

THE LANGARA JOURNALISM REVIEW

LJR

2007
Number 11

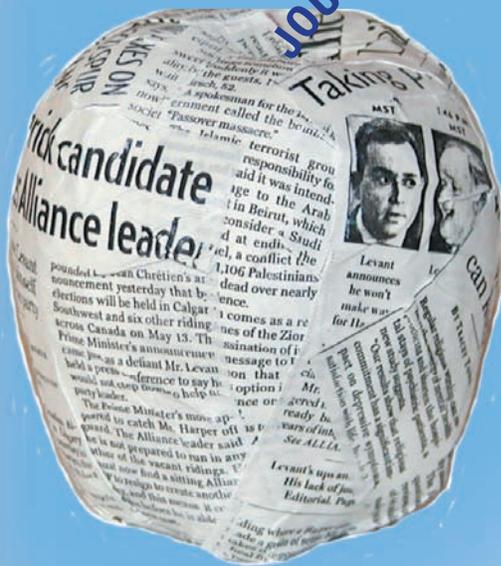
Vaughn Palmer
putting the bite on politicians

Media hype
do journalists cause
the crisis?

Losing
CityNews
one less local view



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Cover photo of Vaughn Palmer by Lee Guille



LJR staff and graduating journalism diploma class of 2007

Back row left to right, Jon Braun, Adam Dunfee, Mark Janzen, Troy Watts, Rob Mangelsdorf. Third row, Melissa Serraglio, Courtney Shepard, Andrea Buchko, Devon Goodsell, Hannah Sutherland, Graham Perkins. Second row, Joel Harris, Krista Siefken, Jessica Walden, Tessa Holloway, Dyrarene Canicula, Marcia Downham, Sonia Aslam. Front centre, Claire Le Noury

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Feeling the pressure

As young journalists in training, we have learned that truth and integrity are the real keys to our success. During our time at Langara College we have been told over and over again to question not only others—but ourselves.

During the last two years we have worked harder and faster than any of us thought was imaginable.

To the untrained eye the world of journalism looks easy. How hard is it really to write stories, take pictures, talk on the radio or appear on TV? In the beginning, we were all a little naive in thinking journalism was going to be a joyride.

When our class first started, we didn't expect becoming journalists would be so demanding.

Long hours, thorough researching, badgering sources for information, non-stop editing and tight deadlines are just some of the pressures we had to deal with on a daily basis.

We have all felt the heat of these pressures first hand, especially while working on this magazine.

Trying to produce a piece of quality journalism in a very short period of time, while juggling other classes, proved to be

extremely challenging.

If anything, putting together the Langara Journalism Review has taught us to work together, keep our patience and check our egos at the door.

The LJR is a symbol of our passion, dedication and persistence. It is the finish line we have all been working towards.

It has been a short journey, yet through it all we have gained the satisfaction of knowing we now have the knowledge to loyally serve the public.

This magazine is a stepping-stone; it has given us the opportunity to be creative and stand up for what we believe in.

When the pressure of production hit, we put on our working shoes and ran with it as fast as we could.

With our adrenaline pumping, we, in this, the 2007 issue of the LJR, explore the many realms of journalism.

So follow us as we question media exaggeration, look into the debate of citizens journalism, detail the challenges of reporting on the Pickton trial and try to find out what makes high-profile journalists tick.

— Marcia Downham

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by journalism students
at Langara College**

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News Nuggets

Tidbits from around the journalism world

The Onion goes postal

'America's Finest News Source'—the Onion is joining forces with the Washington Post to bring its total print circulation to more than 710,000.

The D.C. area will be the 10th U.S. city to receive the newspaper version of the Onion. The Onion is also available at theonion.com.

Despite being available in several U.S. cities, this is the first time the Onion has entered into an agreement with a newspaper. But fear not, the partnership will not lead to the Onion taking down presidents and the Washington Post featuring headlines such as *Incoming North Korean Missile Intercepted by Deion Sanders*.

"We partnered with them solely for advertising sales and distribution," says the Onion Editorial Coordinator, Chet Clem. "We maintain editorial control."

Christopher Ma, vice-president in charge of business development for the Post, echoes that.

"It's strictly a business deal," says

Ma. "It's a business partnership; the content is coming entirely from the Onion [and] the editorial control of the publication is with the Onion. There's no branding, all we're doing is handling some of the business functions and publishing."

The Onion will not be distributed as an insert with the Washington Post but instead be available through vendor boxes and at restaurants and bars.

Though Ma doesn't believe that the partnership will turn Onion readers into Washington Post readers.

"I think a lot of the readers of the Onion in Washington probably already are Post readers. The nature of much of the Onion's humour is at the expense of people involved in political arenas so you almost can't get the jokes unless you have a certain level of awareness of politics."

The Onion was started in 1988 by two undergraduates at the University of Wisconsin. After eight years as a student publication, "someone said this Internet thing seems interesting perhaps we should see what happens if we put our content there. And then we quickly became a national publication," says Clem.

The
Washington
Post

the ONION



Gloria Macarenko and Ian Hanomansing will remain hosts of CBC's B.C. newscast, *CBC News at Six*.

CBC goes back to the future

The CBC's rotating formats of early evening news have performed another flip-flop with the Feb. 19th premiere of CBC's new early evening newscast, *CBC's News at Six*.

"We've done a fair amount of research and had conversations with our audiences and one of the things we've heard consistently across the country is that audiences are very interested in local programming, not only in terms of the product on the screen but also the editorial control," says Jeff Keay, CBC spokesperson.

The switch back to an hour of local news won't be new to British Columbians. Before *Canada Now* debuted, a locally focused newscast aired on CBC. But that format was abandoned, as it was cheaper for CBC to air a national format newscast.

But the evolution isn't stopping there; CBC has established a task force that's considering several other options.

Keay says the CBC doesn't know if change will happen in the backroom with assignments being generated or on the front line with reporters providing information to television, radio and websites.

Compiled by Adam Dunfee

A deadly year for journalists

Last year wasn't a good year for journalists as more than 80 were killed worldwide. According to France-based Reporters Without Borders, 81 reporters and 32 media assistants were killed.

Almost half of the casualties occurred in Iraq where 39 reporters were killed; Mexico came in at a distant second with nine reporters killed.

The organization also said that at least 871 reporters were arrested, while 1,472 reporters were physically attacked or threatened and 56 were kidnapped.

The numbers took a sharp jump

from 2005 when 63 journalists were killed, more than 1,300 physically attacked or threatened, and more than 800 arrested.

Last year was the deadliest year since 1994 when 103 journalists were killed, a majority of them as a result of the Rwandan genocide and the Algerian Civil War.



PAUL DOUGLAS
CBS cameraman
killed in an explosion in Iraq.

A full Dose of dailies

Free newspapers battle it out to capture young, urban readers

by Graham Perkins

In downtown Vancouver, they're hard to miss. They're in boxes on every busy corner. Abandoned copies are stuffed in curbside garbage cans, or blow across sidewalks. Copies litter the seats and floors of buses and SkyTrain. Welcome to the world of the free dailies.

Since their emergence on the international scene nearly 10 years ago, free daily newspapers have been popping up in markets all around the world. In March 2005, they hit the West Coast, with Dose, 24 Hours and Metro leading the charge. Before long, red, orange and green newspaper boxes began to appear on the streets, with vendors on popular street corners doling out copies to passers-by.

The free daily newspaper is where readers whet their appetite for news; articles are short and to the point, leaving out the details in lieu of more stories.

"We like to see ourselves as a mini-newspaper," says Fernando Carneiro, managing editor of Metro Vancouver. "What we give people is headlines from the day and a format they can read in roughly 20 minutes. The idea is, if you read something you like in our paper, you start with us and go on to read more about it in another news source. We're not trying to compete with the Province or the [Vancouver] Sun for readers."

The city's other main free daily newspaper, 24 Hours, sees itself in a slightly different light.

"We have 11 people in our newsroom, so I see us competing with something like the Province," says Dean Broughton, editor-in-chief of 24 Hours.

The two freebies see themselves as important parts of the local newspaper landscape. But wait—weren't there three? What happened to Dose?

Media giant CanWest Global, which owns Dose, decided to stop production of the paper version only a year after its introduction and instead is focusing its efforts on Dose's website.

Even as a newspaper, Dose looked



GRAHAM PERKINS photos

A forgotten Dose box serves as a memory of the paper's short-lived tenure in B.C.

more like a webpage or stylized magazine than a newspaper. It's name doubled as it's philosophy; a quick flip past the cover and the reader would be given tiny tidbits of offbeat news with a heavy emphasis on sidebars, graphics, and quirky attention grabbers.

"We saw Dose was reaching a different audience than anyone else, so we felt that the best thing to do was to bring it entirely online," says Dave Stevens, director of international content for CanWest. "The Dose magazine was very much like a web page. Our audience was very web savvy, and we realized they were getting a lot of their information from the web. By moving the product entirely online, we were able to expand our audience."

"We want to be a one-stop shop for advertisers. We want to let them communicate with the reader through the web and text messaging," he says.

Carneiro, who worked at Metro newspapers in Toronto and Helsinki, Finland, before coming to Vancouver, saw Dose's demise as more of a failed business model.

"They claimed to put out roughly 60,000 copies each day, and they had roughly 33,000 readers. They struggled to pitch their product to advertisers and they struggled to find readers," he says. "It wasn't really a newspaper. It was very opinionated. They editorialized...a lot."

The target demographic for Metro and 24 Hours is women between the ages of 18 and 35, which is considered by many advertisers to be a group with a lot of spending power. However, Dose's offbeat design didn't attract this readership.

"Dose had a bit of local content, but it was more of a national paper," Broughton says about why Dose didn't hit it off in Vancouver. "I quite liked their design, but I thought it was too magazine-like. For a daily newspaper, I think they overshot their market."

"I don't think they understood that their readers were turning out to be so young. I think they were aiming for the same readers as 24 [Hours] and Metro, but what they ended up getting with their format was 16-year-old guys in high school and a few older readers who appreciated the design," Carneiro says.

Although it attracted attention with its flashy covers, Dose's downfall didn't

have a strong effect on the Vancouver market.

"It was a moral victory, but not much more," Broughton says. "There wasn't a lot of advertising in it, so we didn't gain a lot from it [financially]. Now there's just less clutter in the marketplace."

Despite Dose's disappearance from the Vancouver market, there is still significant potential for growth in Western Canadian markets. Metro is working on plans to expand into Alberta (a province currently void of any free



24 Hours Editor-in-Chief Dean Broughton

daily newspapers) and 24 Hours is constantly looking for more advertising to expand the size of its paper.

The main ingredient, not surprisingly, is local news.

"We can't localize the paper enough," Carneiro says. "People want local reporters, local columnists. They don't want to read about what's going on in Toronto."

The growing demand for local coverage has resulted in bigger newsrooms for the free dailies, putting pressure on the marketing departments to come up with creative ways of generating revenue.

One of the more controversial creations have been "wraps" ads that

cover the front and back cover of the newspaper.

Advertisers love it because it gives them premium placement that no reader can ignore and it can be all theirs if they're willing to pay a hefty sum (Metro sells them for no less than \$17,000 each).

However, taking the news off the front page and turning the product into more of an advertising tool than a newspaper can cause friction between sales and editorial departments.

"I don't like it personally, but our sales team loves it," Carneiro says. He puts a cap on the number of wraps at two per year and never on a day after major news events.

Broughton says he thinks wraps weaken "the integrity of the product." He says, "I don't like them at all."

One variation of the wrap that has seen increased prominence is the "jacket," where a half-page section of advertising obscures the front page. This seems to strike a middle ground between editors and sales people, although it does show the challenges of the industry.

With 24 Hours and Metro gaining ever-increasing prominence, it's clear they aren't going anywhere for the time being. The big question, however, is how they're going to adapt to a constantly changing media landscape where the Internet rules. Dose abandoned the print version, but according to Stevens, the traffic on the website has increased by 82 per cent since June 2006. As Stevens sees it,

the future of print journalism must have a strong web component if it has any hopes of survival.

Not everyone shares this philosophy and many people still see newspapers as an irreplaceable institution, but it's certainly a hot topic of conversation for those who have carved entire careers out of broadsheets and tabloids.

"Journalism is in such a state of flux right now with everyone jumping on the electronic bandwagon," Broughton says. "The biggest challenge is keeping up with the appetite of society."

Vancouverites have long been known by other Canadians as a bunch of relaxed, outdoorsy pot-smokers with a passion for the environment and their oats and grains.

One needs to look no further than the lululemon clad streets of the West End to know what the rest of Canada is talking about. The young, trendy, elite Vancouver crowd just coming from yoga, with a tall, non-fat, half-sweet chai latte in one hand, and high-priced tickets to see that hot new band at the Commodore in the other.

This is the crowd that the marketing and sales people at Vancouver's urban weeklies refer to when they talk about the "West Coast lifestyle." Gail Nugent, sales manager of the revamped WestEnder—now called WE—describes her publication as "very Vancouver."

Aimed at an active, urban, 18- to 45-year-old crowd, the WE has re-focused its readership base, away from its previous role as a more traditional community newspaper serving Vancouver's West End.

On the cover of one recent edition of WE, three young, hard-bodied specimens smile into the camera, teeth a gleaming white, skin golden-brown and hair perfect. The scene behind them is the essence of Vancouver: a beach, the downtown core and blue-green mountains beyond. Underneath them, big red letters proclaim: GET FIT.

"It's a live, work and play in Vancouver crowd we're after," Nugent explains.

Nugent, who has worked with the WE for 12 years, has seen the paper's coverage shift from such mundane stuff as city council news and problems about too many defecating dogs to upbeat items on entertainment, food, health and fashion. Nugent says there is more room for stories with alternative viewpoints, and, especially important, more entertainment listings providing the free-spending trendies with

information on where to go and what to do.

"The paper is more dynamic. We needed to have listings; it's what city readers needed."

Nugent says the paper was redesigned to focus more on lifestyle, which is evident on the cover of another recent edition, where an article on fitness gets the major play, along with a picture of a new band you should know about, and a promo photo of a recently released film.

WE's urban niche has for years been occupied solely by the Georgia Straight, which it is now trying to challenge. Even the WE's street boxes are the same co-

is because it has echoed his publication's design.

Claiming an average weekly readership of 340,000 and a publishing history that goes back more than 30 years, the Straight boasts of being Canada's largest urban weekly. And it is still the paper of choice for many people, especially for its classifieds and entertainment listings.

Ainsley MacCallum, a student at the University of British Columbia fits the profile of what Nugent describes to be the quintessential reader. The 20-year-old Gamma Phi Beta goes to the gym regularly, shops with the best of them and is a fixture on the Vancouver night-life scene.

"The Georgia Straight has pretty good listings; I like their dining out section and club listings. I've looked at the WestEnder before but I wasn't as impressed when it came to the listings."

Nonetheless, the make-over for the WE appears to have been a positive move. According to figures from Black Press, the publication's owner, readership sits at approximately 55,000 per week, which is about a 10 per cent increase compared to previous figures. The paper displays a healthy ad-to-editorial ratio. The ads are well-aimed at its readership target, featuring the latest cell phones, trendy clothes and pricey Yaletown condos.

