have this sort of focus, but at the same time, they go beyond the special interests of the participants of the convention or seminar. Generally, these stories follow an outline that is applicable to individual programmes with more than one speaker and to conventions and seminars, with more than one speaker in a given time frame.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In covering speeches, news conferences and panel discussions, you have to find out the subject, which can be indicated by the title. Determine the purpose and locate the main idea, gather the evidence which you will use to prove the point. This provides the body of the story. Remember that these stories are based on spoken words, therefore, your story which includes plenty of quotations.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt about the essential tips in covering speeches, meetings, press conferences, and symposia. These include theme, purpose, background, the major point in statements, and the points of departure.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Write a news story from the press release below:

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Tolu Odugbemi, *OON, NNOM, FAS*, has once again made it clear that the government alone cannot fund tertiary education in the country. He, therefore, urged universities in Nigeria to look inward and advance new strategies to generate funds. He stated this at a special meeting with Provosts and Deans (new and outgoing) of the University held on Thursday, August 13, 2009, in the Conference Room of the Vice-Chancellor's Office.

According to him, "These are difficult times that require ingenuity; the government alone cannot fund tertiary education. It is crucial to advance new strategies to look inwards in generating funds. No internationally acclaimed varsity relies on government for financial support and the case of UNILAG should not be different. For quite some time now, we have been pursuing ways of improving our internally generated funds and these require the commitment and support of every member of the University community."

He said all hands must be on deck to ensure University of Lagos remains in the forefront of providing new and dynamic strategies that would reposition the country for growth and development. These strategies, he added, must be vibrant and have direct and positive impact on Nigerians.

The Vice-Chancellor emphasized the need for the 2008/2009 session to be concluded in line with the academic timetable, so that the hard-earned integrity of the university is not compromised. He explained that this would ensure that all staff scheduled for exchange and research activities in foreign universities could do so while the students can also conclude their programmes and move on with their lives.

He commended the outgoing Deans for their unwavering support for his administration. He, however, urged them not to relent in their efforts but offer suggestions that would shore-up the University system. He identified several value-driven leadership points, which he advised the new Deans to embrace.

According to him, anybody in the position of leadership must be accountable, honest, open and transparent, courageous, strong, stable, focused and selfless. Such an individual

must have integrity, self-discipline, high sense of responsibility and be ready to speak and act for what is right even against the odds.

The Vice-Chancellor emphasized that the university would follow the directive of the National Universities Commission of no work, no pay.

7.0 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Akinfeleye, Ralph, (1987): *Essentials of Modern African Journalism: A Premier*
(2nd Edition), Lagos, Miral Printing Press.

John, Cardownie (1987): *News Agency Journalism*, Germany: Friedrich Ebert-Striftung.

MODULE THREE: BROADCAST JOURNALISM

UNIT 1: BROADCAST STYLE BOOK

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 Cliché
 - 3.1.2 Journalese
 - 3.1.3 Hyperbole
 - 3.1.4 Adjective
 - 3.1.5 Quotation
 - 3.1.6 Attribution
 - 3.1.7 Contentious Statement
 - 3.1.8 Immediacy
 - 3.1.9 Active
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Broadcast copy differs considerably from newspaper copy. Some of the rules for copy preparation also differ from station to station. The point remains that there are some general guidelines applicable to all broadcast news writing. This unit therefore seeks to intimate you with the guidelines for writing a broadcast story.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit you should be:

- i. Able to identify the guidelines for writing broadcast news.
- ii. Able to use the guidelines in your news stories.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

BROADCAST STYLE BOOK

Good Style:

*'If I had a donkey that wouldn't go,
do you think I'd wallop him? Oh no
I'd give him some corn and cry out whoa,
Gee up, Neddy'*

Bad Style:

*'If I had an ass that refused: to proceed,
Do you suppose that I should castigate him?
No indeed.
I should present him with some cereals and
observe proceed;
Continue, Edward: – HAROLD EVANS**

Most broadcast organizations have a view about good style, and though they differ in detail, most would agree that good style is usually whatever makes good sense.

George Orwell wrote *Politics and the English Language* in 1946, but his advice still holds true today;

- Never use a metaphor, simile or other figures of speech, which you are used to seeing in print.
- Never use a long word where a short one will do.
- If it is possible to cut out a word, always cut it out.
- Never use the passive where you can use the active.
- Never use a foreign phrase, scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
- Break any of the rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

3.1.1 CLICHÉ

Eric Partridge, in his *Dictionary of Clichés*, defines a cliché as a phrase so hackneyed as to be knock-kneed and spavined. They not only fail to enliven dull copy, clichés make even the most significant item sound trite. If we accuse council tax payers of taking up cudgels against City Hall whenever they write a letter of complaint, what are we to say the day owner-occupiers really do drive nails through wooden clubs and set about their

elected representatives? What will be left to say when war is declared? Hyperbole and clichés are for hacks. This, then, is a dictionary for hacks:

absolute farce,	got the message,	painted grim picture,
all-out-effort,	heated debate,	picking up piece,
anybody's guess,	high ranking,	pool of blood,
at this point in time,	how does it feel?,	probe,
beat a hasty retreat,	in due course,	put into perspective,
bid (for attempt),	iron out the problem,	quiz (for question),
bolt from the blue,	jobless youngsters,	rushed to the scene,
brutal reminder,	last but not least,	selling like hot cakes, calm
before the storm,	last minute decision,	shot himself in the foot, calm
but tense,	leaps and bound,	show of force,
chequered career,	leave no stone unturned,	sitting on the fence,
clampdown loud	square peg in a round	daylight robbery,
and clear,	hole,	major new development/ desperate
attempt/bid	up in arms, stuck to his/her guns,	marked contrast,
dramatic decision/	vanished into thin air, dug in their heels,	
new move; mindless vandals, nipped in the bud,		virtual standstill,
effortless victory, over and above,	weighty matter,	fell on deaf ears,
whole new ball game,	get under way,	writing on the wall,
given the green light.		

No doubt you will have your own favourites to add to the list. With technology making strides, it may soon be possible to program an elaborate lexicon of clichés into a computer, enter the type of story, say, *murder*, key in details such as the name of victim, and within a matter of seconds, we could be reading printouts of sparkling news copy, such as the following:

'Police are hunting a vicious killer following the brutal murder of (FILL IN NAME) in his opulent country house in the secluded backwater of (FULL IN NAME) this morning.

(FILL IN NAME)'s mutilated body was found lying in a pool of blood in the bedroom. A sawn-off shotgun lay nearby. Police discovered the corpse after a dawn raid on the mansion in the early hours of the morning following a tip from an underworld supergrass.

Detective Inspector (FILL IN NAME) who's leading the hunt, said the killer had vanished into thin air. Police with tracker dogs were now combing woods, and pledged to leave no stone unturned until the butcher of (FILL IN NAME) had been brought to justice.

'(FILL IN NAME) was described by stunned and grief-stricken neighbours as "pillar of society".'

'(FILL IN NAME)'s widow, shapely blonde (FILL IN NAME), told us how she felt...'

3.1.2 JOURNALESE

Clichés owe much to journalese, described by writer John Leo as the native tongue of news gatherers and pundits. It is the language of the label and instant metaphor, drawing its inspiration from space-starved newspaper headlines to make pronouncement of stunning clarity over matters, which to everybody else appear decidedly muddled.

More disturbingly, an evening's sport of name calling, stone throwing and petty crimes against property by rival gangs of schoolboys in Northern Ireland (which is divided along sectarian, religious, tribal and political lines, and suffers the worst unemployment in the UK) becomes a fresh outbreak of violence between loyalists and republican supporters...

Clichés and journalese are devils disguised as angels. They lie in wait for the moment Inspiration turns her back, before overpowering her, stealing her clothes and sneaking up on the reporter as a deadline approaches.

Hapless hacks are usually so intent on beating the clock that they fail to see through the disguise and welcome these saboteurs as saviours. So resigned are reporters to their infiltration and so dependent on their support, that, even when their disguise wears thin through over-use, the two are often left to wreak their havoc unchecked. The alternative is to waste precious minutes attempting to revive Inspiration, who has an infuriating habit of succumbing whenever deadlines draw near.

Even books are written to deadlines, and it is not inconceivable that you may unmask the odd clichés within these pages. Feel free to strike the offender through with a biro and, if you find Inspiration at her post, make some suitable correction.

3.1.3 HYPERBOLE

Definition of hype

‘Exaggerated statement not meant to be taken literally.’ – CONCISE OXFORD DICTIONARY.

‘Headlines twice the size of the events.’ – JOHN GALSWORTHY.

Another blood relation of journalese is Hype. Hype can be found scattered throughout the media, and in especially large concentrations wherever advertising copywriters gather.

Many journalists readily call on Hype’s assistance to lead support to a flaccid story on a quiet news day.

‘Children’s lives could be at risk if they swallow quantities of a lethal drug which has gone missing in Harare.’

Translated: Somebody dropped their sleeping tablets on their way home from the shops.

‘A man has been arrested in Perth after an appalling and unprovoked sex attack on a defenseless three-year-old girl.’

But: All sex attacks are appalling:

NO three-year-old girl is likely to provoke such an attack

ALL small girls are defenseless.

Hype of this order is unpleasant, distasteful and unnecessary. If the story can’t stand up without it, it should not be run.

If the news is to remain a reliable source of factual information, hype should be kept within the confines of the commercial break.

3.1.4 ADJECTIVE

How many adjectives you use will depend on your house style and whether the station’s image is ‘quality’ or ‘popular’. Contrast the versions below:

‘Firemen with oxy-acetylene cutters took three hours to free the body from the wreckage. They said it was one of the worse crashes they’d seen,’

‘Firemen with oxy-acetylene cutters took three hours to free the mangled body from the shattered cab. They said the horrific crash was one of the worse they’d seen.’

Most stations would think twice about the tasteless ‘mangled’, Adjective add colour but too many make the piece sound like an extract from a lurid novel. Remove them all and the item can sound dull or bland. Handle with care.

3.1.5 QUOTATIONS

A good quotation can add considerably to the flavour of a report, but there are hazards in using quotes in broadcasting.

In print, a quote is immediately obvious because of the quotation marks, but broadcast audiences cannot hear when a quote begins and ends, so they should be kept short and clearly attributed:

‘The Prime Minister rounded on the protesters, accusing them of behaving like a bunch of anarchists’.

3.1.6 ATTRIBUTION

Information should be attributed clearly to leave the audience in no doubt about who is speaking – remember, listeners can never refer back. This said, attribution can be overdone and badly clutter a copy.

The honourable Peter Threple, junior Minister in the Department of Health, said today that an injection of 20 million pounds would be made available to improve wages in the National Health Service.

Not exactly an attention grabber, so the sentence should be turned around to put the facts before the attribution, and the attribution shortened to be still accurate, but much more manageable.

‘A cash injection of 20 million pounds is to be made available to improve wages in the Health Service.’

‘Health Minister Peter Threple told the Commons today that the money...etc.

Stories should begin with a person's name only when that name is widely known. If the audience cannot immediately identify the person, this becomes a point of confusion at the start of a story.

To avoid cluttering an introduction it is sometimes necessary to choose between giving a person's name or title in the first line. If their name is better known than their job or organization, then the name should be given before the title, and vice-versa.

'The governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Prof. Soludo, has called on the government to provide tax concessions to make Nigerian businesses more profitable.'

The art is to attribute a statement clearly without letting the attribution get in the way. Television has a major advantage over radio – interviewees can appear without a verbal introduction because their names and title can be displayed on the screen over the pictures.

3.1.7 CONTENTIOUS STATEMENTS

When statements are controversial or contentious, the attribution has to be made clearly and cannot be held back until the second sentence:

'America's unemployed are a shiftless, lazy bunch of spongers, who should be forced to sweep the streets until they find a decent job'. 'So said governor Richman at a news conference today...'

This first sentence has turned a highly debatable assertion into a statement of fact, and the danger is that the audience may miss the attribution, which follows and identify the opinion with the newsreader. The station could lose a large section of its audience – the unemployed. The broadcaster must maintain impartiality by keeping a distance from such statements.

This problem is avoided by giving the attribution in the same sentence and signposting that we are dealing with opinions and not facts:

'Governor Richman launched a scathing attack on America's unemployed today... calling them a shiftless, lazy bunch of spongers. And, speaking at a news conference, he said they should be forced to weep the streets until they could get themselves decent jobs.'

This gets the broadcaster off the hook and leaves Governor Richman dangling firmly on it.

Claim and *allege* are useful qualifications for suspect information and distance the newspaper enough to avoid sounding like a propaganda mouthpiece. *Claim* and *allege* should be avoided where no doubt is meant to be implied, and repetition of the word '*said*' can be avoided by using phrases like '*he added*' or '*pointed out*'

3.1.8 IMMEDIACY

One of the great strengths of broadcast news is its immediacy. It has great advantage over newspaper when it comes to reacting quickly to changing events. The Cuban missile crisis in 1962 when the world stood on the brink of nuclear war has been accredited as the catalyst that caused the switch from papers to TV as the prime source of news.

Broadcasters are able to follow events as they unfold. Broadcasters understandably play to their strengths, and most newsrooms heighten the sense of immediacy in their copy by using the present or perfect tenses. For instance today's bulletin might say:

'Some members of JTF forces have shot dead by MEND militants.' (perfect tense)

But the present tense is even more immediate:

'Nigeria's Supreme Court is refusing to intervene in the election crisis which is delaying return to civilian rule.'

The word 'yesterday' is taboo in broadcasting. Nothing sounds more incongruous than a station with hourly bulletins giving a time reference, which harks back 24 hours. If 'yesterday' or 'last night' have to be used, they should be kept out of the opening sentences and buried further down in the story.

Similarly, phrases such as '*this morning*', '*this afternoon*' or '*this evening*' can date copy.

So, for inclusion in the 6 o'clock news, the following story would have to be rewritten:

"The United Nations warned this morning that planned talks between the government of Rwanda and Hutu rebels may be the last chance for peace..."

The phrase 'this morning', which would stand out like a sore thumb by the evening would be replaced with the words '*have*', or '*have today*'. Some news editors detest the

use of the word *'today'* arguing that all broadcasting is about what happened today, so the word is redundant and can be omitted.

Similarly, exact times, such as, *'at seven minutes past twelve'* should be rounded off to, *'just after mid-day'*, and specific times should be used only if they are essential to the story or heighten the immediacy of the coverage:

'News just in... the President of Sri Lanka has been assassinated in a suicide bomb attack. The bomber struck within the past few minutes at the head of the May Day parade in Colombo...'

For those listening in small hours of the morning, references to events *'last night'* can be confusing, and should be replaced with *'overnight'* or *'during the night'*.

3.1.9 ACTIVE

News is about movement, change and action. Yet too often newswriting is reduced to the passive voice – instead of actions that produce change, we hear of changes that have occurred as a result of actions.

'The car smashed into the brick wall', becomes the limp and soft-centered, *'The brick wall was smashed into by the car'*.

The clock was run up by the mouse	The mouse ran up the clock
One o'clock was struck	The clock struck one
Down the mouse ran	The mouse ran down

The passive version on the left could be said to be lacking something of the snap of the original. The active voice is tighter, crisper and more concrete.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISES:

- i. What do you understand by the term house style?
- ii. What are the main points highlighted in the house style of your organization?

4.0 CONCLUSION

As a broadcast journalist, you should make the house style of your organization a daily manna for you to be able to write good copy.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has enumerated and explained some guidelines to bear in mind in writing for the broadcast media. These include the need to avoid clichés, how to use quotation, attribution, and active words so as to achieve good copy.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

With your knowledge of the house style of your station, interview the Chairman of your local government council and write the story following a broadcast house style.

UNIT 2: PREPARING BROADCAST COPY TO MAKE IT SOUND

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 Sample of Radio Copy
 - 3.1.2 Name and Titles
 - 3.1.3 Pronunciation
 - 3.1.4 Abbreviation
 - 3.1.5 Symbols and Numbers
 - 3.1.6 Quotations and Attributions
 - 3.1.7 Punctuation
 - 3.1.8 Correcting Copy
 - 3.1.9 Principles of Writing for the Ear
 - 3.1.10 Making it Sound
 - Dull Copy
 - Avoid the Negative
 - Punctuate for Sound
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Preparing copy to be read by a newscaster is different from preparing it for a newspaper. Your goal is to make the copy easy for the newscaster to read and easy for the audience to understand. Writing for the ear, which is synonymous with writing for the radio, is different from writing for the newspaper. For, radio has its own unique characteristics. It is a transient medium and the listeners cut across the spectrum and different strata of the society. To communicate with these divergent audiences, you need to understand certain basic principles. This unit focuses on the essential hints for making your copy readable and understandable

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

- i. Write a readable and understandable copy for the broadcast media,
- ii. Edit your copy for clarity,
- iii. Explain the principles of writing good stories for radio, and
- iv. Apply the principles in your news writing.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

Broadcast news copy must be clean, readable and typed. Whether you use conventional typewriters or computer systems, you must be able to demonstrate reasonable typing speed and skills.

Typed characters are displayed in three basic sizes for the newscaster to see the words clearly and for copyediting. Single spacing is too confining, Triple spacing is unnecessary for most broadcast copy applications. Therefore, the copy should be written with the appropriate character and double spacing.

3.1.1 Sample of Radio Copy

Figure 2:1

West Broadway

12- 30
1 – 11 – 88

Flanagan

Members of Citizens for the Preservation of West Broadway plan to gear up their petition drive again this weekend. The group began circulating petitions last weekend.

The petitions request the city council to repeal all previous ordinances and resolutions on the widening of the West Broadway. Many residents of the West Broadway area complain that the proposed widening project will damage its residential nature.

Petition-drive coordinator Vera Hanson says the group is pleased with the show of support from residents all over Springfield... But it wouldn't know exactly how many signatures it has until next week.

Key for figure 2.1

“West Broadway” is the slug for the story.

“12 – 30” is the time of the newscast.

“1 – 11 – 88” is the date of the broadcast.

“Flanagan” is the name of the reporter.

If a story goes more than one page, write ‘MORE’ in parentheses at the bottom of the page.

Television copy is written on the right half of the page in a 40 – character line. Each line will average about six words, and the newscaster will average about 25 lines per minute. The left side of the copy is used for audio or video information. This information, which is not to be read by the newscaster, is usually typed in all caps. The copy that is read is generally upper and lower case. In television copy the stories are numbered, and each story is on a separate page. If a story goes more than one page, write “MORE” in parentheses at the bottom of the page.

Figure: 2:2

Six	6 – 17	art	Jorgenson
MOC JORGENSON		A lesson in art and architecture paid off for some Buchanan High School Students today. Ribbons were the prizes for entries in a sketch exhibit of scenery and buildings in the capital city area.	
SOF: 27 NAT SND UNDER VOICE OVER			
KEY: BUCHANAN HIGH SCHOOL :00-05		The Springfield art club sponsored the show and called in Springfield College art Professor Bill Ruess to judge the artwork.	
		Ruess says he was impressed by the students’ skills, especially those who tried their hands at the different media for the first time.	

Key For Figure 2:2

“six” is the time of the newscast.

“6-17” is the day of the broadcast.

“art” is the slug for the story.

“forgenson” is the name of the reporter.

“MOC” means the person is live on camera with audio from this microphone.

“SOF:27” means there is sound on the film lasting 27 seconds.

“NAT SND UNDER” means the film sound should be kept at a low level.

“VOICEOVER” means the voice is from the anchor person in the studio speaking over the film that is being shown.

“KEY: BUCHANAN HIGH SCHOOL” indicates the title that should be shown over the film.

“00-05” indicates that the title should be shown five seconds after the report of the news items begins.

Do not hyphenate words, and be sure to end a page with a complete sentence or, if possible, with a complete paragraph. If the next page should be missing in the middle of a broadcast, the newscaster can end, at least, with a complete sentence or paragraph.

At many stations copy is prepared for a video prompter, a mechanical or electronic device that projects the copy next to the lens so that newscasters can read it while appearing to look straight into lens. Copy for the video prompter is often typed down a column in the middle of page.

Date the first page to your script, and type your last name in the upper left-hand corner of every page. Stations vary regarding these directions. The local news director determines the slug and its placement for a story. Some directors insist that slug contain the time of the broadcast. If a story continues to a second page, write under the slug First Add, or Second Add, or Page 2, Page 3, and so forth.

3.1.2 Name and Titles

In broadcast style, unlike that followed by newspapers, well-known names, even on first reference, are not given in full. You may say Senator Proxmire of Wisconsin or Governor Galen of New Hampshire. Middle initials should not be used unless they are a natural part of someone’s name (Joe E. Brown) or less they are necessary to distinguish two people with the same first and last names.

Title should always precede names so that listeners are better prepared to hear the name. When you use titles, the first name and middle initial may be omitted. For example,

broadcasters would say Vice-President Bush and Secretary of State Schultz. Newspapers write out names like Thomas “Tip” O’Neill. In broadcast, use either the first name or the nickname, but not both.

3.1.3 Pronunciation

The writer’s job is to help the person who reads the news pronounce the names of people and places correctly. To do this, you should write out difficult names phonetically in parentheses. For example, many individuals’ stations have handbooks of their own.

3.1.3 Abbreviations

Generally, you should not use abbreviations in broadcast copy. It is easier to read a word written out than to read its abbreviation. Do not abbreviate the names of states, countries, months, days of the week or military titles. There are exceptions, and when you use them, use hyphens instead of periods because the final period in the abbreviation may be misread as the end of the sentences.

You may abbreviate US when used as an adjective, and the U-S-S-R; Dr., Mr., Mrs. and Ms; a.m. and p.m. If initials are well known: UN, FBI, you may use them. Hyphens are not used for acronyms such as NATO and ECOMOG which are pronounced as one word.

3.1.5 Symbols and Numbers:

Do not use symbols in broadcast copy because a broadcaster can read a word more easily than he or she can remember a symbol. Such symbols as the dollar sign (\$) and the percent sign (%) are never used. Don’t even use the abbreviation for number (no).

