



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

**SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**COURSE CODE: JLS 721**

**COURSE TITLE: NEWS REPORTING**



**COURSE  
GUIDE**

**JLS 721**

**NEWS REPORTING**

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## **Introduction**

### **Welcome to JLS 721: News Reporting.**

This course is a three-credit unit course for postgraduate students in journalism. The materials have been developed with the Nigerian context in view. This Course guide gives you an overview of the course. It also provides you with information on the organization and requirements of the course.

### **Course Aims**

The aims are to help you to understand the role of the journalist in the society, attributes of a reporter and how reports are compiled for both the print and broadcast media. These broad aims will be achieved by:

- (i) Introducing you to journalism, and the basic principles of news reporting and writing.
- (ii) Demonstrating how these principles can be applied.
- (iii) Acquainting you with the legal and ethical rules guiding your job as a reporter.

### **Course Objectives**

To achieve the aims set out above, JLS 721 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:

- a) Define what news is
- b) State the roles of the journalist in the society
- c) List the attributes of the reporter
- d) Explain some theories of the press
- e) Identify sources of news and how to gather news
- f) Write news stories for the print and broadcast media
- g) Understand Internet journalism
- h) Know some laws guiding you job as a journalist
- i) Differentiate between ethics and law
- j) Discuss the code of ethics for Nigerian journalists
- k) Discuss some ethical problems in Nigerian journalism

## Working Through This Course

To complete the course, you are required to read the study units and other related materials. You will also need to undertake practical exercises for which you need a pen, a note – book, and other materials that will be listed in this guide. The exercises are to aid you in understanding the concepts being presented. At the end of each unit, you will be required to submit written assignments for assessment purposes. At the end of the course, you will write a final examination.

## Course Materials

The major materials you will need for this course are:

- (i) Course guide.
- (ii) Study 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.

## Study Units

There are 30 units (of six modules) in this course. They are listed below:

### Module 1     Role of the Journalist in Society

- Unit 1:        The Reporter and Journalism
- Unit 2:        Attributes of a Journalist
- Unit 3:        Gathering the News
- Unit 4:        Theories of the Press
- Unit 5:        Journalistic Terminologies

### Module 2     Print Journalism

- Unit 1: News and News Judgment
- Unit 2: Rudiments of News Story
- Unit 3: The Lead
- Unit 4: The Body
- Unit 5: Word Economy

### Module 3 Broadcast Journalism

- Unit 1: Broadcast Style Book
- Unit 2: Preparing Broadcast Copy
- Unit 3: Writing for the Ear: Five Principles
- Unit 4: How to Make Your Copy Sound
- Unit 5: Interviewing

### Module 4 Online Journalism

- Unit 1: What is the Net?
- Unit 2: Computer-Assisted Journalism
- Unit 3: Navigating the Net
- Unit 4: Using the Browser
- Unit 5: Legal Pitfalls on the Internet

### Module 5 The Journalist and the Law

- Unit 1: The Concept of Press Freedom
- Unit 2: Regulation of the Mass Media
- Unit 3: Disclosure of Source of Information
- Unit 4: Contempt of Court
- Unit 5: Hints on Court Reporting

### Module 6 The Ethical Journalist

- Unit 1: What is Ethics
- Unit 2: Ethics and Journalism
- Unit 3: Codes of Journalistic Ethics
- Unit 4: The Nigerian Press Council
- Unit 5: Ethical Issues in Nigerian Journalism

### Textbooks and References

Certain books have been recommended in the course. You may wish to purchase them for further reading.

## **Assessment File**

An assessment file and a marking scheme will be made available to you. In the assessment file, you will find details of the works you must submit to your tutor for marking. There are two aspects of the assessment of this course; the tutor marked and the written examination. The marks you obtain in these two areas will make up your final marks. The assignment must be submitted to your tutor for formal assessment in accordance with the deadline stated in the presentation schedule and the Assignment file. The work you submit to your tutor for assessment will count for 30% of your total score.

### **Tutor Marked Assignment (TMAs)**

You will have to submit a specified number of the (TMAs). Every unit in this course has a tutor marked assignment. You are required to attempt all the questions, and you will be assessed on all of them but the best four performances from the (TMAs) will be used for your 30% grading. When you have completed each assignment, send it together with a Tutor Marked Assignment form, to your tutor. Make sure each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline for submissions. If for any reason, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor for a discussion on 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 will be a test of three hours. All areas of the course will be examined. Find time to read the unit all over before your examination. The final examination will attract 70% of the total course grade. The examination will consist of questions, which reflects the kinds of self assessment exercises and tutor marked assignment you have previously encountered. And all aspects of the course will be assessed. You should use the time between completing the last unit, and taking the examination to revise the entire course.

## **Course Marking Scheme**

The following table lays out how the actual course mark allocation is broken down.

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Marks</b>
Assignments 1-4 (the best four of all the assignments submitted)	Four assignments, marked out of 10% totaling 30%
Final Examination	70% of overall course score
Total	100% of course score

### **Presentation Schedule**

The dates for submission of all assignments will be communicated to you. You will also be told the date of completing the study units and dates for examinations.

### **Course Overview and Presentation Schedule**

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Title of work</b>	<b>Weeks Activity</b>	<b>Assessment (End of Unit)</b>
Course Guide Module 1	<b>ROLE OF THE JOURNALIST IN SOCIETY</b>		
Unit 1	The Reporter and Journalism	Week 1	Assignment 1
2	Attributes of a Journalist	Week 1	Assignment 2
3	Gathering the News	Week 2	Assignment 3
4	Theories of the Press	Week 2	Assignment 4
5	Journalistic Terminologies	Week 2	Assignment 5
Module 2	<b>PRINT JOURNALISM</b>		
1	News and News Judgment	Week 3	Assignment 1
2	Rudiments of News Story	Week 4	Assignment 2
3	The Lead	Week 4	Assignment 3
4	The Body	Week 4	Assignment 4
5	Word Economy	Week 5	Assignment 5
Module 3	<b>BROADCAST JOURNALISM</b>		
1	Broadcast Style Book	Week 6	Assignment 1
2	Preparing Broadcast Copy	Week 7	Assignment 2
3	Writing for the Ear: Five Principles	Week 8	Assignment 3

4	How to Make Your Copy Sound	Week 9	Assignment 4
5	Interviewing	Week 9	Assignment 5
Module 4	<b>ONLINE JOURNALISM</b>		
1	What is the Net?	Week 10	Assignment 1
2	Computer-Assisted Journalism	Week 10	Assignment 2
3	Navigating the Net	Week 11	Assignment 3
4	Using the Browser	Week 11	Assignment 4
5	Legal Pitfalls on the Internet	Week 11	Assignment 5
Module 5	<i>THE JOURNALIST AND THE LAW</i>		
1	The Concept of Press Freedom	Week 12	Assignment 1
2	Regulation of the Mass Media	Week 12	Assignment 2
3	Disclosure of Source of Information	Week 12	Assignment 3
4	Contempt of Court	Week 13	Assignment 4
5	Hints on Court Reporting	Week 13	Assignment 5
Module 6	<b>THE ETHICAL JOURNALIST</b>		
1	What is Ethics?	Week 14	Assignment 1
2	Ethics and Journalism	Week 14	Assignment 2
3	Codes of Journalistic Ethics	Week 14	Assignment 3
4	The Nigerian Press Council	Week 15	Assignment 4
5	Ethical Issues in Nigerian Journalism	Week 15	Assignment 5
	Revision	1	
	Examination	1	
	Total	17	

### How to get the most from this Course

You will be required to study the units on your own. However, you may arrange to meet with your tutor for tutorials on an optional basis at the study

centre. Also, you can organize interactive sessions with your course mates.

## **Tutors and Tutorials**

Information relating to the tutorials will be provided at the appropriate time. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must take your tutor-marked assignments to the study centre well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible.

Do not hesitate to contact your tutor if you need help. Contact your tutor if: you do not understand any part of the study units or the assigned readings; you have difficulty with the exercises; you have a question or problem with an assignment, with your tutor's comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment. You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face-to-face contact with your tutor and ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem encountered in the course of your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussion actively.

## **Summary**

The course guide gives you an overview of what to expect in the course of this study. The course teaches you the basic principles of news reporting and writing, and how these principles can be applied. It also acquaints you with the legal and ethical rules guiding your job as a reporter.

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

**MAIN  
COURSE**

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## **MODULE 1**

- Unit 1 The Reporter and Journalism
- Unit 2 Attributes of a Reporter
- Unit 3 Gathering the News
- Unit 4 Theories of the Press
- Unit 5 Journalistic Terminologies

### **UNIT I THE REPORTER AND JOURNALISM**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 What is Journalism?
  - 3.2 Functions of the Press
  - 3.3 The Reporter
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **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.

#### **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; and
- iii) Explain the functions of a reporter.

#### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

##### **3.1 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 and magazines. However journalism has expanded in meaning and scope, to become the means by which you disseminate news and views, and by so doing formed itself into a limb of social awareness; assuming an ethical dimension and to some extent, requires legal accountability for its performance. The journalist, in the performance of his or her duties, has to contend with various legal and ethical issues.

### **3.2 Functions of the Press**

The press has a four - fold function to perform:

To inform: 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.

To instruct: This function refers to the educational dimension. Designing messages primarily to reach a target group.

To entertain: Messages are designed primarily to amuse and help readers to relax

To merchandise: This is the selling function of the press. Messages are designed primarily to persuade the target group to purchase certain products.

### **3.3 The Reporter**

In the performance of these functions, the key personality is the reporter: he/she chronicles events as they happen and he 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 disasters or accidents, demonstrations and other happenings or developments, which either make or explain the news (Alao: 1992).

It must be noted that in 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 and aviation beats, 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.

## **Self Assessment Exercise 1.1**

Identify the role of the reporter in the society.

### **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 and his functions.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The reporter occupies an enviable place in journalism. He is the one that records and reports the events of the day. 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 the beat.

### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

- a) Name ten beats that a reporter can be assigned to.
- b) With specific examples from Radio/TV Stations of your choice, explain the functions of the press in your society.

### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

- Alao, Dayo (1992): *News Reporting*, Lagos, Unique Publications, p. 23-24.
- Sonaïke Femi, (1987): *Fundamental of News Reporting*, Ikeja, John West Publications Ltd.

## UNIT 2 ATTRIBUTES OF A REPORTER

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 Attributes of a Reporter
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

As earlier mentioned in unit one, the reporter occupies an important place in news reporting. 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 report. As such, a reporter must possess certain attributes for him/her to function properly.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- i) Identify or define who a good reporter is; and
- ii) Mention some attributes of a good reporter.

### 3.0 MAIN BODY

#### 3.1 Attributes of a Reporter

The following are some of the attributes of a reporter:

**Nose for news:** A reporter lives on news, he must have an instinct for news, and that is, he should be able to identify a newsworthy event. He should be able to generate news from anyone no matter how important or insignificant that person is.

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

**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. Though you can afford to be ruthless, remorseless in condemning unfair happenings in feature or editorial writings, news reporting differs; what the listeners or readers want in news is fact and not your opinion or emotional reaction.

**Perseverance:** As a reporter you need to persevere and go the 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 it. 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 establishing 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 an 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 opted to go 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 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 practice it. You should keep abreast of the ethics of the journalism profession and also obey the ethics.

**Versatility:** As a reporter you must have knowledge of the beat you are assigned to cover. Also, you need to know about the community where you are operating.

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, neat and stay intellectually alert, optimistic and adaptable.

### **Self Assessment Exercise 2.1**

Discuss five major attributes of a reporter.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Journalism is more than knowing how to write news. To be a reporter calls for certain innate traits that must be mixed with the acquired ones. The attributes highlighted are essential for effective news reporting.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

Your profession as a reporter calls for certain attributes which include good educational background, ability to exercise restraint, speed and accuracy, good sense for news, wide range of knowledge, intelligence, imagination, punctuality, reliability, occupational aids among others.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

A friend of yours who wants to be a reporter has approached you for advice. List ten qualities of a good reporter to him or her.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Alao, Dayo (1992): *News Reporting*, Lagos; Unique Publications p. 23-24.