Nugent says the WE has seen more advertisers wanting to tap into its demographics. Tirtha Dhar, an assistant professor at UBC's Sauder School of Business, says it makes sense that the urban weeklies would

have a good response from advertisers.

"They're very urbanized papers. They're free newspapers. They have a wide circulation and a very good target base," he says. "Community newspapers are much smaller newspapers. They don't reach as many people."



hour as the Straight's, black and white. Any similarity between the two papers is likely not an accident. WE's publisher, James Craig, was for many years the Straight's advertising manager, and thought to be responsible for the WE's new hip urban branding.

In fact, Dan McLeod, founder and publisher of the Straight, has been quoted as saying the WE's new-found success

Information held captive

by Troy Watts

Despite efforts to create a more open and accountable government in British Columbia, the landmark Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP) is continuously being eroded, creating a culture of denial and secrecy within the province's halls of power.

When the NDP government passed the Act in 1992, it was lauded across Canada, and the world, as a shining example of open democratic government. The act was designed to enforce public bodies to be more accountable by providing public access to records and information. But almost immediately the government retreated and started blocking requested information. In the mid '90s ministry budgets were slashed and the number of FOI coordinators were cut by almost one-third. The budget of the independent watchdog has since been cut by 35 per cent and fees keep increasing, all resulting in a longer, more expensive and more secretive process.

Private citizens make the majority of FOI requests. Between 1998 and 2003 of the nearly 33,400 applications, 63 per cent were individuals looking for personal information, such as adoption records and employment files. Law firms made 4,135 requests, while political parties filed 1,670 requests, two-thirds of which were filed by the then-Liberal opposition. Journalists, special interest groups, and businesses filed fewer than 1,300 requests.

The government and its subservient bureaucracy are employing tricks such as legal loopholes, narrow interpretations of requests, and stall tactics. Denied applicants then must appeal their request to the FOI commissioner, a process that can last more than a year.

Currently, the most contentious issue surrounding the FOI debate is the misuse of a so-called "policy advice" clause in the act, which applies to advice bureaucrats give politicians on policy, ensuring that sensitive decisions can be

made without fear of embarrassment or retribution.

Originally, this section referred to a narrow part of the decision-making process. But in December 2002, following a B.C. Court of Appeal decision on a case between the province and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia, the court ruled that medical reports obtained by the college for the purposes of investigating a complaint against one of their physicians were protected. Due to the ambiguous wording of section 13 of FOIPP Act, the ruling expanded "policy advice" to include a plethora of documents that were previously available.

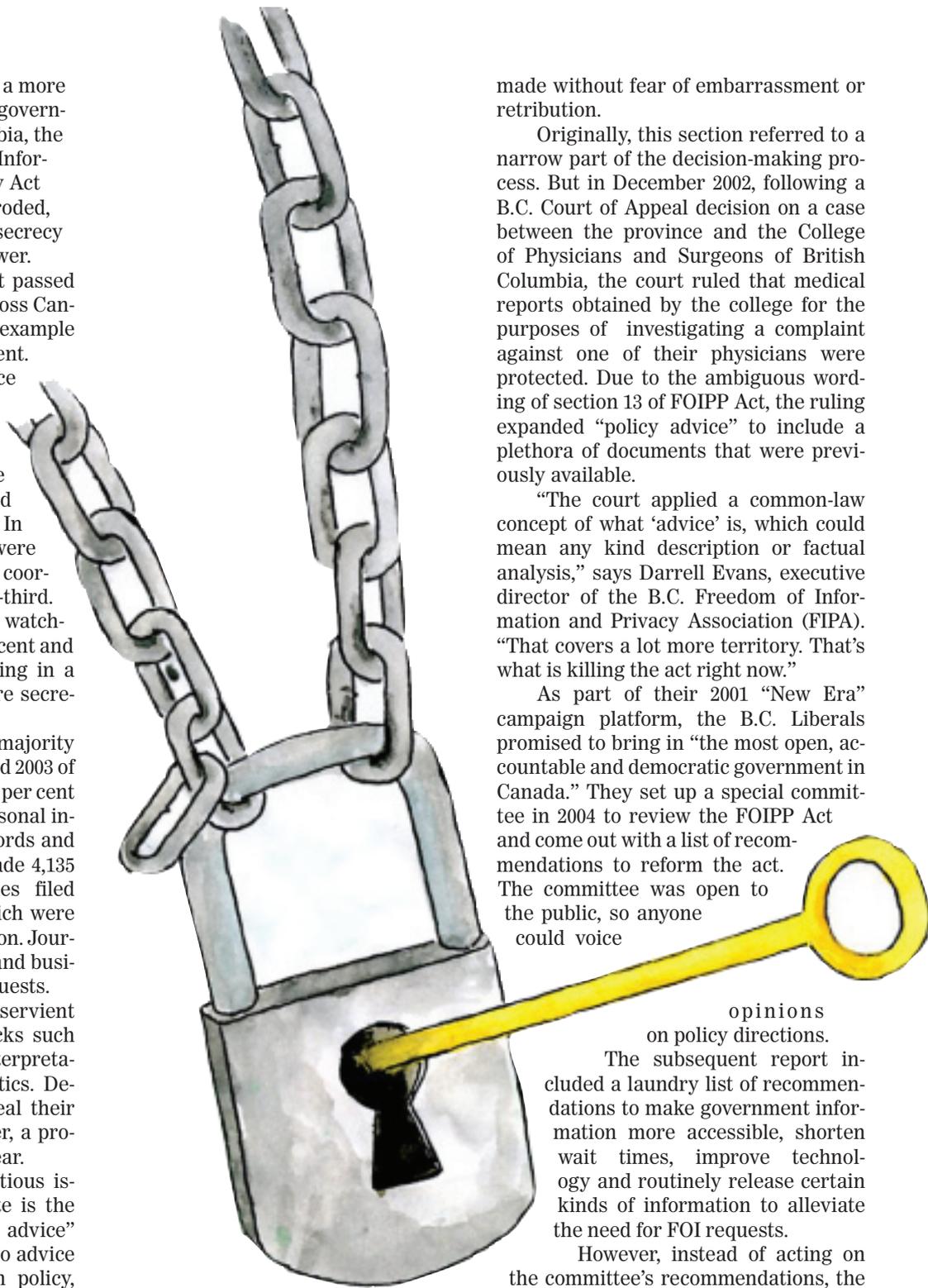
"The court applied a common-law concept of what 'advice' is, which could mean any kind description or factual analysis," says Darrell Evans, executive director of the B.C. Freedom of Information and Privacy Association (FIPA). "That covers a lot more territory. That's what is killing the act right now."

As part of their 2001 "New Era" campaign platform, the B.C. Liberals promised to bring in "the most open, accountable and democratic government in Canada." They set up a special committee in 2004 to review the FOIPP Act and come out with a list of recommendations to reform the act. The committee was open to the public, so anyone could voice

opinions on policy directions.

The subsequent report included a laundry list of recommendations to make government information more accessible, shorten wait times, improve technology and routinely release certain kinds of information to alleviate the need for FOI requests.

However, instead of acting on the committee's recommendations, the Liberal government decided to launch



another review. This time around the government did not go to the public, opting instead for a hand-picked list of consultants.

"This is a bureaucratic move," Evans says. "The government wasn't happy with the really democratic process, so they opted for another one."

He feels the reason behind the new review is that the bureaucrats responsible for administering the FOIPP Act submitted their own list of recommendations

and is not confident that it will provide a framework for meaningful change to the FOIPP Act.

"We don't know what those amendments are but we have very, very little faith that there will be much in the way of what we're asking for," Evans says.

All FOI requests to find out what the recommended amendments will have been denied under the "policy advice" provision in the act.

Although most requests from jour-

"The press in a way is the public's investigative agency."

nalists are treated as "sensitive", public bodies usually respond to FOI requests from the press with regularity.

to the committee and had all of them rejected. Additionally, the bureaucracy is "heavily invested in secrecy" and abuses the policy advice exemption of the Act more often than politicians do.

"They started from scratch," Evans says. "Basically, we feel that was because they were not getting their way. They were not happy with the way their recommendations were received and rejected."

During the process, the FOI bureaucrats submitted another wish list of recommendations to FIPA for comments. At this point, things were starting to look suspicious, Evans says. They were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement and the process was beginning to feel counter-productive.

FIPA and their allies felt that they were never going to get the major reform of the act recommended by the special committee so they began a campaign to lobby the government to accept the recommendations.

Among the diverse groups participating in the campaign are the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the B.C. Civil Liberties Association and the Sierra Legal Defence Fund.

Their goal is to implement the recommendations put forward by the initial FOI reform committee, increase funding to public bodies that respond to FOI requests, and end the "culture of denial" among political aides and bureaucrats.

Despite the fact the new review won't be released until the spring of 2007 the Liberal government has already promised to make amendments to the act. Ev-

ans is not confident that it will provide a framework for meaningful change to the FOIPP Act.

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Although most requests from jour-

nalists are treated as "sensitive", public bodies usually respond to FOI requests from the press with regularity.

"The press gets fairly good treatment because it is the press; it has such power in society, rather than a public interest group that has a more limited representation," Evans says. "The press in a way is the public's investigative agency."

Vancouver Sun journalist Chad Skelton uses FOI requests extensively for researching and finding stories. He has used requests to break a number of stories, many of which contained controversial information. He says at times it can be a frustrating process but it is still possible to obtain important and potentially damaging information through use of the act.

"It's certainly not the case that you can't get stuff out of the government," Skelton says. "Sometimes it takes a while but you still can get good stories out of FOI."

Knowledge about how to use the act and the wording of the requests are key to obtaining information, Skelton says.

He would like to see a fee exemption for journalists written into the act and a reduction in the time it takes to get a reply to a request that is in the public interest.

"I would like to see a presumption that if you're a journalist it is in the public interest, and maybe the government would have to prove that it's not in the public interest if they want to charge you a fee," Skelton says.



About the B.C. Press Council

The Press Council is a voluntary body that considers unsatisfied complaints from the public about the conduct of the press in the gathering and publication of news and opinion.

Who serves on Council?

The council has 11 directors – five professional members who are officers or employees of member newspapers and six public members (including the chair) who are no in any way associated with the press.

Who pays for Council?

The Council was formed at the initiative of B.C. newspaper publishers. Although funded by contributions from member newspapers, it is a wholly independent and unbiased body whose directors are weighted on favour of the public.

How to complain

A complaint must be precisely defined and accompanied by a clipping of the story. The complainant is required to approach the newspaper to see if the dispute can first be solved without intervention by the Press Council. If the complaint is not satisfied with the newspaper's response, he/she and the newspaper will be asked to submit final written summaries of argument and evidence and attend an informal hearing to argue the issue in person.

Normally, the hearing is held in public. Neither party may be represented by council. After the hearing, the Council issues a notice of adjudication. The newspaper involved is obliged to publish the adjudication.

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JR

Covering Pickton

The gruesome details: How much is too much?



by Tessa Holloway

Ernle Crey is reliving the horror all over again. Ever since his sister, Dawn Crey, went missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside in late 2000, he's been telling reporters her story.

"For some people it's the scariest thing on Earth. They just don't want to do an interview," he says.

But he does interviews: he wants to keep the public's attention focused on the missing women, and to see an end to the suffering.

For years now, the story of Vancouver's missing women and the alleged murders of Robert "Willie" Pickton has been a growing media circus.

It started with a few reporters following the story when the Vancouver Police insisted there wasn't a serial killer. Then Pickton was arrested and his farm scoured for evidence. The murder charges started with two and grew to 26. Pickton is currently on trial for six of the murders. And through it all, reporters

have been struggling to find answers and tell the tragic story properly.

Never before in Canadian history has someone been on trial for so many murders, and Crey is glad the media has put this much attention on the case.

Lindsay Kines started reporting for the Vancouver Sun on the dramatic increase of missing women in 1998. Then, police were aware of 16 missing women.

By 2001 the toll had risen to 26, so Kines and colleague Kim Bolan decided to do some digging. They identified 45 missing women—not the 26 police listed.

They shed light on a police investigation marred by lack of resources, conflict and inexperience.

Crey says he's not sure if the RCMP's joint task force to find the missing women would have been created if it weren't for the reporters' investigative work.

"[But] there's still a long list of missing women and no one can account for their whereabouts. That includes my sister."

The trial continues to grind on and Crey is worried about the media "vanishing from the scene." He wants to keep attention focused on the trial and said he worries the public may have had enough. Crey says reporters have told him readers are phoning news outlets and asking them to tone down coverage.

The editor-in-chief of the Province, Wayne Moriarty, said he couldn't think of a time in his 25 years of journalism when the paper received this much public feedback. Readers have complained about the nature of the coverage, including some who have cancelled their subscriptions until the trial is over, but most of the responses have been positive says Moriarty. But even when there's public backlash, it's integral to the paper's credibility that the trial is covered properly, he adds.

"On one hand, you express you understand their [readers'] concerns, but this is what we do," Moriarty says.

"There are so many issues around

the trial that the public is paying for and they have a right to know.”

Ethan Baron is covering the trial for the Province and isn't worried about it dropping off the radar.

“I think the public is very interested in this case,” he says. “Whether that translates into changes, I don't know.”

Crey wants change. He worries about the next generation of young women, especially his teenage nieces who are struggling in foster care. The eldest at 15 only recently returned to school and the younger, who is 14, dropped out.

“I remember [my sister] as an energetic, bubbly girl with long, wavy black hair.” Being 10 years older and growing up in a home plagued with alcohol abuse, he took care of Dawn. He fed her, changed her diapers and took her along when he played with his friends. The siblings were eventually sent to separate foster homes. He saw her a few times as a teenager, but soon after she started experimenting with drugs.

Dawn was hooked. She moved to Vancouver with her boyfriend and turned to prostitution to support both their habits. She was in and out of jail and much of the time Crey's only updates on his sister were through an Aboriginal elder

“

Saying dismembered pieces of them were left here and there, that has a stronger effect on the public...

ETHAN BARON

who worked in the prison. After losing contact with her boyfriend, Dawn drifted further into a vicious cycle of prostitution and drugs.

“In order to cope with the feelings, she turned to more drugs. She was self-medicating with heroin,” Crey says.

One day Dawn didn't show up for her methadone appointment. She didn't cash her welfare cheques either. Dawn's sister searched the Downtown Eastside for weeks, but never found her. Dawn was officially listed missing in September 2000; Crey didn't find out until December.

Crey says his sister tried several times to take her own life and in the end he never found out how she died. Dawn's

DNA was found on Pickton's pig farm but he's not charged with her murder.

The Pickton story is not for the weak-stomached. So how do journalists cover something so graphic and make it appealing, but not so gruesome it would offend standards of good taste?



In a front-page editorial published at the start of the trial, the Vancouver Sun's Editor-in-Chief, Patricia Graham, promised to do two versions of the story: One for sensitive readers and one with the gory details as they come out in court.