Numbers can be a problem for both the announcer and the listener. As in newspaper style, write out numbers one through nine. But write out eleven, too, because 11 might not be easily recognized as a number. Use figures for 10, and from 12 to 999. The eyes can easily take in a three-digit number, but write out the words thousand, million and billion. Hence, 3,800,000 become three million, 800 thousand. Write out fractions (two-and-a-half million dollars) and decimal points (three-point-two percent).

Some stations have exceptions. Figures often are used when giving the time (3:20 a.m), sports scores and statistics (The score was 5 to 2), market report (The Dow Jones Industrial Index was up 2-point-8 points) and addresses (30-0-2 Grand Street). In common speech no one would give an address as three thousand two.

Ordinarily, you may round off big numbers. Thus 48 - point - 3 percent should be written “near half”. But don’t say “more than one hundred” If 104 people died in an earthquake.

Use st, nd, rd, and th after dates: August 1st, September 21st, October 3rd and November 4th. Make the year easy to pronounce: June 9th, 19-73.

3.1.6 Quotation and Attributions

Most broadcast news writers rarely use quotation marks. Because it is different and awkward to indicate to the listeners which words are being quoted, use indirect quotes or a paraphrase instead.

If it is important that listeners know the exact words of quotation (as when the quoted words are startling, uncomplimentary or possibly libellous), the quote may be introduced by saying “in his own words,” “with these words,” “what she called” or “she put it this way”. Most writers prefer to avoid the formal “quote” and unquote”, though “quote” is used more than “unquote”. Note the following example:

In Smith’s words, quote, “There is no way to undo the harm done”.

If you must use a direct quotation, the attribution always should precede the quotation. Because listeners cannot see the quotation marks, they would have no way of knowing the words are a direct quote. If by chance the words were recognized as a quote, listeners would have no idea who is saying them. For the same reason, the attribution must always precede the indirect quote.

And if you must use a direct quotation, keep it short. If the quote is long and it is important to use it, you should use a tape of the person saying it. However, if you are compelled to use a quote of more than one sentence in your copy, break it up with phrases like, “Smith went on to say” or “and still quoting the senator”.

3.1.7 Punctuation

In broadcast copy, less punctuation is good. The one exception is the comma. Commas help the reader pause at appropriate places. Use commas, for example, after introductory phrases referring to time and place, as in the following:

In Paris, three Americans on holiday met their death today when their car overturned and caught fire.

Sometimes three periods are used in place of the comma. Periods also take the place of the parentheses and of the semicolon. They indicate a pause and are more easily visible. The same is true of the dash – typed as two hyphens. Note the dash in the following examples:

‘Government sources say a study due out today will show that the number of teenagers who smoke is decreasing for the first time since 1968.’

The only punctuation marks you need are the period, comma, question mark, dash, hyphen and, rarely, quotation marks. To make the word easier to read, use the hyphen in some words, even when the dictionary does not have it: anti-discrimination, co-equal, non-aggression.

3.1.7 Correcting Copy

Do not use the copy-editing marks you learned for editing newspaper copy. If a word has an error in it, cross out the word and write the corrected word above it.

Once again, your function is to make the copy easier to read. Avoid making the reader go up and down to find the right words as in the following:

‘The price of gold in London at afternoon fixing was 240 dollars’

Better to correct it this way:

‘The price of gold in London at the afternoon fixing was 240 dollars’

And of course, always make your corrections neatly and clearly. Situations may vary in the writing style and in the preparation of copy. But if you learn what is presented here, you will be well-prepared. Differences will be small, and you will adapt to them easily.

3.1.9 Principles for Writing for the Ear

There are five key principles you should always remember about any radio programme.

- It is spoken.
- It is immediate.
- It is person to person.
- It is heard only once.
- It is sound only.

It is Spoken

It's not written literature, it is TALK. So, be natural and use only words you know the meaning of and which are in your spoken vocabulary.

The following example may sound alright in a United Nations Assembly, but not on air.

Not: *The implementation of the environmental quality promotion and preservation project, which will be launched during the Fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan, will place emphasis on solutions to the problem of pollution, population migration and settlement, the deterioration of natural resources and the changes of ecology.*

But: *Government has plans to tackle the problems of environment pollution under the new Economic and Social Development Plan. A project to improve the quality of the environment is to be launched. It will try to find solutions to the problems of pollution, the migration of people from villages to cities and the increasing scarcity of natural resources.*

Use the spoken words of everyday speech.

Don't be afraid to use the same word twice or three times, if it is the right word. The broadcast style must be natural, not invented.

Not *The road is not motorable*

But: *The road is blocked (or closed, impassable).*

Or: *The road can't be used.*

Contractions are common in conversation, but the person starting out to hear news for the broadcast often seems instinctively to avoid them. So use: that's, there's, he's, they're,

don't, won't, isn't, aren't etc. But don't use contractions if you want to emphasize any words, particularly in the case of a strong negative emphasis.

Example: *He said last night he will not resign.*

It is Immediate

Radio is the “now” medium!

The greatest advantage of radio over newspapers is immediacy, and using the present tense can emphasize this. Wherever possible, use the present tense rather than reported speech. This newspaper style sounds strange on the air.

Not: *The Prime Minister said today the country's economy was booming.*

But: *The Prime Minister says the country's economy is booming.*

Things read on the radio should appear to the listener to be happening NOW. The present tense is a typical broadcast tense because it gives a sense of immediacy.

It is Person to Person

Writing for radio is not great oratory, it must be informal, it's YOU and ME. There may be thousands of others listening at the same time, but each of them is listening on his/her own, or in a small group.

However, in news programmes, the styles can be slightly more formal than ordinary conversation, yet certainly not as rigid as that of a newspaper. It must be easy to listen to without sounding casual.

Although radio must give news straight, remember that it is also an entertainment medium. Try not to be dull and too formal in your style. Try to avoid bureaucratic language.

But when it is necessary to use an unfamiliar word, it should be explained in a short explanatory sentence.

Example: *Writ of habeas corpus, this means that the authorities must bring the suspect before the judge.*

Radio must become a friend, whom the listener will believe. And when we broadcast, we should talk as to a friend.

It is Heard Only Once

The broadcast, once made, is gone and the listener has no means of referring to what was said. If the audience has to think twice, to disentangle some cumbersome clause, what you say is lost forever.

Clarity has Top Priority

Use simple, declarative short sentences. When a sentence is too long, it can easily be split up into two or three simple sentences. Don't cram all the information in one sentence.

Not: *Nigeria and Ghana have both agreed on the desirability of expanding two-way trade and increasing participation in the economic development of Ghana under the fifth Five-Year Plan.*

But: *Nigeria and Ghana want to expand trade. Nigeria will also participate more in the economic development of Ghana under the fifth Five Year Plan.*

The Enemy is Confusion

Leave out superfluous information. The problem of comprehension is not only a question of simple language. The idea that is conveyed in a news item must also be easily grasped. You have only one chance! A most useful technique is to put only one idea in one sentence.

Not: *Prices of white sugar and white refined sugar to be sold in the country are set at N7.00 and N8.00 a kilo respectively.*

But: *The price of white sugar is set at N7 a kilo, while refined sugar will be sold at N8 for a kilogram.*

It is Sound Only

Words are the bridge between the news writer and the listener. Words are the tools of our trade.

Don't be vague or ambiguous. Use words that convey concrete images.

Not: *The officials point out that the annual elephant birth rate in Burma is usually lower than the death rate.*

But: *Officials say that more elephants die in Burma each year than are born.*

Be exact and concise. Explain complex and abstract concepts. If you can't avoid them.

Not: *He also said reciprocity will be the guiding rule in the implementation of the U.S.-Philippines extradition treaty, aimed at curbing crimes that could create irritants to their bilateral relations.*

But: *He also says both the Philippines and the United States will apply the same principles under the extradition treaty. The treaty aims at curbing crimes that could cause difficulties between the two countries.*

Avoid sound clashes, they are distracting to the listener.

Not: *The building is built by a local builder.*

But: *A local company has built the house.*

Be careful with words that sound alike.

Examples: accepted – excepted
 retain – regain

This is also the case with figures (15-50, 19-90 etc)

Not: *Container handling through Apapa Port increased by more than 19 percent*

But: *Container handling increased by about 20 percent*

Punctuation is absolutely vital. When eyes see a mark on a page, the brain reacts in a certain way. A large percentage of reading is automatic. Therefore, if the newsreader's brain is suddenly confronted with something unusual, it will cause some hesitation. No matter how momentary, the listener will notice the hesitation. So, remember that you are writing a script to be read aloud. Your punctuation must be correct. Newsreaders expect properly written material.

However, if a sentence is not properly written, punctuation won't be of much help, as this example shows:

'The chairman of the association', said Mr. Khader, "is a liar". The listener will get the opposite impression of what you intended. In this case put the name of the speaker first.

3.1.10 Making it Sound

DULL COPY can hardly be read in a lively way. Crisp, lively copy comes only from an awareness of how to use words distinctly in a sparing, but telling way.

Verbs Do the Work

They are the chief tools in spoken word writing. Think hard about verbs. They are the keystones of broadcast style.

Example: *A series of violent earth tremors shook a big area of the New Guinea Island this afternoon. In Rabaul, the town's main roads heaved and rippled when the main tremor struck shortly after four o'clock... Dozens of children playing on a beach jumped into the water to escape tons of rubble that swept down a hill and across the roads towards them.*

Adjectives are not as much helpful as one might think. In descriptive and narrative writing, they tend to slow the pace and obstruct good delivery and perception. In almost every case, adjectives or adverbs are unnecessary. This is particularly so for the vague adjectives (colourful, traditional, huge, vast, giant, massive, drastic...).

When Possible, Use Verbs in the Active Voice

The active voice tells it better. Word order is often the key to movement in a sentence. Active voice is subject-verb-object.

Not: *Sales counters have been opened by the newspapers at a few important places in the city.*

But: *Newspapers have opened sales counters at a few important places in the city*

Use the Present Tense

Logical use of the present tense gives a tinge of freshness to news, makes it sound more immediate. Radio news must report what has just happened, what is happening and what is just about to happen. For this reason the present, the present perfect and the future are used more than in print journalism.

News writers can make good use of the present perfect tense, as in this example:

The Burmese Navy has arrested a Thai trawler.

The “has” gives more feeling of a continuing drama

Using the past tense often sounds very silly.

Not: *The Minister said that the project was expected to be completed in 1985.*

But: *The Minister expects the project will be completed in two years.*

In reporting on statements, which refer to a view that is still held by the speaker, you can use the word ‘says’ instead of ‘said’.

But remember the present tense must be applied wisely and logically.

Not: *Three people are dead today from weekend traffic accidents.*

But: *Three people died in weekend accidents.*

In dealing with future events, it is preferable to use “is to” rather than “will”. But saying “*The Minister is to visit the flooded area tomorrow*”, we are simply reporting his intension, rather than committing ourselves to a prediction of fact.

A mixture of tense is usual in conversational language, don’t bother too much about certain grammatical rules that apply to written English.

Example: *The F.A.O. Director said that new development project can easily be doubled if sufficient resources are available.*

You can humanize stories and add vitality to news items by getting closer in paraphrase to the way people express themselves in everyday speech.

A lot of formal language can be simplified without misrepresenting the source.

Not: *The shortfall in the publication of books in Bahasa Malaysia against the increased rate of literacy in the language may frustrate government efforts to expand public library services, it was stated today.*

But: *The Director of the National Library, says not enough books are being published in Bahasa Malaysia whereas more and more people are able to read the national language. This may make government efforts to expand public library services, very difficult.*

But many cases avoid the reverse. This is the process, which turns a news contact's simple, straightforward remarks into formal sounding phrases. A road services spokesman who tells you that a lot of cars have been breaking down because of floods should not have his words elevated to "*a high incidence of vehicle malfunctions*". And a person who says he's fed up with a certain situation should not figure in the bulletin as "*expressed dissatisfaction*".

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Go to a television station in your locality, collect the news bulletin for the major news of the day and review the news items based on your knowledge of sound copy as explained in this unit.

Avoid the Negative

You can add colour to many stories by convention from the negative to the positive. It can be done frequently, especially in lead sentences.

Not: *The Ministry of Agriculture has made it clear that fishermen are not prevented from catching prawns in in-shore areas by using tradition gear.*

But: *Fishermen can still catch prawns along the coastline if they use traditional gear. The Ministry of Agriculture has made it clear that....*

Punctuate for Sound

With rare exceptions, the only punctuation marks you need in writing for radio are the full stop, the comma, the question mark and the dash.

Punctuation marks are for the newscaster, not for the listener. Therefore, use them only when they will help the announcer use his voice. It is useful for the announcer if you underline certain words for emphasis. Newsreaders rely on the writer to use punctuation correctly and intelligently.

4.0 CONCLUSION

As a reporter, the basic rules in writing for the mass media may be the same. The fact remains that there are certain things you can do while writing for newspaper which are not permissible in writing for the broadcast media. You need to be abreast of the house style of the organization you are working for.

5.0 SUMMARY

A broadcast news story demands, some technicalities that make it different from when you are writing news story for the print media. Special attention must be paid to the typing, pronunciation, names and titles, spellings, numbers, symbols, emphasis, attributions and acronyms. In addition, you should read out your story to yourself, always remembering that writing for the radio is peculiar in that sense that radio news is spoken, immediate, person-to-person, it's heard only once and it is sound only. Knowing these principles will be a guide for you in writing good radio scripts. For your copy to be sound and lively you must use verbs preferably active verbs, appropriate tenses, you must also humanize your story and avoid the negative.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Write one news story for Radio and another for T.V from this passage:

The USAID Agreement Officer in Nigeria, Mr. Kenneth Luephang has said that more entrepreneurs would only be attracted to invest in the rice industry if the production, processing and marketing of the commodity were made profitable.

Luephang who stated this yesterday at the Rice Alliance field day and demonstration of the R-box technology at Gwako in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), pointed out that to improve productivity rice cultivation in Nigeria, requires an increased access to important farm input like seeds, fertilizers, chemicals and the technical knowledge through extension.

He said that improved productivity and profitability of the commodity would lead to the generation of employment and steady source of income, adding that it would also ensure peace in the society.

“The Alliances will be needed to tackle these issue of poverty reduction through improved agricultural productivity and high income generation activities”, he stressed. (Culled from *New Age*, Oct. 5, P.5).

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. REWRITING THE NEWS

SAN FRANCISCO (AP): Leaders of the University of California on Thursday voted to drop race-based admission following a tumultuous meeting in which Jesse Jackson and other demonstrators drove the panel from its meeting room.

The 14-10 decision by the UC Board of Regents was a major victory for those working to roll back affirmative action programmes around the nation, including Republican Gov. Pete Wilson who has made that fight the key plank of his presidential campaign.

“It means the beginning of the end of racial preferences”, said Wilson who grabbed the national spotlight from his vantage point as president of the regents.

“We believe without the use of the kind of preference that have been in place”, Jackson said after the vote, “California casts either a long shadow or a long sun beam. This is a long time in California history.”

2. Explain the five principles of a radio programme.
3. Rewrite the front-page stories of two daily newspapers of your choice for radio. Attach the newspapers to your assignment.

7.0 REFERENCES

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UNIT 3: INTERVIEWING

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 The Informative Interview
 - 3.1.2 The Interpretative Interview
 - 3.1.3 The Emotional Interview
 - 3.1.4 Interview Preparation
 - 3.1.5 Location
 - 3.1.6 Watch the Language
 - 3.1.7 Question Technique
 - 3.1.8 After the Interview
 - 3.1.9 Problems with Interviewing
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The interview is an important source of news story. Every reporter should be knowledgeable in this art. You need to master the techniques and their application. This unit will prepare you to be good in the art of interviewing.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Identify types of interview,
- ii. Explain the techniques for interviewing, and
- iii. Conduct an interview for your media house.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

Virtually all stories that feature on news pages or as news bulletins on the 6pm news are the product of interviews. This is borne from the fact that the reporter lives for the purpose of gathering information and one of the best ways by which he or she goes about this function is by asking questions – interviewing. He/she must interview eye witnesses to an accident to get the facts about what happened; he/she must interview experts if he/she wants a professional angle to a matter, etc. which ever way, if the reporter will thrive in his business, he/she must hone his/her question-asking skills because without knowing how to ask the right questions, a reporter simply cannot write a complete story.

Interviews directly related to an event or public issue are done to collect facts rather than to draw out the personalities of the persons involved. However, some interviews are conducted specifically to probe into the personalities of people, with the aim of making the person come alive on paper.

The purpose of an interview is to get usable audio. This audio may be live or recorded. If it is recorded – which is more likely – the end result could be 15 seconds or several minutes. The cut itself could be used for a news bulletin or a package or a documentary. In spite of these varied uses, the principles of good interviewing are the same. But before you start, you should have a good idea of the type of interview you are about to do.

3.1.1 The Information Interview

This is primarily to reveal facts or opinions. For example: ‘How many ambulances are off the road because of a maintenance problem?’; ‘Which way do you as a minister intend to vote in today’s crucial local government election?’; ‘Why weren’t the main road in the country rehabilitated?’

Note some of the words used above. The crucial words to use when asking questions are: *What, where, who, how, why, and when*. Questions starting with these words elicit answers other than just ‘yes’ or ‘no’ therefore making them much more useful for radio.

3.1.2 The Interpretive Interview

The interpretive interview is quite different. The subject of the interview needs to interpret some facts, which are already known. The fact that interest rates are rising again; the financial expert can be asked what effect this will have on mortgage rates. You should still, though, ask the question using the word ‘what’.

3.1.3 The Emotional Interview

The emotional interview is by far the trickiest type. Good reporting covers all shades and colours of human emotional experiences. Be conscious not to cause more harm to your subject during emotional interviews.

3.1.4 Interview Preparation

If you are to ask sensible questions, you must know something of the subject. That is not to say that you need to be an expert yourself, but a few minutes of research is important before hand.

However, you may well get pushed into an interview without any chance whatsoever to prepare whatsoever. In that case, use your interviewee as a research resource.

Let us say that you are about to interview a shop steward who is calling for a strike. You know little more than his name, his employer's name, and the union he represents. If you ask for an outright briefing before the interview, he may respect your honesty or he may feel contempt for your lack of knowledge, however unavoidable it may have been.

So start with a wide-ranging question: 'Why do you think that a strike is now inevitable? It is difficult to answer that question without giving a clue to the last offer from the employer! Now that you know the last offer was an extra 12 percent, you can go on to ask what would be acceptable and so on. The conversation has begun.

3.1.5 Location

You may carry out an interview almost anywhere. Most are recorded, but even live interviews can be conducted in many places outside the traditional studio. When you go out on location, make the most of the opportunities, which may exist to include sound effects when these are relevant.

'What did You Have for Breakfast...?'

This question has gone into the lore of radio reporting. Newcomers – and some old hands – think it helps to ask the interviewee about the first meal of the day, to get some recording level and get the conversation going. It is all rather artificial and is better avoided – especially after one famous politician answered: 'An interviewer'! It is much more practical to ask the interviewee for his name and job title. You can take some level on that and your recording is immediately tagged with crucial information. Do not rely on sticky paper labels alone; they can fall off at vital moments.

A chat before the interview is fine, assuming you have the time. It is perfectly acceptable for the interviewee to ask what, in general, the piece will be about, if that is not already obvious. You can do a little more discreet research at the same time. But do not let an interviewee insist on a list of questions in advance. You cannot let yourself be tied in this

way because, by agreeing to ask certain things, you are also agreeing not to raise other matters, which may become more interesting as the interview progresses.

3.1.6 Watch their Language

Of course, everyone should use words acceptable for broadcasting. But there is another kind of language – the language of the body. The interviewee may inadvertently reveal a lot about his/her mental state by his/her posture. Folded arms may be a sign of defensiveness; wringing hands, crossed legs and tapping fingers may reveal various states of tension. Tapping fingers, by the way, must be stopped with a courteous request. Otherwise the recording will probably be spoiled by a most peculiar thumping sound.

3.1.7 Question Technique

You encourage an interviewee to talk by asking questions. That is your job. But do not be tempted into dominating the conversation – the listener wants to hear the voice of the interviewee rather than that of the interviewer. Below are a few general points.

Listening to Answers

This is another good argument against prearranged questions. You must listen to what your subject has to say:

Asking One Thing at a Time

Make an effort not to ramble.

REPORTER: ‘Would you say, then, that bus drivers have had enough, that is, that they are saying they aren’t paid enough, so that they might take action – er, actually go on strike?’.

Do not ask two or more questions in one.

REPORTER: ‘Is it true that treating the roads cost the country more than thirty thousand pounds last winter and that you had to use salt as well as grit?’

Do not start quoting alternatives – then stop in mid-sentence:

REPORTER: ‘Are you recommending to victims that they go to the police or the council or the Citizen’s Advice Bureau or ...?’

Try not to interrupt, unless your subject is never going to stop until you intervene. Interruptions often sound untidy, and they are very difficult to edit sensibly into a short clip.

If you are in any doubt about suitable questions, remember the basics: *What, where, who, how, why, and when*. For example: ‘What happened?’; ‘Where’s the accident?’; ‘Who’s involved?’; ‘How many people have been hurt?’; ‘Why did the coach overturn?’; ‘When will the road be clear?’

Eye Contact

Encourage your subject with eye contact; it is friendly up to a point, but glance elsewhere now and then, otherwise it becomes aggressive. Use nods of the head to show that you are listening and understanding. Do not say ‘yes.’ or ‘I see...’ and other audible means of encouragement we use in conversation.

Leading Questions

These questions encourage a certain answer and they are useful up to a point. Beware also that they are not necessarily ‘closed’ type questions, which could lead to a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer: ‘So would you say that mothers must take extra care?’; ‘You must be very angry about the decision?’. Do not overdo these questions, as you are in danger of putting words into your subject’s mouth.

Cliché Questions

Think about your question technique. Each question you ask should serve a specific purpose. Do not fall into ‘knee-jerk’ interviewing habits:

REPORTER: (to sobbing woman); ‘How do you feel?’