Mencher, Melvin (2000): *News Reporting and Writing* 8<sup>th</sup> (ed) Boston, McGraw Hill.

Sonaike Femi, (1987): *Fundamental of News Reporting*, Ikeja, John West Publications Ltd.

## **UNIT 3     GATHERING THE NEWS**

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  - 3.2 Calls and Contacts
  - 3.3 Tip Off
  - 3.4 Other Mass Media
  - 3.5 Chasing the Facts
  - 3.6 Tools for the Job
  - 3.7 Note-Taking
  - 3.8 Make Inquiries
  - 3.9 Dealing with People
  - 3.10 Be Fair
  - 3.11 Be Thorough
  - 3.12 Who to Ask and Where to Look
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 Reference/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Newsgathering is the process of, or the art of collecting raw materials for reporting. It is an important aspect of news reporting. How a reporter gathers news 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; and
- ii) Explain how to generate ideas for news stories.

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

#### **3.1 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 photographers, answer-

ing 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 newswriting 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 such as 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 newspaper, with more spectacular and exclusive stories.

Some materials meant for a newspaper story, which are still referred to as *copy* can be gathered via the telephone. A good deal of checking and preparation can be done in the newsroom, 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; 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".

### **Self Assessment Exercise 3.1**

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

- a) How many full time reporters are there?
- b) Sources of news for the organization.
- c) Important beats covered by reporters in the organization.

### **3.2 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, 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.

### **3.3 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.

### 3.4 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 advert 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 is what you should look for:

- Ideas for stories or future diary dates.

- Local stories reported elsewhere that your paper has missed and need or require follow-up.

- Ideas for pictures.

- 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.

- 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.

### 3.5 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 filed cuttings 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 old news. 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.

### **3.6 Tools for the Job**

Don't forget your notebook - and mark the dates and reference on it so you can refer to your notes three months after to check if someone queried 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.

### **3.7 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 was anything you did 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.

### **3.6 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 may 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

### **3.9 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 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 "see me tomorrow or next week". Also, if you can, avoid confidential matters 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 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.

### **3.10 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.

### 3.11 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 addresses of those you obtained information from are 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.

### 3.12 Who 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 Corp, ambulance station, hospitals, police press office, doctors, eyewitnesses (but beware of accepting allegations as fact), firms or persons owning vehicles involved, (speak to managers) or owners.

**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 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 officer or director, 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 officer or director, school medical officer, director of social services, chairman social services committee (for children in care), inspector National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children, local secretary or organizer National Society for Mentally Handicapped Children (Mencap), local health authority.

**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 secretariat, 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:** ADP Ministry of Agric, 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, chairman housing committee, Citizens' Advice Bureau, chief environmental health inspector, the Census (figures on houses without baths), council press office (improvement grants), council architect, engineer and surveyor, local builders, property developers.

**Medicine:** Doctors, local secretary, 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:** Directors of social services, secretaries of senior citizens' clubs, clergy, ministers of religion, Age Concerns.

**Planning:** State or city planning officer, council surveyors and engineers, chairman of planning committee, secretary 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 station master, district manager or workshop manager.

**Road transport:** Road Transport Associations, Ministry of Transport.

**Schools:** Chief education officer, chairman of education committee, divisional education officer (in countries), school heads, local secretaries of Nigerian Union of Teachers and National Association of School masters/Union of Women Teachers.

**Scientific matters:** heads of departments at universities and colleges

of further education.

**Shipping:** Ship owners and lines, local office of Shippers council (employers), local representative 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 department at university or polytechnic.

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

**Youth organizations:** Local youth organizers, state youth organizers, chief education officer or director of education, local secretaries, Scouts, Guides, Boys' Brigade, etc., secretary county youth clubs association, youth chaplains and other clergy, secretary 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 news worthy ideas. Regular contact with your sources of news is also necessary.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

There are various sources of news to a reporter. It ranges from calls and contacts, 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 (TMA)

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 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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

## **UNIT 4 THEORIES OF THE PRESS**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 Normative Theories
  - 3.2 Authoritarian Media Theory
  - 3.3 Soviet-Communist Media Theory
  - 3.4 Libertarian Theory (Free Press Theory)
  - 3.5 Social Responsibility Theory
  - 3.6 Democratic Participant Theory
  - 3.7 Development Media Theory
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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 therefore focuses on theories of the Press.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- i) Explain the various theories of the Press; and
- ii) Relate the theories of the Press to what obtains in Nigeria.

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 (1855). 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 social-scientific theory, working theory and common sense theory.

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

#### **3.1 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 authoritarian, libertarian (or free press), soviet-communist, and social responsibility theories. 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:

#### **3.2 Authoritarian Media Theory**

The authoritarian theory of the press dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. As Kunczik (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 19<sup>th</sup> century England. Traces of this still exist today in countries where we have the press being controlled by repressive governments.

#### **3.3 Soviet-Communist Media Theory**

Closely related to the authoritarian theory is the soviet-communist media theory that was 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 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, authoritarian theory seeks to use the media to maintain the status quo. Both theories subject the media to direct state control.

### **3.4 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 which 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 at work.

### **3.5 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 when it acts contrary to the principles of social responsibility.

### **3.6 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.

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.

### **3.7 Development Media Theory**

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

Media must accept and carry out positive development tasks in line with naturally established policy.

Freedom of the media should be open to economic priorities and development needs of the society.

Media should give priority in their content to the national culture and language.

Journalists and other media workers have responsibilities as well as freedom in their information gathering and dissemination tasks.

In the interest of development, the state has a right to intervene in, or restrict media operation.

#### **Self Assessment Exercise 4.1**

- a) List the four categories of general social theory recognized by McQuail.
- b) Which of the theories (or a combination of) is operational in Nigeria?

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

It is essential to point out that these theories are, strictly speaking, not mutually exclusive in operation. Elements of the social responsibility theory can be seen in countries where libertarian theory operates. The same can be said of elements of libertarian theory in countries that operate the social responsibility theory. The difference between Soviet Communist and the Authoritarian theories is more or less a matter of degree. In Nigeria for example, elements of social responsibility theory are gradually finding their way into what is perceived to be an

authoritarian press atmosphere.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

In highlighting the general theories of the press namely, the normative theory, social scientific theory, working theory and the common sense theory, this unit has discussed in detail the normative theory. These include authoritarian theory, libertarian theory, Soviet-Communist theory and the social responsibility theory. Others are the Democratic participant and Development Media theory.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

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

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Folarin, Babatunde (1998): *Theories of Mass Communication: An Introductory Text* Ibadan, Sterling-Horden Publishers Nigeria Ltd pp 18-35.

McQuail, D. (2000): *Mass Communication theory, 4<sup>th</sup> edition*, London, pp 153-155.

## UNIT 5 JOURNALISTIC TERMINOLOGIES

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Like all other professions, journalism has certain terminologies that are peculiar to it and which reporters must acquaint themselves with. This unit introduces you to some of the terminologies that you will come across in the course of this study.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- i) List some terminologies that are peculiar to journalism; and
- ii) Explain the terminologies in ordinary language that non-journalists would understand.

### 3.0 MAIN BODY

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. Below are some of these words.

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

<b>Across the board:</b>	Programmes broadcast seven days a week at the same time
<b>Ad:</b>	Abbreviation for advertisement
<b>Add:</b>	Additional news matter to be added to a news story
<b>Air time:</b>	The time at which a programme is broadcast
<b>AM:</b>	Amplitude Modulation (Standard radio broadcasting)
<b>Audio:</b>	Sound

<b>Background:</b>	Information that may be used by a writer entirely on his own responsibility and cannot be attributed even to a “reliable source”. The writer presents the information as if he had gathered it from original research. Also refers to information upon which a story develops.
<b>Beat:</b>	Area assigned to a reporter for regular coverage: For example, police or airport.
<b>Beeper:</b>	A telephone conversation or interview recorded for later playback on air
<b>Body type:</b>	The type in which most of the newspaper is set, generally 8 point
<b>Budget:</b>	An amount of news copy as in “the budget for this broadcast”
<b>Bulletin:</b>	News of the day
<b>Byline:</b>	A line identifying the author of a story; name of the reporter who wrote the story.
<b>Caption:</b>	Synonymous with cutline. It is the explanatory lines above or below a newspaper photograph, illustration or diagram
<b>Channel:</b>	A radio–spectrum frequency assigned to a radio or television station or stations
<b>Copy:</b>	News manuscript
<b>Continuity:</b>	All radio and television script besides commercials
<b>Cue:</b>	Noun; a signal to an announcer, a newscaster or production personnel to participate in a broadcast.
<b>Cover:</b>	To gather facts of news story
<b>Cub:</b>	A beginning reporter
<b>Deadline:</b>	Time by which a reporter, editor or desk must have completed scheduled work
<b>Dateline:</b>	The name of the city or town and date, which are placed at the beginning of stories not of local origin
<b>Credit line:</b>	The line that designates, if necessary, the source of a story or cut “By NAN–News Agency of Nigeria”.
<b>Dry:</b>	A period lacking in news
<b>Exclusive:</b>	A story that is printed solely by one newspaper; also called a “scoop”
<b>Fade:</b>	Either physical or mechanical lowering of a voice or music to smooth a transition between sounds
<b>Feature:</b>	A story that is timely and interesting but is not strictly news
<b>Feed:</b>	A broadcast to a station to be recorded or sent to another station or other stations
<b>File:</b>	To send a story to office usually by wire or telephone or to put news services on the wire.

<b>FM:</b>	Frequency Modulation: A method of radio broadcasting which has several advantages over standard broadcasting, elimination of static, no fading.
<b>Freelance:</b>	An unattached writer, reporter, photojournalist or artist.
<b>HFR:</b>	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”.
<b>Kill:</b>	To eliminate from copy; to discard type as useless.
<b>Lead story:</b>	Major story displayed at the top of page one
<b>Log:</b>	Schedule of broadcasting
<b>Make up:</b>	The process of preparing a newspaper for publication by placing news stories and advertisements in appropriate positions in the newspaper.
<b>Masthead:</b>	The heading on the editorial page that gives information about the newspaper.
<b>Must:</b>	A designation placed on a copy to indicate that it must be run or published.
<b>More:</b>	Designation used at the end of a page of copy to indicate there are one or more additional pages
<b>Morgue:</b>	The newspaper library, where published stories photographs and resource materials are stored for reference.
<b>Not for attribution:</b>	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.
<b>Off the record:</b>	Information to be held in complete confidence. It is not to be printed under any circumstances or in any form
<b>PM:</b>	Afternoon or evening newspaper
<b>Put to bed:</b>	Closing the forms of an edition
<b>30:</b>	A designation used to mark the end of a story.
<b>Sacred cow:</b>	Slang for a subject or story in which the publishers or editors are interested and which must be printed
<b>Schedule:</b>	The news editor’s (or city editor’s) record of assignment; the copy editor’s record of the stories he has edited and headlined.
<b>Scoop:</b>	See exclusive
<b>Slug:</b>	The word or words placed on a copy to designate the story.
<b>Stet:</b>	Let it stand, restore
<b>SOF:</b>	Sound on Film Recorded simultaneously with the pix

<b>SOT:</b>	Sound on Tape. Recorded simultaneously with picture on tape
<b>Tie back:</b>	The sentence or sentences relating a story or events covered in previous stories
<b>V/O:</b>	Reporter's voice or a picture
<b>VTR:</b>	Video Tape Recording

### **Self Assessment Exercise 5.1**

List and explain 10 terms mostly used by journalists.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

As a reporter, your knowledge of the terms explained in this unit will help you to write your news stories using precise language.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

Both the print and the Broadcast media practitioners have developed terminologies that are peculiar to their professions. Though some of the languages such as 'deadline' have found their way into everyday English terms, most of the terms explained in this unit such as 'byline', 'dateline', 'slug', 'scoop' are unique to journalism.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

Explain the following terms:

1. Airtime
2. Background
3. Audio
4. Beat
5. Bulletin
6. Caption
7. Continuity
8. Dateline
9. Freelance
10. Lead

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

- Akinfeleye, Ralph (1987): *Essentials of Modern African Journalism A Premier*, 2<sup>nd</sup> (ed) Lagos, Miral Printing press.
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## **MODULE 2**

- Unit 1 News and News Judgment
- Unit 2 Rudiments of News Story
- Unit 3 Writing for Newspaper : The Lead
- Unit 4 The Body
- Unit 5 Word Economy

### **UNIT 1 NEWS AND NEWS JUDGMENT**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 What is News?
  - 3.2 Assessing News Value
  - 3.3 Determinants of News
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

As a reporter who hopes to live on newswriting, 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:

- Give your own definition of news
- Identify the traditional criteria for judging the newsworthiness of an event.
- Explain the new trends in deciding the newsworthiness of an event

#### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

##### **3.1 What Is News?**

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

The Prime Minister has announced the appointment of a new body to regulate company takeovers.