“You will be able to keep the stories out of the hands of your children should you choose to do so,” Graham assured.

But the very next day's headline read: “He murdered them, butchered them and disposed of their remains.”

Not even a child could miss these words in bold face type across the front page.

The Province puts warnings on the graphic stories so readers have a heads-up. While it may not be pretty details, Baron says they're important and believes readers should not have the choice to sidestep the story.

“Saying he killed them has an effect on people,” he said. “Saying dismembered pieces of them were left here and there, that has a stronger effect on the public and it's important that the public is affected in a powerful way.”

And he's not the only one to say so.

“I watch the news just for this,” says Lisa Alkek, who came from Lillooet for a drumming ceremony outside the New Westminster courtroom in remembrance of the missing.

According to CBC Reporter, Alan Waterman, journalists need to be careful about becoming advocates.

“I'm not out here to create any change, that's not my role. There are already people coming out here to put

forward their agendas,” he says, pointing towards the circle of drummers.

In fact, reporters covering the trial find they have to be careful about a lot of things. Most importantly, publication bans.

“Whether it's a live or taped story,

we have to be so, so careful about what we say,” Waterman says. “You edit yourself constantly. We have a team put together with all lawyers and senior editing staff and all stories have to be vetted by them.”

If he were to say one wrong word he could be in contempt of court, possibly resulting in a mistrial.

“Just hearing about what the Crown is alleging... We've never seen allegations like this in Canadian law,” he says.

During the ugly parts of evidence in the voir dire, Baron said sometimes he'd have nightmares, but is still far removed from the situation.

According to Global BC reporter Ted Field, he gets the trial off his mind by covering other stories.

“The one thing actually decent about being a general assignment reporter is you spend half the time doing gruesome stuff and half the time doing human interest,” he says.

Crey has endured hours of gut-wrenching pre-trial testimony but he can't step outside of the story or take a break; he is the story. Every time Crey talks, his feelings swell and rise to the surface.

“It's like a tap. It turns the emotions on and it's difficult to turn it off.”

But he feels it's his duty to keep talking to the media. All he asks from reporters is that they take time from scribbling notes to look up and listen.

LJR



Covering the Cops

Journalists have a responsibility to serve the public. So do police. Sometimes they clash.

by Courtney Shepard

The Vancouver Police Department's media liaison officer ended a Thursday morning media briefing in an unusual way. From his elevated podium, Const. Tim Fanning thanked the room of reporters for doing their jobs. Hockey equipment stolen from the Hockey Education Reaching Out Society (HEROS) program, which provides equipment to children who cannot afford it, had been recovered. Fanning told journalists that because the theft was well publicized, the thieves had difficulty selling the equipment. One jean-clad reporter sitting at the conference table, asks Fanning if the publicity was the reason the equipment was abandoned. Fanning nods. "Because you guys got all the information out and it is such a compelling story, to steal this equipment from kids who really need it and from such a worthwhile program, they just dumped it. So, thank you for all your interest on that one." Fanning smiles and ends the media briefing in the small carpeted room on the second floor of VPD's Cambie Street headquarters.

Such an affable media briefing is an example of how the relationship between cops and journalists can work for the benefit of the public. Police officers have a duty to serve and protect people while maintaining law and order, while journalists have a duty to inform and warn the public of the dangers the police tell them about.

But what happens when police and journalists' duties clash? What happens when police refuse to release certain details—they will claim it jeopardizes their investigation—but journalists believe the public has a right to know those details?

What happens when journalists do get the details and use them in what police deem to be an irresponsible manner—out of context or, heaven forbid, sensationalizing?

"I used to be worried about being misquoted, now it's just something I live with," says RCMP Staff Sergeant John Ward, who has given up correcting information in the media. "It is absolutely alarming to see the amount of incorrect

information that is out there. It's amazing. I'll finish doing an interview with a journalist and the next day I read the paper and it's truly not anything reflective of what we discussed."

But still, Ward, who has been the voice of the provincial police force on and off for 13 years, sees value in trying to get as much information out to the public via the media as he can.

"We simply need to let the public know what we are doing." It's important, he says, to inform the city of amber alerts, fraud scams and public safety advisories. "If there is a known sex offender on the loose, we want to let the public know because they need to be able to protect themselves."

The communication channels are extremely open and congenial between the RCMP and the media, he says, but there is a downside: the inaccuracies that are reported. Both Fanning and Ward have concerns when reported facts are incorrect, stories are sensationalized or information is reported out of context.

Fanning is aware of errors from time to time, but says reporters are usually keen to fix factual errors. "They thank us for correcting them if they made a mistake. Overall, most of the reporters and news outlets like to get the information out the right way."

Fanning has been the VPD's media liaison for the last two years. He says speaking to the media is like a balancing act. The guidelines are, make sure the public is informed and don't hamper any investigations.

The Surrey Now's crime reporter, Tom Zytaruk, has been reporting on the crime beat for 16 years and understands his responsibility.

"There is always going to be the understanding, nobody wants to interfere with an investigation or the due course of justice. We want police to catch our bad guys and killers and what not, and I can't think of any reporter that I ever ran into that wanted to cause a mistrial. That would be pretty hard to live with." He says cops and reporters may have perceptions about each other but, "we just have to realize we are both in the service of the public and let's keep things democratic."

Zytaruk imagines what it would be like to have his words misquoted or taken out of context and says he'd be wary of that, too. He says there is a responsibility for journalists to conduct themselves appropriately and not hype a story.

When he's writing a story, say, about a child who's just been killed, he imagines himself being the child's father. How would he feel reading this report? He uses that as a guideline in terms of taste and compassion.

Zytaruk believes sensational copy may sell more papers, but if the information is incorrect reporters are failing the public.

Fanning says the role of a media liaison is, "a necessity for a big city department. We know what the media need, what sort of information they're looking for, the who, what, where, when and why." And, he says, people who are not experienced at dealing with the media may not be able to give that information to them or answer their questions.

Gerry Bellett has been a crime and general reporter at the Vancouver Sun for more than 30 years and says when questioning media spokespersons, "You've got to know what you're likely to get before you start asking. You have to understand if they're in the middle of an investigation they're not going to give you anything that will mess up that

investigation. They are not going to tell you anything that's going to impede their chances of a conviction when the thing comes to trial."

Matthew Ramsey, who has covered crime for the Province for the last three years, says the relationship between law enforcement and the media is, "necessary, but sometimes problematic. You can run the risk of becoming too close to the police and losing objectivity." Ramsey says if police funnel information through one source, be it the media officer, it's less likely potentially damaging information about police operations will be made public.

Having a single media spokesperson means all police information is channeled through one source. This also gives police more control over that information.

Reporter Chad Skelton finds the media briefings helpful. He says police used to hold a briefing daily whether they had news or not. Now when there is nothing to report or when police simply don't want to talk to the media, briefings are cancelled.

Skelton, who deals with law agencies on a regular basis, says his relationship with the VPD and the RCMP is schizophrenic. The police are helpful when he is reporting routine crime stories that reflect positively on them, "but then the next day I might be doing a story about 89 misconduct allegations against the RCMP and then they are a bit testier. They are not as happy with the story."

Skelton cites several positive experiences with the police, such as when he was given the opportunity to interview officers overseeing the chronic offenders program. Another time he was provided with information about the Hells Angels when working on an organized crime series.

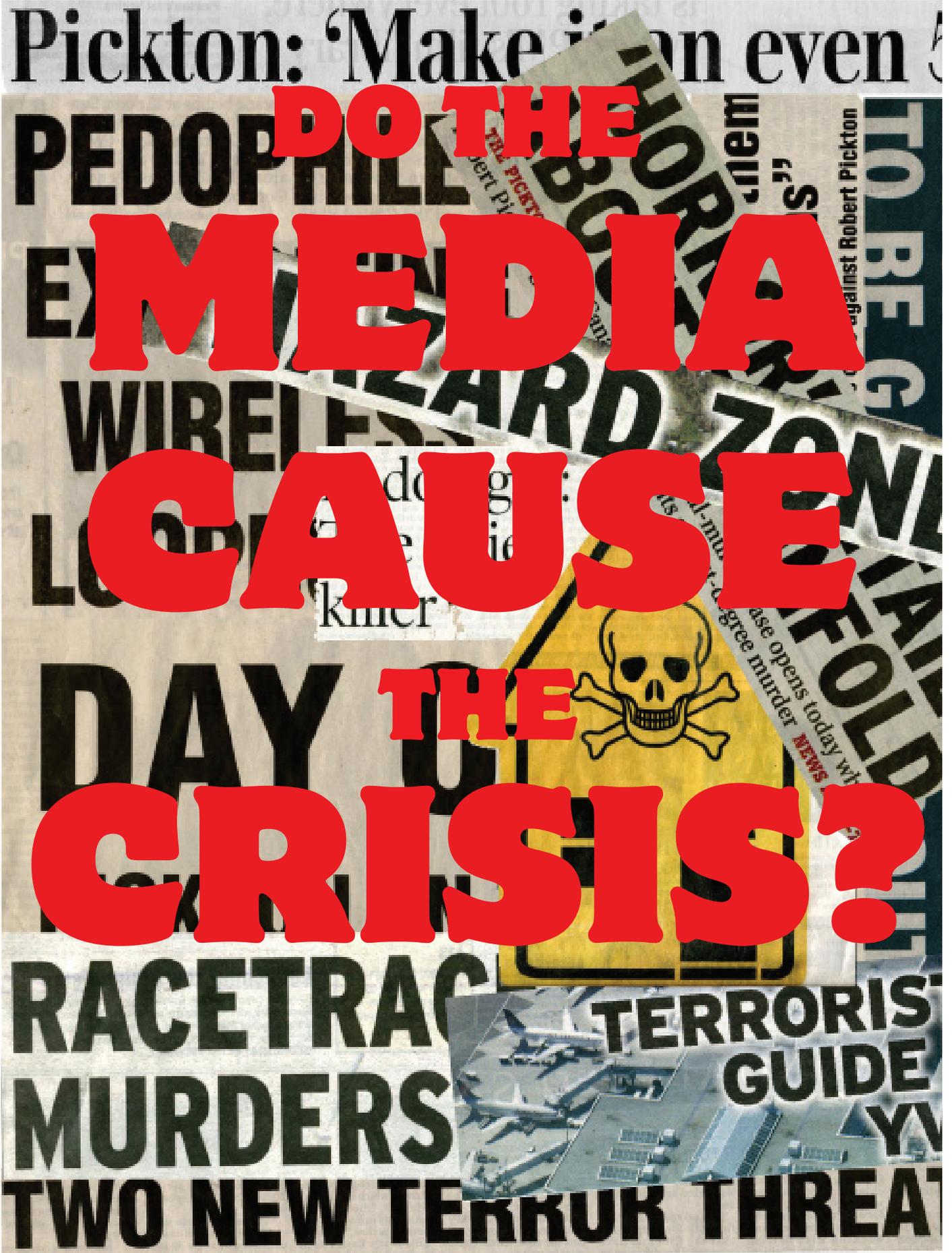
Regardless of the focus of his stories Skelton asserts the police treat him in a professional manner.

"When I am working a late night on Sunday and I'm trying to find out about a shooting or something like that they return my calls and are pleasant on the phone," he says.

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A reporter interviews Constable Tim Fanning during a police media briefing.



Violent storms, poisonous drinking water, deadly viruses. Are we nearing the end, or do the media just make us feel that way?

by Joel Harris

“It’s the end of the world as we know it and I feel fine,” the classic R.E.M. song goes. This could be the anthem of journalists. The world is full of scary people and scary events so aren’t journalists just doing their jobs when reporting calamitous events? Or is it just fear mongering for dramatic stories and great headlines?

Late last year in Vancouver health authorities issued a 12-day boil water advisory after a mudslide muddied the Lower Mainland’s two main drinking water sources, the Seymour and Capilano reservoirs. Nobody got sick, and not one positive test of any harmful bacteria was ever found. Headlines such as ‘Dirty water costing us millions’ and ‘NDP urges debate on water crisis’ were played large. People lined up at grocery stores for bottled water. At one large store people waited for six hours for the store to open to buy bottled water. As it was snapped up, fights broke out and several people were injured.

“All you had to do was boil the water rather than go out and support bottled water companies. There was no crisis,” says Stephen Ward, who teaches journalism ethics at the University of British Columbia.

In another one of Mother Nature’s fits, windstorms knocked out power and blew over thousands of trees including those at Stanley Park. *Stanley Park carnage, Hundreds of fallen trees lasting scar in Stanley Park, and Stanley Park devastated by windstorm* were the headlines across the country. Elisha Moreno, spokesperson for BC Hydro, dealt with hundreds of calls from the media. She said the media exaggerated the story, dedicating entire afternoons to cover the windstorm coverage, calling it ‘Windstorm 2006’, as if Gulf war had broken out.

The downed trees at Stanley Park received worldwide media attention. Global BC launched a three-day fundraiser amidst their six o’clock news hour to help restore Stanley Park. Radio and television stations were dedicating large blocks of time to the windstorm with headlines such as *Major windstorm*

wreaks havoc in B.C.

Then there are “killer diseases” that never quite go away, such as SARS and avian flu. These diseases make dramatic headlines:

Bracing ourselves for the looming avian flu pandemic, Flu pandemic just around the corner and DRUG-RESISTANT SUPERBUGS: There are more of them, they are more widespread and they are making more of us sicker than ever.

The World Health Organization reports 165 confirmed deaths of avian flu since 2003, none in North America. According to Statistics Canada, in 2003, the latest date for cause-of-death statistics, 30 people died from SARS, 511 died from *Clostridium difficile*, a bacteria that infects the colon, and lung cancer killed 17,374 people.

The so-called killer diseases turned out to be busts — not pandemics as media reported scientists saying.

British Columbia Disease Control spokesperson Roy Wadia worked for three years with the World Health Organization in China dealing with the avian flu virus.

“When somebody says the sky is falling and the sky doesn’t fall you tend to become complacent and say, what the hell was all that about? And was the fuss really warranted?” he says.

The RCMP certainly believe media exaggerates. An internal RCMP report obtained by the Vancouver Sun suggests media relation officers should be less helpful to reporters to reduce the number of crime stories because of media exaggeration. The RCMP conducted an analysis of B.C. newspapers during a four-week period and found 67 per cent of front page stories were about crime. The RCMP also polled 750 B.C. residents and found 68 per cent were concerned about crime despite a 2005 Statistics Canada report indicating a drop in the crime rate.

“The media are so huge; inevitably someone out there is going to exaggerate,” Ward says.

Ward helped conduct a study in 2003 that found out of 3,012 Canadians, 92 per cent believe the media sensationalize stories and 63 per cent said it affected their trust in the media.

One reason why the media tend to exaggerate and turn news stories into crises is competition for readers or audiences.

“They exaggerate because it’s easy, it’s dramatic and they think it draws the eyeballs of readers or the ears of listeners to a story,” Ward says. “We are in an era of hot media pressure and competition where traditional media are fighting for a diminishing niche of audiences and so you want to tart the story up.”