3.1.8 After the Interview

Do not go on longer than is reasonably necessary. Remember that you have got to listen to it all back afterwards. If you want a 30-second clip, 15 minutes is too much to put on tape. Five should be plenty and 10 more than ample. If you are after a clip and you hear what you want during the recording, wind up as soon as you can. There is no point in going on in the hope of something better.

Thanks

Remember to thank your subject. It is good public relations, as well as common courtesy, and you might need to talk to that person again in the future.

3.1.8 Problems with Conducting the Interview

Special problems can arise during interviews. The most common form are off-the-record comments by the subject, sources who do not want to be identified in print, and requests by the interviewee to read the story before it is printed. Before agreeing to any of these requests, you should know your media organization's operational philosophy as well as laws bordering on confidentiality of sources and shield laws (if available).

This is particularly important because some sources would not want to be named and this often causes a credibility problem because, as studies have shown, readers usually find it hard to believe stories that lack attributable sources. They sometimes think that the reporter cooked up the story to meet up with deadline pressures.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

- i. Pick someone on radio or television that you think is good interviewer. Tape a live interview the reporter does and write down the questions.
- ii. Go to a university and interview an expert in any field of your choice. Write a news story from the interview.

Interview Story Forms

In the personal interview, the reporter finds that a variety of approaches will apply, depending on the person interviewed and what is said. But all interview stories have one thing in common: many direct quotes. A reporter can make use of the quote-summary-quote form in the body of the story, and in that regard, the interview story is somewhat similar to the speech story. The lead can be a summary, an outstanding feature, a quote or an anecdote, or, to set the scene, it can be descriptive. The lead, of course, can contain the substance of the interview, but if that is not the case, by all means, somewhere early in the story, the importance of the interview must be established.

Another story form that can be used to present interviews is the 'question-and-answer' structure whereby the reporter simply writes a short introduction similar to an editor's

note and then reproduces the questions and the interviewee's answers. This form however is losing its popularity due to the fact that it consumes huge amounts of space.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The interview is an important source of news for you as a reporter. However, it is not a job for every reporter. Rather, it is an art reserved for those who can apply the techniques. Thus, you need to master the techniques of interviewing before embarking on one.

5.0 SUMMARY

The following types of interview are common in journalism; Informational Interview, Interpretive Interview, and Emotional Interview. Besides, you need to know about the subject of interview. Also, watch your language, ask one thing at a time, listen to answers but control the interview.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT S

Plan an interview with the President of your college or university. Decide the central reason why you want the interview. It could be that there is some issue currently facing the university that you will want to ask about. If no such issue exists, you may want to talk to the President about what it is like to be president – duties, responsibilities, daily schedule, and so on.

Or you may want to do a personality profile on the President, asking about family, friends, recreation, and so on.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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MODULE FOUR: ONLINE JOURNALISM

UNIT 1: WHAT IS THE NET?

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 What is the Net?
 - 3.1.2 History of the Net
 - 3.1.3 Uses of the Net
 - 3.1.4 Internet Capacity
 - 3.1.5 Characteristics of the Web
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The world has known three revolutions in the keeping, presenting, communicating and accessing of information. These are the emergence of the written word thousands of years ago, the other was the invention of printing hundreds of years ago, and the third is still on-going. It is, of course, the Internet – the means for anyone in the planet to display information that can instantly be read by anyone else (Randall, 2002). This unit takes a look at what Internet is and its advantages, as well as some of the characteristics of the Web as a unique medium of communication which distinguish it from both the print and broadcast medium.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Explain what the Internet is,
- ii. Tell the history of the Internet,
- iii. Discuss the advantages of the Internet, and
- iv. Outline the characteristics of the Web.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

3.1.1 WHAT IS THE NET?

The Internet – also known as the Net – is the world’s largest computer network. “What is a network?”, you may ask. Even if you already know, you may want to read the next couple of paragraphs to make sure that we’re speaking the same language.

A computer network is basically a cluster of independent computers hooked together somehow. In concept, it is like a radio or TV network that connects a bunch of radio or TV stations so that they can share the latest episode of a programme.

Don’t take the analogy too far. TV networks send the same information to all the stations at the same time (it’s called broadcast networking); in computer networks, each particular message is usually routed to a particular computer. Unlike TV networks, computer networks are invariably two-way; when Computer A sends a message to Computer B, B can send a reply back to A.

Some computer networks consist of a central computer and a bunch of remote stations that reports to it (a central airline-reservation computer, for example, with thousands of screens and keyboards in airports and travel agencies). Others, including the Internet, are more egalitarian and permit any computer on the network to communicate with any other.

The Internet isn’t really one network – it’s a network of networks, all freely exchanging information. The networks range from the big and formal (such as the corporate networks at BHP, Westpac and Qantas) to the small and informal (such as the one in your back bedroom, with a couple of old PCs bought through the Trading Post) and everything in between. College and university networks have long been part of the Internet, and now high schools and elementary schools are joining up. In the past year or two, Internet usage has been increasing at a pace equivalent to that of television in the early 1950s; the Net now has an estimated 40 million computers and something like 150 million users, growing at 40 to 50 percent per year.

3.1.2 HISTORY OF THE INTERNET

The precursor of the internet was the Advanced Research Project Administration (ARPANET), a project funded by the US Department of Defense (DOD) in 1969, both as an experiment in reliable networking and to link DOD and military research contractors,

including the large number of universities doing military-funded research (ARPA stands for Advanced Research Projects Administration, the branch of the DOD in charge of handing out grant money). Although the ARPANET started small, connecting four universities in the west of the USA, it quickly grew to span the entire US.

In the early 1980s, the ARPANET grew into the early Internet, a group of interlinked networks connecting many educational and research sites funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), along with the original military ones. Pioneers at Melbourne University established Australia's first links and then extended the network when they graduated. This network was taken over by a consortium of universities and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) called the Australian Academic Research Network (AARNET). By 1990, it was clear that the Internet was here to stay and, in the USA, the government encouraged the commercially run networks that comprise today's Internet. In Australia, Connect.com (now owned by AAPT) had established the first commercial Internet company and by 1994 there were about twenty companies providing Internet access. The whole network went commercial in 1995 with Telstra taking over from the AARNET.

It is a relatively new step in Nigeria, yet many people have embarked on the use of the Internet.

3.1.3 USES OF THE NET

Here are some of the ways the Internet is being used:

- **Finding people:** If you've lost track of your childhood friend, now's your chance to find him or her anywhere in the world.
- **Finding businesses, products, and services:** New yellow page directory services enable you to search by the type of company you're looking for. People are shopping for that hard-to-find, special gift item. A friend told us of her search for an ear pendant that led her to a company in Alaska that had just what she was looking for.
- **Research:** Law firms are realizing that a great deal of information that formerly paid hundreds of dollars to find from commercial services can be found for almost nothing when they go directly to the Net, including unemployment statistics, to help assess property values. Genetics researchers and other scientists download up-to-date

research results from around the world. Businesses and potential businesses research their competition over the Net.

- **Education:** Schoolteachers coordinate projects with classrooms all over the globe. University students and their families exchange e-mails and keep down the cost of phone calls. Students do research from their home computers. The latest encyclopaedias are online.
- **Travel:** Cities, towns, states and countries are using the Web to put up (post) tourist and event information. Travellers find weather information, maps, transportation schedules, and tickets and museum hours online.
- **Marketing and Sales:** software companies are selling software and providing updates via the Net. (The folks making money from the manufacture of floppy disks are looking for new products. Most software distribution is moving to the Net). Companies are selling products over the Net. Online bookstores and music stores enable people to browse online, choose titles, and pay for stuff over the net.
- **Love:** People are finding romance on the Net. Singles ads and matchmaking sites vie for users.
- **Healing:** Patients and doctors keep up-to-date with the latest medical findings, share treatment experience, and give one another support around medical problems. We even know of some practitioners who exchange e-mail directly with their patients.
- **Investing:** People do financial research, buy stock, and invest money. Some companies trade their own shares online. Investors are finding new ventures, and new ventures are finding capital.
- **Organising events:** Conference and trade-show organisers are finding that the best way to disseminate information, call for papers and do registration is to do it on the Web. Information can be updated regularly, and paper and shipping costs are dramatically reduced. Registering online saves the cost of on-site registration staff and the hassle of on-site registration lines.
- **Non-profit:** Churches, NGOs and other community organizations put up pages, telling about themselves and inviting prospects and clients

3.1.4 INTERNET CAPABILITY

The Internet is a new communications technology that is affecting our lives on a scale as significant as the telephone and television. Some people believe that when it comes to disseminating information, the Internet is the most significant invention after the printing press. If you use the telephone, write letters, read a newspaper or magazine, or do business or any kind of research, the Internet can radically alter your entire world view.

When people talk about the Internet today, they usually talk about what they can do, what they have found, and whom they have met on the Net. The Internet's capabilities are so expansive that we don't have room to give a complete list in this chapter (indeed, it would fill several books larger than this one), but here's a quick summary:

- **Electronic mail (e-mail):** This service is certainly the most widely used – you can exchange e-mail with millions of people all over the world. People use e-mail for anything for which they might use paper mail, fax, special delivery of documents, or the telephone: gossip, recipes, rumours, love letters – you name it. (We hear that some people even use it for stuff related to work). Electronic mailing lists enable you to join in-group discussions with people who have similar interests and to meet people over the Net. Mail servers (programs that respond to e-mail messages automatically) let you retrieve all sorts of information.
- **The World Wide Web:** When people talk these days about surfing the Net, they often mean checking out sites on the (buzzword alert) multimedia hyper-linked database that spans the globe. The Web, unlike earlier Net services, combines text, pictures, sound and even animation and lets you move around with a click of the computer mouse. New Web sites (sets of Web pages) are growing faster than ever, with new sites appearing every minute. In 1993, the Internet had 130 Web sites. Today, it has many millions, and statistics indicate that the number is doubling every few months.

The software used to navigate the Web is known as a browser. The most popular browsers today are Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer, along with some other less popular but worthy competitors.

- **Chatting:** People are talking to people all over the globe about almost everything under the sun. They enter chat rooms with several other people or one special person.

They use one of the chat facilities provided by the major service providers, America Online, MSN and CompuServe all have them or Internet Relay Chat, a chat facility available to almost anyone on the Internet.

- **Information retrieval:** Many computers have files of information that are free for the taking. The files range from the Australian High Court decision (www.austlii.edu.au) and library card catalogues to the text of old books, digitized pictures (nearly all of them suitable for family audiences), and an enormous variety of software, from games to operating systems.

Special tools known as search engines, directories, and indices help you find information on the Net. Lots of people are trying to create the fastest, smartest search engine and the most complete Net index.

- **Electronic commerce:** This term is just a fancy word for buying and selling stuff over the Net. It seems that everybody's doing it, and now that software are available to make the process of sending your credit card number over the Net safe and secure. You can buy anything from books to stock in microbreweries.
- **Intranets:** I guess you know this. Businesses have figured out that this Internet stuff is really useful. They're using e-mail and Web technologies on their own internal networks and calling them Intranet. After companies, some quickly cut in to the idea that they could use this same stuff to work with their customers and suppliers and other offices with which they have business relationships.
- **Games and gossip:** All types of multi-use games can easily absorb your waking hours and an alarming number of what would otherwise be your sleeping hours. Multi-user games allow you to challenge other players from all over the world. In a MUD (Multi-user Dimension of Multi-User Dungeon) you take on characters and play a role. In games like Network 'Doom' you play arcade-style games, with other players on the network playing in the same space.

3.1.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WEB

The World Wide Web continues to grow and change – and to have profound influence on our lives. More websites go online everyday, and many people use the medium. The Web

has altered the way we trade stocks, the way we do our banking, the way people shop, the way many people get their music, and the way we get news.

The Web is like broadcasting and newspapers, but it is also something quite different. Although it shares many characteristics of other media, it has qualities that make it unique. Those qualities are immediacy, flexibility, permanence, capacity, and interactivity

IMMEDIACY

It is much easier and less time-consuming to ‘broadcast’ or ‘publish’ on the Web than in the traditional broadcasting or print media. Certainly, broadcasters can go on the air quickly when the news occurs. But what they broadcast may have little substance, or they may be reduced to showing live camera shots in which nothing is happening. In less frenetic times, broadcasters spent a great deal of time and effort in preparing materials for their shows.

The publishing process for the print media involves several unavoidable steps. Whatever is being published must be in printable form, it must be duplicated by some machine (a photocopier, printer, or printing press), and then it must be distributed to an audience.

With the Web, once information is available in some form, it can be loaded onto a website within a few seconds. The president could go on television to declare war and before the statement was finished, it could be on the Web, and reactions to it could be coming in. The Web does not require the personnel or equipment that broadcasting needs, and it does not have the distribution problems of print.

FLEXIBILITY

The Web can handle a wide variety of formats for presenting information. It can stimulate print with words, sentences, and paragraphs. It can show still pictures and video. It can play sound recordings. The Web journalist works in a multimedia environment and, along with other decisions he or she must make, has to choose the format that is best suited for the information.

In addition, the Web is fostering new forms of information presentation. The audio photo gallery is one simple example. The format marries a series of pictures to an audio

recording of commentary from the photographer. Such a format was not possible in the world of print, but it is now being used extensively by some news organizations such as the New York *Times*.

PERMANENCE

Unless we turn our videotape recorders on every time we turn on the television, there is little about broadcasting that is permanent for the user. We certainly cannot (unless we happen to be taping) go back to watch again a story by Dan Rather or part of a *Friends* episode. Once these are broadcast, they are gone.

Although we can reread stories in newspapers and magazines, we are unlikely to save every publication we get. Lack of storage space would quickly overwhelm us if we tried (not to mention the tag of 'eccentric' that our neighbours would hang on us). Printed materials are certainly more lasting than broadcasting, but their life and usefulness are limited.

With the Web, however, material can remain in place and accessible as long as the Web server and electronic storage space exist. Although many websites, particularly news websites, change their content everyday, the previous day's stories, pictures, graphics, video, and sound can remain available as long as the webmaster wishes. Even when the server ceases to exist, material can be stored in a variety of ways so that it can be accessible to users.

CAPACITY

Most news organizations produce more than they can show or print. Broadcasting is limited by time. Print media are limited by space. The Web races past these problems with its ability to keep and show huge amounts of text and image material.

Not only can a news website present a story about an event, but it can also offer pictures, video, audio, graphics and ancilliary text. It can even set up a forum so that visitors can react to the event, see the reactions of others, and carry out discussions about these reactions. Professional communicators are now faced with the problem of figuring out the best way to present the material they have; rather than to choose what material to present. Then there is storage. We have already alluded to what your neighbours might say if you kept too many newspapers and magazines around the place. This is a problem of

capacity. You are probably running out of room in your house, apartment or dormitory room. So are the Library of Congress and almost every other library in the world. No one has enough physical space to store copies of all the books, newspapers, magazines, audiotapes, pictures and other materials that are being produced.

The Web and other technological advances have alleviated the space problem by enhancing our ability to store more in smaller spaces and by centralizing information so that it is available from one location to people anywhere in the world. You no longer have to keep a copy of Shakespeare's plays and poems on your bookshelf. You can access them from any number of websites in just a few seconds.

INTERACTIVITY

Broadcasting in its traditional forms has a low level of interactivity with its listeners and viewers. People can change television or radio stations and the sound volume with the ease of using a dial or a button, but they have no control over what they receive from those stations. Nor is there any mechanism to offer feedback to the stations.

Newspapers, magazines and other printed media are highly interactive in at least one sense. Readers can select what they will read and look and what they won't. choosing, however, can be slow and cumbersome. And in doing so, readers do not communicate directly with the media they are using or with the people who have produced the material. The technology of the Web offers a level of interactivity between producers and consumers that goes far beyond what other media are capable of. The wide variety of material on a site can offer visitors many more choices than they would get if they were reading a magazine or a newspaper. Linking to other material on other sites is another way in which visitors can interact with what they are seeing.

Visitors can choose the parts of the website they want to see, and producers can track those choices. Software can record 'hits' for various pages within a site, and they can show site managers the sequence of those hits and the amount of time visitors spend on a page.

Visitors can communicate directly through email or other means set up by the producers. They can send producers their money, as many commercial sites hope they will do. And they can communicate with other visitors to share thoughts and reactions about what is on the site.

With all these characteristics and differences, the Web remains a medium of words, images and sounds – especially sounds. The Web requires people who understand the language and are skilled in using it.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Name five characteristics of the Web

CHARACTERISTICS OF WRITING FOR THE WEB

All the characteristics of good writing – accuracy, efficiency, clarity, and precision – come into play in writing for the Web. Despite its seemingly infinite capacity for information, the Web is not a medium in which words can be taken lightly or wasted. Users are often in a hurry, and websites seek to achieve maximum speed in serving them. That said, the following are some of the characteristics of writing for the Web that have emerged as important within the medium.

EFFICIENCY

Students who are new to writing for the mass media probably struggle more with one of its major characteristics – efficiency – than with any other. To write efficiently, using the fewer words to present the most information, is not the type of writing that most students have been taught in English grammar and literature classes. To write less and say more is a more difficult skill to develop. Writing efficiently is time consuming because it involves editing and rewriting. Most of us use too many words when we put together our first drafts and those drafts need to be edited and rewritten.

The Web demands efficient writing, but it goes further because of the forms and structures of writing that are most common to the Web. Writers should remember that readers do not want to waste time – and will not waste time. The Web offers many points at which information can be obtained. Readers will gravitate to those points where information can be gained most efficiently.

SIMPLICITY

Reading a computer screen is usually more difficult than reading something in a printed form. It requires a different posture and more intensive focusing of the eyes. A writer

cannot alleviate these physical demands, but he or she can make it easier on the reader by using the simplest, most straightforward language possible.

Writing simply is one of the continuing themes of writing for the mass media. Writers need to get past their English-theme habits and mentality and work towards producing the simplest, most unadorned prose possible. The task is not easy. Figuring out simple language takes a great deal of thought and effort. On the Web, that effort is a particular necessity.

TONE

Writers should write in a tone that is appropriate for their information and the context of their writing and one that meets readers' expectation. The Web requires writing that is formal at certain times and informal at other times. A straightforward news story will have a formal tone because the writer is trying to present information, and readers expect to receive it without the opinions or attitudes of the writer.

Some forms of writing for the Web invite a more casual tone. Some websites allow writers to take such a tone in wiring summaries because the opinions and attitudes of the writer can be entertaining and can help to sell a story to the readers. Weblogs may also be casual in tone, as if the writer were talking one-on-one with the reader. Still, with most audiences, the Web is not a place where anything goes and any language is appropriate. A writer needs to understand when more informality is appropriate and expected and what the limits of that informality are.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Visit the Net and send a mail to a friend in another country on latest political developments in Nigeria. Also, attempt a download of more information on the history of the Internet. using any of the common search engines e.g. Yahoo, Google, etc.

4.0 CONCLUSION

With the advent of the Net, the world has witnessed an unprecedented revolution that has touched every area of our lives. Notwithstanding the perceived negative effects that might be associated with it, we should all work together to preserve this legacy and try to improve on it.

Today, it has made unprecedented change in the way we communicate. It can be used for electronic mail (e-mail), chatting, Intranets, games and gossip, information retrieval, electronic commerce etc. In the area of research, you can use it to access vast amounts of information not otherwise readily available.

The Web is increasingly becoming a medium of mass communication that is being widely used, especially in the transmission of information. This unit has attempted to show the distinguishing features of the Web which separate it from broadcasting or print journalism mechanisms.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has highlighted the meaning of Internet, its history, importance and functions to the society. The increased use of the Internet as a medium of communication has seen its usefulness for information dissemination become more pronounced in recent times. As much as the traditional media of mass communication, that is, television, radio, newspapers/magazines, have not done badly in terms of breaking news, the Web, which, possesses characteristics of traditional media, has some features of its own which makes it stand in a different class from these traditional media

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- i. Briefly explain the history of the Internet.
- ii. What are the uses of the Internet?
- iii. What are the characteristics of Web writing?

7.0 REFERENCES

- Houston Brand, (1999): *Computer Assisted Reporting: A Practical Guide* (2nd Edition), New York: Bedford/ St. Martin's.
- Randall. D. (2000): *The Universal Journalist* (2nd Edition), London: Pluto Press.

UNIT 2: COMPUTER ASSISTED JOURNALISM

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 The Case for Using the Computer in Journalism
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The use of the computer in newsgathering is one of the latest developments in information technology. This facilitates the job of the reporter and affords him/her access to vast information just with a click on an icon.

In this age of high tech journalism, any journalist who does not know how to use the computer could find himself or herself in the back number.

This unit takes a look at what Computer Assisted Journalism means and its role in modern-day journalism

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Explain what computer assisted journalism means, and
- ii. Discuss the relevance of the computer to a journalist.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

3.1.1 WHAT IS COMPUTER-ASSISTED JOURNALISM (REPORTING)?

Computer-assisted reporting is the use of computers to gather and analyze the data necessary to write news stories. The spread of computers, software and the Internet is changing how reporters work. Reporters now routinely collect information in databases, analyze public records with spreadsheets and statistical programmes, 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. It is closely tied to "precision" or "analytic" journalism, which refers specifically to the use of techniques of the social sciences and other disciplines by journalists.

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, computer-assisted reporting 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 neighbourhoods.

In the last 15 years, journalism organizations such as the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting (NICAR, a programme of Investigative Reporters and Editors) and the Danish International Centre 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. Journalists have also created mailing lists to share ideas about CAR, including NICAR-L, CARR-L and JAGIS-L.

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 ubiquitous 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.

The development of the Internet brought about a redefinition of database journalism. It is now considered as "supplying databases with raw material - articles, photos and other content - by using medium-agnostic publishing systems and then making it available for different devices."

The first projects in this new database journalism were probably mySociety in the UK, launched in 2004 and Adrian Holovaty's ChicagoCrime.org in the US, released in 2005. Adrian Holovaty then wrote what is now considered the manifesto of database journalism in September, 2006. In this article, Holovaty writes that most material collected by journalists is "structured information: the type of information that can be sliced-and-diced, in an automated fashion, by computers". For him, database journalism is opposed to traditional journalism. When the latter puts the story as the finality, database journalism stores facts in databases and publishes them according to ongoing editorial needs.