Fifteen people have been killed in a battle in Congo.

Bournemouth used 500 million cubic feet of gas last year.

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.

The chief executive's exit has hit Toad shares.

The main opposition party in Lagos State Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) said yesterday that the Government's new housing policy might not be good for the town.

The chairman of the Finance Committee and a 21-year-old shop girl have disappeared from their homes. Both have left letter to say they have gone together to Biarritz.

A 50 year-old home career will meet the Duke of Edinburgh during his visit to Blank town next week.

Three memorable goals enable Blank town United to reach the semi final of the FA Cup last night.

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 Bournemouth gas report would rate a few paragraphs only in the Bournemouth 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 1.1**

1. Ask 10 different people why they read newspapers? From their answers write your own definition of news.
2. Compare you own definitions with the definition you have in this unit.

### **3.2 Assessing News Value**

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

It is fairly easy to define what news is

It is less easy to assess its value. Why? Because we are talking about two different things.

All ten 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 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, “makes 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 will likely 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 ten examples at the beginning of this Unit. (Harris and Spark, 2001).

### 3.3 Determinants of News

As a reporter, your news judgment or ability to determine newsworthy events is very essential. And, an event may make news because of one or a combination of the following:

**Timelines or Immediacy:** This concerns the question: Is it new? An event that has just happened is new and probably news? Timeless or immediacy refers to the currency of the news item. It relates to how timely the event is. Nothing is as dead as yesterday’s newspaper.

**Proximity:** This refers to nearness to the news source. It is important to localize your news. Proximity can be of geography or interest “10 people killed in Lagos” is more newsworthy than “15

killed in Ghana”. Also, report on the latest fashion in London will be of interest to a fashion designer despite its distance.

**Prominence:** In news reporting, this refers to the degree of importance of the personality involved in the news. Is he a well-known person in the community? 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. An unusual event involving the man-on-the street may make him prominent, e.g the case of Clifford Orji accused of cannibalism.

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.

#### 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 MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

1. What are the traditional criteria for judging the value of news?
2. List two important recent issues in Nigeria that have been given prominence by the press. Explain the reasons for your choice of the issues.

#### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

- Brooks, Brian *et al* (1988): *News Reporting and Writing*: New York, St Martins press
- Harris, G and Spark, D. (2001), *Practical Newspaper Reporting* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition: Oxford: Focal press pp: 1-3

## **UNIT 2     RUDIMENTS OF NEWS STORY**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 Accuracy
  - 3.2 Attribution
  - 3.3 Balance and Fairness
  - 3.4 Brevity
  - 3.5 Clarity
  - 3.6 Human Interest
  - 3.7 Identification
  - 3.8 Newspoint
  - 3.9 Objectivity
  - 3.10 Verification
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA)
- 7.0 Reference/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

It is not enough for you to know how to gather news and define news. You should be able to write a good news story. In doing this, there are certain basic things that you need to master for your news story to be logical, accurate, concise, coherent and readable.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- i) Explain the rudiments of news story
- ii) Apply these rudiments in writing your news story

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

Just as the basketball player must abide by the rules of the game, the newswriter must adhere to a set of guidelines. These are also known as rudiments of the news story. These include:

#### **3.1 Accuracy**

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

Write correctly the middle or initial in names and the exact address 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.

### **3.2 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.

### **3.3 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 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 favouritism. Fairness also involves the honest use of words. Words like admit, refuse, complain have varied meanings and should be used with caution.

### **3.4 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.

### **3.5 Clarity**

Ability to write clear and interesting stories 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.

### **3.6 Human Interest**

Readers like the human angles 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.

### **3.7 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.

### **3.8 Newspoint**

Every story must have a point, and 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.

### **3.9 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 news writing but also as representing the broader claim of journalism as an important third party, the one that speak for the general interest.

### **3.10 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.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In writing your newsstories, certain basics must be considered. For it is possible to have the raw materials for the news and still not come out with good story. Hence, the rudiments of newsstories are essential points that any reporter must be familiar with.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

This unit has enumerated the basic points to bear in mind in writing newsstories, that is, the need for the story to be accurate, balanced and fair, brief, clear and of human interest. Also the story must be attributed, verified, objective and it must contain identification.

#### **Self Assessment Exercise 2.1**

1. Take a look at two lead stories in the front page of any newspaper of your choice. Will you say the writers are objective? Use your own knowledge of objectivity to evaluate the stories.
2. Explain to young reporters in your organization some points to note in writing news

#### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

- a. Differentiate between Attribution and Identification
- b. Name different ways of identifying the people you are writing about.

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Alao, Dayo (1992): *News Reporting*, Lagos, Unique Publications p. 23-24.

Brooks, Brian *et al* (1988): *News Reporting and Writing*, New York, St Martin's Press.

### **UNIT 3 WRITING FOR NEWSPAPER: THE LEAD**

## CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 Functions of the Lead
  - 3.2 Hints on Writing the Lead
  - 3.3 Lead Writing Styles
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The newsstory consists of two main parts, the lead and the body. The lead or intro is the beginning of the newsstory. 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.

### 3.0 MAIN BODY

Usually newsstories 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.

#### 3.1 Functions of the Lead

To summarize the story;

To provide answers to the questions, **who, what, when, where, why** and **how?**

To provide quick identification of persons, and events in the newsstory for the reader;

To emphasize the most important element in the news story by placing that element in the first paragraph of the story.

### 3.2 Hints on Writing the Lead

In writing the lead, you need to:

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

- National Stadium Surulere is the venue for this year's National day parade.
- Abuja Conference Centre will today host the 2<sup>nd</sup> West African Children's 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 certificate, 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 around 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 Eagles’ defender earned the Ethiopian junior team their only goal in yesterday’s quarter-final played at Abeokuta.

**Note:** Deciding which of the 5 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’.

### 3.3 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,
- Cartridge lead

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 3.1**

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.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

As the first paragraph that wets the appetite of your readers, the lead of your story is very important. It must give your readers the 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 ASSIGNMENTS (TMA)**

Re-write the following leads:

- a. The West African Breweries Ltd manufacturers of *Top Beer* today laid off 200 workers at its Abeokuta plant for one month.
- b. 400 workers of the Nigeria Airways will be sent home on Friday because of poor productivity, Managing Director Brown Doe told Airport correspondents in Jos yesterday.
- c. Obasanjo told Nigerian Universities to redirect their energies towards solutions for the nation's economic problems.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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

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Mencher, Melvin (2000): *News Reporting and Writing*, 8<sup>th</sup> (ed.) New York, McGraw Hill.

## **UNIT 4 THE BODY**

## CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 Transitional Devices
  - 3.2 Quotations
    - 3.2.1 Indirect Quotation
    - 3.2.2 Partial Quotation
    - 3.2.3 Direct Quotation
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Newsstory 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 newsstory. This unit focuses on how to build up the body of your newsstory and describes the ingredients needed to achieve this.

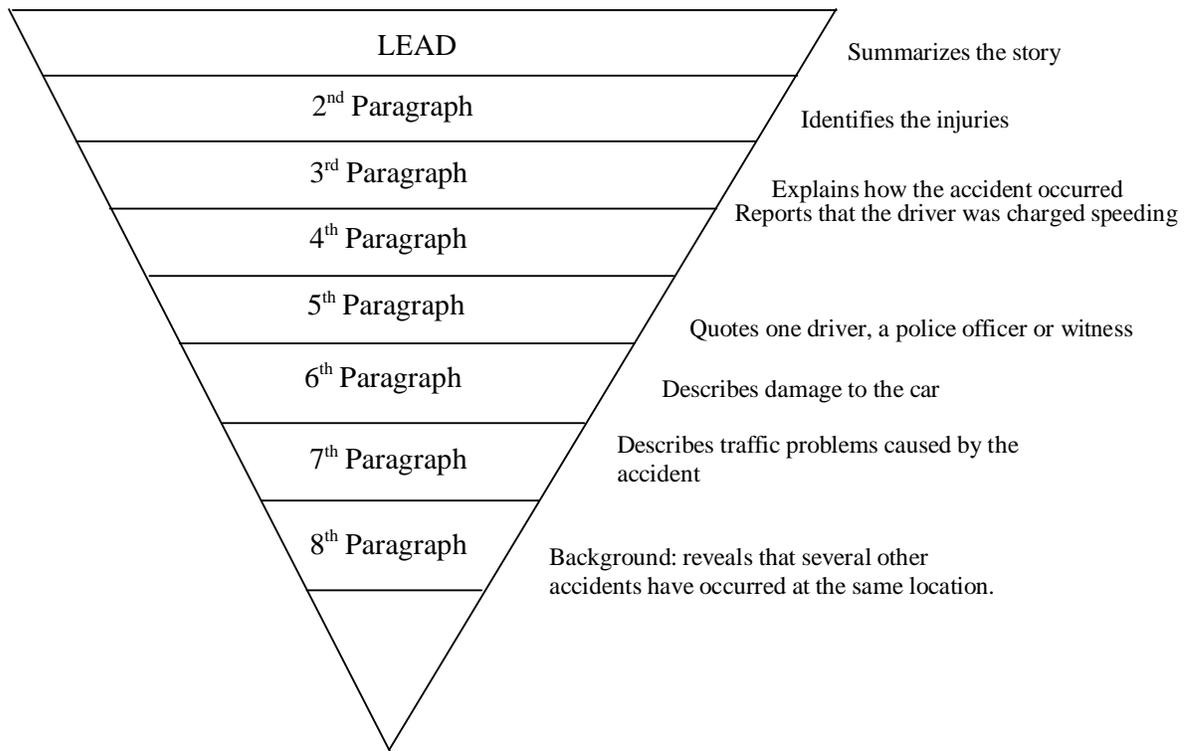
### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

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

### 3.0 MAIN BODY

The portion of a newsstory 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 Transitional Devices

Most newsstories 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 used. Here are a few: earlier, later, next week, at the same time, meanwhile, soon after, and many more.

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, etc.

Some transitional words suggest the picture of an action. Turning to, suddenly, grabbing his hand, etc.

Some linkage words emphasize contrasts: However, conversely, but, nevertheless, in spite of, despite, on the other hand, and many more.

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.

## 3.2 Quotations

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

- Direct,
- Partial, or
- 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:

### 3.2.1 Indirect Quotation

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

### 3.2.2 Partial Quotation

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

### 3.2.3 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.

#### **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 are 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 4.1**

Look at the *Guardian* and *This Day* 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 ASSIGNMENTS (TMA)**

1. Name at least five transitional devices that could be used to join one sentence to another.
2. Give examples of (a) Direct quotation (b) Indirect quotation

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Randall, D. (2000): *The Universal Journalist*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, London Plato Press.

Mencher, Melvin (2000): *News Reporting and Writing*, 8<sup>th</sup> (ed.) New York, McGraw Hill.

## **UNIT 5 WORD ECONOMY**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 Question to Ask
  - 3.2 Dignitary or Wasteful Words
  - 3.3 Redundancies
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Your ability to use the appropriate word and write precisely is a good skill for good reporting. As a reporter, you need word economy in order to make your story brief and straight to the point. This unit will not only help you to write a tight story, it will also help you to avoid redundancy and clichés.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- i) Write news story devoid of redundancy and straight to the point
- ii) Identify and eliminate unnecessary words, phrases and sentences in your copy

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

Applying word economy is one way of improving your work. That is, you have to check that every word does work for you, contributes to the message and is understood by the reader. Words that do not add any meaning should be cut out e.g.