The pendulum swings the other way, too. If competition forces media to exaggerate stories, it also forcing news organizations to be accountable for their exaggeration for fear of pushing the public to another news organization, Ward says.

“The public believe these large corporate entities respond to nothing. They do respond. If it’s going to affect their subscription rates or their audiences they will listen.”

Vancouver Sun writer Pete McMartin, opined in a column that there was much overreaction to the downed trees in Stanley Park. Readers wrote letters to the editor agreeing with him.

“Finally a dose of logic and reality about the condition of Stanley Park,” one reader wrote. Another said: “I cannot understand why this incident is being treated as a tragedy of epic proportions.”

Why was Stanley Park making headlines daily when communities in the interior and northern B.C. are losing trees by the thousands to the pine beetle?

“It’s a natural disaster that hasn’t been dealt with in part I think because the national media haven’t picked up on the story the way they should,” says Mel Rothenburger, editor for the Kamloops Daily News. “There has been some attention paid to it but nothing in comparison to the coverage of Stanley Park.”

Oliver Lum, assistant managing editor for Global BC, doesn’t believe his station exaggerated the Stanley Park story. He said Global BC does several fundraisers throughout the year for a variety of public causes. Lum says the media are always under public scrutiny so there will always be critics.

“We’re not in the business of sensationalizing news. Does it happen? Probably somewhere but I don’t think we do that.”

Rothenburger says the media have failed to put Stanley Park into context of what is happening in the rest of the province.

“The loss of Stanley Park is exaggerated when you compare it to the pine beetle crisis.”

Ward agrees with Rothenburger. “Stanley Park is important and it is very important to the community and to get it back into shape. But I mean a lot of people can rightly say what about poverty, what about all the other issues and, to be cruel, trees grow back.”

David Beers, editor of the Tyee, an online news site, says journalists need to do stories that audiences find interesting but without sensationalizing them.

“They need to realize people need context; they need perspective in order to judge how important it is. The thing to do is not just go to the sources that make it sound as dire as possible,” Beers says. “You have to come up with some objective rational standard of what is an important story and what isn’t.”

In the Stanley Park matter, Beers suggests reporters talk to environmentalists who aren’t attached to the park, which will give people a balanced view on how bad the problem of the blown-over trees is.

When Vancouver health authorities issued a boil-water advisory last winter, the media needed to convey this information to the public. But it was also an opportunity to produce compelling drama, out-perform the competition, and, by extension, capture new readers and audiences.

“It’s much harder to write about the water shortage in a respectful manner Ward says. In a point of context, such as what about all the other people in Canada who are under the boil water advisory?”

Dr. John Blatherwick, chief medical officer for Vancouver Coastal Health, believes the media generally do a good job of reporting health problems but they sometimes get carried away when reporting on the threat of influenza.

Wadia believes the media went overboard with coverage of avian flu, with television stations dedicating extensive coverage to bird flu, calling it the next killer virus.

When the media report a scientist saying there is going to be a huge outbreak of avian flu or SARS, people naturally become frightened. The question

is: What is the degree of truth to these reports, or is this statement placed in perspective?

“If there is any danger, even if it is somewhat remote, it is better to flag it and to let the public know,” Wadia says. Because the worst is for something to happen and your citizens to accuse you of not having prepared them.”

Ward says language is an important tool for journalists and sometimes words are chosen for effect or as an attention grabber.

“The role [for journalists] is you have to note the possible consequence without resorting to simplistic scare words.”

Beers recalls just after the planes hit the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, anthrax was the scare of the moment. The media were running stories about the potential of the bacterial spores causing the disease being found in Vancouver. Beers says the story was blown out of proportion. People in Vancouver were walking downtown with masks on. He suggests more balanced experts were needed in some of these stories.

“Unfortunately cooler heads often don’t make great headlines. But I would have loved to have heard cooler heads point out, for example, ‘I don’t think we are high on Al-Qaida’s list here in Vancouver,’” Beers says. “The media worsened the situation and kind of embarrassed itself rather than bring some sense of perspective and order to the conversation.”

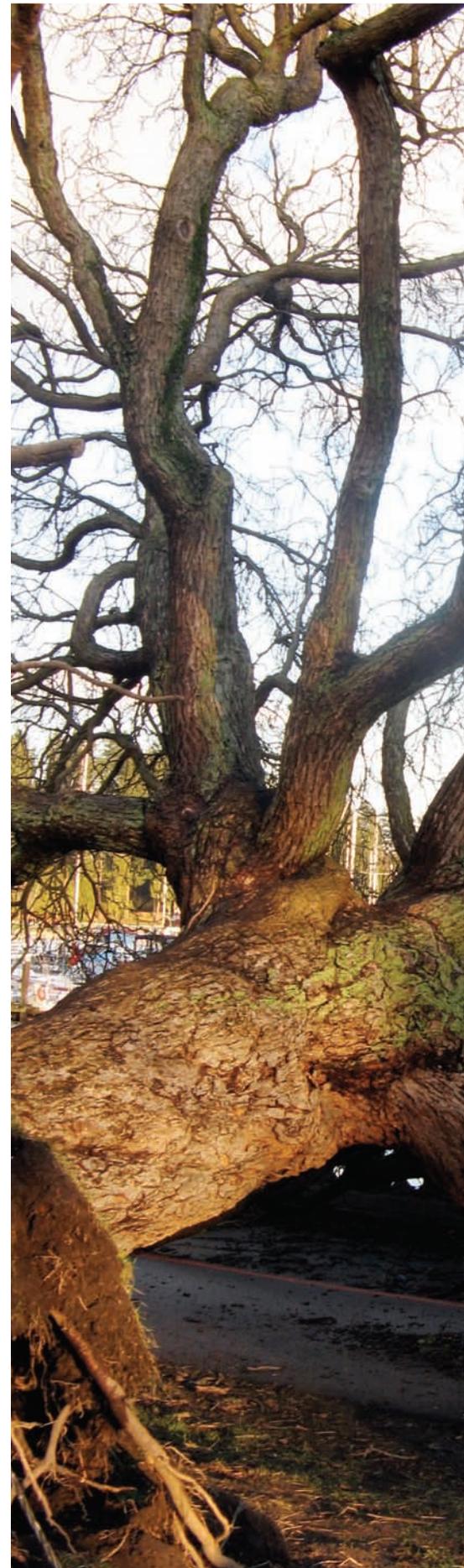
When journalists use melodramatics to boost their story from A10 to A1 they are doing a disservice to themselves because the public becomes jaded and stops believing the news.

“We have to warn people but we have to do it with the best scientific evidence we have. It never serves to frighten and scare the hell out of people,” Ward says.

The media often like to compare current calamities to devastating historical ones. Avian flu stories, for example, are quick to make a connection with the 1918 Spanish flu, which killed an estimated 40 million people.

But Wadia defends these comparisons. “It is useful to know that if it happened to that extent at that time then it could happen in the world of today.” Wadia points out even though international travel wasn’t nearly as common in the early 1900s as it is today, the disease still managed to spread fast in a short time.

Dr. Marc Siegel, who teaches medicine at New York University and has written several books about bird flu, believes there is an overreaction to the threat of





GRAHAM PERKINS photo

bird flu by scientists and media. He believes the Spanish flu and the avian flu should not be compared because of the improvement of technology and knowledge of diseases.

Siegel feels journalists do not consult the proper experts in some cases, or are satisfied to merely obtain a dramatic quote.

“Too much attention has been paid to the worst-case scenario involving humans in part due to the attention placed on the statements of human health experts without an essential background in disease of birds,” he wrote in an e-mail to the *Langara Journalism Review*.

Siegel believes instilling fear moves the focus away from long-term preparation of stocking vaccine and trying to find a cure, but he doesn’t just point the finger at media.

“The thing to do is not just go to the sources that make it sound as dire as possible....”

“The media isn’t entirely to blame as it is stimulated and fed by the posturing of public health and government officials as well as profit-seekers,” he says.

Wadia believes avian flu is an important issue that journalists must keep in the public eye without causing too much unwarranted panic. He realizes it poses a challenge.

“It is difficult for any journalist to spot something looming on the horizon.”

With newsroom cutbacks, journalists are constantly being asked to do more with less and so what often happens is they wind up talking to the same sources and people with a vested interest in getting a message to the public, often in the form of a press release.

Beers believes journalists should not base their stories only on press releases and instead use the old-fashioned journalism nose.

“The thing to do is not just go to the sources that make it sound as dire as

possible—which, by the way, are often the people whose names are on the press releases. Also talk to people who might have a very different perspective,” he says.

Kirk LaPointe, managing editor of the *Vancouver Sun*, agrees journalists must be suspicious of sources and their motivations for being interviewed.

“You have to approach each of these interests similarly, which is that your reporting has to be critical and you have to recognize that part of the transaction inherent in journalism is that someone is seeking an advancement of their views or interest on your platform,” he says.

Special interest groups, lobbyists and anyone who deals with media on a regular basis have become more knowledgeable about how the media work and

better at stirring up crisis, Ward says.

“One of the things you need to look for in the cause of exaggeration is a growing manipulation of the media by very media-savvy groups. It used to just be the environmentalists who were really good at this, at getting the media’s attention. But now they are everywhere.” Ward says, most news organizations don’t have the staff or the time to check out the claims of special interest groups and thus those groups are more successful at getting out their message.

Global warming is on everybody’s minds and a popular topic on news stations, radio and newspapers, which means environmental groups such as the Sierra Club or Suzuki Foundation are often quoted.

Media have reported that the entire world is in danger of being besieged by malaria due to global warming. A study

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LEE GUILLE photo

Political shark

Vaughn Palmer has been ripping apart B.C. politicians for two decades

by Adrian Nieoczym

When Gordon Campbell took the stage during his first Liberal convention as head of the party, Vaughn Palmer looked on, clutching a freshly delivered copy of the leader's prepared text.

Campbell's 1994 speech to the party faithful should have been a triumph. In just over a year, Campbell had repaired old rifts and convinced former Conservatives and Socreds to join him, while Mike Harcourt's NDP government was staggering under the weight of the ever-growing Bingogate scandal.

Campbell got about as far as page four and a trashing of the NDP, before departing from his notes. In press row, journalists scratched their heads as they tried to decipher the meaning of Campbell's rambles. The partisans, still euphoric, jumped to their feet and tried to blow the roof off with their applause.

At the press conference afterwards, Palmer took the first bite. "Is that the best you can do?" he asked, tearing a chunk of flesh out of the premier-to-be's hide.

"It was one of those zingers that Vaughn throws at a politician," says Keith Baldrey, Global BC's legislative reporter, who worked with Palmer at the Sun. "And the politician just sits there and melts."

When the shock wore off, the feeding frenzy was on. Following Palmer's lead, his colleagues darted in on the wounded prey. They asked, do you really think you can be premier?

"Because Vaughn was able to get that first shot in, it just sort of set the tone for the entire media contingent's coverage of the whole speech," says Mike Smyth, the Province newspaper's long-time political columnist.

Twelve years ago, Palmer was the undisputed leader of Victoria's press gallery and B.C.'s most influential political writer. His hold has only gotten stronger.

"His column is must reading for anybody associated with government or wanting to know what's going on with

government," Baldrey says. Palmer's column has appeared in the Sun five days a week for 22 years and has outlasted seven premiers.

Last fall, Palmer received the Jack Webster Foundation's highest honour, the Bruce Hutchison Lifetime Achievement Award. The 54-year-old Palmer's reputation as a hardworking, tough, but fair journalist has been cemented.

"It gets to the point where politicians look to see what he's writing about and it probably sets part of their agenda from time to time," says Steve Crombie, co-chair of the Jack Webster Foundation board of trustees.

Campbell certainly took note of the damage Palmer inflicted on him at the convention. "I've heard from Liberals afterwards that Campbell never forgot that," Baldrey says. Campbell realized that if he was going to become premier, he was going to have to pass what former Sun reporter and columnist Jamie Lamb calls, "the Vaughn sniff test."

Born in Gaspé, Quebec, Palmer moved to Nanaimo with his family when he was 15. His father Syd was a BC Ferries captain. As a teenager Palmer worked a summer job on the ferries himself. "The messiest busboy in the ferry fleet," he recalls with a deprecating laugh. Palmer's connection to B.C.'s ferries is significant because it was Palmer who shone the spotlight on the NDP's fast ferry debacle.

Rafe Mair, the former Socred cabinet minister turned radio host and himself a Webster lifetime achievement award winner, believes the fast ferry coverage is one of Palmer's most notable accomplishments. "That was his story. I should have had it as my story but like an asshole I listened to one of the government representatives and decided that the guy who was blowing the whistle was a kook," Mair says. "Vaughn didn't buy that bullshit. He stayed with the story." And because Palmer stayed with the story, the rest of the media picked it up. Palmer wrote almost 150 columns on

the fast ferries saga, many of them based on insider information. But had Palmer's father not recently retired from the ferry service, Palmer would not have felt free to use it.

"I could use all the leaks without having anybody suspect that they came from my father," Palmer says.

The result for then-premier Clark was devastating. "Clark's goose was kind of cooked by the fast ferries scandal," Smyth says.

Palmer is a thorough researcher who knows what to ask a politician. In a scrum, Palmer "is the one whose questions are most feared," Mair says. Palmer doesn't jostle for position at the front. Instead, he prefers to stand along the fringes in his smart grey sports coat and tie, waiting to pounce.

"And all of a sudden this question comes kind of zooming through the crowd," says Dan Miller, who took over as premier after Clark's resignation. "He has the ability to phrase questions well. I think that's just as important in terms of trying to elicit information."

Other journalists welcome Palmer's pointed questions because he draws out the juiciest quotes and information. "He's kind of like the great white shark and the rest of us are sort of like pilot fish," Smyth says. "He's ripping all the flesh off the bones and we just sort of nip at the scraps that float by."

Yet, as hard as he is on those he covers, Palmer does not let it get personal. "He can be quite hard-edged in his criticism of personal conduct but he never crosses the line," Baldrey says. "Vaughn doesn't take cheap shots."

Palmer's ethical reputation helps explain why people seek him out to leak information. It is widely acknowledged he has the best sources in Victoria and he meticulously protects them. "There's no story worth the short-term burning of a source," he says, nodding sagely.

Government workers who leak confidential information to journalists often risk their careers. When he uses

leaks, Palmer never reveals his sources and is careful to make sure his story cannot be traced back to the source or even the source's department.

"People trust him around here," Smyth says. "So when he says to somebody this is on background, I'm not going to disclose I talked to you, you can take that to the bank."

Surprisingly, becoming a journalist was not a childhood dream of Palmer's. "I didn't go to university thinking that I would work for the university paper," he says. "And I didn't go to work for the Sun thinking I'm going to be here 34 years later and I didn't go to the Sun thinking I wanted to be their political columnist. It just sort of all happened."

Palmer attended UBC from 1970 to 1973. "Note attended," he says, displaying his dry wit. He majored in history, something that is still a huge interest, but he never finished the degree.

In class he met a guy who used his position at the UBC student newspaper to secure a summer position at Canadian Press. "It sounded to me like a pretty decent way to get a summer job so I went to work for the university paper and got hired at the Sun for a summer job and here I am," Palmer says.