2007 saw a rapid development in database journalism. Interactive maps have become a central feature of database journalism, often supported by mashups. A December, 2007, investigation by *The Washington Post* (Fixing DC's schools) aggregates dozens of data

items about over 135 schools, possessed in several ways, whether on a map, individually or through articles.

The importance of database journalism can be assessed by the *Knight News Challenge's* awarding \$1,100,000 to Adrian Holovaty's Everyblock project, which aims at gathering and presenting as much data as possible in 11 American cities. The Pulitzer prize received by the *St. Petersburg Times'* Politifact in April, 2009, has been considered as a Color of Money moment by Aron Pilhofer, head of the *New York Times* technology team, hinting that database journalism has been accepted by the trade and will develop, much like CAR did in the early 1990's.

3.1.2 THE CASE FOR USING COMPUTER IN JOURNALISM

You are looking into the early release of convicts from state prisons because of overcrowding. A good source had told you that many convicts released into a so-called supervised home release programme are never supervised at all. In fact, the system loses track of the convicts until they are arrested again.

Prison officials say they don't know if that's true, but they say you can look at individual inmate records if you want to.

Here's the catch: there are 20,000 records. Prison officials are counting on you having to look at 20,000 sheets of paper. They believe you will give up on the story because it will take you and other reporters months to go through all the records. At best, they think you will develop some anecdotal evidence they can easily refute.

But you have an answer. You say you will take the records not on paper but on a computer tape. After a series of meetings, the officials agree to give you the computer tape with the information you need. You pick up the tape in the morning and transfer the information to your personal computer in the afternoon.

By the next morning, using store-bought software, you have determined that more than 1,000 convicts walked away from the programme in the past year. Over the next few days, you check through the records and gather more details. You recheck your

information, conduct interviews, and write the story. A week later, you run a front page story that presents a systematic look at a programme gone wrong (Houston: 1999).

The above scenario depicts an example of the relevance of computer-assisted journalism. That is, the use of computers not only to write stories but to do far-reaching research through online database; to gather large numbers of records from analysis to launch stories from a higher level and with deeper context than ever before.

It must however be noted that computer assisted journalism does not replace proven journalistic practices, it only compliments and elevates them.

Without computers, newspapers would have to have people to fill all those positions eliminated in the computer revolution. Besides, computers make it possible for reporters to cover stories with greater ease.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

- i. What do you understand by Computer Assisted Journalism (CAJ)?
- ii. What are the advantages of Computer Assisted Journalism (CAJ) over old methods of practising Journalism?

4.0 CONCLUSION

Today's best reporters and editors have learned that computers can help at almost any phase of the reporting and editing process. They see computers as essential tools of the journalist's trade. Therefore, today's journalists must learn to use computers in order to gain from the several benefits they offer.

5.0 SUMMARY

The computer for journalists today has become a veritable tool in gathering and dissemination of information. It has helped the journalist to access vast information in a jiffy and also helped the editor to verify, edit and publish stories of noteworthy value with fewer efforts.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Expatiate on the need for Computer Assisted Journalism in this millennium.

7.0 REFERENCES

Houston, Brand, (1999): *Computer Assisted Reporting: A Practical Guide* (2nd Edition),
New York: Bedford St. Martin's.

UNIT 5: LEGAL PITFALLS ON THE INTERNET

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 Defamation
 - 3.1.2 Privacy
 - 3.1.3 Contempt
 - 3.1.4 Copyright
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Internet as a tool for reporting is not without some dangers. This unit warns you about a few of the legal potholes you may encounter on the information highway, and how to avoid them. These include defamation, privacy, contempt of court and copyright.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- i. Identify the legal problems arising from the use of the Internet, and
- ii. Explain how to avoid the identified legal problems.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

3.1.1 DEFAMATION

The tort of defamation is designed to protect a person's reputation from unjustified attack through publication.

At common law, a person has an action for defamation if he or she can establish three things. First, that a statement has a tendency to injure the reputation of the person, by exposing him or her to hatred, contempt or ridicule, or lower that person in the estimation of right thinking members of society, or make that person be shunned or avoided without moral blame. Second, that the statement was published, and third, that the person defamed could be identified from the statement.

The publisher, who (subject to the innocent disseminator defense) is anyone who has taken part in the publication of the material, will be liable for the defamatory statement unless one of the defences is successful in court.

The defences include: Truth, Fair Comment, Qualified Privilege, Consent and other statutory defences. The publisher has the burden of proving one of the defences.

An action arises for each defamatory publication and publication occurs each time material is seen, read or heard by a third party. Therefore, there can be multiple, simultaneous publications which give rise to an action in defamation. This poses a problem as to which law should be applied and where proceedings can be instituted.

The law of defamation applies to Internet publications. This issue was settled by the Supreme Court of Western Australia in *Rindos v. Hardwick*. From this case, it can be concluded that the court will treat online publications as libel and not slander and that the content provider (the person who posts the information on the Internet) is liable for publication of information.

However, this case did not consider the liability of other people in the publication line, such as the Internet Service Provider (ISP). Germane to this question is the application of the innocent disseminator defence: Is the ISP a primary publisher or merely a vehicle by which people can access information, that is, an innocent disseminator?

The innocent disseminator defense recognizes that it is unjust to hold liable for defamation a person who is merely disseminating information. A person is regarded as a mere disseminator of information if they can establish three things – that they had no actual knowledge of the defamatory nature of the publication; second, that they had no implied knowledge of the defamatory nature of the publication; third, that the lack of knowledge was not due to negligence.

However, this lack of liability for ISPs has its downside, particularly where users can post information anonymously. It creates an environment where inaccurate information can be distributed to the public, with virtually no recourse. If you are using the Internet for research, be mindful of the need to verify the information you want to use. Failure to do

this could have wide-reaching consequences and it may bar you from relying on some of the defamation defences such as the new political communication privilege.

Another problem facing people publishing on the Internet (which includes people who repeat statements made by someone else) is the increasing problem of unintentional defamations. The intention of the publisher is irrelevant to liability. Under the existing law, people have been held liable for defaming someone of whom they have no knowledge.

Thus, there are major uncertainties associated with the application of defamation laws to Internet publication and research. Be mindful of these gray areas when using the Internet to disseminate or collect information.

3.1.2 PRIVACY

The right of privacy is the right to be left alone. This is protection from invasion by newspapers, television, radio, magazines, books, pictures and motion pictures, advertising and even wiretapping

The major problem confronting journalists is knowing what constitutes an invasion of privacy. Most journalists know they should not enter a person's property without permission. However, what about accessing confidential information, which has accidentally been put on the Internet, or accessing a site, which has password access only, that contains confidential information? Should journalists use this information? The mode of access does not alter a legal and ethical obligation. In fact, the ease of access to the Internet may place even greater burdens on the reporter to check the accuracy and source of information.

Chadwick and Mullaly note that "privacy is not an absolute value ..., other interests compete, the most significant of which...is free speech" (Chadwick and Mullaly: 1). There is a need to balance an individual's need for privacy against the public interest in free speech. In 1995, Privacy Commissioner Kevin O'Conner identified professional standards as the most effective way of protecting information privacy within industry. 'while technology is always opening up new ways of communicating, the behavioural and ethical standards to which we adhere should, in my view, govern the technical not the other way around" (O'Conner: 1).

The lack of certainty, the diverse laws which regulate this issue and the lack of consistency in the self-regulatory bodies' interpretation of what constitutes a breach of privacy pose major problems for journalists. The ease of accessing information via the Internet adds to the confusion for journalists.

Enforcement of censorship laws to regulate the type of information that can be stored and accessed via the Internet, raises a number of privacy issues. Remember that protection of privacy involves a balancing of the individual's rights against public interest.

3.1.3 CONTEMPT

Contempt of court can take many forms, but the one that most concerns us here is connected to sub judice publication. This is publication of material when a court action is pending. The general rule is that the crime of sub judice contempt can be committed by publishing material which has a clear tendency to interfere with the course of justice. For this to occur, there must be a real possibility that such a publication actually could prejudice the administration of justice (*A-G for NSW v TCN Channel Nine*, P/L 1991: 379).

There are two major issues regarding sub judice contempt and Internet publications:

- What constitutes a publication for the purposes of the contempt rules?
- Who is liable for an "offending" publication?

In *Attorney General (NSW) v TCN Channel Nine*, the court found that in contempt actions "publication has a meaning different from its meaning in the law of defamation, and it appears to be generally accepted that a private communication to a single individual would not ordinarily be regarded as publication" (op cit: 378). But the court warned that "a statement made to journalists or broadcasters does not fall into the category...; the circumstance that a statement is published by being communicated to someone who would be likely in the ordinary course to broadcast it also has an important bearing upon the question of the tendency of publication to influence members of the public" *(378-379). From this, it can be concluded that publication for contempt purposes means more than material being seen, read or heard by a third person.

Given that for the purposes of defamation (*Rindos v Hardwick*), Internet communications are regarded as publications; Internet communications other than personal e-mail are likely to be regarded as “publications” for the purposes of the contempt laws. However, if a personal e-mail were sent to a journalist, then this would be taken into account when the court considered the likely tendency of the publication.

However, the Internet poses another problem because of the likelihood of information posted on the Internet being accessed by journalists. It is arguable that people using the Internet should be aware of the possible general broadcast of information and the possibilities of a journalist accessing information, which is not directly forwarded to him or her. Therefore, Internet publications would be in contempt of court if the “clear tendency of the publication is, as a matter of practical reality, to interfere with the due course of justice”. (*A-G for NSW v TCN Channel Nine P/L 379*)

You should be aware that contempt laws are not uniform. In some countries such as Australia, each state has its own, which are set out in both statute and common law. Journalists who are reporting court should familiarize themselves with specific legislations, which apply in, their states and countries.

Who is liable? In *A-G for NSW v TCN Channel Nine*, the court acknowledged that the entire publication line, including editors, proprietors, printers, the content provider and the distributor are liable for publication of “offending” material. And it was found in *Director of Publication Prosecution v Wran* that the original communicator of the information may be in contempt in addition to the broadcaster of the information.

Would ISPs be liable for material posted on the Internet? Given that everyone in the entire publication line is liable for publications and the intention required by the court to establish the crime of contempt is an intention to publish and not an intention to interfere with the administration of justice, it is probable that ISPs would be included in the liability line where “offending” material is published on the Internet.

It can be concluded that:

- Internet communications, other than personal e-mail sent to individuals other than journalists or broadcasters, would constitute a publication for the purposes of the law of contempt.
- If material published on the Internet has the tendency to interfere with the course of justice, it could be held in contempt.
- Everyone in the publication line, including ISPS, could be liable for the publication.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Briefly explain how materials published on the Internet can lead to contempt of court?

3.1.4 COPYRIGHT

Copyright is a group of rights under the Australian federal Copyright Act 1968 that protect the creators of original works from unauthorized reproduction, publication, performance, broadcast or adaptation, According to Lindsay, (Armstrong, Lindsay, Watterson: 73). Copyright is automatic on the creation of an original work. It is infringed if a person reproduces, publishes, performs, broadcasts or adapts an original work without the permission of the copyright owner. The author/creator usually owns copyright. However, any of the rights set out in the Copyright Act can be assigned to others.

In Nigeria, Copyright Decree 1988 (now Act) regulates copyright in the country. The provisions are similar with those in others parts of the world. However, Richardson says copyright will be around for along time. Justice Heerey bases her optimism, in part, on an Australian Federal Court decision in *Trumpet Software Pty Ltd v OzEmail Pty Ltd*. She claims the Trumpet Software case established “that Australian Courts are prepared to treat the use of material published on the Internet in the same ways as other publications and uses as far as the principles of the Copyright Act are concerned” (Centre for Media, Communications and Information Technology Law, Research paper: 1, 13).

Thus, it can be concluded that the Copyright Act apply to Internet publications. The ease of copyright and disseminating information does not impinge on the exclusive rights of the copyright holder. However, there are some questions over the future applications of

copyright laws, because of the ease with which people can avoid the application of those laws. Therefore, the owners of copyright may need to look to alternative ways of protecting their rights, such as contractual arrangements or codes of practice for Internet users.

A major problem with the application of copyright laws is identifying infringements. ISPs are likely to be the target of owners of copyright seeking to enforce their rights, according to solicitor Jason Macarthur. He says they “may be liable for authorizing the distribution of material to or from the service, without the permission of the copyright owner” (Macarthur: 11). The key to the situation lies in the definition of the word “authorize.” Macarthur says the High Court has held that its meaning in the Copyright Act is “to sanction, approve or countenance” but “it will be a defense to establish that reasonable steps were taken in the circumstances to avoid the infringement” (Macarthur: 11).

Macarthur added “A person will not be liable for authorizing an infringement of copyright unless they had some power to prevent it; a specific act of infringement occurred; and the person was aware of the possibility of the infringement (even if they were not aware of the actual infringement that occurred)” (Macarthur: 11).

4.0 CONCLUSION

As can be seen, addressing the problems posed by the new information technology age will not be easy. However, if journalists are aware of some of the “potholes” they may encounter along the way, at least they can brace themselves for the bumpy ride. To ensure a “smoother” ride, journalists should follow these guidelines:

- Check the accuracy of information posted on the Internet. Check the source of information and ensure you have a right to use it.
- Be mindful of the “layers” of liability. Do not just think as a user. Internet use exposes you to “layers of liability”.
- Be aware that the legal definition of publication is not dependent on where material originates. The people who access the information define it. Therefore “publishers” are exposed to liability in multiple jurisdictions.

- Ensure your publication complies with the legal and ethical requirements of the jurisdiction in which the material is likely to be accessed by readers.
- Seek legal advice

5.0 SUMMARY

Copyright law recognizes that writers and auditors should enjoy the right at ownership in their creation. The Internet has been a major revolution in the area of communication. You must however be aware that the use of the Internet is not without some legal implications. These include contempt, privacy, copyright and defamation.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

A young journalist wants to explore the Internet for research. Advise him/her on the legal problems he/she should beware of.

7.0 REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Osinbajo, Yemi and Fogam, Kadinga (1991): *Nigeria Mass Media Law*, Lagos, Gravites Publications & Ltd.

Pember, Don (2003/2004): *Mass Media Law*, Boston: McGraw Hill.

MODULE FIVE: THE JOURNALIST AND THE LAW

UNIT 1: REGULATION AND PRESS FREEDOM

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 The Meaning of Press Freedom?
 - 3.1.2 Constitutional Guarantees
 - 3.1.3 Limits to Freedom of the Press
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

As a journalist, you need to know the basis of your freedom. As such, this unit will take a look at the freedom of expression, press freedom as enunciated by international laws and conventions and of course the Nigerian Constitution. For any student of mass media law in Nigeria, the history of the regulation of the mass media would be a subject of interest. For, over the years, government intervention in the control of the mass media had impacted on the growth and development of the media either negatively or positively. This unit also takes a cursory look at the various legislations that have affected the practice of journalism in Nigeria since colonial times.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

- i. Define press freedom,
- ii. Differentiate between the freedom of expression and press freedom, and
- iii. Explain the limitations of your freedom as a journalist working in Nigeria.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

3.1.1 THE MEANING OF PRESS FREEDOM

Encarta (2009) defines press freedom as the immunity of the communications media – including newspapers, books, magazines, radio, and television—from government control or censorship. Freedom of the press is regarded as fundamental to individual rights.

Without free media, a free society and democratic self-government would not be possible. By recognizing the right to dissent, democratic governments encourage peaceful and orderly social and political change.

When the first Congress of the United States met in 1789, its main order of business was the adoption of the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the Constitution of the United States. The 1st Amendment provides that “Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or the press” (see Speech, Freedom of). Although intended as a guarantee limiting the federal government, its reach was extended by the 14th Amendment (1868) to protect the press from abridgment by the states. In its constitutional sense, the term press has been interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court to encompass not only newspapers, but also books, magazines, and other printed matter as well as motion pictures.

Liberty or freedom of expression and the meaning:

1. Laying no previous restraint upon publication. Liberty of the press means laying no previous or prior censorship of publication. Every person has the right to lay what sentiments, facts, information or publication he/she has before the public. To forbid this right is to destroy freedom of expression and the press; but
2. Where a person publishes what is unlawful, criminal, defamatory or mischievous, he must face the consequences of his/her publication.

“Liberty of the press consists in laying no previous restraint upon publication and not in freedom from censure for criminal matters published. Every man has the undoubted right to lay what sentiment he pleases before the public... to forbid that is to destroy the freedom of the press- but if he publishes what is illegal or mischievous he must face the consequences of his own temerity” (Osinbajo and Fogam, 1991)

In a nutshell, the liberty of the press is a right with a responsibility. The freedom of expression which Ray Ekpu (1998) regarded as the grandmother of all freedoms has been given an important place in virtually all international and national charters of human rights.

For instance, Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontier.

Article 19 (1) of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights says that “Everyone shall have the right to hold opinion without interference.”

The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, Article 9 says “Every individual shall have the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the law.”

In most countries of the world, including Nigeria, freedom of expression has always been given a significant place.

3.1.2 CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES

The first amendment to the American Constitution says, “Congress shall make no law to abrogate the freedom of the press”. In Nigeria, the concept of the liberty of the press is embodied in Section 39 (1) of the 1999 constitution which says “Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinion and to receive and impart ideas and information”.

Osinbajo & Fogam (1991) mentioned some justification for a free press as follows:

First, that the institution of a free press – i.e., a press that is independent, and free of censorship – is an essential element of every free state and modern democracy.

Second, it is held that it is the function and indeed, the duty of the press to keep the citizens of a country informed of the different opinions which are being expressed, so that the citizens can make the political decision which a democracy demands of them.

Also, it has been held that the security of constitutional government lies in effecting peaceful change based on the worthiness and appeal of opposing programmes and ideas presented to the public by the competitor for political power. Besides, it is widely considered that freedom of the press is essential to the individual's own development and realization.

It must, however, be pointed out that the freedom of expression clause as stated in Nigerian Constitution does not specifically mention media practitioners. Rather, it says "every person", which presupposes that every member of the society has a right to write and to print as they will and gather news for any publication without interference.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

- i. What do you understand by freedom of expression?
- ii. Is freedom of expression synonymous with the freedom of the press?

3.1.3 LIMITS TO FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Freedom of the press, however, is not absolute. The principle has long been established that the press may not be used in circumstances that would create a "clear and present danger" of bringing about serious consequences to some significant interest that the government has a right or duty to protect.

There is no absolute freedom anywhere, even in the freest societies of the world. For the freedom or right of one person or the press to publish should not destroy the right of another man or the right of society to exist and be safe from the effect of wrongful, harmful, defamatory or mischievous publications. Therefore, the press has freedom and equal responsibility that goes with that freedom. It has a right and a duty. For every right or freedom that is claimed or enjoyed there is a corresponding duty.

In the words of Justice Lord Denning of the United Kingdom:

To our way of thinking it is elementary that each man should be able to inquire and seek after truth until he has found it. Every one in the land should be free to think his own thoughts, to have his

own opinion and give voice to them, in public or in private, so long as he does not speak ill of his neighbour, and free also to criticize the Government or any party or group of people, so long as he does not incite anyone to violence.

In short, while the press wants absolute and unhindered freedom, the freedom has to be limited in the overall interest of everyone in society including the press by:

- i. The Constitution,
- ii. The Legislature,
- iii. The Courts, and
- iv. The Government

While guaranteeing freedom of expression and the press, the Constitution is also quick to impose limitations. For example: The 1999 Constitution makes freedom of expression subject to any law that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society.

Section 39 (3). says:

Nothing in this section shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society.

- a. For the purpose of preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, maintaining the authority and independence of courts or regulating telephony, wireless broadcasting, television or the exhibition of cinematograph films; or
- b. Imposing restrictions upon persons holding office under the Government of the Federation or of a state, members of the Nigerian Police Force or other government security services established by law.

Section 45(1) provides:

“Nothing in Sections 37, 38, 40 and 41 of this Constitution shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society.

- a. In the interest of defence, public safety, public order, public morality; public health; or
- b. For the purpose of protection of the rights and freedom of other persons.

In pursuance of this constitutional provision, for the protection of the public and private individuals, legislatures in Nigeria are therefore free and have been able to pass laws in the following areas:

- i. Contempt of court and contempt of parliament;
- ii. Disclosure or publication of official secrets including defence and security information;
- iii. Publication of obscene and harmful literature and materials;
- iv. Seditious and seditious publication;
- v. Defamation, and
- vi. Regulation of telephony, wireless broadcasting, television or the exhibition of cinematography films.

Another important limit on the free press is the law of libel, involving the defamation of a person, false accusations, or exposure of someone to hatred, ridicule or pecuniary loss. In 1964, the Supreme Court of the United States weighed the libel law against the interests protected by the 1st Amendment. The Court held that a public figure who sues a newspaper for libel can recover damages only if the person can prove that the statement printed was made with actual malice, that is, “with knowledge that it was false or with reckless disregard of whether it was false or not.” Subsequent court cases have extended this principle for the further protection of a free press.

Until about the mid-20th century, the law of obscenity was also a substantial limitation on freedom of the press. Today this exception, like the law of libel, has been narrowed so as to exclude from the constitutional guarantee only so-called hard-core pornography.

However, the press has not exactly been able to practise in a ‘free’ environment in Nigeria due to the presence of some media (restricting) laws present in the statute books.

DEFINITION

Media Laws are laws that regulate the operation of mass media of communication

HISTORY

The history of media laws in Nigeria dates back to the colonial times. As a result of the growing oppositions of nationalist newspapers to British colonial rule, the first comprehensive law to regulate the activities of the newspapers (Newspaper Ordinance of 1903) was promulgated. It made provisions for the regulation of newspaper publications in southern Nigeria. Among the provisions of the 1903 ordinance was that the newspaper proprietors were required to deposit a sworn affidavit with the registrar of the Supreme Court, giving details of the correct title or name of the newspaper, the address of the place of production, and name and address of the printer, publisher, or proprietor.