“First of all, let’s start to examine the total number of delegates sent from each different country. In fact, Nigeria sent five delegates, Ghana sent four delegates and Liberia sent none at all.”

The passage carries redundant words and must be avoided.

### 3.1 Questions To Ask

- a) Does it employ word economy?
- b) Does every word earn its place?
- c) Can we chop off any passenger or parasites?

Let's assess the value of the words and phrase in Bold.

FIRST OF ALL, let's START TO examine the TOTAL number of delegates SENT from each DIFFERENT country. IN FACT, Nigeria sent five DELEGATES, Ghana sent four delegates and Liberia sent none AT ALL."

- i) **First of all**, is a cliché, a mindless phrase that adds nothing to your story. It is more effective to use simple **FIRST**.
- ii) **Start To** is another example of a wasted word
- iii) **TOTAL**, it doesn't earn its place, would you examine any other than the total?
- iv) Delete **Sent** If they are delegates, someone sent them.
- v) **Different** is not necessary.
- vi) **In fact** the phrase does nothing for this report, rather a critical reader may think that the rest of your report is based on fact.
- vii) Repetitions of the word delegates is not based on fact
- viii) **Sent & delegates** are not helpful
- ix) **Sent** and **at all** are not necessary, they do not give the paragraph impact. Thus, we may have

"First, let's examine the number of delegates from each country. Nigeria sent five Ghana four and Liberia none".

### 3.2 Dignitary or Wasteful Words

- Accommodate (hold, take)
- adjacent to (near)
- approximately (about)
- at an early date (soon)
- at this moment in time (now)
- concerning (about)
- conspicuous by their absence (not absent)
- declared redundant (sacked)
- discontinue (stop)
- donate (give)
- extinguish (put out)
- face up to (face)

- In addition (also)
- In spite of the fact that (although)
- locate (find, place)
- made their way (went)
- occasioned (caused by)
- previous to (before)
- revealed (said)
- seating accommodation (seats)
- together with (with)
- weather conditions (weather)
- with regard to (regarding)
- public conveniences or urinary (restroom, convenience or toilet)
- absence of (no)
- accede to (allow)
- accordingly (so)
- adequate bus transportation (enough buses)
- arrangements were made in the hands of (arranged by)
- called a halt (stopped)
- caused injuries to (injured)
- facilitate (ease)
- gather together (met)
- leaving much to be desired (bad)
- local authority (council)
- centre around (centre on or centre in)

### 3.3 Redundancies

Ability to avoid redundant words or phrase will also enhance the quality of your work. Some of these redundant words and phrases are:

- Absolutely necessary
- advance planning
- ask the question
- assemble together
- at a later day
- attached here to
- at the present time
- canceled out
- city of Lagos
- close proximity
- consensus opinion
- carbon copy
- continue on
- cooperate together
- each and very
- enclosed you will find

- exactly identical
- fair and just
- first and foremost
- rise up
- friend of mine
- important essentials
- open up
- other alternative
- patently obvious
- plain and simple
- postpone until later
- reasonable and fair
- read again
- refer back
- rules and regulations
- temporarily suspended
- totally unnecessary

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Knowing how to write a good copy will make you a darling to your editor. However, writing a good copy is not a one-day job. You need to know the basics of good writing such as economy of words and use of appropriate words. You must also write regularly.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

The economy of words is a skill that every writer should have. It will help you to avoid redundancies and the use of wasteful words in writing. For you as a reporter it will make your copy tight and neat.

#### **Self Assessment Exercise 5.1**

Read the editorial column of a newspaper of your choice and write down the clichés and redundant words you can identify in the editorial.

#### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENTS (TMA)**

Find synonyms for the following words to show your mastery of them.

- i. adjacent
- ii. aggravate
- iii. anticipate
- iv. biannual
- v. at a later day
- vi. consensus opinion
- vii. conspicuous by their absence

- viii. discontinue
- ix. facilitates

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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## **MODULE 3**

- Unit 1 Broadcast Style Book
- Unit 2 Preparing Broadcast Copy
- Unit 3 Writing for the Ear: Five Principles
- Unit 4 How to Make Your Copy Sound
- Unit 5 Interviewing

### **UNIT 1 BROADCAST STYLE BOOK**

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
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  - 3.2 Cliché
  - 3.3 Journalese
  - 3.4 Hyperbole
    - 3.4.1 Definition of Hype
  - 3.5 Adjective
  - 3.6 Quotations
  - 3.7 Attribution
  - 3.8 Contentious Statements
  - 3.9 Immediacy
  - 3.10 Active
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **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 able to:

- i) Explain of the guidelines for writing broadcast news; and
- ii) Write using the guidelines.

### 3.0 MAIN BODY

#### 3.1 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 refuse: 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 if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.

Break any of the rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

#### 3.2 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	
	untuned,	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 are now combing woods, and pledged to leave no stone unturned until the butcher of (FILL IN NAME) has 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...’

### **3.3 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, which 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.

### **3.4 Hyperbole**

#### **3.4.1 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 lend 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.

### 3.5 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', Adjectives 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.

### 3.6 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’.

### 3.7 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 titles can be displayed on the screen over the pictures.

### 3.8 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 identifies 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 sweep 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 phrase like '*he added*' or '*pointed out*'

### 3.9 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:

*'Indian forces have shot dead a pro-Pakistan guerilla leader in Kashmir.'* (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 time 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 Mayday 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*'.

### 3.10 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 Exercise 1.1

1. What do you understand by the term house style?
2. 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 a good copy.

### 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

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.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Brooks, Brian *et al* (1988): *News Reporting And Writing*, New York, St Martins Press pp. 429 – 435.

Mencher, Melvin (2000): *News Reporting and Writing*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition; Boston.

## **UNIT 2     PREPARING BROADCAST COPY**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
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  - 3.3 Pronunciation
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- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
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### **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. 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

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

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 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.

### **3.2 Names 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 unless 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 “Trip” O’Neill. In broadcast, use either the first name or the nickname, but not both.

### **3.3 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 stations have handbooks of their own.

### 3.4 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, F-B-I- you may use them. Hyphens are not used for acronyms such as NATO and ECOMOG which are pronounced as one word.

### 3.5 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).

Number can be a problem for both the announcer and the listener. As in newspaper style, write out number 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 fraction (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 1<sup>st</sup>, September 21<sup>st</sup>, October 3<sup>rd</sup> and November 4<sup>th</sup>. Make the year easy to pronounce: June 9<sup>th</sup>, 19-73.

### 3.6 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 Para-phase instead.

If it is important that listeners know the exact words of quotation (as when the quoted words are startling, uncomplimentary or possibly libelous), 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 ..."

### 3.7 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. Period also takes the place of the parenthesis 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 teen –agers 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.

### **3.8 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 in the followings:

*‘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.

## **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**

The broadcast news story demands some technicalities that make it different from the newsstory for the print media.

Special attention must be paid to the typing, pronunciation, names and titles, spellings, numbers, symbols, emphasis, attributions and acronyms.

### Self Assessment Exercise 2.1

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 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 inputs 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 the 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

Explain five important points to bear in mind in writing a broadcast news story.

### 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Brooks, Brian *et al* (1988): *News Reporting And Writing*, New York, St Martins Press pp. 429 – 435.

Mencher, Melvin (2000): *News Reporting and Writing*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition; Boston.

## **UNIT 3 WRITING FOR THE EAR: FIVE PRINCIPLES**

### **CONTENTS**

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- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Objectives
  - 3.1 It is Spoken
  - 3.2 It is Immediate
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  - 3.5 It is Sound Only
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 Reference/Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Writing for the ear, which is synonymous with writing for radio, is different from writing for 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 therefore focuses on the principles of writing for radio.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- i) Enumerate the principles of writing good stories for radio
- ii) Apply the principles in your newswriting

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

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

### 3.1 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 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.*

### 3.2 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 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.

### 3.3 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 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.

### 3.4 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 N7.00 a Kilo while refined sugar will be sold at N8.00 for a kilogram.*

### **3.5 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 official points out that the annual elephant birth rate in Burma is usually lower than the death rate.*

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

Be exact and concise. Explain complex and abstract concepts, if you cannot 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.

### **Self Assessment Exercise 3.1**

Look at the front page of your local newspaper, study three lead stories and re-write them for radio broadcast.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Having written your script, you need to read it aloud to yourself. By doing this, you would be the first to hear your own news story. It is better to spot out your mistakes yourself than to have your audiences do it for you.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

The five principles you should always remember writing for the radio are: that it's 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.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

Explain the five principles of a radio programme.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

Rich, Carole (1999): *Writing and Reporting News: A Teaching Method*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Boston, Wadsworth Published Company.

## UNIT 4 HOW TO MAKE YOUR COPY SOUND

### CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 Dull Copy
  - 3.2 Avoid the Negative
  - 3.3 Punctuate for Sound
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 Reference/Further Reading

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Besides knowing the principles of writing for a radio. There is a need to make your copy sound and lively. And this can only be achieved if you can use words distinctly in telling your story.

### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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

- i) Identify the tools for writing a sound copy
- ii) Use the tools to produce lively copy

### 3.0 MAIN BODY

#### 3.1 Dull Copy

Can hardly be read in a lively way. A 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 developments 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 National Library, says not enough books are being published in Bahasa Malaysia whereas more and more people are able to read national language. This may make government efforts to expand public library services, very difficult.*

But any 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 4.1**

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.

### 3.2 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 traditional gear.*

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

### 3.3 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, you need to write your copy in a lively way. This can be achieved through the use of appropriate tenses and punctuations.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

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.

## 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Rewrite the front-page stories of two daily newspapers of your choice for radio. Attach the newspapers to your assignment.

## 7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Brooks, Brian *et al* (1988): *News Reporting And Writing*, New York, St Martins Press pp. 429 – 435.

Mencher, Melvin (2000): *News Reporting and Writing*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition; Boston.

## **UNIT 5 INTERVIEWING**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 The Information Interview
  - 3.2 The Interpretive Interview
  - 3.3 The Emotional Interview
  - 3.4 Interview Preparation
  - 3.5 Location
  - 3.6 Watch their Language
  - 3.7 Question Technique
  - 3.8 After the Interview
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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:

- Identify types of interview
- Explain techniques for interview
- Conduct an interview for your media house

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

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 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 roads 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.

### **3.2 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’.

### **3.3 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.

### **3.4 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. In that case, use you 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%, you can go on to ask what would be acceptable and so on. The conversation has begun.

### **3.5 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.

### **3.6 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 mental state by his 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 spoilt by a most peculiar thumping sound.

### 3.7 Question Technique

You encourage an interviewee to talk by asking question. 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?’

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

**Self Assessment Exercise 5.1**

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

**4.0 CONCLUSION**

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 (TMA)**

Your editor has assigned you to cover a robbery at a commercial bank. Write in details how you will go about the story. Those you will interview and the questions you will ask.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Brooks, Brian *et al* (1988): *News Reporting And Writing*, New York, St Martins Press pp. 429 – 435.

Mencher, Melvin (2000): *News Reporting and Writing*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition; Boston.

## **MODULE 4**

- Unit 1 What is the Internet?
- Unit 2 Computer Assisted Journalism
- Unit 3 Navigating the Net
- Unit 4 Using the Browser
- Unit 5 Legal Pitfalls on the Internet

### **UNIT 1 WHAT IS THE INTERNET?**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 What is the Internet?
  - 3.2 Internet Capability
  - 3.3 Uses of the Net
  - 3.4 History of the Internet
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **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.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- i) Explain what the Internet is;
- ii) Tell the history of the Internet; and
- iii) Discuss the advantages of the Internet.

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

#### **3.1 What is the Internet?**

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 computer hooked together somehow. In concept, it’s sort of 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 report 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 50s; the Net now has an estimated 40 million computers and something like 150 million users, growing at 40 to 50 percent per year.

#### **3.2 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 worldview.

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, faxes, 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](http://www.austlii.edu.au)) and library card catalogues to the text of old books, digitized pictures (nearly all of them are

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 engines 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's 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.

### 3.3 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, product, 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 they 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:** School teachers 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 encyclopedias 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.