These days, Palmer likes to frequent the fitness club across the street from his home. He is svelte, has well-defined cheeks and tidy short hair. That was not the case when Lamb met Palmer at the Sun in 1976.

"I noticed him, an odd-looking duck, I thought," Lamb says. The Palmer of the '70s had unruly neck length hair and liked to wear T-shirts with Merry Melodies cartoon characters stamped on the front. He had a bit more heft and his face was puffier.

Lamb and Palmer quickly became close friends. "We were both insane music aficionados," Lamb says. They also shared a taste for books and magazines. Palmer is an avid reader with a wide range of interests. "He knows something, and usually a lot of something, about everything."

Palmer soon became the Sun's rock critic. "Disco was at its height," Palmer says. Meanwhile, Palmer and Lamb rented a house on the North Shore with two other bachelors. "It was wilder in those days," Lamb says. When asked if he remembers any good stories, he replies "nothing printable."

"Nothing that was ever reported to the police," Palmer says.

In 1980, Palmer moved up to become the Sun's city editor. A year later he mar-

ried Dale Ketcheson, who was working in the Sun's art department. Still happily married, Ketcheson is a landscape painter and the two of them have a 19-year-old daughter, Elise, who is attending Queen's University. "I regret to say she's taking political science," Palmer says with a chuckle. "I have a lot to answer for."

The lack of a degree has never hindered Palmer. He even spent the 1982-83 academic year at Stanford on a fellowship for professional journalists.

Shortly after Palmer's return to B.C., the Sun's popular political columnist Marjorie Nichols decided she'd had enough. "She wanted off the rock as she put it," Palmer says. The legendary Bruce Hutchison recommended to Palmer he go for Nichols' job.

As editor emeritus of the Sun, Hutchison still wrote a column for the

"He's ripping all the flesh off the bones and we just sort of nip at the scraps that float by"

paper. Despite the 50 years age difference, Palmer and Hutchison hit it off and Hutchison became something of a mentor. After Palmer started writing his column in 1984, he would regularly visit Hutchison for dinner and advice on how to hone his craft. The visits and friendship continued right up to Hutchison's death on Sept. 14, 1992. The next day, the Sun ran a 4,000 word memorial to Hutchison written by Palmer.

For Palmer, the fact the lifetime achievement award is named after Hutchison "is the nicest part" about winning it. Hutchison's support was important in getting Palmer through his rough first year on the island.

"There was a lot of talk in the Sun newsroom that this guy isn't going to last," Lamb says. "Marj was a very strong columnist, and a real yeller and that was the attraction." Palmer was not a yeller. Instead of calling then-premier Bill Bennett or opposition leader Dave Barrett an idiot, Palmer often provided a dry policy analysis, "which would prove one or the other was an idiot at the end of it but it wasn't just loud yelling, 'what an idiot,'"

Lamb says.

But Palmer soon found his groove and style. "He grew into the position," says Mair. "When you start out in these things, you're just appalling, you're just beginning to learn. You don't even know where the bathroom is."

In 1986, the B.C. electorate gave Palmer a gift in the form of Bill Vander Zalm. As Vander Zalm set about destroying both the government and the Social Credit party, he provided Vaughn and other journalists covering the legislature with an endless supply of good material.

From the Coquihalla Highway cost overrun scandal, to Vander Zalm's blatant conflict of interest during the sale of his Fantasy Gardens theme park, Vaughn was there, poring over documents, feasting on leaks and pounding out biting columns. It was during the Vander Zalm years that Palmer rose to the top.

He was the first to dig up how the construction of the Coquihalla Highway was massively over budget and the government was forced to call a commission of inquiry. When the report was released, "most reporters only read the executive summary," Baldrey says. But Palmer disappeared to digest the whole 400 pages.

Once the Socreds were ousted, Palmer trained his sights on the NDP. He helped expose the Nanaimo bingo scandal, after which Harcourt felt compelled to resign, setting the stage for Glen Clark.

Clark's former communications advisor, Geoff Meggs, is one of the few people interviewed who had anything critical to say of Palmer. "He's extremely partisan against the government of the day, if it's an NDP government," he says. Meggs's complaint is that Palmer can overplay an issue. In Meggs opinion, accusations the NDP fudged the 1996 budget "were blown out of proportion."

But Meggs still respects Palmer. "He is a very hard-working and ethical person," he says. "Many times he's apologized right in his columns and taking responsibility for your own column is, I think, outstanding journalistic practice."

Palmer says government officials often think he is hard on them and light on the opposition. "If you had interviewed Bill Vander Zalm when he left office, he would have told you I was harder on him than I've ever been on anybody."

Miller certainly thinks he got fair treatment from Palmer. Miller spent 10 years in NDP cabinets before serving six months as premier in between Clark and Ujjal Dosanjh. "I always used to try and

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Falling on deaf ears

Senate committee calls for curbs on media ownership. Is anyone listening?

by Robert Mangelsdorf

Moves by one of Canada's media giants to swallow another major media corporation have raised questions about media monopolies in Canada and in B.C. in particular.

By gobbling up Alliance Atlantis, CanWest Global plans to add 13 specialty television channels to its already vast media empire, which nationwide includes seven specialty channels, 16 local television stations, 13 daily newspapers, more than 25 community papers, and Canada's largest Internet portal.

While CanWest contends this consolidation is just good business and ensures the survival of small market news outlets, many feel it is detrimental to Canadian journalism, and by extension, democracy.

Paul Schneiderei, president of the Canadian Association of Journalists, is among them.

"If you have people in a local market and all of their media choices are controlled by one corporate interest then that really limits the diversity of voices available to them," he says. The result: Canadians don't get the whole story.

David Beers, editor of independent news site The Tyee, agrees.

"If you don't have different forms of media ownership then you're not going to have different questions being pursued in the media. You'll get a monochromatic view of the world from a publisher that is only interested in chasing big advertising bucks," he says. "When you have only one skewed view upon which you're making your decisions, then you're not likely to make the best decision."

In the Lower Mainland alone, CanWest owns two dailies, 12 community papers, and the most popular local television station, Global. The Black Press news chain owns the remaining 20 community papers, leaving only one major independent publication, the Georgia Straight, which is more entertainment than news oriented.

This example of "vertical" or cross-media concentration, where one company owns many different types of media

in a single market, only compounds an already bad problem, Schneiderei believes. Often, a reporter will file stories for more than one outlet, further decreasing news diversity.

In 2003, the Canadian government, responding to public concern about cross-media concentration and newsroom layoffs, launched a Senate committee to probe the Canadian news media.

This is not the first time media ownership has come under the microscope. Both the Davey Committee of 1970 and the Kent Commission of 1981 advised more stringent regulations to protect media diversity. However, both sets of recommendations were shelved and today sit gathering dust. Those who support journalistic variety are hoping the findings in the new report will leave more of an impression.

It was pointed out to the 2003 committee that Quebecor-owned Sun Media Corp., which owns 20 dailies and more than 160 community weeklies across the country, cut 120 positions last year.

However, while this practice of reducing labour costs may increase the profitability, and in turn viability, of a paper, it has a profoundly negative effect on the quality of journalism, the Senate committee found.

In its report released in June 2006, the committee recognized that while media organizations are businesses, they are quick to say they are motivated by the public's best interest when seeking greater access to information or protecting their sources.

The Senate committee concluded there should be a limit on media ownership and monopolies, broadcast regulations should specifically encourage a diversity of news and news outlets, and start-up media should receive government funding to increase diversity.

The call for stronger government regulation to increase media diversity was virtually ignored by the Canadian news media. Instead, stories on the Senate committee report focused on recommendations the CBC scrap its \$300 million

take in advertising and avoid competing directly with private broadcasting.

Schneiderei supports the report's findings, and would like to see laws similar to those in the United States and Europe, which limit the concentration of media ownership in a single market, established here in Canada.

"You can't look at the CanWest...or anyone else specifically, you have to look at the environment in which all these companies operate," he says. "What's needed is specific recognition that media companies have to be looked at a little differently than other companies because they play a fundamental role in our democracy."

However, David Gollob, vice president of public affairs for the Canadian Newspaper Association, an advocacy group for Canadian daily newspaper publishers, balks at the idea government should dictate how newsrooms are run.

"We are of the view that Canada is a free society and we are not of the view that governments should regulate the press," Gollob says. "Pierre Trudeau said the government has no business in the bedrooms of the nation. We say the government has no business in the newsrooms of the nation."

The CNA wrote in its presentation to the Senate committee that, "the right of any owner or publisher to influence content should be celebrated as a strength of Canadian law...not a weakness."

The report clearly recognizes cross-media ownership and consolidation as a significant threat to Canadian news media as newsrooms are whittled down, reporters are shouldered with increasing workloads, investigative journalism declines, re-written press releases become news, and the diversity of voices is choked.

It remains to be seen whether or not the Senate committee's proposals will be put into practice, or join the previous recommendations on that dusty shelf.



ROBERT MANGELSDORF illustration

Avoiding the internship treadmill

Where do journalism hopefuls draw the line between experience and exploitation?

by Ania Mafi

After hours, weeks or even months of working hard and paying their dues, journalism interns are gaining hands-on experience with the hope of landing a much-anticipated job offer. It's common to find prospective journalists boasting two, three or four internships, none of them paid. Realistically, every journalism student and industry hopeful can't be hired after interning somewhere; there are simply not enough jobs to accommodate the demand. So what are young journalists really gaining from an internship and what's the next step after interning?

"Some days you're so busy that you think, 'wow, what would they have done if I hadn't been there?'" says first-year BCIT broadcasting student Megan Smyth. "It seems that in the journalism industry you need to devote some sort of free time for experience."

Interning on and off at Global National in Burnaby since March 2006, Smyth, like many journalism hopefuls, faces the ups and downs of today's competitive world. Stations are flooded with talent and interns have no guarantee of being hired afterwards. Smyth applied for the internship while studying English literature at UBC. She got her foot in the door, but being a journalism hopeful with no education or industry experience, what could she do?

"When I started in March for Global National there were at least three other interns, but they've kind of all disappeared,"

Smyth says. "Some of them really didn't like it because on the days when it's not very busy, there wasn't a lot to do."

Smyth says she makes the effort to pitch ideas at story meetings and treats her role seriously and professionally.

But no amount of hard work and dedication can allow Smyth to cross the line that restricts interns from doing the work of a paid employee. Global BC employees are under the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, which is good news for paid workers but bad news for interns hoping to get their hands dirty.

"One day [the web writer] was really bogged down with stuff and he asked me to write the write-up to go on the website," Smyth says. "He didn't put his name on it, but he couldn't put my name on it."

Smyth will return again to Global National in March to continue her nearly year-long unpaid internship.

John Pippus, tape editor in the Global BC newsroom for the last 20 years, says interns don't get paid in dollars but are instead given the opportunity to increase the value of their experience with the right amount of curiosity and ambition. Journalism internships started at Global BC in 1985 with only a couple of interns working per year. The program has since grown and reached a high of 18 interns in the 2002-2003 academic year. Despite the overwhelming popularity of the internship program, Pippus' opinion is most interns don't take the

initiative to ask how a job is done.

"Often when I see the interns, they seem to be, for whatever reason, shy or unmotivated, not curious," Pippus says.

"They're waiting to be told what to do. I don't know what they're doing, but they're not out and about."

When an intern works hard and doesn't get hired at the end of an internship, where do they go from there? Faced with the disappointment of leaving an opportunity they hoped would blossom into a career, some resort to finding another internship. Thus, a serial intern is born.

Vanessa Richmond, assistant editor of the Tyee, a Vancouver-based online news magazine, feels interns must not lose sight of their goals.

"I definitely think people get intern-addicted and get kind of on an internship treadmill. I think one of the reasons that happens is that people aren't careful enough to define exactly what they want out of it," she says. "If you're getting to the end of your internship and you realize you haven't met anybody and you haven't published anything, I think then it's up to the intern [to] really be proactive and do that."

How many internships are too many? According to Noreen Flanagan, managing editor of Elle Canada magazine, young journalists should do no more than two internships. She says by doing more than that, interns are sending a message that they don't mind donating their services and are willing to work for free. After two internships, Flanagan feels prospective journalists have learned all they can about the internship experience and continuing to intern becomes exploitive for them.

"If I look at someone's resume and I see they've done a string of internships, it tells me two things: either they lack confidence to get out there and get a job, or they're not that good," she says.

Flanagan feels it's the responsibility of interns to turn their experiences into a paying job of some sort, even if it's not their dream job. She says interns often want to stay longer but can't and at that point they shouldn't be afraid to venture towards something smaller or even take a job that may not put them where they want to be. Flanagan says these young journalists are held back by their unwillingness to step outside of their direct path.

"That [attitude] can be a bit of a curse," she says. "If you have to go to another magazine that's smaller or not what you're interested in, don't see that as a setback in your career. Maybe eventually you'll be back at wherever it is you've set your sights."

Although Flanagan believes prospective journalists shouldn't exploit their talents for too long, Pippus believes in this day and age interning may sometimes be all the experience a young journalist has access to.

"As long as you're learning the craft and getting your name out there and looking for related work, then go for it—with no apologies. It's a tough job market these days."

Richmond says several decades ago when people were entering the field of journalism, few had training and media

outlets were expected to train employees. Now, she says, there aren't enough resources to train new journalists.

Although big media companies today may not have the time to mentor and train up-and-comers the way they once could, one way to gain experience is to branch out—far out. Flanagan says she started as a journalist when she moved to Vancouver Island and got a job at a small community paper.

"In a sense it was equivalent to an internship in that I had my hands on everything. I've worked in a larger setting and I see interns who come in or young writers who come in and their experiences are a little more restricted," she says.

Young journalists may benefit more by starting out on a smaller scale and avoiding the media giants as places to gain experience. According to Flanagan, up-and-comers can't let ideas of where they want to see their future in journalism stunt the potential growth and experience they can gain by working at a smaller media outlet.

Carolynne Burkholder works as features editor at the Nanaimo Daily News. She believes smaller media give those starting out in the industry more of an opportunity to gain experience. Burkholder is a student in UBC's master of journalism program, writing her thesis while adding work experience to her resume. Having interned for one summer at CBC Radio in Prince George, Burkholder chose to jump off the internship treadmill before it sped up.

"Something like the CBC, it's a huge corporation so it's good to have on your resume but it's also good to go somewhere where you actually get to do something," she says.

Clearly, interns need to be more proactive, but what can the professionals who offer the internships do to help these keen learners? Is providing the opportunity for them to absorb information and network with media professionals enough?