The Seditious Offences Ordinance (1909) and the Criminal Code (1916) were also introduced. However, the colonial government, not satisfied with the level of control of the media, introduced the Amended Newspaper Ordinance of 1917 and the Press Regulation Ordinance (1933).

Uche (1987) observed that there was hardly any substantial addition other than certain technical changes in terminologies and names; otherwise, the Newspaper Ordinance of 1917 retained all the major provisions of the earlier ordinance of 1903.

In 1948, another amendment to the Newspaper Ordinance was introduced. Its main feature was that any person who wished to start a newspaper “pays an equivalent sum in cash to the government as a deposit to free him from the necessity of providing a bond.”

NEWSPAPER AMENDMENT ACT, 1964

This was the most controversial media law passed immediately after independence. Part of the controversy generated by the Act was Section 4 (1) which says that, ‘Any person who authorizes for publication, publishes, reproduces or circulates for sale in a newspaper any statement, rumour or report knowing or having reason to believe that such

statement, rumour or report is false shall be guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a fine of two hundred pounds or to imprisonment for a term of one year.

“It shall be no defense to a charge under this section that he did not know or did not have reason to believe that the statement, rumour or report was false unless he proves that, prior to publication, he took reasonable measures to verify the accuracy of such, statement, rumour or report.”

The Act was condemned and it generated much debate among journalists. Nationalists equally condemned it. The law was passed by our own countrymen and women who had just taken over the reins of power from colonial masters. Newspaper proprietors and editors feared that once they fell out with any politician, government official or the government, they could be charged with peddling a rumour through their newspapers. This, they believed, would be an indirect way of caging the press.

For simplicity, the many laws and decrees inhibiting the freedom of expression in Nigeria, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information, have been documented by Momoh (1996) to include the following:

A. As at independence in 1960:

1. The Newspaper Act, 1917
2. Press Registration Act, 1933
3. The Criminal Act and schedules thereto insofar as it deals with
 - a. Sedition: Sections 50 and 51 [Ss 416 & 417 of Penal Code (PC)]
 - b. Injurious Falsehood: Section 59 (Section 418 Penal Code)
 - c. Criminal Defamation: Sections 373 – 379 (Ss 392-392 Penal Code)
 - d. Power to Prohibit Important of Publication: section 58
 - e. Seditious Publication Against Foreign Heads of State: Section 60
 - f. Contempt of Court: Section 6, Criminal Code Act and Section 133

B. Between 1960 and the coup d’etat of 1966.

1. Children and Young Persons (Harmful Publication) Act, 1961

2. Defamation Act, 1961
3. Emergency Powers Act, 1961
4. Seditious Meetings Act, 1961
5. Obscene Publication Act, 1961
6. Official Secrets Act, 1962
7. Newspaper (Amendment) Act, 1966.

C. Between 1966 and 1979

1. Circulation of Newspaper Decree No. 2, 1966
2. The Defamatory and Offensive Publication Decree No. 44, 1966
3. Newspaper Prohibition of Circulation Decree No. 17, 1967
4. Public Officers (Protection Against False Accusation) Decree No. 11, 1976
5. Newspaper (prohibition of circulation) (Validation) Decree No. 12, 1978
6. Nigerian Press Council Decree 31, 1978
7. Daily Times of Nigeria (Transfer of Certain Shares) Decree No. 101, 1979.

D. From 1979 to return of the military in December, 1983

The 1979 Constitution in addition to the Criminal Code and Penal Code were in operation.

E. From December, 31, 1983 when the military returned to power till date:

1. Constitution (Suspension and Modification) Decree No. 1, 1984
2. State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree 2, 1984
3. Public Officers (Protection Against False Accusation) Decree No. 4, 1984
4. The Federal Military Government (Supremacy and Enforcement of Powers) Decree No. 13, 1984.
5. Constitution (Suspension and Modification) Decree 107, 1993. This decree reverted Nigeria to the operation of the 1979 Constitution. It, however, suspended those parts of the constitution that asserted its supremacy.
6. State Security (Detention of Persons) (Amendment) (No. 2) Decree No. 14 of 1994. This decree prohibited courts from ordering the production of persons

- detained under the decree. In other words, any one could be detained, even for expressing his opinion on an issue that is of interest to the generality of the public.
7. Newspapers Registration Decree No. 43 of 1993 and the Newspapers (Prohibition and Prevention from Circulation) Decree No. 48 of 1993. The latter was repealed on the assumption of office by General Sani Abacha in November 1993 and the former is in the cooler as a result of the decision of the Federal Government not to pursue an appeal from a High Court of Lagos State that declared the Registration Decree illegal.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

- i. What are the major provisions of the Newspaper Ordinance of 1903?
- ii. In what ways will the Public Officers (Protection Against False Accusation) Act affect your job as a journalist

4.0 CONCLUSION

The freedom of expression and freedom of the press given by the Constitution are not without limits or warnings. It is important for every media practitioner to know that there is a limit to his or her freedom of expression so as not to run foul of the law.

5.0 SUMMARY

The freedom of expression and freedom of the press are so important that virtually all-international and national charters of human rights recognize them. Besides, most countries of the world including Nigeria have enshrined them in their constitutions. However, it must be noted that the freedom is not limited to journalists alone, also the freedom is not without restriction from the constitution, from government, courts and legislations. Also, over the years, both the colonial and indigenous governments of Nigeria have tried in one way or the other to regulate the mass media through pronouncements that directly or indirectly affect the practice of journalism in Nigeria. Though, some of these laws are rarely applied, you should be aware of them since they are still in the statute books.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT QUESTION

Name and explain the various ways of curtailing the freedom of the press.

What are the merits and demerits of regulating the activities of the mass media?

7.0 REFERENCES

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UNIT 2: DISCLOSURE OF SOURCE OF INFORMATION

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 Journalists and Sources
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the ethical requirements of your job as a reporter is the confidentiality of your source of information. As a journalist or editor or a person charged to court on account of a particular publication, can you be compelled to disclose the source of your information? This issue will be examined against the background of decided cases and constitutional provisions.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Explain the constitutional provisions on the disclosure of your source of information, and
- ii. Cite relevant cases related to disclosure of source of information.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

3.1.1 JOURNALISTS AND SOURCES

The business of journalism involves two parties: the reporters and the news sources. The relationship that these parties have is mutually beneficial: the newsmaker usually needs his information to be published, while the reporter needs the information that the news source can give him/her if he/she wants to keep his/her job. However, in the process of gathering information from news sources, some might be hesitate in divulging information due to the sensitive nature of such information.

Suffice it to say, for almost as long as reporters have written news, they have used confidential sources, and reporters routinely promise to protect the identity of these sources. This cannot be unrelated to the fact that reporters depend on confidential sources

for some of their best stories, and the sources will provide information only if they know their identities are safe.

It is a cardinal rule of journalism that the identity of the source remains confidential, given the fact that people who speak to reporters on this basis are frequently breaking some duty of confidence they themselves owe to a third party, e.g. an employer. It is not surprising that the journalistic principle of protection of sources clashes from time to time with different priorities of tribunals and courts of law. This happens when, sometimes, law enforcement officials, grand juries, courts, legislative bodies or administrative agencies demand the names of a reporter's confidential sources or other information the reporter wants to protect. The lawyers or judges want this information because they think it is relevant to some civil or criminal cases (because sometimes this is the reason why the source was secretive in the first instance). In such cases, reporters may be forced to appear before such tribunals to testify and may be directed to come with notes, photographs, tapes etc that contain this sensitive information. This creates a clash of interest.

The outcome of such clashes has varied according to the circumstance of each case, but courts have been known to take a hard line. In 1963 the Tribunal of Inquiry in the United Kingdom looking into the case of Vassal, the admiralty spy, ordered three journalists to reveal the sources of stories they had written at a very early state in the scandal which accurately identified the traitor. The argument of the tribunal was that knowing how the journalists got their information would assist it in discovering how security could be tightened. All three refused and two of them went to prison for contempt, the third reporter escaped such drastic punishment only because his source came forward voluntarily, (*Attorney-General V Mullholland and Foster (1963)* and *Attorney-General V. Clough (1963)* cited by Tom Crone (1995)).

In the case against Mullholland, Lord Denning identified the interest of justice as being the primary consideration in deciding whether to order disclosure. "The judge will not direct him to answer unless it is not only relevant but also a proper and indeed necessary question in the course of justice".

In Clough's case, Lord Parker cited "the interest of the state as being the dominant consideration".

Thus, one can say that the court is not frivolous in asking journalists to disclose the source of their information.

In *British Steel Corporation v Granada Television Ltd.*, Lord Denning held as follows:

The public has a right of access to information which is of public concern and of which the public ought to know. The newspapers are the agents, so to speak of the public to collect that information and to tell the public of it.

In support of this right of access, the newspapers should not in general be compelled neither by means of discovery before trial nor by question or cross-examination at the trial nor by subpoena. The reason is that, if they were compelled to disclose their sources, they would soon be bereft of information which they ought to have. Their sources would dry up. Wrongdoing would not be disclosed. Charlatans would not be exposed. Unfairness would go unremedied. Misdeeds in the corridors of power, in companies or in government departments would never be known. Investigative journalism has proved itself as a valuable adjunct of the freedom of the press (Yakubu, 1999).

It is now necessary to consider the position in Nigeria. In *Tony Momoh v. Senate of the National Assembly & Ors*, Tony Momoh, the editor of the *Daily Times* newspaper, was summoned by the Senate to give the details of a publication in the 'GRAPEVINE' column of the *Daily Times* of 4th February, 1980 about Senators and their act in lobbying for contracts from the Executive arm of government. The editor challenged the summons on the ground that it was a violation of his right to freedom of expression guaranteed by the Constitution. The court in delivering its judgment recognized the purport of Section 36(1) as that which guarantees freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information. Section 36(2) was also taken to include newspaper publication in this

context. In construing the application of Section 36 of the 1979 Constitution to the issue before it, Acting Chief Judge Ademola Johnson held:

It is a matter of common knowledge that those who express their opinions, or impart ideas and information through the medium of a newspaper or any other medium for the dissemination of information enjoy by customary law and convention a degree of confidentiality. How else is a dissemination of information to operate if those who supply him with such information are not assured of protection from identification and or disclosure?

The court concluded thus:

Without straining words, it appears clear that any attempt to force a person as the applicant who disseminates information through the medium of a newspaper to disclose the source of information apparently given in confidence is an interference with the freedom of expression without interference granted by Section 36(1).

It should be pointed out that the court did not consider the implication of Section 41 vis-a-vis Section 36 of the 1979 Constitution in the case of *Tony Momoh v The Senate of the National Assembly*. This issue, among others, was considered in *Innocent Adikwu (Editor, Sunday Punch Newspaper) & Ors. v. Federal House of Representatives of the National Assembly & Ors.* The applicants were journalists. The first applicant was an editor of the *Sunday Punch*. They received letters of invitation from the Committee of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly to appear at diverse dates to testify on the information contained in the publication of *Sunday Punch* of 5th April, 1981 titled, "Fraud – Legislators Claim Salaries and Allowances for Fictitious Staff". They applied under the Fundamental Rights (Enforcement Procedure) Rules 1979 to enforce their fundamental rights complaining that the action of the House of Representatives amounted to an interference with their constitutional rights under Section 36 of the 1979 Constitution. Justice A. L. A. Balogun, held *inter alia*:

"It must be remembered at all times that a free press is one of the pillars of freedom in this country as indeed in any democratic

society. A free press reports matters of general public importance, and cannot, in law, be under an obligation, save in exceptional circumstances, to disclose the identity of the persons who supply it with the information appearing in its report. Section 36 of the Constitution which guarantees freedom of speech and expression (and press freedom) does provide a constitutional protection of free flow of information. In respect of the press, the editor's or reporter's constitutional right to a confidential relationship with his source stems from that constitutional guarantee. It is the basic concern that underlines the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech and expression. If this right does not exist or is not protected by the courts when contravened or when there is a likelihood of its being contravened, the press's sources of information would dry up and the public would be deprived of being informed of many matters of great public importance. This must not be allowed to happen in a free and democratic society. In a country with a written constitution which establishes a constitutional structure involving a tripartite allocation of power to the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary as coordinate organs of government, the Judiciary as the guardian of the fundamental law of the land has the role of passing on the validity of the exercise of powers by the Legislature and Executive and to require them to observe the Constitution of the land".

In relation to the extent of recognition of freedom of expression and the press guaranteed by Section 36 of the 1979 Constitution, the court held that this section is subject to the "built in limitations and exceptions to that section which restricts fundamental rights of freedom of speech, ideas and expression".

The court then concluded:

In my view, it seems clear that the circumstances of this case are neither grave nor exceptional, and therefore do not fall within the

permissible limitations of freedoms provided for under Chapter IV of the Constitution in the built-in exception or limitations or otherwise.

It could therefore be concluded that the Constitution recognizes freedom of expression and the press. No one can take away these rights excepts as recognized by the built-in provisions in Chapter IV of the said Constitution. To say this, however, is not to close one's eyes to the reality of the position under the military. This is because the constitutional provision in relation to freedom of expression and the press may be curtailed or indeed taken away by a decree. For example, a person may be imprisoned for non-disclosure of his source of information under Decree 2 or as it happened in respect of Decree 4 of 1984 when it was in existence.

It is beyond doubt that freedom of expression and the press should not be toyed with. In a democratic setting one can be sure or assured of the recognition of freedom of expression and the press and the protection of the editor or the good-spirited individual who decides to give the public the benefit of knowing what is happening in government or in respect of an issue of public importance, relevance and interest. Except this is done, a reporter's constitutional right to a confidential relationship with his/her source of information will be a mirage. Much as the constitutional provision relating to freedom of expression and the press is hallowed, one must not forget to note the cautionary words of Lord Denning, British Master of the Roll in *British Steel Corporation v Granada Television Ltd*:

“In order to be deserving of freedom, the press must show itself worthy of it. A free press must be a responsible press. The power of the press is great. It must not abuse its power. If a newspaper should act irresponsibly, then it forfeits its claim to protect its sources of information.”

In relation to Nigeria therefore, it could be asserted that the law recognizes the right of the journalist to protect or refuse to disclose his/her source of information except as

curtailed by relevant provisions of the law dealing with defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health or for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedom of other persons.

The extent to which the courts recognise this privilege varies from place to place and from time to time, but the norm is that reporters are allowed to protect confidential sources except when the information is essential to a case, can be obtained in no other way, and would serve a compelling governmental interest. Courts generally have held that this privilege does not apply to non-confidential sources. Shield laws exist in some countries to protect journalists from divulging their sources of information but this law is oft disregarded in situations where the government feels that withholding such information will impede the judicial process.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

How would you defend yourself if you were asked to disclose your source of information in the court?

SHIELD LAWS

The Shield Law protects a "publisher, editor, reporter, or other person connected with or employed by a newspaper, magazine, or other periodical publication, or by a press association or wire service" and a "radio or television news reporter or other person connected with or employed by a radio or television station." The Shield Law also likely applies to stringers, freelancers, and perhaps authors.

WHAT INFORMATION IS PROTECTED

- The source of any information. There need be no assurance or expectation of confidentiality.
- Unpublished information
 - Specific information obtained during newsgathering but not disclosed to the public,

- Includes "all notes, outlines, photographs, tapes or other data of whatever sort".
- Includes newsgatherer's eyewitness observations in a public place.
- Applies even if published information was based upon or related to unpublished information.
- Protects only information obtained during newsgathering

WHAT IT PROTECTS FROM

The Shield Law only protects a journalist from being adjudged in contempt by a judicial, legislative or administrative body, or any other body having the power to issue subpoenas, for the failure to comply with a subpoena. The Shield Law does not protect the journalist from other legal sanctions. Thus the Shield Law generally does not apply when the journalist or news organization is a party to a lawsuit and other sanctions are available.

In this situation, a journalist may be subject to contempt for not disclosing information if:

1. The defendant demonstrates a reasonable possibility that the information will materially assist the defence; and
2. The defendant's fair trial rights outweigh the journalist's rights. In deciding this, a court will consider:

- A. The degree of importance of the information to the defendant
- B. Whether the information is otherwise available from another source and the defendant has attempted to obtain it.
- C. If testifying would hinder the newsgathering ability of the reporter
- D. If the information is confidential or sensitive.

If the court does order disclosure of the information, it must:

1. Give the reporter five days notice before a contempt citation will be issued,
 2. Issue a written order
- Disclosure of information under these conditions does not constitute a waiver of the right to assert the Shield Law for the same information in the future

However, there are no Shield Laws in force in Nigeria as yet. Journalists rely on the freedom of expression provision in the 1999 Constitution. Even the proposed Freedom of Information Bill or the Press Council Bill has no such provisions.

4.0 CONCLUSION

From the foregoing discussion, it is obvious that, as a journalist, there is a constitutional provision to rely upon against failure to disclose your sources of information. And from the reviewed cases, judges are not frivolous in asking journalists to disclose their sources of information.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has shown that it is a cardinal rule in journalism to refuse to divulge your sources of information. For, if you divulge your sources of information, you will soon be bereft of information, your sources will dry up and the public will be deprived of information.

However, you should not be unmindful of what obtains in military regimes whereby you can be penalized through decree for your failure to disclose the sources of your information.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Briefly explain the reasons why a journalist should not disclose his or her source or sources of information.

7.0 REFERENCES

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UNIT 4: CONTEMPT OF COURT

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 Contempt Of Court as Related to the Mass Media
 - 3.1.2 Defenses
 - 3.1.3 Appeal against Conviction
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the grey areas for journalists covering the Judiciary beat is contempt of court. What constitutes contempt of court? How can journalists avoid being charged for contempt of court and what are the defences available to them if they are charged for contempt? These are some of the issues to be discussed in this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of the unit you should be able to:

- i. Define contempt of court, and
- ii. Explain defences against contempt of court.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

Contempt of court is anything that is likely to bring the activities of the court, the process of the court, into disrespect or ridicule.

Contempt of court is usually divided into criminal and civil contempt.

- a. Civil Contempt: This occurs when a court's order or directive is disobeyed. It is also called "contempt in the face of the court."
- b. The second form, called Criminal Contempt, "consist of any acts or words which obstruct or tend to obstruct or interfere with the administration of justice" (Osinbajo & Fogam 1991).

Criminal contempt is conduct committed in the presence of the court; it may consist of disorderly behaviour, disrespect or disobedience of a judge's orders. Examples of criminal contempt committed during a trial are an attorney's persistence in pursuing a line of questioning that the judge has ruled improper and the refusal of a witness to answer a

question despite the judge's direction. Criminal contempt may also include disorderly acts occurring sufficiently near the courtroom (for example, in the corridors or on the courthouse steps) to interfere with court proceedings. Criminal contempt may be summarily punished by the court through the imposition of a fine or imprisonment or both; to prevent abuse of this power, however, the laws of some jurisdictions permit appeals from findings of criminal contempt.

Civil contempt of court is the disobedience of a court order designed to grant relief to a party to a lawsuit. Such orders, often called decrees, stem from the equitable powers of courts. Common examples of equitable decrees are the injunction and the order for the payment of alimony. Civil contempts are punished by fine or imprisonment as a result of proceedings brought by the aggrieved party, for example, by a person who has not received overdue alimony payments.

Both criminal and civil contempt of court may be purged in many cases by obeying the order of the court or by apologizing for the misconduct. The person in contempt is often held in jail until the contempt is purged.

The distinction between civil and criminal contempt commonly is not made in regard to legislative bodies. Contempt of the Legislature usually signifies either a person's refusal to obey a subpoena ordering him or her to attend and give testimony at a hearing conducted by a Legislature, or the refusal, without lawful excuse, to answer a proper question at such a hearing. When contempt supposedly has occurred, the legislative house may vote a contempt citation, and the public prosecutor may then bring the alleged offender before a criminal court for trial.

Contempt of court is also classified as

1. Contempt in facie curiae, that is, contempt in the face of the court or direct contempt;
2. Contempt ex facie curiae, that is, contempt outside the face of the court or indirect contempt.

Direct contempt (contempt in facie) includes the following:

- a. Words or acts done in the court or in the precincts of the court which obstruct or interfere with the due administration of justice or are calculated to do so, such as gross or irregular behaviour in the court room or near the court room, disruption of proceedings by demonstration, physical attack or insult on the judge or other court officials in the face of court, that is, with the personal knowledge of the judge, that is, with the judge viewing or hearing same
- b. Taking photographs in the court room or its environs. This activity with the flashing of bulbs and the associated noise often disrupts court proceedings and amounts to interference with the course of justice. Failure to surrender film when so demanded is contempt of court.
- c. Refusal by a witness (a reporter) to appear in courts when ordered, or to refuse to be sworn, testify, or answer a lawful question which the court requires him to answer is contempt of court.

Indirect contempt, on the other hand, is contempt which is committed away from the face of the court room or its precincts. Examples of this type of contempt, just like others, are inexhaustible and its list is not closed. It includes any act, words or misconduct done outside the court that interferes or is intended to interfere with the fair or smooth administration of justice. The following are examples of contempt ex facie curiae:

1. Any act which interferes with, pervert or hinders the administration,
2. Publications which interfere with the administration of justice, such as:
 - a. Publication of a false and inaccurate report of court proceedings, and
 - b. Publications that discredits a court or judge,
3. Any publication that is likely to prejudice the fair trial or conduct of criminal or civil proceedings.