**Nonprofits:** Churches, NGOs and other community organizations put up pages, telling about themselves and inviting prospects and clients

### **3.4 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 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 comprises 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 development in Nigeria, yet many people have embarked on the use of the Internet.

#### **Self Assessment Exercise 1.1**

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.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

This unit has highlighted the meaning of Internet, its history, importance and functions to the society.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

1. Briefly explain the history of the Internet.
2. What are the uses of the Internet?

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Houston Brand, (1999): *Computer Assisted Reporting: A Practical Guide 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Body
  - 3.1 The Case for Using Computer in Journalism
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 Reference/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The use of computer in newsgathering is one of the latest developments in information technology. This can facilitate the job of the reporter and afford him 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 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

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

#### **3.1 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 live 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 2.1**

1. What do you understand by Computer Assisted Journalism (CAJ)?
2. What are the advantages of Computer Assisted Journalism (CAJ) over old methods of Practicing 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 note with less efforts.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

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

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING**

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

## **UNIT 3    NAVIGATING THE NET**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 The World Wide Web
  - 3.2 Netscape Navigators Vs Microsoft Explorer
  - 3.3 Software Overview
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

As the title implies this unit teaches you how to get connected to the Net and the workings of the Web. Besides, it highlights some basic web navigation tools and techniques.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- i) Describe the various navigational tools; and
- ii) Use the tools.

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

#### **3.1 The World Wide Web**

Just a few short years ago, Internet users had to navigate in a fairly complex computer environment. Today, the Internet is dominated by the World Wide Web (www), a graphically oriented, user-friendly portion of the Internet that has seen enormous growth in recent years. With few exceptions, the Web is where the action is for journalists and non-journalists alike.

The basic workings of the Web are relatively simple (from the users' vantage point). Users browse through a Web page filled with text and graphical images. Some of the text and graphics may be highlighted. Users point and click on the highlighted portion of the page and are taken to another Web page, either in that same computer system or into an entirely different system.

## 3.2 Netscape Navigators Vs. Microsoft Explorer

Two software “browser” programs designed to navigate the Web are known today: Netscape’s Navigator and Microsoft’s Internet Explorer. They are similar in design, but, like everything in the computer world, they trigger great debate. Some people believe Netscape is by far the superior product, while others insist Explorer is the way to go.

If you have a relatively new computer, it is probably loaded with both already. If not, both will be available through your Internet provider. And you can download a new version of the software for free.

## 3.3 Software Overview

Let’s take a moment to go over some of the best features of the navigation software that reporters would likely need. Most of the illustrations will be from Netscape Navigator, but I will include descriptions of Internet Explorer when the functions are different from Netscape. Also note that each company releases updated versions of the software regularly.

Once connected to the Internet, click on the software icon, a preprogrammed “home page” will pop onto the screen. A home page is the main page of a Web computer site. Your new software will be programmed for either the software manufacturer’s home page or the computer manufacturer’s home page, either of which is not too useful for reporters. We will discuss briefly how to change the home page in a bit, but first some basics.

Near the top of the program is a white box (called “Location” in Netscape Navigator and “Address” in Internet Explorer). That gives you the computer address of the Web site that is currently on the screen. It is vital to keep a close eye on this box in order to determine where you are at all times and to enable you to evaluate the reliability of the information.

The power of the Web is in “hyperlinks, or simply “links,” which takes a user to another section of the same Web page, or to another page on the same computer site, or to a completely different site, all with a simple mouse click. You can see what has links by passing your mouse arrow over the text and graphics. If there is a link, the arrow will turn into a hand with an extended index finger pointing at the linked object. Linked texts also stand out in a different colour from the unlinked portion of the text, usually in blue. To go to the link site, simply click with your mouse.

The point-and-click method is both the beauty and the problem with the Web. It is easy to get from one place to another, but too often users will go clicking through a site and soon do not know where they are or how they got there. That is why it is critical to keep your eye on the Web address. Even before clicking on a link, you can see the new address by placing the mouse pointer over the linked material. You may however be lucky sometimes to find your way back by clicking on the “back” button. This can progressively bring you back to your starting point. The linked address will appear in the bottom left portion of your screen.

### **Self Assessment Exercise 3.1**

Explain the terms Modem and WWW.

#### **Stop Right There!**

It is important to be aware of what the computer is doing at any given time. Depending on the speed of your connection and the complexity of the graphics on the page being accessed, it could take some time before the page is fully loaded. To observe whether the screen is still downloading, look at the corporate icon in the top right corner of the screen. If it is moving, that means the last command is still being performed. The command is completed when the icon stops moving. The results of the command also can be viewed in the lower left-hand corner, which shows the computer opening up the file. When it is completed, Netscape tell you “Search: Done”. For graphic-laden Web sites on slow-moving modems, you may decide you simply want to cancel your last command. To do that, go up to the command bar and click on the red stop sign in Netscape or the red “X” in Explorer.

#### **Getting Rid of Graphics**

Graphics make Web pages eye-catching, but they do little, for journalists other than slow down their reporting, especially for those who do not have high-speed connections to the Internet. You may want to consider turning off the graphics. That leaves you with just text, but greatly speed up the downloading process. To turn off the graphics in Netscape, go to the “Options” menu and click on Auto Load Images. That will remove the check mark. To turn the graphic back on, repeat the command and the check mark will reappear. In Explorer, go to the View menu and select “Options”. Click on “Appearance” and remove the checks from the top three boxes—*Show Pictures*, *Play Sounds*, and *Animations* – to remove the check marks.

#### **Web Navigation Tools And Techniques**

The following are some basic web navigation tools and techniques.

### **Moving Backward and Forward**

Among the most important software tools are the Back and Forward commands. You can “surf” around a site – the process of clicking from one page to another via hyperlinks – and then if you decided what was really needed was something two clicks ago, simply “back out:” by using the *Back* button (a left arrow in Explorer). Each click on the *Back* button will take you to the previous page. The *Forward* button (a right arrow in Explorer) will take you ahead to points where you had been previously before backing out. Netscape and Explorer also leave a “footprint” on links that have been used recently by changing the traditional blue link text to a different colour, enabling you to retrace your steps.

### **Bookmarks**

Each program also enables users to save the addresses of useful Web sites. When you come across a site you may want to return to, pull down the Bookmarks menu and go to “Add Bookmark”. The next time you want to go to that site, go back to the Bookmarks menu and pull down to the saved site. The “Go To Bookmarks” function under the Bookmarks menu allows user to organize their saved Web sites in folders.

### **Print, Find, and Save**

Both programs have print buttons that will print out the full Web page you have opened on the screen. If a file is too long you may want to save it onto your computer hard drive or floppy disk and read it later. To save a file into a word processor, go to the File menu and select “Save As” (same in both programs). There will be other times when you are looking for a very small piece of information in a very large document. Instead of downloading the entire document into your word processor, you can click on the “Find” icon in Netscape and type in a keyword or phrase. “*Find*” will take you directly to the word or words you are seeking.

### **Go directly to a site**

This enables you to go to specific addresses. Simply go to the Location box in Netscape (or the Address box in Explorer) and type in the address. Note that, as you begin making the change, the Location box name turns to “GO to:” (and Explorer’s Address box turns to “Open”). Alternatively, you can click on the “Open” icon in Netscape (Open File icon on the top right side in Explorer) and type in the address. Either way, be sure the address is precise.

A misplaced comma, an extra letter or a dot instead of a slash will result in a failed search. Also note that in newer versions of

Navigator and Explorer, the programs automatically add the http:// to the beginning of all addresses.

### **Searching**

Search engines are used when you do not have a specific Web address. There are many search engines out there, they all work differently, and there is no single search engine that can comprehensively search through Internet. To easily access some of the major search engines, click in the Net Search button on Netscape under the *Location* box. On this page Netscape has links to a handful of the most popular and powerful search engines, including Yahoo, Infoseek, Lycos, and WebCrawler. Much like the personal preferences for Navigator or Explorer, everyone who has ever been on the Net has a favorite search engine and sticks to it. The reality, however, is that we should use different search engines for different situations.

### **Changing the Home Page**

As we discussed earlier, the browser software comes with a preprogrammed home page that appears every time you go on-line. It usually advertises the software you are using or the computer you have just bought or something not too useful for a deadline reporter. Instead, the home page can be changed to a site that a reporter might actually want to look at and use in daily reporting. Some options include your own newspaper, your local news competition, a dominant regional newspaper, or a national publication. The home page also could be the Web site of an institution you cover regularly, such as National Assembly or the University of Lagos.

To change the home page on Navigator, go to the “Options” menu and pull down to preferences. Click on “Appearances” and, inside the Startup box, type in the address of the Web site you want to be your opening page. In Internet Explorer, call up the page you want to be your home page, they go to the View menu and pull down “Options”. Click on the Start and Search Pages, click on the Use Current button and then the OK button. The home button icon on Navigator (and house icon on Explorer) will bring you back to your home page.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Your access to the Internet begins with a deliberate attempt to get connected and also frequently patronizing the Net. Mastering the use of the Net therefore needs a constant use of it. This will no doubt enhance your knowledge of the Internet and its use in making your job easy as a journalist.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

This unit has briefly introduced you to how to search for materials on the Net and the basic navigational tools and techniques needed to do this.

You must be acquainted with these tools and techniques for your proper understanding of their functions and working.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

Name six web navigation tools and explain five of them in detail.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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

Randall. D. (2000) *The Universal Journalist 2nd Edition*, London, Pluto Press.

## **UNIT 4 USING THE BROWSER**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 Using Browsers
  - 3.2 Going to a Web Site
  - 3.3 Nominating a “Home” Site
  - 3.4 Finding Date on a Page
  - 3.5 Bookmarks or Favourites
  - 3.6 Similarities in Browsers
  - 3.7 Which Browsers to Use
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Having learnt about some basic Web navigation tools and techniques in the previous unit. It is important to know the use of the browser, the clear software that helps you to navigate. This unit focuses on you (a journalist and the browser).

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- i) Explaining the principle behind the browser you use;
- ii) Demonstrate how to get to a web site;
- iii) Identify similarities in browsers.

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

#### **3.1 Using Browsers**

Because of their fierce competition, Netscape and Microsoft update their browser softwares frequently. But whatever version of whichever browser you use, the principles should remain the same, even if the browsers call their buttons by different names (“Reload” and “Bookmarks” on Netscape; “Refresh” and “Favorites” on Explorer) and their positions vary on the Toolbar. Note the American spelling of Favourites.

The buttons are in a Toolbar row at the top of the screen with a white box running nearly the width of the screen under the buttons. The buttons and the white box are options, and if they are not there, you can put them there. You can have the browser display them by going to the “Preferences” menu and selecting the “Show” option. Be aware that Netscape and Explorer locate these options in different menus and call them by similar but different names. The “Back” and “Forward” buttons on the extreme left on the Toolbar will take you to the site you last explored in the specified direction. If there is no destination to go forward to, the button is disabled – “grayed out.” If you nominated a site and what appears on your screen is incomplete, the “Reload” or “Refresh” button will try again for you, just click on it

If it has been a while since you visited a page, you should reload it as a matter of course, because what’s on your screen could be an outdated version. This is because once an Internet document has been fetched from a site, local providers save time by storing it on a proxy server for users who subsequently request it instead of sending each user to the originating site each time. “Reload” or “Refresh” sends you to the original site so you can be sure you’ve got the latest version.

### **3.2 Going to a Web Site**

How do you visit a World Wide Website? You have at least four options. The first is to type its address, or URL, in the white box and hit enter (or return) on your keyboard. The browser goes into action. On Netscape, meteors start showering near the planet behind the capital N in the top right of the screen. On Explorer, the “e” in that spot starts revolving and displaying that its other side is a spinning Earth. On both, a bar along the bottom of the screen begins to fill, providing a visual indication of how long it will take for the page to appear on your screen. The slower the bar fills, the longer the wait.

You will also see a message in the box at the left-hand button of the screen that tells you the browser is trying to contact the host where your requested document resides. After contact is made, it gives you a running status report while the document is downloading onto your computer. Depending on the speed of your modem or in house network, sooner or later some words and images from the website will appear on your screen. The “Stop” button halts any incoming transmission immediately.