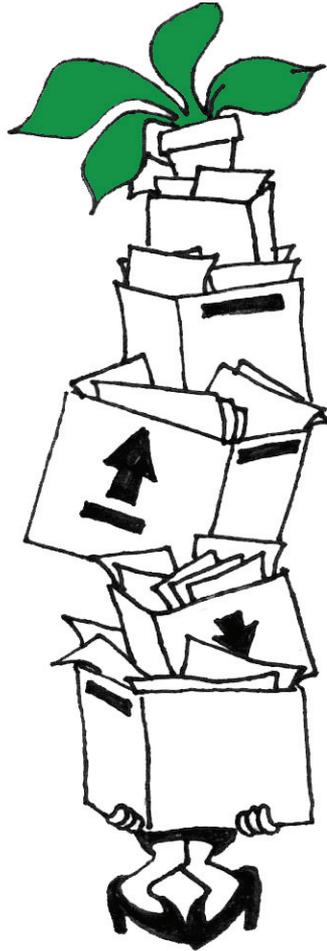
According to Jim Wong-Chu, creator and editor of Ricepaper Magazine, places that offer internships should make sure interns

know what they are doing and offer as much guidance as they can.

At Ricepaper, Wong-Chu says interns are assigned to a project they can work on for the amount of time that they intern at the magazine. Many interns stay on board as regular volunteers long after their internships are finished.

"We are more interested in developing the volunteer, their personal experience and training. We want to train them so that when they do go out to look for a job on the outside that their qualifications match," he says.

Whatever avenue prospective journalists want to pursue, they must not lose track of the goal of the internship. Gaining experience is one thing, but making the most of it by being proactive and curious takes the internship to a whole new level. With so many gunning for the finish line, running the internship race might be the necessary course to that elusive prize—a paid job.



ROBERT MANGELSDORF illustration

The Death of CityNews

by Krista Siefken

On the morning of July 12, 2006, Citytv reporter Jill Bennett was on her way to court. She was assigned to cover the trial of one of the men charged with the high-profile murder of Aaron Webster in Stanley Park.

On her way to meet the camera crew she received a call from a co-worker telling her to drop her assignment and return to the newsroom.

Bennett sensed something was amiss. If she wasn't at the trial, the station wouldn't have this important story. She returned to Citytv's West Second Avenue newsroom, buzzing as other staff also returned. The routine was wrong. What was going on?

Bennett checked her e-mail. A message from management instructed her to attend a meeting in the station's studio.



COURTNEY SHEPARD photo

Now she knew something was wrong, because her fellow reporter Dag Sharman had received an e-mail instructing him to attend a different meeting, this one upstairs.

“At that point Dag and I looked at each other and we knew one of us was getting the axe, but we didn’t know who,” Bennett says months later in a Vancouver coffee shop.

“I could tell from looking around the studio that the people in that room were not the people needed to keep a station going. So it was obvious that the group I was in was the group going.”

Meanwhile, on vacation in Zanzibar, Citytv reporter Elaine Yong was checking her e-mail in an Internet café. It was almost 11 p.m. and Yong had received a message on her work account also telling her to attend an important meeting.

The café was about to close so Yong left, wondering what was going on back at home. When she returned the next morning she found she was inundated with e-mails: Citytv had scrapped the news.

Her friends were concerned. Some asked if she’d been laid off and others simply said they were sorry, as if a relative had just died. Her parents wrote to say they had seen Citytv employees crying on the evening news. The last e-mail was from her office manager instructing Yong to call her news director, Bud Pierce, immediately.

“I called him and said, ‘I’ve been laid off, haven’t I?’ And he just kind of paused and said, ‘Yes.’ So there I was, in Stone Town, Zanzibar, in some Internet café on the phone long distance, and I’d just found out I’d been laid off,” Yong says.

“When I came back and I started hearing from other people about what happened that day, I’m glad I was in Africa, because being here would have been even worse. People crying and being escorted to your desk by a security guard after you’d worked at the same place for years...it was a shock to everybody.”

A total of 47 people were let go from Citytv Vancouver that morning. On the same day CTVglobemedia (at the time Bell Globemedia) announced a \$1.7-billion bid to buy Chum, the current owner of Citytv. Representatives for both companies deny the two events were related.

Back in Vancouver, Bennett, along with the rest of the staffers in the studio, had been given a layoff letter and told she had five minutes to clean out her desk.

She did – and was then abruptly escorted out of the building.

“It’s kind of a blur, but one of the coldest things they said to us in that room was ‘Don’t dawdle at your desks, don’t take longer than you need to get out of here because you’re making the people upstairs really uncomfortable, still being in the building,’” Bennett says. “They were probably uncomfortable because they were huddled into a room upstairs.”

Outside, competing television news crews were setting up, ostensibly to cover the news of the takeover, but instead they found the fired Citytv employees leaving the building with their belongings.

“I got a box of stuff and as soon as I left the building CTV was there shooting me putting my box into the car,” Bennett says.

Citytv Vancouver had cancelled the 6 and 11 p.m. newscasts. In addition, Chum

“People crying and being escorted to your desk by a security guard after you’d worked at the same place for years...it was a shock for everybody.”

- Elaine Yong

chopped news programs across the country, eliminating 281 jobs. Instead of traditional supertime news, Citytv Vancouver transferred its news programming to Breakfast Television, a morning show hosted by Simi Sara and Dave Gerry. It runs weekdays from 5:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. and is intended to give viewers a daily dose of news mixed with features, entertainment and contests.

The show’s news host, Mark Docherty, reads the dozen or so news stories, as well as sports. Weather and traffic host Dawn Chubai provides updates usually before each commercial break, and Sara and Gerry, as well as co-host Tasha Chiu, chit-chat about recent events, usually of the entertainment variety.

Monitoring the show reveals it devotes more time to such items as children’s ballroom dancing than the federal debate over Kyoto protocol. There’s an item about the discovery of a body in a local suburb, and other major items included the results of Anna Nicole Smith’s autopsy and the previous night’s Grammy winners.

So is Breakfast Television filling the hole CityNews left behind?

The 2004 agreement between Chum and the country’s broadcasting regulator, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, says Citytv is required to broadcast a certain quota of news.

The agreement states in part: “The licensee shall broadcast during each broadcast week a minimum of 27.5 hours of original local programming, of which a minimum of 12 hours will consist of original local news programming...”

However, determining if Citytv is meeting the news requirement is difficult because the CRTC does not have an exact definition of what “original local news programming” is.

“I couldn’t find a local news definition at all,” says Peggy Nebout, a spokesperson for the CRTC.

If the entire three and-a-half hours of Breakfast Television counts as news, then Citytv is exceeding its news obligation. However, one episode of BT has roughly one half-hour of hard news items, which are repeated up to 20 times during the show.

The promos featured on Breakfast Television’s website for one episode included a feature on YouTube, tips on “do-it-yourself spa products,” and “a little rabbit from Europe that gives you the weather and reads your e-mails to you!”

Sounds like entertaining information, but is it news?

Nebout says the commission is currently looking into Breakfast Television content to see if it qualifies under the conditions of licence.

“I don’t know if it does count as news,” she says. “I know that we received a complaint about the content; that they do not air 12 hours of original local news, and the complaint is in front of the CRTC, so everything will be examined.”

Nebout won’t release the details of the complaint because she says it is not public information.

But ex-Citytv employees believe Breakfast Television falls short of a newscast.

“A breakfast show to me is one part of a news wheel,” Bennett says. “When you break the show down they do news every 15 minutes, but it’s recaps of the top stories. There’s no digging, there’s no going after people. I would liken it to reading 24 Hours rather than reading the Globe and Mail; it’s going to give you little snippets, but you’re not going to get anything in-depth out of it.”

Yong agrees.

"In my opinion, absolutely not. But the CRTC is not necessarily black and white. And frankly, you hear about it a lot—when a new station gets a licence they promise all kinds of things and slowly they start pulling back," she says.

But station officials stand behind Breakfast Television.

Steve Scarrow, the regional director of promotions and marketing for Chum and Citytv, refers to Breakfast Television as a morning news show and says it is a growing market.

"This [the traditional evening newscasts] wasn't an area that's growing. Whereas an audience that is growing is Breakfast Television's, and morning television is growing across the continent. As traffic congestion becomes

sector radio and television stations, believes Breakfast Television satisfies the CRTC requirement but she feels it leaves much to be desired.

"Technically it does [meet the requirement], but it certainly is playing fast and loose with the intent of the licence, which is to have effective independent news editorial presence," says Murray, an associate professor at Simon Fraser University's School of Communication.

"City has really made its licence brand around the country basically on three types of news. It's done a lot on crime reporting, it's done a lot on urban politics, and it's done a lot on what I'd call arts and culture – not entertainment news – but arts and cultural news locally," Murray says. "I would be looking for the degree to which they're carrying on

Citytv outlets across the country have been known for a distinctive, informal style of news coverage. Instead of camera crews, reporters often take handheld cameras with them to cover a story, and anchors read the news with Citytv staff working behind and around them. This cinema verite style is successful in Toronto but failed to grab Vancouver audiences. There is speculation surrounding why the style failed to make an impact in the West.

"I don't think Vancouver was quite ready for that style," Bennett says. "It worked in Toronto, and because the company is run out of Toronto they tend to think that if works in Toronto it'll just work in Vancouver, and why on earth would Vancouver be any different from the rest of the country? Our market is



even more difficult, people want more weather information in the morning, they want more headlines and highlights of the day, and more conversation about current events," he says. "We have defined it [Breakfast Television] as a news program because even when they [the hosts] are talking they are talking about current events and topics of the day."

"So we still are respectful of our conditions of licence. We still want to contribute to the community and give a different voice. We just said it doesn't appear they need another voice at six o'clock," Scarrow says.

Catherine Murray, a member of the Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council, an organization representing private

with that. Clearly, if that goes, then we are arguing that there really is a retraction [on the CRTC agreement]. And the problem I have is that their traditional areas of strength aren't an easy fit in what I'd call a morning show."

Whether Breakfast Television fulfills the news quota or not, Ian Haysom, news director at Global BC, says it is not making much of an impact in Vancouver, in part because it can't compete with Global's morning news program.

"We're [Global BC] hyper-competitive all the time," Haysom says. "They're [Citytv] competitive in the morning. I have a morning show so I have to ensure we're beating them everyday, and we do. We have huge ratings in the morning."

not as big. I don't know if we have enough people interested in local news to support three local six o'clock newscasts that are still very similar. Even though the style at City was different, the news itself was pretty much the same."

Yong says the difference between the two markets is vast.

"People are not coming home at five in the snow and the dark, sitting at home watching TV," she says. "A lot of times they're outside, they're doing stuff, so I think it takes a lot more to win a news audience here than it does in other parts of the country."

Murray says CityNews' failure also stemmed from a lack of journalistic credibility.

"They never developed authoritative journalist voices," she says. "They never had a solid news presence."

Evening news programs cost a lot to produce and are generally a drain on the station's budget. Some feel Citytv couldn't compete in Vancouver because it didn't spend the money required.

"I know news isn't a money-maker, but you really have to spend money to get the right stories and to get the people to research and spend time," Bennett says.

"And what they wanted was more community-based; they wanted more people, and more real people, in their stories, and if you want to develop that and really get into that you need to spend money to do it, and they just wouldn't."

Yong offers an example of this thrifty behaviour.

"When the ferry sunk off the coast of Prince Rupert Citytv didn't send anybody. We had a videographer from the sister station, the NewVI [based in Victoria], one man, one videographer." Yong pauses, then adds sadly, "They sent him to cover the news for the entire country in Prince Rupert. Meanwhile at Global at least three crews went. And we had one man, who was not even from our station, and we were using his stuff."

The lack of spending may have translated into poor ratings. According to the Bureau of Broadcast Measurement (BBM) Nielsen Media Research, in the Vancouver area during Feb. 1 to May 31, 2006, CityNews ranked last with 13,000 viewers.

Global BC, on the other hand, had a total of 246,400 viewers. CTV ranked second with 64,800, and CBC placed third with 17,100 viewers.

The station's image also lacked stability, further fragmenting its audience. Since its inception in 1976 the station has changed hands several times and undergone numerous image makeovers. Originally owned by Western Approaches, Ltd. and branded as CKVU, it was purchased by CanWest in the late 1980s and became U.TV. In 1997 it was re-branded as Global. In 2001 Chum purchased the station and named it ckvu13 until 2002 when it became known as Citytv Vancouver.

The sale of Chum to CTVglobemedia is subject to CRTC approval and will determine if the station is to make any additional changes. Denis Carmel, the

CRTC's director of public affairs, says the application for the sale, received late last year, will be made public and then the CRTC will go to a hearing, expected some time this summer. The federal Competition Bureau already cleared the takeover in March, decreeing that the deal would not substantially lessen advertising competition.

Paul Schneidereit, president of the



Former Citytv reporter Jill Bennett

Canadian Association of Journalists, says the CAJ has called on Ottawa to carefully scrutinize the takeover of Chum to "ensure that the media landscape didn't suffer the further erosion of diversity."

"When you have alternatives as a viewer or a listener or a reader, that gives you access to other viewpoints, other points of view, and I don't mean that just in terms of commentary. Even in the straight news reporting, you can have the best reporter in the world, but if you're relying on them for all your information you're going to be missing some stuff because more sets of eyes and ears will pick up more things," he says. "The problem is that in too many places in Canada the number of choices of local voices is getting dangerously small."

John MacNab, the executive director of the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council, doubts the sale of Chum will be detrimental to news diversity.

"I think that if you look back histori-

cally it seems to me there's been media mergers going on for as long as there's been media and it hasn't resulted in anything catastrophic yet. There's still quite a variety of perspective out there."

But Bennett says the loss of Citytv's evening news has left a hole in Vancouver's broadcasting landscape.

"For all that we like to make fun of City[tv] and the fact that there was some complacency there and they didn't really go after the news, there were a few times when City brought things up," Bennett says. "There were times with City broke things that made the other stations scramble... and that kind of competition is healthy." Bennett says having fewer stations is problematic because there isn't a push to go above and beyond since there is less chance of a different story or angle ending up on Vancouver televisions.

But Yong believes losing Citytv's evening news hasn't made a large impact on Vancouver's news scene.

"I think overall, to be honest ...it's not making much difference because it wasn't that effective to start with. I think anytime you lose a station in a market it's not good news because it's just one less outlet, one less place people can go to, one less opinion, one less slant on a story. So I don't think that's good at all, to lose a station. To not have a newscast coming out of there is pretty sad but if you look at what it's been doing over the last few years, I don't think most people really have noticed much difference at all, and that's unfortunate," she says.

Yong now works for Global BC, filling in while another reporter is on maternity leave. She says she has moved on, as has Bennett, who is now at CKNW and fills in occasionally at CTV.

Yong says it is a nice change to be working on a broadcast that reaches a large audience.

"To have something like this happen, I think everybody was affected by it, even the ones that weren't working at City," she says. "But you know what? Life goes on, people move on, and when nobody was really noticing you in the first place, then nobody notices when you're gone."



Salim Amin with his late father, Mohamed Amin, in Ethiopia.

photo courtesy of SALIM AMIN

Uniting Africa

Salim Amin is a man with a vision. For the past three years he has been working on what he believes is going to be one of the most significant leaps forward for African journalism: a pan-African television network, called A24, which will be owned by Africans with content written and produced for an African audience. He hopes the network is up and running by the end of 2007.