3.1.1 CONTEMPT OF COURT AS RELATED TO THE MASS MEDIA

The mass media can run foul of the law of contempt in the following ways:

- a. **Scandalizing the court:** The dignity of the court may be offended if a report published is such that the public may be influenced to cast derision or ridicule at

- the court or at the judge or magistrate's personality. To become contempt, however, the publication must be such that it tends to incite misgivings as to the integrity, propriety and impartiality of the members of the court acting as a body. If by such publication the faith of the public in the judicial system is so shaken that litigants are deterred from placing complete reliance on the administration, it is a serious contempt. Comments which tend to lower the court's authority are the chief sources of such contempt. If the court's proceedings are misrepresented, leading to a lowering of the court's dignity, it may also be contempt.
- b. **Prejudicing a fair trial:** Most attachments and motions for contempt involving the press arise out of this category. A publication, which has a tendency to prejudice the course of justice, is contemptuous. The intents with which such a report is written or published have little bearing on the matter in general, although it will be seen later that there are exceptions. The decisive factor in most instances is the tendency of the matter published to prejudice a fair trial.
 - c. **Interfering with proceedings:** This section includes insulting, assaulting or wilfully obstructing a judge, witness, juror, litigant, lawyer or court officer during a court proceeding, or on the way to or from the court. It also applies to anyone who wilfully misbehaves in court or wilfully interrupts the court. Anyone who shows disrespect for the court either by words or by actions is similarly guilty of contempt.
 - d. **Failure to obey court order:** A judge may rule that no photographs may be taken in the courtroom, or order reporters not to publish stories about certain aspects of a case. If these orders are disobeyed, a contempt citation may result.
 - e. **Refusal of a journalist to disclose the identity of a source or to testify in court** may lead to a contempt of court. It must however, be noted that the court is not unmindful of the claim by journalists not to disclose their sources of information as we have seen in *Tony Momoh v. Senate*.

Contempt is provided for under different sections of our law – the Criminal Code, Constitution and under the Common Law. The two distinct approaches to dealing with the issue of contempt are due to the different procedures provided under the relevant sections of the law.

Section.133 of the Criminal Code approach requires type of contempt to be tried before a different court from that where the alleged offence occurs and further requires a format charge, plea, trial and verdict. Whereas, the mode adopted under S.6 of the Criminal Code, assumes the inherent jurisdiction of the court in common law to punish summarily.

One hitch in this approach which has been overlooked by the Nigerian judges and the Supreme Court alike is that English Common Law confers this power only upon Superior Courts of record; the Nigerian case law approach gives this power to the lower and higher courts alike. So in practice both the High Courts and Magistrate Courts can summarily punish for contempt.

There is need for journalists to be very careful in dealing with contempt and this is for the following reasons:

- a. The law of contempt is wide;
- b. The power of the judge is great in respect of it;
- c. The powers of court to punish is capable of being abused especially in the punishment of contempt in the face of court, and
- d. Summary punishment of contempt in the face of the court allows a magistrate or judge to be a judge in his/her own case, contrary to the rules of natural justice and the fair hearing provisions of the Constitution, which provide for an impartial court or tribunal

The Supreme Court has therefore from time to time cautioned in several court cases, that the power of court to punish for contempt should be used with discretion. In other words, the power to punish for contempt should be used by court sparingly, for instance, only in cases that clearly deserve sanction and not in every case where contempt is alleged.

3.1.2 DEFENCES

A journalist that is charged for contempt may plead any of the following defences:

1. The conduct or behaviour complained of does not amount to contempt of court in law.

2. The court will pardon alleged contempt if the conduct is unintentional and purged by sincere apology and credible explanation.
3. The acts or omission were from an honest and reasonable mistaken belief
4. The acts/ omissions were due to a misconception of the law, thereby flouting a court's orders.
5. For example in the case of a publisher of a newspaper, the acts or omission were done without his/her knowledge or approval and not communicated to him/her.

3.1.3 APPEAL AGAINST CONVICTION

Generally, where there is no formal charge, i.e. in cases of summary conviction, there is no right of appeal. However, in certain parts of Eastern Nigeria, there is now a general right of appeal against summary interment for contempt

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

- i. Differentiate between civil and criminal contempt.
- ii. Explain four ways in which a journalist can commit contempt of court.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The court system would cease to operate as it does if people had a choice of whether or not to obey a court order. Without the power to coerce behaviour, judges would be unable to discharge their duties and responsibilities, and courts would become mere boards of arbitration that issue advisory opinions.

5.0 SUMMARY

The power of a judge to punish for contempt of court is a remnant of the power of English royalty. Today, courts have broad powers to punish persons who offend the court, interfere with legal proceedings, or disobey court orders. Contempt is used both to protect the rights of private persons who are litigating matters in the courts and to punish a wrong committed against the court itself.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Enumerate the various defences open to a journalist who is accused of contempt of court.

7.0 REFERENCES

Osinbajo, Yemi and Fogam, Kadinga (1991): *Nigeria Mass Media Law*, Lagos: Gravitas Publishers & Ltd.

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MODULE SIX: THE ETHICAL JOURNALIST

UNIT 1: ETHICS AND JOURNALISM

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 Origin of Ethics
 - 3.2 Theories of Ethics
 - 3.3 Ethics in Journalism
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the distinguishing features of man is that he is endowed with free will from creation. He is therefore free to act in whichever way he desires. However, as a social being, he is expected to align his values with that of the society where he operates. As such, ethical codes are designed to align his actions to the relevant norms in the society. Thus, even when you have the free will to act in whatever way that suits you, there are certain sets of norms that are expected to guide you in whatever action you want to choose.

2.0 OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit, you should be able to

- i. Define ethics, and
- ii. Trace the origin of ethics.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

There are certain human actions that are not regulated by law. These activities that are not regulated by law come under ethics.

Merrill (1982) defines ethics as the branch of philosophy which aids in determining what is right to do. That is, ethics is a study of right conduct. Its ultimate concern is how to provide moral principles or norms for action, Ethics could therefore be termed a normative science of conduct. Because of its concern with such concepts as virtue and vice, right and wrong; and good and bad; responsible and irresponsible action; a study of

ethics is a study of rules and guidelines designed to regulate human actions while making moral decisions.

Ethics (Greek *ethika*, from *ethos*, “character,” “custom”), principles or standards of human conduct, sometimes called morals (Latin *mores*, “customs”), and, by extension, the study of such principles, sometimes called moral philosophy. This article is concerned with ethics chiefly in the latter sense and is confined to that of Western civilization, although every culture has developed an ethic of its own.

Ethics, as a branch of philosophy, is considered a normative science, because it is concerned with norms of human conduct, as distinguished from the formal sciences, such as mathematics and logic, and the empirical sciences, such as chemistry and physics. The empirical social sciences, including psychology, however, impinge to some extent on the concerns of ethics in that they study social behaviour. For example, the social sciences frequently attempt to determine the relation of particular ethical principles to social behaviour and to investigate the cultural conditions that contribute to the formation of such principles.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Attempt a definition of ethics.

3.1.1 ORIGIN OF ETHICS

The concept of ethics dates back to the beginning of human existence (Okunna, 1997). For some philosophers, it must have been in existence in more primitive forms long before it came to be documented in written records. For as long as people have been living together in groups, the moral regulation of behaviour has been necessary to the group's well-being. Although the morals were formalized and made into arbitrary standards of conduct, they developed, sometimes irrationally, after religious taboos were violated, or out-of-chance behaviour that became habit and then custom, or from laws imposed by chiefs to prevent disharmony in their tribes. Even the great ancient Egyptian and Sumerian civilizations developed no systematized ethics; maxims and precepts set down by secular leaders, such as Ptahhotep, mingled with a strict religion that affected the behaviour of every Egyptian. In ancient China, the maxims of Confucius were accepted as a moral code. The Greek philosophers, beginning about the 6th century BC,

theorized intensively about moral behavior, which led to the further development of philosophical ethics.

The role of ethics has been what it is today, that is, prescribing rules for moral behaviour. Okunna traces the origin of ethics to:

The idea of “The Good” Morality and Human Nature

The idea of the good presupposes that God created human being in such a way that they are able to distinguish what is good from what is bad. They therefore prefer good things to bad ones and expects others to behave in like manner.

Since ethics is associated with man, you need to understand certain characteristics that enable him to be ethical. These include:

Rationality of Human Beings

Unlike the lower animals, which act on instincts, human beings are rational and reasonable. They are therefore expected to behave ethically and suppress their instincts.

Human Beings and Social Animals

Man finds fulfillment and happiness when he relates with others. Thus, a person acts ethically or morally only when he relates or identifies in principles with all mankind.

Feeling

Your ability to feel and empathize with others makes it possible for you to behave ethically and live in harmony with them.

Learning

This is an important characteristic of men. He has the ability to learn especially from experience.

3.2 THEORIES OF ETHICS

Since a theory has been defined as a way of explaining the ordering and occurrence of various events, as well as a way of making sense out of a disturbing situation, there is the need to understand ethics. Okunna (1997) provides that ethical theories help to understand ethics and explain them as “principles put forward to explain, describe,

prescribe or predict human behaviour”. She explains further that theories of ethics are descriptive in the sense that they tell the nature of ethics in general and because they stipulate how people should behave in situations involving ethical considerations, they can also be said to be prescriptive; and they are also predictive to the extent that they can indicate how people will act under certain situations.

Theories of ethics involve the dominant theories and others.

Dominant Ethical Theories

Over the centuries, a broad range of ethical theories has been developed. However, the three dominant theoretical approaches to making ethical judgments are: teleological, deontological and situational.

Teleological Theory: The Teleological Theory of Ethics according to Okunna (1997) maintains that it is the result or consequence of actions that determine the rightness or wrongness of such actions. Hence, teleological ethics is called consequence ethics or consequentialism. By consequence, Ogunade (1996) explains that the good that is produced determines the morality of the action.

Thus, teleologists believe that we should compare and contrast the positive and the negative results of our intended action before embarking on it. If the bad consequences outweigh the good, then the proposed action should be abandoned and it should be considered morally wrong. Should the good consequences outweigh the bad ones however, the proposed action can be considered as morally permissible.

Deontological Theory: The Deontological Theory of Ethics, as explained by Okunna (1997), is based on the philosophy that judging an action as morally right and wrong should not depend on the consequences of the action; rather, the qualities of the actions should be the yardstick.

One of the best deontologists, Immanuel Kant, as pointed out by Merrill (1982), contends that an action is justified if the intentions of the doer are good, regardless of the consequences that ensue from the action. Hence, an action can be judged moral if it is based on the good intention of the doer, regardless of the consequence.

Relating this to journalism, Okunna says that the deontologist in journalism recognizes that certain actions, like sycophancy and acceptance of 'brown envelopes', are intrinsically wrong, whether the consequences of such actions are beneficial or not.

Simply put, the deontologist believes that "a person is acting ethically if he would be willing to see his/her rule applied by every one who is in a similar situation".

Situational Ethics: Situational ethics is based on desires of the human nature which compromise moral principles or set them aside in a situation. In essence, the situational ethics, as observed by Ogunade (1997), considers the rightness or wrongness of an action in relation to the particular situation in which the doer of the action finds himself or herself. The argument behind this theory of ethics is that morally correct principles or standards could be compromised or set aside in particular situation. For the situationist, ethical decision making should depend on the context or situation, it should aim at contextual appropriateness, the fitting rather than the good or the right. Therefore, if a lady takes to prostitution because she is from a poor family, situationists may not frown at it. However, this would be relegating ethics to relativism which is not acceptable to a number of philosophers.

Other Ethical Theories

In addition to the dominant theories, there are a number of other ethical theories, which moral philosophers consider to be more or less variant forms of one another, with close relationship to the dominant theories. Like the Teleological and Deontological Theories, these other theories appear in pairs as thesis and antithesis of one another. They include absolutist and relativist; objectivist and subjectivist; legalistic and antinomian theories.

Absolutist and Relativist theories: Absolutist Theory of ethics is based on the universality of ethics. That is, a right action should be right in all places, at all times and in all circumstances (Okunna, 1997:19). The Relativist Theory, on the other hand, says what is good or bad depends on the context in which the action was made. The assumption of the relativist is that people differ in culture and moral values and these should be used in judging the morality of their actions.

Objectivist and subjectivist theories: The Objectivist Theory holds that ethics is rational rather than emotional and ethical standards are objective in the sense of being formed outside the person. To the objectivist journalism who is confronted with an ethical issue in mass communication, he or she believes that the right action must be taken by all concerned irrespective of how they individually feel about the action. This is the basis of objectivism in ethics, and the link between it and ethical absolutism.

On the other hand, the subjectivist theory preaches the relativity of moral behaviour depending on the feelings and emotions of the person making the moral decision.

Legalistic and Antinomian Theories: To be properly understood, it should be noted that these theories are in certain respects, similar to the above discussed theories.

Legalistic Theory: Legalistic or code ethics is really an objective and absolute system of ethics. It is rigid, uncompromising and based on accepted principles which tradition and society have ratified as serving the common good.

Antinomian Theory: This is at variance with the Legalistic Theory and is a situation of no ethics at all. That is, the antinomian journalist acts according to his/her whims and caprices. Hence, Antinomian Theory is closely related to Subjectivist Ethical Theory.

In summary, it will be apt to note that the tendency to behave in one way or the other is not without theoretical basis, the theories being the Teleological, Deontological, and Situational theories, as well as the Absolutist, Relativist, Objectivist, Subjectivist, Legalistic, and Antinomian theories.

3.3 ETHICS IN JOURNALISM

The earliest signs of ethics in journalism were noticed at the turn of the 20th century when there was a reaction to the excesses of the freedom of the Libertarian press system. This abuse led to calls for a free but responsible press. The Social Responsibility Theory believes that:

1. Certain obligations to society should be accepted and fulfilled by the press.
2. These obligations are mainly to be fulfilled through setting high professional standards of trust, accuracy, objectivity, balance and informativeness.

3. In the discharge of their duties, the media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions.
4. The society and public have a right to expect high standards of performance from the media, and intervention can be justified to secure the public good since journalists should be accountable to society.

The theory holds that to ensure high ethical standard that the press must be controlled by itself or by the government.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Briefly describe the basis of journalistic ethics.

3.1.1 NATURE AND PURPOSE OF JOURNALISTIC ETHICS

Merrill (1982) describes journalistic ethics as a branch of philosophy, which aids journalist in determining what is right to do. It is ultimately concerned with providing moral principles or norms for journalistic actions.

To understand the full meaning of ethics in journalism, Okunna, (1997) asks:

1. What standard should journalists adhere to in the practice of their profession?
2. What is good journalism and what is bad journalism?
3. What should the journalist do in a particular situation?
4. What should journalism do for its practitioners, its audience and the society?

Judged from the above questions, the purpose of ethics in mass communication is to assist journalists to be more moral professionals.

Journalistic ethics will stipulate rules, guidelines, norms and principles that would guide the journalist in making moral decisions.

4.0 CONCLUSION

For a proper understanding of the importance of ethics in journalism, you need to understand what ethics mean and the origin of ethics. Looking at the basis for the introduction of ethics to journalism, that is, the observed excesses of the freedom of the press in the 20th century, one cannot but support the need for ethics in mass

communication. For, it behoves media practitioners to be accountable to the society in which they operate.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has been able to acquaint you with the meaning of ethics, the origin of ethics and the essential characteristics of human beings which enable them to be ethical when they are confronted with moral problems. The excesses of the Libertarian Theory had necessitated the need for the society to demand a high moral standard from journalists.

This moral standard was to be set by journalists themselves so as to make them sensitive to every action they take in the search for the truth. Thus, like any other profession, journalism is guided by ethics, which enable them to be more responsible in exercising their freedom on what to report and what not to report.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the origin of ethics?
2. List and explain the characteristics of human beings that enable them to be ethical.
3. Mention and explain the dominant theories of ethics.

7.0 REFERENCES

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UNIT 2: CODES OF JOURNALISTIC ETHICS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 National Codes
 - 3.1.2 Institutional Codes
 - 3.1.3 Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Having established the fact that journalism, like any other profession is not without some ethics guiding the conduct of its practitioners, it is essential to focus on the codes of ethics for journalists, especially in Nigeria.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end this unit you should be able to:

- i. Define journalistic codes of ethics, and
- ii Understand the codes of ethics for Nigerian journalists.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

Codes of journalistic ethics can be defined as rules and norms which are prepared and adopted by journalists to regulate the conduct of their profession. Professional ethical norms first began to be codified in the early 1920s and at present many codes exist in some 90 countries in all regions of the world. These codes of journalistic ethics are in different categories. We have the International codes of ethics, Regional codes of ethics and National codes of ethics.

3.1.1 INTERNATIONAL CODES

For many years, there was not in existence any one international code of ethics guiding journalists in all nations of the world as they practise their profession. This was not a surprising development considering the fact that we live in a world which holds varying views as to the roles of the journalist. This situation was further corroborated by the

MacBride Commission report which noted that “diversity of values likely to affect an International Code would make it impossible to formulate”.

That notwithstanding, the issue of formulating an international code was first discussed in the United Nations between 1950 and 1952 when a draft International Code of Ethics for Information Personnel was prepared by the UN Sub-Committee on Freedom of Information and the Press. The 1954 UN General Assembly, however, did not take any action on the draft, thus stagnating it for almost three decades until eventually, between 1978 and 1983, several consultative meetings of international and regional journalistic organizations culminated, in November 1983, in the emergence of the International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism. These principles were prepared as an international common ground and as a source of inspiration for national and regional codes of ethics. The consultative fora were held under the auspices of UNESCO in consort with the following journalistic organizations: International Organisation of Journalists (IOJ), International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), International Catholic Union of the Press, Latin American Federation of Journalists, Latin American Federation of Press Workers, Federation of Arab Journalists, Union of African Journalists and Confederation of ASEAN Journalists.

The International Code of Ethics comprises the following 10 principles:

- **Principle I: People’s Right to Know**

People and individuals have the right to acquire an objective picture of reality by means of accurate, comprehensive information as well as to express themselves freely through the various media of culture and communication.

- **Principle II: The Journalist’s Dedication to Objective Reality**

The foremost task of the journalist is to serve the people’s right to true and authentic information through an honest dedication to objective reality whereby facts are reported conscientiously in their proper context, pointing out their essential connections and without causing distortions, with the deployment of the creative capacity of the journalist, so that the public is provided with adequate material to facilitate the formation of an accurate and comprehensive picture of the world in

which the origins, nature and essence of events, processes and state of affairs are understood as objective reality.

- **Principle III: The Journalist's Social Responsibility**

Information in journalism is understood as a social good and not as a commodity, which means that the journalist shares responsibility for the information transmitted and is thus accountable not only to those controlling the media but ultimately to the public at large. Social responsibility requires that he or she act under all circumstances in conformity with a personal ethical consciousness.

- **Principle IV: The Journalist's Professional Integrity**

The social role of the journalist demands that the profession maintain high standards of integrity, including the journalist's right to refrain from working against his/her conviction or from disclosing sources of information as well as the right to participate in the decision-making of the medium in which he/she is employed. The integrity of the profession does not permit the journalist to accept any form of bribe or the journalist to promote any private interest contrary to the general welfare. Likewise, it belongs to professional ethics to respect intellectual property and in particular to refrain from plagiarism.

- **Principle V: Public Access and Participation**

The nature of the profession demands that the journalist promote access by the public to information of the public in the media, including the right of correction or rectification and the right of reply.

- **Principle VI: Respect for Privacy and Human Dignity**

An integral part of the professional standards of the journalist is respect for the right of the individual to privacy and human dignity, in conformity with the provisions of international and national laws concerning protection of the rights and the reputation of others, prohibiting libel, calumny, slander and any other form of defamation.

- **Principle VII: Respect for Public Interest**

The professional standards of the journalist prescribe due respect for the national community as well as its democratic institutions and public morals.

- **Principle VIII: Respect for Universal Values and Diversity of Culture**

A true journalist stands for the universal values of humanism, above all peace, democracy, human rights, social progress and national liberation, while respecting the distinctive character, value and dignity of each culture, as well as the right of people freely to choose and develop their political, social, economic and cultural systems. Thus, the journalist participates actively in the democratic betterment of society and contributes through dialogue to a climate of confidence in international relations conducive to peace and justice everywhere, to détente, disarmament and national development. It belongs to the ethics of the profession that the journalist be aware of relevant provisions contained in international conventions, declarations and resolutions

- **Principle IX: Elimination of War and Other Great Evils Confronting Humanity**

The ethical commitment to the universal values of humanism calls for the journalist to abstain from any justification for, or incitement to, war or aggression and the arms race, especially in nuclear weapons, and all other forms of violence, hatred or discrimination, especially racism and apartheid, oppression by tyrannical regimes, colonialism and neo-colonialism, as well as other great evils which affect humanity such as poverty, malnutrition and diseases.

- **Promotion of a New World Information and Communication Order**

The journalist operates in the contemporary, witnessing a movement towards new international relations in general and a new world information order in particular. This new order, understood as an integral part of the New International Economic Order, is aimed at the de-colonisation and democratisation of information and communication, both nationally and internationally, on the basis of peaceful co-existence among people and with full respect for their cultural identity. The journalist

has a special obligation to promote the process of democratisation of international relations in the field of information, in particular, safeguarding and fostering people and friendly and friendly relations among states and peoples.

3.1.2 REGIONAL CODES

3.1.3 NATIONAL CODES

Every country has different codes of ethics that govern the different mass media – print, broadcast and the cinema.

In Nigeria, the code of conduct of the Nigeria Press Organisation (NPO) is the umbrella code for journalists in the country. However, it must be noted that practitioners in different media and media-related professions also have different codes of ethics to guide their professional practice. These include the code of ethics of the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR) and the code of the Association of Advertising Practitioners of Nigeria (AAPN), now the Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (AAAN) The Nigeria Broadcasting Commission (NBC) also has a code of conduct for broadcasting.

3.1.2 INSTITUTIONAL CODES

Different media organizations have their own policies regarding the conduct of employees. These codes are often comprehensive and deal with such diverse matters as the acceptance of gifts and other gratuities from outside sources, conflict of interests, the use of offensive or indecent materials, the publication of rape victims' names, the staging of news events, the use of deceptive news gathering techniques, and the identification of sources. There are usually similar policies regarding advertising content, particularly in matters of decency and taste.

Although these codes often reflect an organization's commitment to certain standards of conduct, they are sometimes criticized for failing to provide guidance for the myriad of ethical dilemmas that confront media practitioners under the pressure of time deadlines.

Nevertheless, such codes are helpful in orientation of new employees to the ethical values of the organization and can also be used as a neutral standard to which both sides can appeal in an ethical dispute.

The violation of the codes may earn employee sanction from the organization. Also, each violation, particularly if ignored by media executives, erodes the integrity of the published ethical guidelines.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Highlight the different codes of journalistic ethics.