### 3.3 Nominating a “Home” Site

Browsers allow you to nominate a “Home” site, that is, to choose a location on the World Wide Web that the browser always goes to once you open the software. In your preference or Options location, you can type in the URL of your choice. Later versions may automate this feature, so you might navigate to a site, then select it as your “Home” by clicking in an instruction to that effect. In any case, your selection will be your home site until you change it. Clicking on the “Home” button will always take you straight to that site, regardless of where you are on the Internet.

The “Search” button allows you to search the Internet for specific information. A click on that button takes you to a site that has search engines.

The “Print;” button is straightforward. A click allows you to print any document on the screen. Note that it only works when the entire document has been downloaded into your computer. The “Security” button is for technicians. The button opens a window that provides information about security for whatever page is on the screen.

You can turn off images and receive only text. This speeds up data transfer considerably, especially with slow modems. To do so, go to your “Preference” or “Options” and make the necessary choice, which may involve de-selecting a default setting. Once you’ve done that, pages will load without images. If you want to see the images, click once on the images button (if your browser has one) in the Toolbar.

### 3.4 Finding Data on a Page

The “Find” button on browsers is extremely useful for journalists. In Netscape version 4 the search function is hidden. Use your usual keyboard shortcut (“apple + ‘f’ for a Macintosh, “Ctrl” +’f’ for a PC). In the “Find” box you type keywords or parts of words. Clicking sends the browser out to find that word or part-word. This can be very useful in long documents.

As you move about the Internet, your browser collects all locations you visit in a history list. You can return to any location by clicking the “Go” menu at the top of the page and selecting an earlier location. But this history dies once you quit the browser.

However, browsers provide a bookmark feature that is available every time you load the browser. For journalists, this is probably the most helpful browser service. You’ll find it represented by a button on the

Toolbar or a menu item “Bookmarks” or “Favorites” above the Toolbar. Once you find a useful site, you can bookmark it simply by choosing. “Add bookmark” under the Bookmark menu in Netscape and “Add to favourites” under the “Favourites” in Explorer. The item will remain in your list until you delete it. You delete a bookmark by editing the bookmark/favourite file. Open the file “apple” + “b” if you’re using a Macintosh or “Ctrl” + “b” on a PC). Highlight the file and hit the delete button.

### **3.5 Bookmarks or Favourites**

The second way to get to an Internet site is by clicking on it in your “Bookmarks” or “Favorites” list. This applies even if you turn on the browser some months later, as soon as you select the Bookmark menu and click on a bookmark. There is actually a hypertext link at the top of the site. You’ll quickly learn to love the bookmark facility. Netscape stores your bookmarks in a file called “Bookmark htm”. I recommend backing up that file every couple of days. A bookmark may become obsolete because the site closes down, so it’s worth the time and trouble to go through your bookmarks from time to time to make sure they’re still active.

As a journalist, you should organize your bookmarks in a way that best suits you. One efficient method is to nominate folders that correspond to key areas, such as rounds, and placing files in those folders after you bookmark them.

A third way to visit a site is to open the “Select location” or “Open Location” box. To do this, the keyboard shortcut is “apple” + “L” if you’re using a Macintosh or “Ctrl” + “L” on a PC. You type the name of the URL in the box and hit enter or click OK. Netscape also permits you to open a specific file. The instruction is under the “File” menu.

A fourth way to go to a site is to click on a hypertext “link” on a page. Links are easy to recognize because they are usually a different colour from the rest of the page. Blue is the most common colour because it is the default of the most Web page design packages. You can detect the link when you place your mouse over a suspected link, provided you do not click. If the page is a link, the destination will appear in a box in the bottom left of the page. Hypertext is a feature unique to the Web. You can jump to sites anywhere in the world simply by clicking on hypertext links anywhere in the text.

### **3.6 Similarities in Browsers**

Explorer is similar to Netscape in terms of the position of the buttons. Most of Explorer's buttons are in the same place at the top of the screen in versions 1 to 3. Version 4 attempts to integrate the Web into the PC, so the home page looks like the standard Windows 95. Let's discuss the major differences from Netscape.

These are the "Mail", "News", "Larger", "Smaller" and "Preferences" buttons. Mail and News are options that allow you to send and receive e-mail and monitor newsgroups. You can make text on the screen larger and smaller by clicking on the relevant buttons.

The "Best of the Web" and "Web Gallery" buttons in Explorer links you to selection of sites chosen by Microsoft. These buttons correspond roughly with Netscape's "What's Cool?" and "What's New" buttons. The "Software" button in Netscape is similar to the "Product news" button on Explorer. "Net Search" in Netscape takes you to a selection of search engines. It is the same as "Search" in the upper level of buttons in Explorer. Most of the other buttons explain themselves.

#### **Self Assessment Exercise 4.1**

Go to the Web and look for yesterday's edition of your favourite Nigerian newspaper.

### **3.7 Which Browsers to Use**

Which browsers should you use? The current versions of the two main browsers are very similar. Because they are so similar, it will probably be a matter of personal choice if you are using the browser from home. At work, your organisation's information technology staff may make the choice for you. The best advice is to learn to use both.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Without a practical application of the techniques in using the browser, you may find it difficult to obtain the information needed on the Internet.

The above practical guidelines therefore will be of immense value to you in the use of browsers.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

Despite the frequent up-date of their software by Netscape and Microsoft, the principles remain the same. Knowing these principles highlighted in the above points will get you acquainted with the browser of any service provider.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

Go to the web pages of two Nigeria universities and down load materials on the faculties and schools available in the universities.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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

Randall. D. (2000) *The Universal Journalist 2nd Edition*, London, Pluto Press.

## **UNIT 5      LEGAL PITFALLS ON THE INTERNET**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 Defamation
  - 3.2 Privacy
  - 3.3 Contempt
  - 3.4 Copyright
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **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
- ii) Explain how to avoid the identified legal problems

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

#### **3.1 Defamation**

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

At a 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 to 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 defenses is successful in court.

The defenses include: Truth, Fair comment, Qualified Privilege, Consent and other statutory defenses. The publisher has the burden of proving one of the defenses.

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 defense: 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 defenses 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 law to Internet publication and research. Be mindful of these gray areas when using the Internet to disseminate or collect information.

### **3.2 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, raise a number of privacy issues. Remember that protection of privacy involves a balancing of the individual's rights against public interest.

### 3.3 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" (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" \*(378-79). 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 from courts 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 5.1**

Briefly explain how materials published on the Internet can lead to contempt of court?

## **3.4 Copyright**

Copyright is a group of rights under the federal Copyright Act 1968 that protects 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 regulates copyright in the country. The provisions are similar with those in other parts of the world. However, Richardson says copyright will be around for a long time. Heerey J bases her optimism, in part, on a 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 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 applies to Internet publications. The ease of copyright and disseminating information does not infringe 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, journalistic 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 authors should enjoy the right of ownership of their creations. 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 (TMA)**

A young Journalist wants to explore the Internet for research, advice him on the legal problems he should beware of.

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

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 5**

- Unit 1 The Concept of Press Freedom
- Unit 2 Regulation of the Mass Media
- Unit 3 Disclosure of Source of Information
- Unit 4 Contempt of Court
- Unit 5 Hints on Court Reporting

### **UNIT 1 THE CONCEPT OF PRESS FREEDOM**

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 The Meaning of Press Freedom
  - 3.2 Constitutional Guarantees
  - 3.3 Limits to Freedom of the Press
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **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.

#### **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) Identify the limitation of your freedom as a journalist working in Nigeria.

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

#### **3.1 The Meaning of Press Freedom**

Liberty or freedom of expression and the meaning:

Laying no previous restraint upon publication. Liberty of the press means laying no previous or prior censure upon publication. Every person has the right to lay what sentiments, facts, information or publication he has before the public. To forbid this right is to destroy freedom of expression and the press; but

Where a person publishes what is unlawful, criminal, defamatory or mischievous, he must face the consequences of his 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 frontiers.

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.

### **3.2 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 the 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 1.1**

1. What do you understand by freedom of expression?
2. Is freedom of expression synonymous with the freedom of the press?

### 3.3 Limits to Freedom of the Press

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 Denning L. J:**

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:

- The Constitution
- The Legislature
- The Courts; and
- 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 cinematographic films; or
- b. Imposing restrictions upon persons holding office under the Government of the Federal or of a state, members of the Nigerian

Police Force or other government security services established by law.

**Section 45(1) provides:**

“Nothing in Section 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 defense, 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:

- a) Contempt of court and contempt of parliament
- b) Disclosure or publication of official secrets including defence and security information
- c) Publication of obscene and harmful literature and materials
- d) Sedition and seditious publication
- e) Defamation; and
- f) Regulation of telephony, wireless broadcasting, television or the exhibition of cinematography films.

#### **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.

#### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

Name and explain the various ways of curtailing the freedom of the press.

#### **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

- 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Section 39).
- Epku, Ray (1988): *The Media and Democracy in Nigeria*; being excerpts from a paper delivered at a workshop on 1995 constitution organized in 1998 by Civil Liberty Organization, CLO, Constitutional Right Project, CRP and the National Human Rights Commission in Abuja NHRC.
- Osinbajo, Yemi and Fogam, Kadinga (1991): *Nigeria Mass Media Law*, Lagos Gravitas Publishments & Ltd.

## **UNIT 2 REGULATION OF THE MASS MEDIA**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 Definition
  - 3.2 History
  - 3.3 Newspapers Amendment Act, 1964
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

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. Therefore, this unit takes a cursory look at the various legislations that have affected the practice of journalism in Nigeria from the colonial days.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- i) Narrate the history of media laws in Nigeria
- ii) Explain the provisions of some of the laws
- iii) Discuss for or against the introduction of some of the media laws in the country

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

#### **3.1 Definition**

Media Laws are laws that regulate the operation of the mass media of communication.

#### **3.2 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 sedition offences ordinance (1909) 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.

### **3.3 Newspapers 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 reign 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 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'état 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 Publications 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 order 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 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 and declared the Registration Decree illegal.

**Self Assessment Exercise 2.1**

1. What are the major provisions of the Newspaper Ordinance of 1903?
2. In what ways will public officers (Protection Against False Accusation) affect your job as a journalist?

**4.0 CONCLUSION**

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 book.

**5.0 SUMMARY**

This unit has enumerated the various attempts made by past and present governments to regulate the practice of journalism in Nigeria since 1903 to date.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

What are the merits and demerits of regulating the activities of the mass media?

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Akinfeleye, Ralph, Okoye Innocent, (2003): *Issues in Nigeria Media History*, 1900-200 A.D. Lagos, Malthouse press Ltd.

Momoh, Tony and Godwin Omole (eds) (1996): *The Press in Nigeria*, Lagos Nigeria Press. Council.

Uche, L. U. (1986): *Mass Media People and Politics in Nigeria*, New Delhi, India.

## **UNIT 3 DISCLOSURE OF SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

## CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 Journalists and Sources
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### 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.

### 3.0 MAIN BODY

#### 3.1 Journalists and Sources

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.

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 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 because, 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. Charlants 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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, Ademola Johnson Ag. C. J. 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 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* titled. “*Fraud – Legislators Claim Salaries and Allowances for Fictitious Staff*” of 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1981. 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. Balogun A. L. A. L. J., 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 Legislative 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 right 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 except 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 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 Denning M. R. in *British Steel Corporation V Granada Television Ltd.* That:

“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 irresponsible, 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 source of information except as curtailed by relevant provisions of the law dealing with defense, public safety, public order, public morality or public health or for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedom of other persons.

### **Self Assessment Exercise 3.1**

How would you defend yourself if you were asked to disclose your source of information in the court?

## **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 (TMA)**

Briefly explain the reasons why a journalist should not disclose his source or sources of information.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Crone Tom, (1995): *Law and the Media: an everyday guide from professionals* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Great Britain Focal Press.

Yakubu, Ademola (1999): *Press Law in Nigeria*, Lagos Malthouse Press Ltd.

## **UNIT 4     CONTEMPT OF COURT**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 Contempt of Court as Related to the Mass Media
  - 3.2 Defenses
  - 3.3 Appeal Against Conviction
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

One of the gray 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 defenses 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 defenses against contempt of court.

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

Contempt of court is anything that is likely to bring the activities of the court, the process of the court into disrespect or ridicule.