Amin, 36, is the son of the late African photojournalist Mohamed “Mo” Amin, whose images depicting some of the most momentous events in African history were broadcast around the world. Mohamed Amin started his company Camerapix in a small shop in Dar es Salaam, and built it into a well-respected, independent media company delivering

*African journalist
envisioning a home-grown
pan-African TV network*

by Troy Watts

images and stories around the world.

Mohamed Amin was tragically killed in November 1996, when hijackers forced the Ethiopian airliner he was on into the Indian Ocean. At 26, Salim was thrust into the helm of his father’s company.

In February 1998, Salim Amin, along with television producer and journalist David Johnson, started the Mohamed

Amin Foundation, a professional media-training centre in Nairobi, Kenya. Since its opening the centre has trained 29 young East African professionals who now work in the region’s developing television industry.

Amin admits the pan-African television project is ambitious and not without risk. The idea has been tried by others twice before, both without success. One of the problems was the technology needed for a pan-African television news network was either too expensive, or not available. Now that the technology is more accessible, such a project is more achievable. Amin is confident his station will be successful in part because much of Africa is modernizing and Amin feels Africans are more ready for it.

“There isn’t anyone who has said that this is not a good idea,” says Amin who received his journalism training in Vancouver.

The unsuccessful networks—TV Africa and the African Broadcasting Network—imported much of their programming from the West. It was also a time when Africans were emulating Western culture, fashion, music and idolizing Westerners. Amin says Africans now are more aware of “Africanism among Africans,” and that is what Africans want to see in their media.

“They [the failed networks] didn’t focus on building local content, which is what Africans want to see,” Amin says. He cited the example of poorly made, but wildly popular Nigerian films and serials that have phenomenal sales throughout the continent “simply because other Africans can relate to those stories.”

A24 will have an empowering effect throughout the continent. It will give Africans the information they need to make educated decisions of who they want their political and social leaders to be, where they want to invest their money, and where they want to travel, Amin notes. It will give Africans a voice and a platform for dialogue not only within their own continent, but to the world as well. It will create a sense of African unity that will transcend tribal, linguistic and local divisions.

Amin is aiming to structure much of the station after the popular Middle Eastern television network Al Jazeera, especially the station’s talk shows, which give Arabs an opportunity to question their leaders on taboo topics on live television. Amin wants to give Africans a similar opportunity to put politicians “on the spot” on live television.

“I think this will enable a lot of good government and accountability,” Amin says. “I think the fact is that there will be an independent station that is highlighting some of these issues and actually holding politicians accountable, which is something that hasn’t happened on this continent. I think it will be a huge step forward in the democratic processes.”

“It will allow Africans to communicate and talk to each other for the first time in their lives,” Amin says.

Many Africans, especially in rural areas, now only have access to news networks from the Western world, such as

CNN or the BBC.

“From our point of view it’s been very negative, and it continues to be very negative. All that you get on the Western media is stories of death, destruction, famine, and war,” Amin says. “It is a depressing picture that is painted of their own continent if they don’t know any better.”

A24 will not only cover the events that get the attention of the Western press it will also focus more on success stories and other positive initiatives throughout the continent.

“Even the negative stories will be covered from an African perspective, which will hopefully have a lot more depth, perception, background, and knowledge behind the stories” than the Western press, Amin says.

Most Western media “parachute” reporters into areas only when there are big stories, never spending enough time to understand the people and their history. However, they are trying to feed a “24 hour machine”

and have to report every hour. It does not give journalists time to conduct the research needed and to produce meaningful pieces.

The news network Amin envisions will focus on events in Africa. It will produce news stories and documentaries about events throughout the continent. It will mainly employ African journalists.

Amin hopes to begin with 10 to 12 bureaus in the major African countries and expanding to 46 as the company grows. Each of the bureaus will consist of a team of two local journalists who will be provided with the technology to write, produce, film, and edit stories independently. This is important in covering events in Africa because local journalists will have a greater understanding of their area, understand the language and local culture that a foreign journalist likely would not have. Initially A24 will employ 250 journalists. It will also have bureaus in

Washington, London and Beijing, giving an African perspective on world events.

In much of Africa, television sets are still not a common household item, especially in the rural areas. Amin is hoping to tap into the growing use of cellphones that can download video and the Internet, both of which are increasing in use, especially among the growing middle class.

Not only Africans but people around the world will be able to access A24 via the Internet. Amin says he is negotiating with major broadcasters throughout the world, including the CBC, to carry A24’s content once the network can provide regular high-quality material.

Amin is now in the process of looking for “seed funding” for the project, about US\$600,000. He estimates a \$35 million operating budget, expected to keep the company going until it becomes financially viable, expected within four years. Revenue is to come from advertising, satellite subscription, sales of material to international broadcasters, mobile phone revenues and non-government organizations.

The ownership of the television station is structured so that no entity can

“All that you get on the Western media is stories of death, destruction, famine and war.”



Salim Amin in his Nairobi office: Aiming to set up 46 bureaus.

own more than 15 to 20 per cent of the company. Amin says it is important the company remains independent so it will have complete editorial control of content. A24 will be too powerful a force on the continent to be left unprotected from control, Amin says.

“I think it could be the biggest propaganda tool this continent has ever had; if it’s in the wrong hands it could be disastrous. If this works it’s going to be massive.”

JK



Journalism takes to the streets

A cell phone can turn the average person into a reporter. But is citizen journalism an oxymoron?

by Jon Braun

Anyone with a keen eye, a cell phone and a little luck can be a reporter these days. So-called citizen journalists are born by being in the right place at the right time and possessing the tools to transmit pictures or words about events of interest to the public.

They can be found on millions of web pages across the Internet, which is the citizen journalist's most powerful tool.

Citizens have captured some of the most important events of recent history: the Indonesian tsunami, the attack on the World Trade Center in New York and the execution of Saddam Hussein.

The citizen journalist, however, is untrained and might not dig for the truth like a professional journalist has been trained to do. But some say citizens still have a role in modern journalism.

Alfred Hermida, a pioneer of online journalism, felt the full force of citizen's journalism while working for the BBC during the bombings of London's transportation system on July 7, 2005.

"There was an avalanche of footage coming into the BBC," Hermida says. He believes this was a key event for citizen media and the most compelling video even though it was taken by camera phones that produced shaky, low-light images of shadowy figures coming out of

the subway tunnels.

"It was dreadful by all professional standards, but it didn't matter because it took you there," he says. "It was a sense of being there."

The footage was on TV stations across the globe less than one hour after the attacks occurred. The BBC received 30 video clips and more than 300 e-mails with an average of three images each.

When the tsunami hit Asia at the end of 2005, Hermida says the BBC saw the same flow of images. Shots of the wall of water rushing through the towns were all from people who were on-scene by chance, when journalists couldn't be there or dared not go.

"It's very rare to get those images so you get that sense of immediacy," he says.

Hermida is now a professor at UBC and teaches a multi-platform journalism course. His instruction and research leads his students to a better understanding of future newsrooms and how journalists will deal with elements such as citizen journalism.

Hermida is a blogger himself and runs Reportr.net. Now living in Kitsilano, Hermida uses Kitsilano.com to find out what's happening in his community.

"It offers me a level of information I'm not getting from professional news sources," he says.

Hermida says that in many cases blogs are quicker to post information.

"People want to be heard. They feel they have something to say and want the world to hear about," Hermida says.

The Vancouver-based website Orato.com invites anyone with a story to upload it to their site. The material, vetted by Orato's professional journalists, provides perspectives that wouldn't normally be heard, according to Paul Sullivan, Orato's founding editor.

Sullivan, who has worked as a journalist for 30 years at such newspapers as *The Globe and Mail* and *The Vancouver Sun*, says the difference between him and the citizen journalist is his training and experience.

"Citizen correspondents are not necessarily trained journalists," he says. "The only credential I'm interested in is how good the story is."

The stories featured on Orato.com come from more than 100 correspondents worldwide and many are first-person.

For example, Pauline VanKoll and Trista Baptie, former sex-trade workers on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, are writing about the Robert Pickton trial in New Westminster, B.C.

They describe the emotions they feel while watching the trial and past experience in sex work to construct and write their stories. Sullivan believes they are providing a perspective not found in mainstream media outlets.

But journalism is founded in objectivity and accuracy. Are the stories on Orato.com or other citizen's journalism outlets truthful? Can we trust untrained

citizens?

"I don't think people know with any certainty if they are getting the real story," Sullivan says. "Even professional journalists make mistakes and they get the facts wrong."

Citizen journalism is still evolving but it generally needs to adhere to the same ethical and legal standards of that professional journalism does.

Hermida says bloggers can just as easily be charged with contempt of court, for example, if they publish proceedings with a ban. "The real impact of the Internet is yet to be felt," he says.

Some journalism educators argue

Sure, citizen
journalists and
bloggers could
become professionals.
I think there's a
great potential there
because at least there
is a passion for good
journalism.

—MAXINE RUVINSKY

citizen journalists don't possess the training required to be reporters.

"Bloggers may have the romance of the press in their bones but don't have the credentials," says Maxine Ruvinsky, chair of journalism at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops. "All of the prime values of good quality journalism like accuracy, fairness, balance, depth, context, all of those things are missing," says Ruvinsky, who has more than 20 years of journalism experience and a byline in many major publications across Canada.

"What's curious is that people are going to blogs because they mistrust the

mainstream media."

Ruvinsky notes, however, that she herself helped set up independent media during the 1960s, well before the advent of the Internet, because she didn't trust the "straight press," much like a large majority of citizen journalists are doing today with indie-media websites.

"Sure, citizen journalists and bloggers could become professionals," Ruvinsky says. "I think there's a great potential there because at least there is a passion for good journalism."

Hermida senses some sort of compromise will take place, bringing together the best of both worlds. He points to a news organization in Bluffton, South Carolina, where an experiment is taking place.

Bluffton Today, a daily newspaper with a circulation of 17,000, encourages the community to contribute to the paper through its online site, BlufftonToday.com.

The paper has been using blogs on its website to enhance coverage—gathering story ideas or augmenting stories and keeping in touch with the community. This is a good example of a paper going "hyper-local," interacting with readers by publishing some of their blogs as stories. "I don't know anyone who does it exactly like we do," says executive editor Kyle Poplin. "We don't lift any old blog and throw it in the newspaper. It's still a professional newspaper with professional journalists."

He says the interactive nature gives readers the power to challenge the newspaper.

"They didn't feel like we were doing a good job covering the school system so we just reverse published these blogs and let them have their say."

Hermida and Ruvinsky both believe citizen involvement in the creation and dissemination of information—whether we call it journalism or not—means the journalist's exclusive role of gatekeeping will be a thing of the past. Journalists must realize they will no longer hold a monopoly on information, and take that into account in any new media system.

"People will keep deserting the press until the press remembers what it's supposed to be doing and does it," Ruvinsky says.

JR



Vancouver Sun columnist Daphne Bramham

Photo courtesy of Daphne Bramham

by Patti Shales Lefkos

Kids scatter and hide in the ditches or run into their houses. Women look away and cover their faces with their hands. Teenage boys yell taunts at the visiting reporter and the photographer. These are some of the images Daphne Bramham recalls from her first visit to Bountiful, the polygamous community near Creston, B.C.

Bramham, a columnist for the *Vancouver Sun*, was on assignment to interview the wives of Winston Blackmore, the former bishop of Bountiful and still its spiritual leader. Blackmore reputedly had 26 wives and 80 children, and some of them were willing to share their perspectives on the polygamous lifestyle after reading Bramham's earlier column describing the trafficking of Bountiful women to the U.S.

"I thought I'd write one column, but it didn't all fit in one, so I wrote a second," Bramham says.

Bramham, who has been a reporter, editorial page editor and columnist for the *Sun* for some 20 years, has made Bountiful her beat.

"What has kept me going on this story is that it has forced me to stretch as a reporter. I have had to learn and use new skills, to dig up research and follow the money." Bramham's investigations are related to possible fraud by Bountiful wives involving welfare and child tax credits. She searched property titles, court documents, the independent schools' act and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in an effort to delve into the community's operations.

After even a brief conversation with Bramham, it is obvious her approach to journalism can be summed up by her determined desire for social justice.

Although research and interviews on Bountiful and other stories are time consuming, Bramham loves the work. She says her genuine interest in people and her perseverance are the secret. "I want to find out everything and I'll stay until I get the good quote."

Fazil Mihar, *Sun* editorial page editor, says Bramham has a sense of hopefulness, taking on issues and pushing them, hoping things will change.

"She has a passion for issues which matter and gives a voice to the voiceless in the community."

"Over the years her point of view has become stronger, more passionate

Her beat is Bountiful

and punchy,” says Mihlar. Because of her determination to see things through, “she builds a reputation for the paper and the paper owns the issue.” One of those issues is Bountiful.

“One of the things very liberating about being a columnist is knowing you can continue with a story,” Bramham says. When she started writing about Bountiful, Bramham soon realized she would continue and was able to make deals with people she never would have made as a daily reporter. She built trust by making sure people understood what off-the-record meant. “But off-the-record can be a double-edged sword, because once you know you can’t unknow.”

“I remember the first time I met Jane Blackmore, [Winston Blackmore’s ex-wife] and I was terrified to ask her a question because I thought she would break,” Bramham says. At the time she was still married to Blackmore. “I have never seen a woman so fragile,” says Bramham, “and I didn’t want to be the one to push her over the edge so I tiptoed around her.”

Because Bramham treated members of the Bountiful community with respect, they still talk to her. “They now tell me their stories on-the-record.”

Her passion for the written word was evident from childhood. By age 10 she made her decision to be a journalist. Born and raised in Regina, Bramham credits her Grade 5 English teacher, Mrs. Black, with the original inspiration.

She didn’t discuss her career goal with her parents until the end of Grade 12. When she did, they were horrified. In 1972, Bramham says the image of journalists “was still pretty much guys with bad suits with scotch bottles, who smoked too much, who were not very well educated and not very well regarded.”

Her father, Donald Bramham, a chiropractor, and her mother, Lydia, a high-school principal, thought a career in law, medicine or education more appropriate for their 17-year-old daughter and considered her too young to go away to journalism school. Bramham’s resolve never wavered though, and a deal was struck. She agreed to attend university close to home before going to Toronto for journalism school. She fulfilled her part of the bargain by completing a Bachelor of Arts in English and German in 1975 at the University of Regina. In exchange, her parents supported her decision to attend Ryerson to study journalism.

“She’s like a dog with a bone...”

Bramham’s journalism debut was a summer internship at the Regina Leader-Post. Assigned to news, she was given a rental car, sent on the road and loved it. “Working at small papers is great. You get to do everything,” Bramham says.

After her second summer internship, this time at The Globe and Mail, she returned to the Regina Leader-Post but it felt like a defeat. Bramham considered a switch to law, but journalism prevailed and she continued to learn her craft, covering various beats.

In 1983, offered a job at Canadian Press, she moved to the West Coast. Three years in Vancouver were followed by two in Victoria, as CP bureau chief. There, demoralized by the worst boss she ever had, she again thought about quitting journalism. “She tried to ruin

my career. She blocked a promotion I was promised and completely destroyed my self confidence,” says Bramham.