3.1.3 CODE OF ETHICS FOR NIGERIAN JOURNALISTS

In Nigeria, a code of ethics for journalists was first established and adopted by the Nigeria Press Organization (NPO) in 1979. This code later paved way for a new one because the old one was deficient in many areas.

The new code, which is a collective effort of Nigeria journalists represented by the Nigeria Press Organization (NPO) and the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) which is expected to interpret the code while acting as a judicator when any of the provisions of the code is breached.

The code contains the following:

1. EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE

Decisions concerning the content of news should be the responsibility of a professional journalist.

2. ACCURACY AND FAIRNESS

- i. The public has a right to know. Factual, accurate, balanced and fair reporting is the ultimate objective of good journalism and the basis of earning public trust and confidence.
- ii. A journalist should refrain from publishing inaccurate and misleading information. Where such information has been inadvertently published, prompt correction should be made. A journalist must hold the right of reply as a cardinal rule of practice.
- iii. In the course of his/her duties, a journalist should strive to separate facts from conjecture and comment.

3. PRIVACY

As a general rule, a journalist should respect the privacy of individuals and their families unless it affects public interest.

- i. Information on the private life of an individual or his/her family should only be published if it impinges on public interest.
- ii. Publishing of such information about an individual as mentioned above should be deemed justifiable only if it is directed at:
 - a. Exposing crime or serious misdemeanour;
 - b. Exposing anti-social conduct;
 - c. Protecting public health, morality and safety;
 - d. Preventing the public from being misled by some statement or action of the individual concerned.

4. PRIVILEGE/NON-DISCLOSURE

- i. A journalist should observe the universally accepted principle of confidentiality and should not disclose the source of information obtained in confidence.
- ii. A journalist should not breach an agreement with a source of information obtained as “off-the-record” or as “background information.”

5. DECENCY

- i. A journalist should dress and comport himself or herself in a manner that conforms to public taste.
- ii. Journalist should refrain from using offensive, abusive or vulgar languages.
- iii. A journalist should not present lurid details, either in words or picture, of violence, sexual acts and abhorrent or horrid scenes.
- iv. In cases involving personal grief or shock, enquiries should be carried out and approaches made with sympathy and discretion.
- v. Unless it is in the furtherance of the public’s right to know, a journalist should generally avoid identifying relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime

6. DISCRIMINATION

A journalist should refrain from making pejorative reference to a person's ethnic group, religion, gender, or to any physical or mental illness or handicap.

7. REWARD AND GRATIFICATION

- i. A journalist should neither solicit nor accept bribe, gratification or patronage to suppress or publish information.
- ii. To demand payment for the publication of news is inimical to the notion of news as a fair, accurate, unbiased and factual report of an event.

8. VIOLENCE

A journalist should not present or report acts of violence, armed robberies, terrorist activities or vulgar display of wealth in a manner that glorifies such acts in the eyes of public.

9. CHILDREN AND MINORS

A journalist should not identify, either by name or picture, or interview children under the age of 16 who are involved in cases concerning sexual offences, crimes and rituals or witchcraft either as victims, witnesses or defendants.

10. ACCESS TO INFORMATION

A journalist should strive to employ open and honest means in the gathering of information.

Exceptional methods may be employed only when the public interest is at stake.

11. PUBLIC INTEREST

A journalist should strive to enhance national unity and public good.

12. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

A journalist should promote universal principles of human rights, democracy, justice, equity, peace and international understanding.

13. PLAGIARISM

A journalist should not copy, in whole or in part, other people's work without attribution and/or consent.

14. COPYRIGHT

- i. Where a journalist reproduces a work, be it in print, broadcast, artwork or design, proper acknowledgement should be accorded the author.
- ii. A journalist should abide by all rules of copyright established by national and international laws and conventions.

15. PRESS FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

A journalist should strive at all times to enhance press freedom and responsibility.

4.0 CONCLUSION

At whatever level you want to practise as a journalist, whether international, regional or national, there are rules and regulations to guide you in the conduct of your profession.

The most important thing for you is to be abreast with the codes of ethics of your profession in order to be a sound journalist that would command the respect of your audience and your employer.

5.0 SUMMARY

Since 1920, journalists like any other professionals have had rules and regulations enacted by journalists themselves to guide the conduct of their profession.

These are the international codes of ethics and national codes. In Nigeria, besides the code of ethics for practitioners in specific areas of specialization such as advertising, public relations, the Nigeria Press Organization which is the umbrella body for journalists, editor and proprietors of newspapers and magazines, ratified the code of ethics for all journalists which contain 15 injunctions or declarations.

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Elaborate on the need for ethics in journalism.

Trace the history of the code of ethics for Nigerian journalists and highlight the issues raised in the code.

7.0 REFERENCES

Nigerian Press Organization (1998): *Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists*, Lagos, NPC.

NPC Act No 60 of 1999.

UNIT 4: ETHICAL ISSUES AND ENFORCEMENT OF ETHICS IN NIGERIAN JOURNALISM

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 Sycophancy
 - 3.1.2 Character Assassination
 - 3.1.3 Pressure
 - 3.1.4 Aghanistanism
 - 3.1.5 Bribery
 - 3.1.6 Sensationalism
 - 3.1.7 Moonlighting
 - 3.1.8 Self-censorship
 - 3.1.9 Advertorial
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Despite the introduction of a code of ethics for Nigerian journalists and the setting up of the Nigerian Press Council, there are other ethical issues, which are part of the overall problems in the society. And, journalists being part of the society, may fall victim to them, except a conscious efforts is made to avoid them. These ethical issues include sycophancy, character assassination, pressure, Afghanistanism, bribery, moonlighting, sensationalism, self-censorship, plagiarism and advertorial.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- i. Identify some ethical problems militating against sound journalism practice.
- ii. Discuss the effect of such problems on journalism.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

One of the attributes of a good reporter is a keen nose for news. He/she should be able to identify a newsworthy event or issue and go for it. Not only that, he/she should be able to go after it and gather the information with professional precision. In doing this, the reporter is expected to abide by the ethics of the journalistic profession. He/she is expected to be honest, thorough and fair. Unfortunately, in most African and developing

countries where there is free circulation of newspapers, a lot of ethical issues in the coverage of news events have been recorded. It is alleged (and in most cases, noticed) that they are lopsided in their news coverage. They either all usually carry between 80 and 100 percent news of events in urban areas to the neglect of rural occurrences, or pretend to be serving ‘all interests’ whereas not one percent of rural interest is represented. In Nigeria, for instance, it is estimated that about 70 percent of the populace live in rural areas, yet only about one or one and a half percent coverage is accorded them daily. The newspapers rarely get to the rural areas.

The reason behind this lopsidedness has been traced to a number of ethical crisis factors.

3.1.1 SYCOPHANCY

A sycophant is a “person who tries to win favour by flattering rich or powerful people (Okunna, 1997). Such excessive and insincere praise is a common ethical problem in journalism.

The sycophant journalist flatters political leaders, wealthy citizens and owners of media houses who are employers and have formidable powers over journalists. This is more glaring in the political sphere. Majority of the mass media in Nigeria, as in other developing countries, are owned by the government and as a result the media more often than not are praise singing the activities of government officials and government policies.

During elections, sycophancy leads to the abuse of the power of the mass media, as unethical journalists use the media to confer status and legitimacy on their favourite politicians, even when they lack legitimacy and do not deserve the praise heaped upon them.

Writing on 126 years of the Nigerian press in *Newswatch* special edition of October, 1985, Olatunji Dare noted that “between 1979 and 1983, many a journalist sold his souls and his craft to the highest political bidder or indeed to anyone who put up the bid”. Without exception, he observed, “government-owned newspapers became organs of whatever political party seemed likely to control the state in which they were published or the centre”.

Cases of sycophancy by Nigerian journalists again became glaring in the present political dispensation, to the extent that the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) on May 29, 2001 warned 10 erring broadcasting stations to desist from “furthering the political views of the owner state government to the detriment of opposition views, thereby mortgaging public trust as well as confidence of citizenry (Media Rights Monitor, 2001). This practice denies the public of the correct information, which is the duty of the journalist to give them.

3.1.2 CHARACTER ASSASSINATION

Closely related to sycophancy is the ethical problem of character assassination. While flattering favoured prominent and powerful people, the sycophant journalist could indulge in vilifying the opponents of such people.

An example of character assassination was the late Obarogie Ohonbamu’s accusation of the former Head of State, the late Gen. Murtala Muhammed of corruption and acquisition of ill-gotten wealth.

Ohonbamu, a senior lecturer in law at the University of Lagos and also the publisher of *African Spark* magazine published the allegation in his magazine. He was charged to court and towards the end of the trial he pleaded guilty. He was verbally reprimanded and set free (Uche: 1989).

When the press makes statements that damage a person’s reputation, the press is guilty of character assassination. Whereas there is no legal punishment for sycophancy, character assassination is both unethical and illegal; a journalist could face court action for defamation or damaging somebody’s reputation.

3.1.3 PRESSURE

Pressure is any force or influence, which causes a journalist to feel strongly compelled to act in a manner desirable to the source of such force or influence. This can be internal or external. Internal pressure emanates from within the organization in which the journalist works.

The publishers of a newspaper, for instance, could pressurize an editor to write an editorial in a particular way, or even request the editor to publish a canned editorial

written by the publisher or his surrogate. External pressure, on the other hand, comes from the wider community or society. These range from advertisers, politicians or even friends and families of journalists can constitute sources of this type of pressure.

Pressure can cause a journalist to be irresponsible or unethical if the source of the pressure compels the journalist to carry out actions that are contrary to a journalist's ethical principles.

3.1.4 AFGHANISTANISM

This is the practice of writing about far-away issues while shying away from tackling the problems at home. It originally applied to editorial writing, but has come to be applied to all forms of journalistic writing. Afghanistanism can be as a result of fear or lack of courage. Since charity should begin at home, if the mass media shy away from tackling serious local or national problems by pre-occupying themselves with harmless discussions of issues which are largely irrelevant to a majority of their audience, then the journalists who work in these media are irresponsible and unethical, failing in their duty which the society expects them to perform with courage and dedication.

3.1.5 BRIBERY

In journalism, the ethical problem of materialism is manifested in the form of bribery and acceptance of gifts. Ogunade (1997) observes that journalists for performing their normal duties of disseminating information usually accept money and other non-monetary gifts. These might compromise the integrity of journalists and media organizations.

In Nigeria, the commonest type of bribe in journalism is the so-called 'brown envelope' which is a monetary bribe handed out to an unethical journalist to pressurize him or her into doing what the giver wants. Once accepted, monetary bribes and other gifts tie the hands of journalist who then become incapable of being objectives in reporting events and issues involving people who give the gifts.

Objectivity is thus the first casualty in reporting when journalists succumb to the evils of materialism as they attempt to please people whose bribes they have accepted.

3.1.6 SENSATIONALISM

When a newspaper or any other mass medium presents news in a way designed to arouse a quick and excited reaction, it is said to be guilty of sensationalism. This type of reaction is evoked when a newspaper, for instance, seizes on the most sordid disgusting aspect to play up in its news story. Some newspapers and soft-sell magazines deliberately encourage this practice and thrive on it in Nigeria.

3.1.7 MOONLIGHTING

To make ends meet, journalists sometimes take two jobs, by working for competing employers. Moonlighting is the act of holding two different jobs simultaneously and being paid for both. This creates room for conflict of interest and divided loyalty, which constitute fertile grounds for unethical behaviour by journalists.

Again, objectivity is usually one casualty of this type of situation. Suppose a moonlighting journalist is required to write a negative story about his or her second employer. Such a journalist may not have the courage to carry out this assignment objectively and responsibly. Considering that objectivity and responsibility occupy a central position in journalistic performance, journalists who lack these two virtues could be considered as having been weighed in the balance and found wanting.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

Compare and contrast sycophancy and character assassination.

3.1.8 SELF-CENSORSHIP

This is a socially irresponsible and unprofessional act. It is a situation whereby a journalist believes that writing or publishing certain stories would be offensive to his or her employer or the government of the day and therefore refuses to write or publish the story, even without external pressure not to do so.

3.1.9 ADVERTORIAL

This is the practice of failing to differentiate and separate advertisements from editorial matters. It is unethical to pass an advertising material for editorial.

3.1.10 DECEPTION

Deception covers a wide range of practices, but at its heart is not being truthful with someone in order to get a news story. Some journalists practise deceit when they misrepresent themselves, go undercover or use a hidden camera or tape recorders. For example, consumer reporters commonly do this when they are doing price comparison. The absolutists would say no to this method. However, others would argue that there is nothing wrong if the method is used to get information so as to correct an abuse.

3.1.10 FAKERY

As observed by Ogunade (1986) one of major ethical issues confronting the media is fakery – the publishing of false stories. According to him, only the thoroughly unethical and unprofessional editor or reporter would knowingly publish falsehood as Lawrence Akapa (*Top News*) and Bop Opene (*Prime People*) did. Of course, both men paid the price as the Nigeria Union of Journalists promptly rose to the occasion, and nipped in the bud the dangerous development by blacklisting the erring newsmen. Also, according to *The Press*, a publication of the Nigerian Press Council, several complaints of false stories have been received and adjudicated by the council.

3.1.11 FREEBIES

Gifts given, either directly or indirectly, to reporters, editors and sub-editors, may be responsible for some of the unethical journalistic practices that have been levelled against the press. Most news makers are too keen on getting their pictures and their stories on the pages of the newspapers and usually ‘recruit’ reporters through gifts. This usually creates a conflict of interest, especially when the news maker is doing something wrong which must be reported. All reporters owe it a duty to shun these practices; even those not all reporters find freebies reprehensible. For nothing can compromise the sincerity of the press and those who run them than gifts, free travel and other special treatments.

3.1.12 INVASION OF PRIVACY

As has been aptly observed by Anton Checkhov, no one ever intends his/her personal life to be an open book. However, reporters, in their bid to gather stories for the newspaper or the newscast, tend to go overboard and forget the line that separates personal private

affairs and information that falls within the ambit of the public's right to know. Those whose personal lives have been affected by this deeply resent it. In the quest to make money, newspapers show no moral compunction and sensitivity to the agony of parents whose deformed new-born child is photographed in a hospital or private clinic and the picture published without their consent. Even though it is the responsibility of reporters to present information to the public, they must be conscious of the fact that some information are best left private because it would hurt the lives of the persons who get reported.

3.1.13 CHEQUEBOOK JOURNALISM

Chequebook journalism is commonly defined as the payment of money to a newsmaker for the privilege of quoting that newsmaker. Opinions are mixed on the ethical considerations involved with such an act. Some who have paid the price have reaped major career benefits, but sometimes, because of competition, this act can be undertaken rashly and this may have ethical consequences.

3.1.14 MISREPRESENTATION

This is another serious ethical problem. It can be as innocent as not identifying yourself and thus letting your source assume you are just another member of the public (as consumer reporters commonly do when they are doing price comparisons). It can also be as serious as misrepresenting yourself to a source as a police officer, a customer or some other official whose questions are more likely to be answered than those of a reporter. If you want to establish trust with your sources, you have to be absolutely straight and not pretend to be someone else.

It is unethical to steal or receive stolen information. Also, blackmailing a source to obtain information is also unethical.

3.2 ENFORCEMENT OF CODE OF ETHICS

Unlike law which has the machinery of state to ensure its enforcement, ethics do not have that privilege. A code of professional ethics is a set of laws – a table of do's and don'ts. Like all laws, they are meant to be obeyed by those for whom they are made. However, since ethics are voluntary, there is no hard-and-fast means by which their observance can

be enforced. This means that though there is a large body of ethics, the breach of them does not constitute a crime under any law but they are vital to the proper and efficient exercise of the profession, and consequently, the society. This leaves open a gap for unethical practices which, if unchecked, can affect the reputation of the profession.

This creates the need for strict enforcement of the code of ethics. Jakande (1989) observed that the enforcement of professional ethics in journalism can be effected by the professional bodies, media houses and the public. Besides, the role of the press council cannot be over emphasized.

Professional bodies act to check unethical practices in the capacity that journalists belong to these bodies and are bound by their rules and regulations; rules and regulations which would have been designed in sync with the code of ethics. By signing up as members, journalists agree to abide by the rules of the union and subject themselves to punishments meted by the union in the event of a breach. Punishments from the professional body may range from reprimands in minor cases to expulsion in severe cases, a situation that could negatively affect the career chances of the erring journalist. This would make him/her think deeply before engaging in any unethical practices.

Media houses also act as a conscience for the enforcement of the code of ethics. This is because these journalists work for a media house and the media houses can, as a condition for employment, enforce a strict adherence to the code of ethics.

The third enforcement agency is the public. The journalist writes to the public, and the organization can only survive on the back of public patronage. If there is a flagrant breach (in part or whole) of the code of ethics, this could lead to a loss in confidence and subsequently, patronage and this could jeopardize the journalists' career.

In Nigeria, the task of ensuring best practices in the journalistic profession among its practitioners is that of the Nigerian Press Council (NPC). The Nigerian Press Council is an autonomous body set up by Act No of 1992 and amended by Act No 60 of 1990 to promote high professional standards for the Nigerian press, and to deal with complaints emanating from members of the public about the conduct of the journalists in their

professional capacity or complaints from press about the conduct of persons or organizations towards the press.

The NPC Act provides it with a wide range of responsibilities to wit:

- Enquire into complaints about the press and the conduct of any person or organization towards the press,
- Research into contemporary press development and engage in updating press documentation,
- Review development likely to restrict the flow of information and advice on means aimed at remedying such development,
- Ensure the protection of the rights and privileges of journalists in the lawful performance of their professional duties, and
- Foster the achievement and maintenance of high professional standards by the Nigerian press.

In a submission on the limitations of the Nigerian Press Council, Bako (2000) believes that the acts establishing the Nigerian Press Council have not met the acceptable standards of a self-regulatory mechanism, pointing out that such provisions impede on press freedom as enshrined in the 1999 Constitution and other international human rights instruments.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In the performance of your duty as a journalist, you may mistakenly be a victim of some of the mentioned ethical problems. It is therefore your duty to be abreast of the problems and guard against them.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit has highlighted some of the ethical problems facing journalism in Nigeria. These include character assassination, pressure, Afghanistanism, bribery, moonlighting, self-censorship and advertorial.

6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Identify some ethical issues in Nigeria journalism and suggest likely causes of the problems and their solutions.

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MODULE SEVEN: ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS WRITING

UNIT 1: WRITING ADVERT COPY

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 Advertising Copy Writing
 - 3.1.2 Tips for Writing Advert Copy
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Advertising copy writing is a different form of writing from the other kinds of writing for the mass media (newspaper writing, broadcast media writing, etc) earlier treated in this course. Its purpose is to persuade and motivate. Despite the inherent differences, the precepts of good writing that are synonymous with other forms of media writing are prominent features of advertising copy writing – accuracy, clarity, efficiency, and precision. This unit will put you through the process of advertising copy writing and provide important tips that will help the beginner on his/her way to becoming an astute advertising copy writer.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit you should be able to:

- i. Demonstrate the difference between advertising copy writing and other forms of media writing, and
- ii. Explain the process of advert copy writing.

3.1 MAIN CONTENT

3.1.1 Advert Copy Writing

Advertising is based on the assumption that words have the power to produce a change – a change in thinking, attitudes, beliefs and, ultimately, behaviour. Advertising that does not accomplish this change or aid in accomplish it is worthless. The process of advertising copy writing is in many ways the same as the process of writing news. The copywriter must process information and put it in an acceptable form for its medium.

Like the newswriter, the advertising copy writer must conduct research before he/she starts to write. He must understand the product or service he/she is trying to sell and with this at the back of his/her mind, must decide which information is strong enough to use and what should be left out. The copywriter must choose the words and structure for the copy that best fit the product, media, and purpose for the advertising. The copywriter, also like the news writer, is subject to many editors – not the least of whom is the client who is paying for the advertising and whose ideas about advertising may differ radically from those of the copywriter.

Since the aim of advertising is to persuade and motivate, this implies that the advertising copywriter must in the practice of his/her profession exhibit creativity; an ability to use words to influence and motivate a change in pre-dispositions, opinions, attitudes and behaviour. Thus, in some respects, the process of advertising copywriting involves a bit more creativity than the process of newswriting. This is because highly innovative approaches for adverts are often effective, especially when products have established and well-rooted competition and when the purpose of the advertising is to gain consumer attention. This is not to say that advertising copy writer has the complete licence to write what they want when they want. This is because a copywriter must take copy through a variety of approval stages, a process that demands a great deal of research and discipline. The creative process is a part of the process of producing copy, but it is only a part.

Two universally accepted axioms are that an ad must be simple, and it must look and sound as if it's worth paying attention to. And, obviously, it must be complete -- it must contain all the information you want to convey. These axioms -- if indeed they are axioms -- spring from the fact that few ads are successful when these rules are ignored. Beyond that, clarity is essential. No matter how an ad is written, it must be understood and easy to read.

The artistry of advertising lies in the ability to manipulate symbols and ideas in order to inform and persuade people. As in any art form, there are no rules that can guide you in doing this, except to list those factors that seem to work most consistently. And yet, remember, some of the most successful ads are those that violate the rules.

It should be grammatical -- despite the fact that there are many examples of successful advertising that are clearly ungrammatical. A breach of grammatical rules, however, should be deliberate, and designed to serve a specific purpose. The rules of grammar are not arbitrary, nor are they engraved in stone. But the purpose of the rules of grammar is consistency, understanding and clarity. Unless there is a conscious reason to do otherwise, copy should be grammatically sound. Writing is not the manipulation of words -- it's the expression of ideas. Words, grammar and punctuation are merely the tools and devices we use to express ideas most clearly. To think of copy as a configuration of words is the same as thinking of a symphony as a configuration of notes.

The Limits of Copywriting

The limits of copywriting are essentially those of the medium. You can't write 10 minutes of copy for a 30-second radio spot. The mechanics of writing for one medium are too infrequently translatable into another medium. You can't put 50 words of copy on a billboard alongside a high-speed highway and expect the message to be read.