There are two main types of 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" (Osibanjo & Fogam 1991).

### 3.1 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 willfully 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 willfully misbehaves in court or willfully interrupts the court. Anyone who shows disrespect for the court either by this words or by his actions is similarly guilty of contempt.
- d) **Failure to obey court order:** A judge may rule that no photos 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 Vs. 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 is 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 formal 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 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.

### **3.2 Defenses**

A journalist that is charged for contempt may plead any of the following defenses:

- a) The conduct or behaviour complained of does not amount to contempt of court in law.
- b) The court will pardon alleged contempt if the conduct is unintentional and purged by sincere apology and credible explanation.
- c) The acts or omission were from a honest and reasonable mistaken belief.
- d) The Acts/ omissions were due to a misconception of the law thereby flouting a court's orders.
- e) For example in the case of a publisher of a newspaper, the acts or omission were done without his knowledge or approval and not communicated to him.

### **3.3 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 conviction for contempt.

### **Self Assessment Exercise 4.1**

- 1) Differentiate between civil and criminal contempt.
- 2) 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 (TMA)**

Enumerate the various defenses open to a journalist who is accused of contempt of court.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Osinbajo, Yemi and Fogam, Kadinga (1991): *Nigeria Mass Media Law*, Lagos Gravitas Publishers & Ltd.

Pember, Don (2003/2004) *Mass Media Law*, Boston, McGraw Hill.

Yakubu, Adenola (1999): *Press Law in Nigeria*, Lagos Malthouse Press Ltd.

## **UNIT 5 HINTS ON COURT REPORTING**

### **CONTENTS**

1. Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 Court Reporting
  - 3.2 Elementary Law
  - 3.3 Legal Glossary
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

As you have seen in unit four, the court is replete with legal landmines thus great care is required of a reporter wishing to report from there. A good knowledge of the technicalities of court reporting will however save you from any troubles. This unit therefore will afford you the opportunity to correctly and accurately report court stories.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- i) Understand the language of court reporting; and
- ii) Correctly use some legal terminologies.

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

#### **3.1 Court Reporting**

Court reporting is highly specialized. A keen knowledge of law and the most important cases is not enough to make a good newspaper reporter. You must have a good sense of news values, a sound general knowledge and a firm grasp of the social, political and civic life of the community. Courts are a place where some of the most startling news stories of the day are born.

Often, the most important news in a court case is hidden in a great mass of legal argument. As a report of the case, a story should never be taken down from its legal peg.

In court reporting, as elsewhere, there must be no faking of news for the sake of turning out a bright story. A reporter does not deliberately distort his news but, through ignorance or carelessness, may give a wrong impression of the facts, often by the omission of simple facts and the addition of others, a damaging impression can be created.

From the lowest court in the land to the High Court, the basic rule is the same – be accurate, fair and avoid personal comments.

Careless court reporting can gravely endanger the reputation of your medium. Nothing is more damaging than constant correction to court reports. And there is always the threat of a libel or defamation suit against the medium.

You cannot take the risk of not giving equal prominence to both parties in litigation or to the accuser's answer to the case in criminal proceedings.

### **3.2 Elementary Law**

New points of law are constantly arising and leading counsel is hard pressed to keep pace with legal trends and legislative amendments. But the following principles of English law are still very relevant.

**NO** person is guilty until he has been fairly tried and convicted.  
**ALL** men are equal before the law.

**OFFENCES**, summary and indictable, are only allegations until proved beyond doubt.

**ONLY** what is read, said or put in evidence in the hearing or sight of the reporter in an open court can be safely reported.

**DEFAMATORY** statements in affidavits, written pleadings and notices should never be used unless they are part of the case and have been read in court.

**PROCEEDINGS** in camera are privileged but can never be reported unless some person in authority gives consent.

**DESCRIPTIVE** phrases in a court report can be a breach of elementary law. You could fairly say what a prisoner was wearing but not that he looked nervous or disturbed.

**NO** comment is allowed while the case is pending.

**ACCOUNTS** of police investigations suggesting that the accused is guilty or innocent are contemptuous

**THE** proper function of judges is the enunciation and enforcement of law and not of morals

**THE** theory of judicial precedent is that a decision of a judge, once given in a question of law, binds both that judge himself and subsequent judges in a court of lower rank to decide the same question in the same way.

**EXERCISE** care at all times, and address to the heart of a case.

**DEVELOP** a keen sense of news. Ability to seize on a bright story in the middle of an otherwise dull and involved case is essential.

**TAKE** the utmost care with names and address. Check them with the official court papers and never rely on information supplied by court officials or other reporters.

**ALWAYS** approach a lawyer if in doubt about technical terms.

**NEVER** submit a report to the sub-editors which you do not yourself thoroughly understand.

**BEWARE** of opening address by counsel in important criminal cases or public inquiries, such as royal commissions. They are only allegations and may not be subsequently proved in evidence.

**NEVER** forget that charges are only allegations until proved by the evidence. The word "*alleged*" should always preface the statement of an offence. For instance, it is dangerous in the early stages of a case to say that an accused had been seen committing an offence. Such a statement is only alleged.

**DEVELOP** good shorthand. It is impossible to cover a superior court adequately without being able to write shorthand. This could be one developed by you and perhaps understood by you alone.

**NEVER** use an affidavit unless every part of it has been read in court

**LEARN** to write clearly and accurately about court proceedings without the slightest tinge of bias.

**IN** industrial courts, remember that union officials and employers' representatives may make allegations for political reasons and great care

should be taken to see that they are made in open hearing and are recorded in the official transcript before they are used in a report.

**NEVER** be afraid to ask for information.

**ALWAYS** accede to the direction of the presiding judge or magistrate that certain facts and allegations must not be published. This action must always be reported to the news editors.

**IF** in doubt about some aspect a court story, always inform the chief sub-editor.

**REMEMBER** that a misplaced word or name may lead to a writ for libel.

**ALWAYS** record the adjournment of a case and never leave a case half reported. The final result must be reported in the first available edition.

**NEVER** use the word “*admitted*” in a court report unless quoting someone during the court proceedings. Otherwise use “*said*”.

**WE** do not publish the street numbers of people named in court actions.

**CHECK** carefully any doubtful or vital points in the official depositions of lower court cases, Particularly inquests. A newspaper is liable if it publishes an error in a court deposition of evidence.

### 3.3 Legal Glossary

**Affidavit:** A document containing a sworn statement in writing used as evidence in judicial proceedings.

**Alleged:** Used to describe charges etc, made in the course of criminal proceedings, which have yet to be proved.

**Award:** A decision of arbitrators on points submitted to them; the document containing such decisions; a decision of an Arbitration Court or Conciliation Commissioner.

**Banco:** Applied to sitting of the Supreme Court as a Full Court as distinguished from sitting of single justices. Also the court in which the Full Court sits.

**Barrister:** A member of the legal profession qualified to plead at the Bar. In NSW, he or she does not also carry on the business of a solicitor.

**Brief:** An abridged statement of a case by a solicitor for the instruction of counsel.

**Caveat:** A formal notice forbidding a transaction, and lodged with a public officer.

**Certiorari:** The name of a writ directed by a superior court to an inferior tribunal whereby a judgment, order or other proceeding is brought up for revision.

**Counsel:** Barrister.

**Count:** A separate and distinct charge in an indictment.

**Decree nisi, decree absolute:** First and second stages in proceedings for divorce. Decree nisi, decree or order to take effect from a certain future date unless cause be shown meanwhile to the contrary. Decree absolute finally dissolves the marriage.

**De facto:** In actual fact.

**Demurrer:** A plea that, admitting the facts alleged, denies that they entitle to relief in law. The contention is that the facts are legally insufficient to attract any remedy. A demurrer is determined by the full court before the action is heard.

**Deposition:** Sworn statement of a witness taken down and signed in Court of Petty Sessions.

**Estoppel:** A legal rule preventing a person from denying a statement he or she has made when others have relied on such statement.

**Habeus corpus:** An order by writ to produce a person before a court at a stated time and place to justify his detention.

**Hearsay:** A rumor or report; secondhand evidence.

**In camera:** Hearing of a case from which the public and the press are excluded.

**Indict:** To charge with a crime.

**Injunction:** An order granted in Equity to restrain an unlawful proceeding. Granted in three states (a) interim (for a short time); (b) interlocutory (until the trial of the action); (c) perpetual (when) the case is established).

**Interlocutory proceedings:** Intermediate proceedings in the preparation of a case before trial.

**Lien:** A right by which a person is entitled to obtain satisfaction of a debt by means of property belonging to the indebted person.

**Mandamus:** A writ issued by a superior court directing an inferior court, public body or officer to perform some duty.

**Non-suit:** Decision against the plaintiff without the defendant having been called on to reply.

**Plaintiff:** One who brings a suit in a court of law; the originator of a legal action.

**Plea:** Defendant's answer to the plaintiff's declaration in an action at common law.

**Prima facie:** a case made out "at first or appearance".

**Puisne judge:** Any judge of the Supreme Court other than the Chief Justice.

**Quash:** Annul; make void.

**Queen's Counsel:** Senior barrister who does not appear in a case without the aid of a junior barrister.

**Sequester:** Seize property temporarily for the benefit of the state or of creditors.

**Sine die:** Indefinitely. Court adjourned without fixing the date of resumption.

**Statement of claim:** An initiating document in court proceedings setting out the plaintiff's claim in detail.

**Summary offence:** An offence dealt with by a magistrate as opposed to an offence tried on indictment by a jury.

**Tort:** A civil wrong, injury or damage as opposed either to a breach of contract or a crime.

**Ultra vires:** "Beyond the power": usually "outside the jurisdiction or powers of".

**Writ:** A written document of enforced obedience to an order of a court; the document by which the defendant is brought before the High Court or Supreme Court.

**Writ of summons:** First step in Supreme Court action. Process issued at the instance of the plaintiff to give the defendant notice of the claims made against him and compelling him to appear and answer them if he does not admit them.

**NOTE:** At common law, the proceeding between the parties, whether in the Supreme Court or District court, is known as an “action: If heard before a judge and jury, the jury gives a “verdict” for the side or the other. If heard by a judge alone, the judge gives” judgment” for one party or the other.

On appeal, the Full Court gives “judgment” and “allows” or “dismisses” the appeal.

### **Self Assessment Exercise 5.1**

Explain the following terms:

1. Defamation
2. Affidavit
3. Injunction
4. Plea
5. Prima facie

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

As a journalist, there is no denying the fact that you need to know the hints on court reporting at your fingertips. This will no doubt save you from unnecessary embarrassments that may accompany inaccurate report of court proceedings. Also, it will save your medium from unnecessary ridicule.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

This unit has emphasized some basic elementary law for you as a court reporter. It has given you the dos and don'ts of court reporting and also explained some legal terms, which are important for your job as a judicial correspondent.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

Your friend has been assigned to cover court proceedings, what advice will you give him as a fresher covering the court for the first time.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Osinbajo, Yemi and Fogam, Kadinga (1991): *Nigeria Mass Media Law*, Lagos Gravitas Publishers & Ltd.

Pember, Don (2003/2004) *Mass Media Law*, Boston, McGraw Hill.

Yakubu, Adenola (1999): *Press Law in Nigeria*, Lagos Malthouse Press Ltd.

## **MODULE 6**

- Unit 1 What is Ethics?
- Unit 2 Ethics and Journalism
- Unit 3 Codes of Journalistic Ethics
- Unit 4 Nigerian Press Council
- Unit 5 Ethical Issues in Nigerian Journalism

### **UNIT 1 WHAT IS ETHICS?**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 Origin of Ethics
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

#### **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 OBJECTIVES**

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

- i) Define ethics; and
- ii) Trace the origin of ethics.

#### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

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 as 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.

### **Self Assessment Exercise 1.1**

Attempt a definition of ethics

## **3.1 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.

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. He therefore prefers 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.

#### **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.

#### **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 enables them to be ethical when they are confronted with moral problems.

#### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

1. Discuss the Origin of Ethics?
2. List and explain the characteristics of human beings that enable them to be ethical.

#### **7.0 REFERENCES**

- Merrill, C. John (1982): Ethics and Journalism “in Merrill *et al* (ed) *Ethics and the press: Readings in Mass Media Morality*, New York, Hasting House Publishers.
- Okunna, Stella (1997): *Ethics of Mass Communication*, Enugu, New Generations Books pp 49 – 55.

## **UNIT 2 ETHICS AND JOURNALISM**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 Nature and Purpose of Journalistic Ethics
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In performing their duties as journalists, there are certain rules and regulations that bind members of the profession. This unit will take a look at the origin of ethics in Mass Communication as well as the nature and purpose of journalistic ethics.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- i) Discuss the origin of ethics in journalism; and
- ii) Explain the nature and purpose of journalistic ethics.

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

The earliest signs of ethics in journalism were noticed at the turn of the twentieth 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:

Certain obligations to society should be accepted and fulfilled by the press.

These obligations are mainly to be fulfilled through setting high professional standards of trust, accuracy, objectivity, balance and informativeness.

In the discharge of their duties, the media should be self-regulating within the framework of law and established institutions.

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 to ensure high ethical standard that the press must be controlled by itself or by the government.

### **Self Assessment Exercise 2.1**

Briefly describe the basis of journalistic ethics.

### **3.1 Nature and Purpose of Journalistic Ethics**

Merrill (1982), describes journalistic ethics as a branch of philosophy, which aids journalists 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 journalist to be moral in their professions.

Journalistic ethics will stipulate rules, guidelines, norms and principles that guide the journalist in making moral decisions.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Looking at the basis for the introduction of ethics to journalism, that is, the observed excesses of the freedom of the press in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one cannot but support the need for ethics in Mass Communication. For, it behooves media practitioners to be accountable to the society in which they operate.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

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 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 (TMA)**

Justify the need for ethics in Mass Communication.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Merrill, C. John (1982): Ethics and Journalism “in Merrill *et al* (ed) *Ethics and the press: Reading in Mass Media Morality*, New York, Hasting House Publishers.

Okunna, Stella (1997): *Ethics of Mass Communication*, Enugu, New Generations Books pp 49 – 55.

## **UNIT 3      CODES OF JOURNALISTIC ETHICS**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Body
  - 3.1 National Codes
  - 3.2 Institutional Codes
  - 3.3 Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists
    - 3.3.1 Editorial Independence
    - 3.3.2 Accuracy and Fairness
    - 3.3.3 Privacy
    - 3.3.4 Privilege/Non-Disclosure
    - 3.3.5 Decency
    - 3.3.6 Discrimination
    - 3.3.7 Reward and Gratification
    - 3.3.8 Violence
    - 3.3.9 Children and Minors
    - 3.3.10 Access to Information
    - 3.3.11 Public Interest
    - 3.3.12 Social Responsibility
    - 3.3.13 Plagiarism
    - 3.3.14 Copyright
    - 3.3.15 Press Freedom and Responsibility
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA)
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Having established the fact that journalism, like any other profession is not without some ethics guiding the conducts 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) Explain the code of ethics for Nigerian journalists.

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

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 much code exists in some ninety countries in all regions of the world.

These codes of journalistic ethics are in different categories. We have the International code of ethics, Regional code of ethics and National code of ethics.

#### **3.1 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). The Nigeria Broadcasting Commission (NBC) also has a code of conduct for broadcasting.

#### **3.2 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 3.1**

Highlight the different codes of journalistic ethics.

### **3.3 Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists**

In Nigeria, 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 Nigerian 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:

#### **3.3.1 Editorial Independence**

Decisions concerning the content of news should be the responsibility of a professional journalist.

#### **3.3.2 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 duties, a journalist should strive to separate facts from conjecture and comment.

### 3.3.3 PRIVACY

As a general rule, a journalist should respect the privacy of individuals and their families unless it affects public interest.

- a. Information on the private life of an individual or his family should only be published if it impinges on public interest.
- b. 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.

### 3.3.4 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.”

### 3.3.5 Decency

- i) A journalist should dress and comport himself 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 case 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.

### 3.3.6 Discrimination

A journalist should refrain from making pejorative reference to a person’s ethnic group, religion, sex, or to any physical or mental illness or handicap.

### **3.3.7 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.

### **3.3.8 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.

### **3.3.9 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.

### **3.3.10 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.

### **3.3.11 Public Interest**

A journalist should strive to enhance national unity and public good.

### **3.3.12 Social Responsibility**

A journalist should promote universal principles of human rights, democracy, justice, equity, peace and international understanding.

### **3.3.13 Plagiarism**

A journalist should not copy, wholesale or in part, other people's work without attribution and/or consent.

### **2.3.14 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 copyrighting established by national and international laws and conventions.

### **3.3.15 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 practice 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 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 contains 15 injunctions or declarations.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

Trace the history of the code of ethics for Nigerian journalists and highlight the issues raised in the code.

## **7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS**

Nigeria Press Organization (1998): *Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists*, Lagos, NPC.

NPC Decree No 60 of 1999.

## **UNIT 4 NIGERIAN PRESS COUNCIL**

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- 2.0 Objectives
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### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the enforcement of professional ethics, the role of the press council cannot be over emphasized. The Nigerian Press Council is an autonomous body set up by Decree No 85 of 1992 and amended by Decree No 60 of 1999 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 the press about the conduct of persons or organizations towards the press.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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

- i) Identify the role of a press council;
- ii) Explain the workings of the Nigeria Press Council; and
- iii) Describe the role of the complaints committee of the press council and how complaints are treated.

### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

The NPC decree provides it with a wide range of responsibilities namely:

- i) Enquire into complaints about the press and the conduct of any person or organization towards the press.
- ii) Research into contemporary press development and engage in updating press documentation.
- iii) Review developments likely to restrict the flow of information and advise on means aimed at remedying such developments.

- iv) Ensure the protection of the rights and privileges of journalists in the lawful performance of their professional duties, and
- v) Foster the achievement and maintenance of high professional standards by the Nigerian press.

### **3.1 Composition of the Council**

The council shall consist of a Chairman and the following other members, that is,

- i) Four representatives of the Nigeria Union of Journalists.
- ii) Two representatives of the Nigerian Guild of Editors.
- iii) Two representatives of the Newspaper Proprietors' Association of Nigeria who shall be practising Journalists.
- iv) One representative of educational institutions involved in training of journalists.
- v) One representative of the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture who shall be a practising Journalist.
- vi) Two representatives of the Broadcasting Organizations of Nigeria.
- vii) One representative of the News Agency of Nigeria who shall be a practising journalist.
- viii) The secretary to the council.

Thus, the board of the council comprises the chairman and 16 members including the Executive Secretary, drawn from the press and the public. The council works through four committees: the Complaints Committee, Research and Documentation Committee, Registration and Disciplinary Committee, and Rights and Privileges Committee.

### **3.2 Roles of the Complaints Committee**

This committee vets, investigates and deals with complaints which people affected by the performance of the press may have about the conduct of persons or organizations towards them. According to the Decree, any member of the public is entitled to lodge complaints against the press provided the complaint is one of unethical conduct. You can complain if:

- i) Anything unethical is published about you in any medium of information in Nigeria.
- ii) Anything considered objectionable is done to you by any journalist in his capacity as a journalist.
- iii) Anything is done against the journalist that is capable of limiting the freedom of the press guaranteed by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

- iv) What is done and complained about is not in accordance with the code of conduct of the Nigerian Union of journalists.

However, before you can complain, you must be satisfied that you have invited the attention of the medium concerned to what you deem objectionable and you are not satisfied with the way the matter was handled by the medium. The medium may have failed to react to your complaint or informed you that they were not liable. If the grouse has to do with a broadcast, it is advised that the complaint is directed to the station's director of news and/or programmes. You should be in no doubt about the publication you are complaining about, when the publication was made, what harm you think it did and what you want done. All your complaints to the council will be in WRITING and should be directed to:

The Executive Secretary  
Nigerian Press Council,  
National Arts Theatre Annex,  
Iganmu,  
P.M.B. 3451, Surulere,  
Lagos State.

The importance of the complaints being in writing is that the committee will not entertain verbal complaints. You have to state clearly what your grouse is, the steps you had taken to effect redress, and your CHOICE that the press Council should look into the matter.

### **Self Assessment Exercise 4.1**

Discuss in details the process of laying complaints before the NPC.

### **3.3 Treatment of Complaints**

Within 48 hours of the receipt of the complaint, the office of the Executive secretary will make a preliminary report to the complaints committee to keep it fully informed as well as set in motion the following administrative steps for the resolution of the complaint:

- i. Acknowledge receipt of the complaint.
- ii. Refer the complaint to the legal department of the Nigeria press council for interpretation and confirmation that the complaint falls within the council's jurisdiction. If the advice is negative, the secretary will write to the complainant to say that the complaint is not within the council's jurisdiction. If positive, the secretary will write to the complainant to supply documented details if not already submitted.

- iii. The secretary will then write to inform the defendant about the complaint and invite him to comment in writing.
- iv. With necessary preliminary investigation now completed, the secretary will lay all available facts of the case with documents, if any, before the Complaints Committee for adjudication.

The Complaint Committee now will meet as often as the need arises while the press council itself will meet every quarter.

The Complaint Committee now handles the matter by inviting both sides and witnesses as provided for in the Nigeria Press Council decree sections 9 (1) and 10 which empowers the council to summon any person in Nigeria to attend any meeting of the council to give evidence and to examine him as a witness.

### **3.4 Possible Findings of the Council**

The council may find the medium complained against liable or not liable, and where appropriate, direct the medium or cause the person concerned to publish, in such manner as the council may direct, a suitable apology or correction and may in addition reprimand the journalist or person in the matter. If the journalist has to be further disciplined, like the removal of name from the register, a recommendation will be sent to the Nigerian Union of Journalists, which is responsible for accreditation of journalists.

#### **Self Assessment Exercise 4.2**

- 1) What are the functions of the Nigeria Press Council?
- 2) Discuss in detail how an aggrieved person can seek redress from the NPC.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The importance of a press council cannot be overemphasized in the maintenance of high standard of professionalism in the field of journalism.

However, it is still controversial whether the NPC has been able to live to the expectations of Nigerian journalists.

First, it was established by government, and as such people believe that as a federal government organ, it may not be able to work as expected. Also, it is believed that the council is a toothless bulldog, which cannot bite.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

Conscious of the need to maintain a high standard of professionalism in journalism, the Nigerian government established a press council to entertain complaints against journalists and complaints from journalists against individuals. The council is also responsible for accreditation of courses in tertiary institutions where journalism is taught.

Besides, it is the duty of the council to maintain a register of accredited journalists submitted to it by the Nigerian Union of Journalists.

Thus, it is an offence for anybody that is not a registered journalist to practice the profession in Nigeria.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)**

To what extent do you think that the NPC has justified the purpose for which it was created?

## **7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READINGS**

NPC Decree No 60 of 1999.



### **3.0 MAIN BODY**

#### **3.1 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, is owned by the government and as a result the media more often than not are praising 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.

Generally, sycophancy denies the public the correct information, which is the duty of the journalist to give them.

#### **3.2 Character Assassination**

Closely related to sycophancy is the ethical problem of character assassination. By flattering favoured prominent and powerful people, the sycophant journalist could indulge in vilifying the opponents of such people.

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.

#### **3.3 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.

### **3.4 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 to face the problems at home. 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.

### **3.5 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. This 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 objective 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.

### **3.6 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.

### **3.7 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 5.1**

Compare and contrast sycophancy and character assassination.

### **3.8 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.

### **3.9 Advertorial**

This is the practice of failing to differentiate and separate advertisements from editorial matters. It is unethical to pass an advert material for editorial.

## **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, amongst others.

## 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMA)

Identify some ethical issues in Nigeria Journalism and suggest likely causes of the problems and their solutions.

## 7.0 REFERENCES

Ogunade, Delu (1996): *“The Press Responsibility and professionalism in” Constitutional Rights Journal, Lagos, CRD. 49 – 55.*

Okunna, Stella (1997): *Ethics of Mass Communication, Enugu, New Generations Books pp 49 – 55.*

Randall, D. (2000): *The Universal Journalist 2<sup>nd</sup>* (ed) London, Pluto Press.