And yet there are times when originality, imagination and skill dictate that all rules be violated. Fifty or 100 words on that billboard may be just the ticket if the headline is something like, "There are not enough words to describe ... " and you don't really expect people to read the text.

Elements of a Good Copy

An advertising copy that includes at least the following elements might be expected to be good:

- **Attention.** In the clamour and clutter of sight and sound, and the competition for the reader's eye, ear and heart, it's imperative that you compete successfully for attention. There should be some element in the ad -- whether it's the headline or the illustration or the layout -- that attracts the eye or ear and arouses sufficient interest to warrant attention to the message. And the copy itself must sustain that attention.

- **Promise of Benefit.** Something in the ad should promise the reader or the listener some benefit that will accrue from accepting the ad's premises.
- **Credibility.** The premises of the ad must be believable. (On the other hand, do you really believe that Exxon put a tiger in your tank? But it sold a lot of gas.)
- **Persuasiveness.** The ad should be persuasive. It should sell or generate the need for the service you offer, and project your service as superior. (On the other hand, what do those Nike shoe ads say that persuade you? But they sell a lot of athletics shoes.)
- **Interest.** Once you've captured the reader's attention you've got to say or show something to sustain interest, or the message will not be heard.
- **Desire.** The ad must generate a desire to accept what you have to say about what you have to offer, to want to do business with you.
- **Action.** The ultimate aim of an ad is to generate action on the part of the reader or listener; to cause the reader to want to do something that you want him or her to do, such as buy your service, or, in the case of professional services marketing, it might be to either generate an inquiry or accept a selling situation. On the other hand, just getting a reader to think about you in a specific way is an action, too. That's what institutional advertising is about.

The Advertising Copy Writing Process

The process of writing advertising copy begins with a recognition that all humans have certain needs and desires. Effective advertising appeals to these needs and desires in a way that makes people act positively to a product or an idea. We live in a consumer-oriented society in which the list of needs and desires is a fairly long one. The first step in producing advertising copy is to examine some of the needs and desires of people in a general. Advertising scholars try to fit these needs and desires within the context of the Maslow Hierarchy of Needs but these needs, according to Stovall (2006), include the following:

- Food and drink
- Shelter, security and comfort
- Sex, intimacy and social contact
- Independence, privacy, self-fulfilment, and power

- Stimulation.
- Acquisition

Before we can delve into the discussing the hows, do's and don'ts of copy writing, we have established that effective copy is a product of research. The information that research is embarked upon to provide includes information on:

- The audience
 - Demographics (age, gender, income, marital status, education, etc)
 - Psychographics (Attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, etc)
- The product
 - What the product does
 - Physical characteristics of the product
 - History of the product
 - Makers of the product
- The advertising situation, and
- The competition.

Copy Structure

The purpose of a headline is to attract attention and to bring the reader to the ad. A headline that offers nothing to the reader in terms of either benefit or interest may effectively mask the cleverest ad, and one that's offering the most useful service. The text should spring from the headline, and follow through the promise it offers. It should explain and clarify the facts and claims. It should be a logical progression of ideas, covering all of the points you mean to cover, even if it's done only with an illustration.

Copy can appeal to the intellect and reason, or it can appeal to the emotions, or it can do both. The text of an ad designed to cause action should lead naturally to a call for action. What precisely do you want your reader to do? Call now? File for future reference? Send in a coupon? Send for a brochure? Remember something? Experienced copywriters know that the call for action works. It's not so much that when readers are told to do something they do it. It's that when they're not told to do something they're less likely to do it.

The copy usually ends with a logo and a signature for identification and impression, and sometimes also a slogan.

The Copy Platform

Before writing the copy, it helps to have a clear idea of which information gathered to use and how. This problem is one that most copywriters encounter. This dilemma is usually solved by the copy platform. The professional copywriter usually develops a concept, sometimes called the copy platform, which is a clear statement of the copy objectives, focus and approach. This is an attempt to articulate, as clearly and as simply as possible, what the copy shall say and how it shall say it. Shall it be extensive or brief? What tone shall it take? Shall it be breezy and light, or formal? What message shall it try to convey? What is the rationale behind the approach?

The purpose of this copy platform, whether it's specifically articulated on paper or merely understood in the copywriter's mind, is to serve as a guide to actually writing the copy. Many copywriters present it to their clients for a clear understanding of how the ad will come out.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

What particular role does the copy platform play in the advert copy writing process?

3.1.2 Tips for Writing Advertising Copy

There are several tips from several professional and seasoned copywriters as to how to go about effective copy writing. In this section, different tips from different professionals will be provided. The goal is to give you insight on important points to note when you are saddled with the responsibility of writing copy for advertisements. These guidelines are not cast in stone; they however provide a pathway of some sorts for the beginner copywriter.

To write a compelling copy, the following points are worthy of note:

Know your audience. The first aspect in any kind of writing is to know the audience. One doesn't write about the molecular make-up of heat and cold to a kindergarten class. But, a recipe for Coca Cola can talk about the same process in a different language.

Know your topic. As a copy writer, sometimes it's necessary to write about topics that are unfamiliar. If you don't know your topic – find out! Research skills are critical. If the search conducted is Internet-based, access as many different sites as possible, then take the most interesting or informative sections of the information found and re-create fresh copy from what has been learned. Be extremely careful not to copy word for word. This is plagiarism.

Determine the goal of the writing. Do the words you're in writing want to compel the reader to buy a certain product? Or does the copy want to compel the reader to lean toward a political party? Whatever it is, the writer must know the outcome of the writing and create an attraction toward it.

Attract the reader through features. The writer must know what the key features are about the product or idea about which he or she is writing. Does the toothpaste you're writing about create the whitest teeth on the planet? Then write about that. Find the greatest feature or the element that sets the product apart from other products like it and focus on it.

Make an offer. Once you've determined your goal and figured out the feature(s), it's time to make a reasonable offer for the product. The best-tasting, most smile-whitening toothpaste is just N150 for a limited time. Or maybe it's buy one get one free – or if the consumer's smile isn't whiter in three weeks they get their money back.

Letter (2009) provides the following tips:

Talk to the reader, the listener or the viewer. Don't announce, don't preach. And don't get carried away by words and lose sight of the message.

Write short sentences, with easy and familiar words. You want the reader or listener to do the least possible work to get your message. Even when you're talking to very bright people, communication is of the essence, not language manipulation.

Don't waste words. Whether you use three or a thousand words, make sure each is exactly the one you need. Make sure each word is exactly the right one to convey your meaning.

Try to avoid being formal. You're talking to people as people. You're not writing an insurance contract for lawyers. An ad is information and persuasion.

Use the present tense and the active voice. ("All professional copywriters have extensive experience in preparing material," rather than " ... extensive experience in the preparation of material."). If you do want a formal style, it should be deliberate, and you should have a clear idea of why you are using it.

Punctuate correctly. Punctuate to help the reader, and not merely to follow specific rules. The less punctuation the better, within the bounds of clarity, but don't be afraid to use it if it helps the flow of an idea. Don't be afraid to use contractions and personal pronouns, just as you would in chatting informally with a prospect. After all, that's what you're trying to accomplish in your ad.

Watch out for clichés. They turn some people off. More significantly, people don't hear them as they pass mindlessly off the tongue without bothering to visit the mind, and the point you're trying to make is lost (again, unless you're doing it deliberately). Try to use bright, cheerful language that keeps the reader alert and maintains attention. To be enthusiastic and exciting is to be well along on the way to being interesting.

For Copp (2009), good advertising copy can be achieved by adhering to the following guidelines:

Use other ads for inspiration. If you are new to writing ad copy a great way to get inspiration and find ideas is to look at other ads. Read through as many ads as you can find for both similar and unrelated products. Some of the ads will immediately catch your attention – these will leave you wanting to know more or make you interested in the product or service they are advertising. Write down all of the similar traits in the ads that you find compelling as well as the traits of the ads that did not inspire you or make a

good impression. You will then have a list of strategies and ideas you can use to make your ads more compelling and some ideas of what you should avoid.

Determine Your Goal. Before you start writing your ad, decide what you want your ad to accomplish. Not all ads are designed to sell a product and some ads are very vague and never clearly state their purpose. After you decide the purpose of your ad you will be able to write an ad that compels readers to take your desired course of action.

Reveal the benefits of your product or service. Effective ads usually contain specific reasons why a product is beneficial or how it will help to solve a problem. Make a list of all of the benefits that your product offers and all the positive features before you write your ad. These aspects should be the focus of your ad because most readers will want to know how purchasing your product will benefit them. Be as specific as possible with this information, including descriptions, statistics and concrete evidence, if it is available.

Make your product or service stand out among competitors. If your product or business has a lot of competition or highly successful competition, your ad may also benefit from highlighting the positive differences between your product and the competition. Mentioning your competition outright is not always a good idea, but comparing your product's superior features to other features common amongst your competition will give readers a reason to make a purchase.

Appeal to your target audience. The last and perhaps most important aspect of writing ad copy is to identify and appeal to your target audience. Before you write your ad, decide exactly what types of people are likely to buy your product or be interested in your web site. You can then write an ad that appeals to the emotions and impulses of this demographic, which will be more successful than an ad written for a generic audience. You should also include any perks or incentives that your customer will receive after taking action such as free services or information, support, or consulting. If you are selling a product, stating your return policy and other information that will instill confidence in your buyers is also beneficial.

Quinn (2003) adds the following:

- i. **Be as concise as possible.** Keep sentences short, saving the academics for industry and trade writing. Try to write just enough to make your point, leaving the audience interested in or willing to buy the product.
- ii. **Try to empathize with your audience.** By putting yourself in their shoes, you can write copy with an eye towards their needs and desires. Don't concentrate on jargon they may not understand; write more about the benefits of the product and how it will make your target audience's lives better. Consumers value their time and money, and stressing how reading your ad will save them either of these commodities will greatly improve your chances of finding a new customer or client.
- iii. **Avoid clichés.** A cliché in advertising can act like a disease, crippling the impact of the ad. They aren't appreciated by the savvy consumer who views them as a cheap trick that only detracts from the effectiveness of the advertisement's message.
- iv. **Don't "stuff" the wording with lyrical prose** that adds nothing to the content of the ad. Consumers today want to know the benefits of a product right away, and draping the ad in fancy wording or poetry will only bore them and cause them to look elsewhere. Whether you're writing copy for your own business or someone else's, your goal should be to entice the reader with the product, not impress them with your writing ability. The latter may briefly catch the audience's eye, but it won't interest them in what's being sold.
- v. One small but important step many copywriters sometimes forget to do is **proofread the ad.** Even tiny mistakes in spelling or grammar can be glaring, leaving the consumer to wonder if the company really knows what it's talking about or if they actually care about what they're selling. A simple proofreading when you're finished writing can save you from a massive headache later on.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Writing advertising copy calls for a high degree of intelligence, hard work, creativity, resourcefulness and competitiveness by the copywriter. It is not a job that everyone can do, but it is one that is rewarding for those who are successful at it. To be successful at it though, requires that the copywriter adhere to certain rules and regulations.

5.0 SUMMARY

Advertising is a challenging and rewarding professional venture. The fact that it involves attempting to change perception, opinion and attitude and motivating action makes it imperative that any attempt at it must be creatively persuading. This unit has attempted to provide a few guidelines as to how the starter copywriter can achieve this.

6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment

1. Mention and explain the tips for copy writing provided by Copp (2003).
2. List the information that research provides for the copywriter

7.0 References/Further Reading

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UNIT 2: WRITING FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1.1 Public Relations
 - 3.1.2 Tools for Public Relations (Press Release, Newsletters)
 - 3.1.3 Tips for Writing Press Releases
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Reading

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Public Relations (PR) is a management function that helps organizations to communicate and relate appropriately with the community in which they operate. The objective of public relations is to ensure that the community understands and empathises with the organization. This means that any attempt at writing for public relations must be targeted and designed in such a way as to achieve this aim. This unit is designed to provide the beginner with insight into the world of public relations and the different tools available to the PR writer.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you are expected to:

1. Identify the qualities of public relations writing,
2. Explain the different tools of public relations, and
3. Demonstrate how to write press releases.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1.1 Public Relations

The British Institute of Public Relations (BIPR) defined public relations as a planned, deliberate and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its publics. PR is all about communication and much of this interaction is in the written form, including the initial pitch and the resulting coverage. Therefore, the ability to clearly and concisely articulate your thoughts in writing is particularly important. There is an art to writing for public relations that comes with

experience and prolonged media relations. With so many press releases and pitches going across the desks of reporters on any given day, it takes a lot to stand out and get noticed. A successful PR campaign is brought about by careful messaging and well thought-out strategy. Emails and press releases must be drafted in order to reflect this messaging. These pieces are often part of the make-or-break point that determines the likelihood of a resulting story and therefore must contain succinct, interesting writing. Writing for PR entails attracting the audience, selling the idea of your client, and giving them an interesting news hook.

Key Terms and Concepts

The following are some key terms and concepts about public relations and public relations writing that the student should understand as he or she works through this chapter:

- **Publics** — The PR writers must think in terms of “publics,” the groups to whom he or she may be directing a communication.
- **Four-step Process of Public Relations** — These four steps are Planning, Research, Communication and Evaluation. Any public relations campaign, large or small, involves these four steps to some degree. In some organizations, this is an elaborate process, while in others the process is fairly informal, but it occurs no matter where the campaign is taking place.
- **News Release** — The good news release is essentially a good news story in a public relations suit.
- **Intents and Purposes** — Like the advertising copywriter, the PR writer must have a good idea what the writing he or she produces is supposed to do. The intent of the writing must be firmly in mind as the writer begins the project. Otherwise, the writing will be inefficient and ineffective. Intents and purposes are discussed in some detail in the “Letters” section of the chapter, but they apply to other parts of it as well.

Key Functions of the Public Relations Practitioner

As a professional in the field of public relations, the variety of activities that one engages in is enormous. On the other hand, that variety requires that you be skilled in many areas

and be able to deal with many differing and sometimes conflicting assignments. Some of the expected functions of the PR practitioner include:

- **Handle communication with the external publics of the organization.** These publics include the government, regulatory agencies, buyers/users of the product/service offered by the organization, members of the news media on whom the organization depends to distribute its information, and the public at large. These ones can be reached through advertorials, press releases, publicity stunts, etc
- **Handle communication with the internal publics of the organization.** This group of people include employees, shareholders, independent contractors and suppliers.
- **Counsel management and other organization employees on how best to deal with important publics.** The point of PR practice is to achieve best practice on the part of the organization, and mutual understanding from its publics. The PR practitioner can advise the organization on the different ways to achieve best practice.
- **Work with the news media to get information about the organization.** This is perhaps the most important function of the PR practitioner – media relations or liaison. This involves gathering information from the organization and giving to the media for distribution, or setting up meetings between the media and news sources within the organization, or advising the organization’s hierarchy on media relations.
- **Help to produce public functions and events.** Events are one of the means by which an organization can get media mileage. It is the responsibility of the PR practitioner to organize events and special functions that would help put the organization in the news for good reasons.
- **Research.** PR activities and plans start and end with research. The PR practitioner must find out everything possible about their client, the problems or opportunities being faced, and the publics that need to be addressed. This process of information may be simple or complex, but it is necessary for effective practice.
- **Planning.** PR is a strategic and deliberate activity. This means that it is planned and designed to achieve set objectives. A good PR plan would help the

organization know what public it needs to communicate with and how best to do so. Planning involves setting measurable impact and output objectives for the various communications with the organization's publics.

- **Communication.** This is perhaps the most important function of the PR practitioner. According to Stovall (2006), it involves putting information into the proper form.
- **Evaluation.** This involves measuring the extent to which the objective of the PR activity has been achieved.

3.1.2 Tools of Public Relations

There are different tools available to the public relations practitioner that helps him ply his or her trade. Jefkins (1988) identifies some of these tools to include:

- Advertorials
- Press Luncheons
- Press Releases
- Press Conferences
- Special Events
 - ❖ Exhibitions
 - ❖ Facility Visits
 - ❖ Annual General Meetings
 - ❖ Product launch
 - ❖ Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

List five tools of modern-day public relations practice.

Public Relations Writing

Public relations practitioners do a lot of writing. They are responsible for the production of informational materials (some of which have been identified above) and thus are expected to be wordsmiths.

Gathering information and structuring it for specific formats is the basic process for all writing. Public relations writing and news writing are sometimes the same. But the differences between public relations writing and news writing are primarily differences created by the intent inherent in public relations writing. A public relations writer must bear in mind a complex set of purposes and interests while producing any piece of copy for any particular publication; must understand that his work is targeted to specific audiences; and must justify his work by ensuring that it fulfills its purpose.

Essential to every PR writing is the understanding of the purpose of the communication and the public for the communication. This implies research and an ability to write and use language effectively.

It is perhaps apt at this juncture to highlight that the press has a love-hate relationship with P.R practitioners, at once needing them to find stories and at the same time loathing trying to get past the spin. If you present information in a clear, interesting, and concise manner with attention to news value, then you are far more likely to get the coverage you want from a media organization.

3.1.3 Tips for Writing the Press Release

The most common - and yet misunderstood - tool of public relations is the press release (also called news release). It is one of the best ways to get a little publicity for the organization. The press release is a written summary of your announcement that is disseminated to a targeted audience. Most media organizations that provide news (local television, radio, and newspaper) do not have the staff to go out and dig up every single thing that is going on in town. So if you have something that you want people to know about, you need to alert the media yourself. And this is just what a press release is for. Typically, a press release is designed to inform the media of your message. This document should be written to appeal to newsroom editors and show producers, so keep flowery language to a minimum and the key, newsy details foremost.

Also, writing a news release guarantees you nothing. News outlets literally receive hundreds of news releases daily and most are never read. Be eye-catching, but avoid clichés, to stand out from the crowd. Polish your writing and, if possible, take a class in news writing. Watch the news and see what makes good news.

To determine if something is news, ask the following questions

- **Is it important?** Will your press release alert the media to something that will affect the daily lives of its audience? For example, if you are working with a department of transportation, you may want to let residents know that a significant section of highway may be closed for repairs. The power company may need to let customers know that there will be a significant rate increase or a hospital may want to let everyone know that a nursing strike has ended.
- **Is it current or timely?** News always needed to be current, but especially now that we live in a 24-hour news cycle. If you need to make an announcement, do it while the story is fresh.
- **Is it local?** Also called proximity in journalism studies, the news in Lagos is probably not going to report on a story affecting people in Kaduna
- **Prominence: Does it involve well-known people?** If your organization has partnered with a celebrity or prominent public figure, your news quotient just went up.
- **Is there conflict?** Everyone loves a bit of drama, especially in the media. Capitalize on today's sensational news culture and don't be afraid of invoking a bit of controversy - especially if you're in a position to help control the story.
- **Are you providing an update on a current news story?** The news loves of a follow-up on popular stories.
- **Does it invoke emotions?** Think children and pets. People love stories about children and pets. They also love stories that just plain tick you off. Think about the stories that pull on your heart or touch a nerve. Is your story one of these?

Make sure your news release falls into at least one category before you send it out. The more categories it falls into, the greater probability you'll get the word out. Remember, the key word in a news release is news. By following these basic principles, not only will

it help your public relations efforts go smoothly, but it will help you develop a reputation within the news media of being a solid source of great content.

One of three things will happen when you submit a press release: it will be discarded, the organization will send someone to follow up, or the release will be run in the media (either edited or as is). The key to avoiding the first fate is to write an effective press release that is mindful of news values and what an editor (even radio and television news organizations employ editors) would deem important. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you write your press releases.

1. **Show news value.** The fact that you are having a grand opening will probably earn you a place in the business notes, if your community has them, but it is usually not considered "real" news. You have to show why your store is new, timely, or applicable to the generality of lives. Will you be selling an innovative product? Are you the first in your community to offer a particular service? These are things that spark interest and warrant an actually news brief, or even a reported story.

2. **Write in a journalistic style.** The typical journalist writes in what is known as an "inverted pyramid." The most important information goes first. So if you are selling an innovative product, start out with that detail to grab the attention of the editor. You get the basic information out first, and the details go at the end. Information about your company is one of those details that belong toward the end.

3. **Avoid being too "salesy."** While you are writing a press release, and the editor expects that you are not going to give the other side of the story, try not to be too overt in plugging your company. If you focus more on the objective and practical reasons that your product or company is worth covering, and do so with brevity (keep a press release to a page in length), you are more likely to be taken seriously.

4. **Provide people that the media can talk to.** In addition to having contact information displayed in the header of your press release, it never hurts to include a quote from a manager, owner or even an employee or customer. Just make sure that you quote someone who is willing to comment, so that if the news organization wants further

details, they have a name, other than the P.R. contact, to start with. Plus, having a quote means that your story can be used "as is" to plug a small hole in that the editor might need to fill.

Final tips

- Make sure to put contact information at the top of your press release including name, phone number (cell phone number as well, in case a reporter on deadline is trying to reach you) and email address. If you put your contact information at the bottom of the release and it's a two-pager and the two pages somehow get separated, you might be losing out on a valuable opportunity.
- Indicate "For Immediate Release" at the top of your release unless it is embargoed. That way, media know they can begin using the information right away.
- Never fail to identify date of the release and the name, signature and designation of the official issuing it
- If you don't have a company letterhead, make sure to include your logo on your press release along with your company address, phone number and Web site.
- At the end of your release, don't forget to indicate there is no more information to be provided in the release by using an end mark, typically, three pound signs (###) centred on the page after your copy.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Public relations work is mostly writing. Public relations writing requires a versatility on the part of the writer that is demanded in few other jobs. This implies that it involves intelligence, skill and hard work.

5.0 SUMMARY

The PR practitioner is as important to the success of the organization as the advert copy writer. The work of the PR man/woman is to ensure that the opinion and perception that people have of a company is positive, and he/she has different tools, which if deployed efficaciously and appropriately, can help achieve this objective. This unit has attempted to show the PR practitioner can use the available tools to achieve the desired objectives.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

You are the Public Relations Manager of an organization and your organization is launching a new product into the market. Write a press release to this effect for onward passage to media organizations for transmission.

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