Knowing no future existed for her at Canadian Press, she applied for a job at the Vancouver Sun and first worked as a reporter and then as editorial page editor. That’s when she met one of the biggest influences in her life, Neil Reynolds, who became the Sun’s editor-in-chief. Bramham says she hated being editorial page editor and Reynolds saved her.

“All of us in our lives need someone to tell us what we would be perfect at. He decided I should be a columnist,” says Bramham. “He is the only person who made me believe that everything is possible.” His first offer was a column four times a week about the city. Before she could respond, he revised it to twice a week and topics of her choice.

She says the job is perfect for her because she doesn’t play well with others, preferring to work on her own. Colleagues disagree. While neither Mihlar nor her Sun colleague Amy O’Brian question her independent nature, both happily collaborate with her.

“She’s like a dog with a bone once she has an idea or an issue that she thinks needs to be dealt with. In her tenacity to polish a story, she writes and rewrites ad nauseum and I have to grab the copy from her kicking and screaming,” Mihlar says.

A self-described space pig, Bramham begins early each week to negotiate extra column inches. To solidify her opinion, she debates issues with colleagues. “It could be easy for a columnist to stay in her own little world and not participate in newsroom life, but she refuses to do that,” says O’Brian. “She is always open to suggestions and other opinions.”

“She brings intelligence and authority to her work. She has a sense of responsibility to her readers and to society,” Valerie Casselton, executive editor of the Sun says.

Despite six years as a Sun columnist and more than 25 years as a journalist Bramham still considers herself a writer-in-progress. “You have to constantly evaluate language and you need to read good books all the time,” says Bramham, who is on leave from the Sun while she works on a book about Bountiful.

“There are very few people in journalism that get this kind of freedom and independence,” says Bramham. “This is the best job in the world.”

Dave Hayer listens!

Our office is open to all residents of Surrey-Tynehead and we look forward to hearing your questions, concerns and ideas.

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conducted in 1997, funded by the David Suzuki Foundation, predicted Canada would now be threatened by malaria, caused by global warming. But to date, the Canadian Public Health Agency has not found one case of malaria in Canada caused by global warming.

Recently, the Sierra Club of B.C.

mixed up, but says it was a misunderstanding. He also says closer to the truth, Victoria might be submerged within hundreds, if not thousands of years and not in our lifetime, as was reported.

When such special-interest groups provide information for compelling stories, journalists often run with it, even though they might not be familiar with the material.

“...it is really difficult for media to cover science-based issues.”

claimed at a press conference staged in Victoria that global warming will cause the provincial capital to be submerged in 25 metres of water within 100 years. Members of the Sierra Club painted for the reporters Technicolor images of the Empress Hotel and the parliament buildings both submerged. The famous inner harbour was gone. The Victoria Times-Colonist, the Calgary Herald, the Province and the Vancouver Sun all pounced on the story.

Victoria was clearly going to be the next New Orleans — until Andrew Weaver disputed the claim. Weaver holds the Canada Research Chair in climate modelling and is co-author of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s report on global warming.

“It’s wrong. It’s downright silly,” Weaver was quoted in the Province a few days after the story was published about the Sierra Club’s claim. Weaver said it would take thousands of years, not 100 for Victoria to become a victim of global warming.

“There was some confusion in our presentation I will acknowledge,” says Colin Campbell, science advisor for the Sierra Club. “We spoke about it in real estate, who gets flooded, and the point really wasn’t that. The point wasn’t people in Victoria will go under 25 metres [of water]. The point was in the next 20 years we get to decide whether that happens or not.”

Campbell, a paleontologist who has done sea levels research, says a few of the reporters got some of the numbers

“I think it is really difficult for the media to cover science-based issues because science is really complex,” says Donald Gutstein, a lecturer at Simon Fraser University’s school of communication. “The reporter has to simplify it somehow and communicate the essence. I don’t think they do a very good job in most cases of doing that.”

Phillip Austin, an associate professor at UBC’s department of earth and ocean science, believes the media need to do their own research by looking at scientific journals, reading peer-reviewed reports and not just take the word of special-interest groups.

If the media simply try to attract audiences by fear and hysteric headlines, it only backfires because they lose credibility, says LaPointe.

“I think mainly people will pick up your newspaper or draw them into your newscast spontaneously not because of your lead item or your first couple of stories, but because of the experience they had the last time.”

LaPointe believes the media need to be balanced in what they report, and don’t declare the world is ending for every degree of danger.

Campbell agrees. “Fear immobilizes people. I think it only does if there are no options. If you say it’s going to happen and there is nothing you can do about it that would be irresponsible. The point is there’s a lot you can do about it.”

JR

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- Langley Times
- Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows News
- Mission City Record
- North Shore Outlook
- Peace Arch News
- Richmond Review
- South Delta Leader
- Surrey/North Delta Leader
- Tri-City News
- WestEndr

The face of BC Hydro

As Hydro's spokesperson, Elisha Moreno is energy personified

by Dyrarene Canicula

It's 10:11 a.m. and an announcer's voice on the radio rattles off the latest CKNW traffic report as Elisha Moreno unscrews her pink water bottle and takes a sip.

As the media spokesperson for BC Hydro, Moreno's face and voice were everywhere during a rash of nasty storms that hit the West Coast last winter. Thousands of frustrated, sometimes angry customers were without power for days and it was up to Moreno to tell reporters why. Not only did she survive the 24-hour days, but she turned into a minor celebrity and kept the embattled utility company in a reasonably positive light.

"I'm aware that everything I'm doing reflects on BC Hydro because in a lot of cases I am BC Hydro whether I like it or not," Moreno says.

So, what does it take to be BC Hydro? Moreno will tell you it takes an extra limb and a lot of energy.

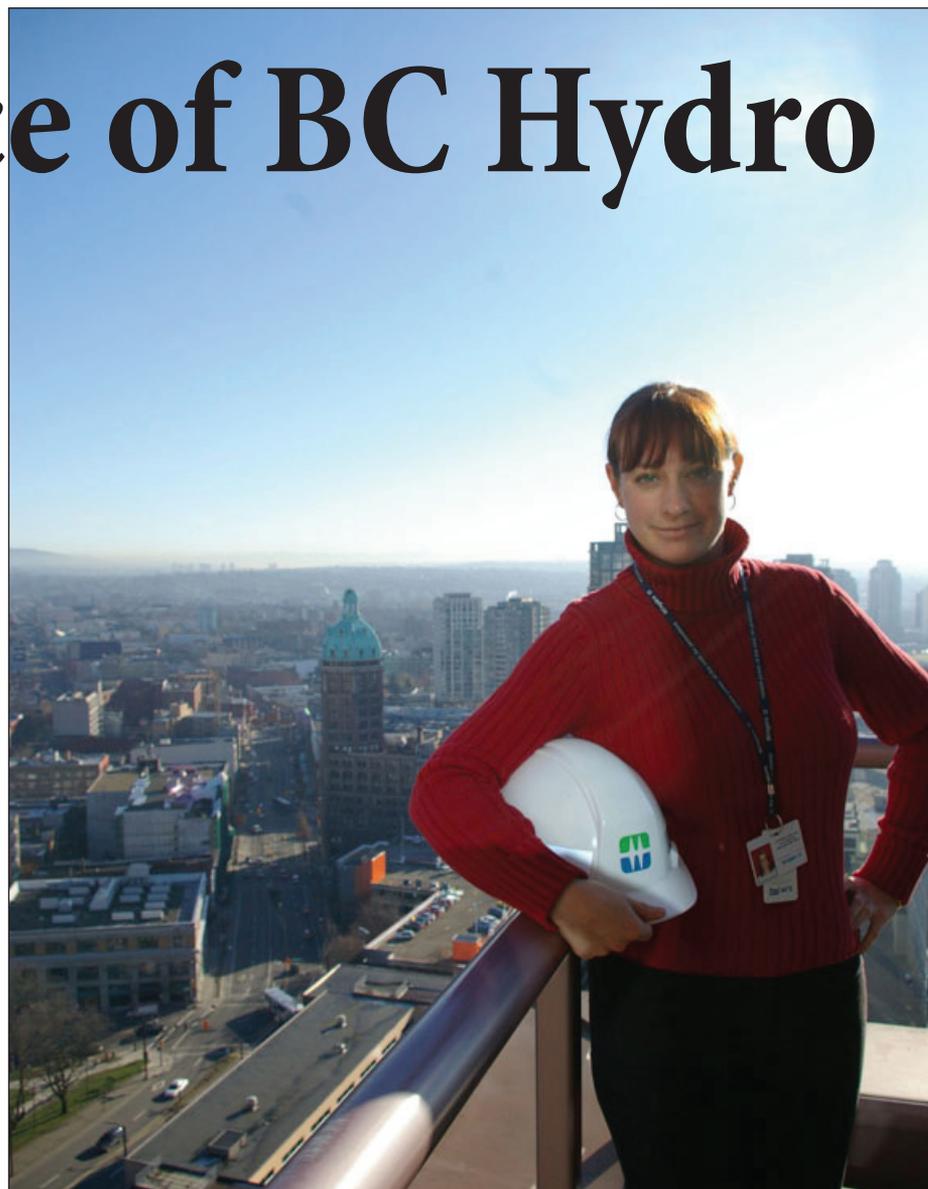
"I'm plugged in 24-7," she says, keeping the radio just loud enough to catch any reports about BC Hydro.

Her short brown hair is tied neatly back into a low pony tail and her bright eyes are framed by her bobbed bangs. Her smile is inviting, kind and genuine. She carries her BlackBerry on her waist.

"The BlackBerry is with you all the time. If you're swimming in the pool the BlackBerry is at the edge of the pool. If you're having a shower, it's in the bathroom with you. The BlackBerry is always with you. I kind of feel like it's an extension of my arm some days," she says laughing.

Those who know her suggest Moreno is energy personified.

"You don't even want to see this woman on coffee," says Carolyn Gleeson, a communications advisor, who has known Moreno since she started working for BC Hydro seven years ago. Gleeson says Moreno just keeps going under pressure and never loses her bubbly per-



Elisha Moreno atop the BC Hydro building.

DYRARENE CANICULA photo

sonality.

Working in public relations was not the first thing on Moreno's mind as a Langara College journalism grad in 1998. At 21 she went to work for VTV, now CTV and then to CBC-TV before venturing into PR. It was the '99 CBC technicians' strike that made her take a contract with the Pace Group, an agency specializing in media and government relations.

Her job there gave her exposure to working with BC Hydro where she organized school tours about energy conservation. She then moved to the Vancouver Aquarium where, she says, the job was a challenge because it was "frought with issues." Within a year, she left for BC Hydro.

"She was quite accomplished at such a young age," Gleeson says of the then 23 year-old Moreno. "She's very dynamic, outgoing, bubbly and effervescent."

Born in Winnipeg and raised in Alberta, Moreno's drive to achieve started at a young age. She was valedictorian for her high school class, edited the school paper and starred in school plays. Today, she still puts boundless amounts of energy and enthusiasm into her work.

"I pretty much did 24-hour days between November 15 and December 22," she says referring to the period that saw the worst of the storms. "I didn't have a personal life."

Moreno spends a lot of time in the office and on the phone, even working weekends. She has built such a rapport with the media that reporters would venture to her Port Coquitlam home on weekends to get a quote.

She recalls one instance where she stood outside her house in slippers and pajamas, with a jacket overtop, explaining to the cameras why it was taking so

Face of BC Hydro

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long for power to be restored.

"It becomes part of your life. It's part of who you are and you have to be up for that," she says. "If you have a life that's not conducive to really rapid change and having things that are changing basically on the fly... you won't be able to survive in this job."

"All the people I've dealt with tell me I'm faster on my feet," she says. "I try to make their priorities my priorities. I think they understand that I have to represent BC Hydro as an organization," and she says this brings the mutual respect between her and the media.

She admits the job does occasionally wear her down. "At the end of the November-

December storm gong show, I basically took a few days—went to the spa, went snow-shoeing with my dogs, spent some time with my friends and family and just reconnected with everybody."

Moreno feels some pride when her work is recognized, even in an indirect way. When Vancouver Sun reporter Scott Simpson won a Jack Webster award for his series on construction of new dams on the Peace River, he commended BC Hydro on its transparency and helpfulness.

"It drives me to believe that I'm on the right path with my strategy so that I know that the results I'm getting are really worth the effort," Moreno says.

J/R

Vaughn Palmer

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remind my colleagues who would sometimes read a Palmer column and flip out a little bit, rail about it, say it's unfair. 'Well you know,' I said, 'when he wrote those same kind of columns about the Socredits, you thought he was bang on.'

Since 2001, Palmer's main target has been Gordon Campbell and the Liberals. When Campbell held his first news conference after his drunk driving arrest, his wife was standing with him. Once again, Palmer took the first shot.

"He was asking why Mrs. Campbell was beside the premier," recalls Gary Mason, a colleague of Palmer's in the '80s. "And the suggestion was,

was she there to kind of mute the criticism. It was a tough question." The kind that has become Palmer's specialty. "He can be really ruthless," says Mason, now a Globe and Mail columnist.

Besides writing his column, Palmer appears on radio seven times a week and television three times a week. Baldrey jokingly refers to his friend as "Vaughn Inc."

Palmer says he appreciates his lifetime achievement award but finds it a little disconcerting because journalists usually receive it near the end of their careers. He's nowhere near calling it quits. "Governments have been very good to me in terms of material," he says. "I find the story continues to be interesting."

J/R

Covering the cops

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Zytaruk says it's "not really so much an us-and-them kind of thing.

Some police officers make excellent sources and then the other guys see journalists as a kind of threat. It all depends on the individual, you've got good people and bad people and friendly people and unfriendly people in every profession."

Zytaruk was writing crime stories before police had such a thing as media liaisons. "Back in those days, the reporter really had to work the contacts. You could get more scoops and stuff like that and there was more of an atmosphere of competition between different news groups and newspapers. Now of course the competition hasn't stopped, but it's different. It's basically who can get the same story first because there is so much homogeneity now."

Uniformity of information from police sources on crime stories works well for the media liaisons because they have some control over what information reporters can print. The amount of crime coverage has become an issue.

According to a recent study released by the RCMP, the more crime stories are reported the higher the public's fear level. Fanning says, "You have to have officers that communicate with the media because the public have the right to know. It may not always be pleasant and

of course in one breath we are saying, yes, the more media people take in the higher their fear of crime, but... if people want to know if there's a serial robber, or purse snatcher in the southwest part of town that struck eight times at Oakridge in the last two weeks I think that's important. And we would be negligent in not informing the public of crime that's going on."

Skelton says the connection is a legitimate concern. "It may create an overall impression, if you have crime stories all the time, that crime is more prevalent than it is."

If people are overly concerned about crime, the answer is not to hide it.

Ramsey acknowledges some truth to the claim the more media coverage on crime there is, the higher the level of public fear. However, he does not agree with the view that there is too much crime reported in the news because crimes are a fact of life and thus need to be covered.

Zytaruk agrees. Reporters must be careful about getting into the whole concept of self-censorship, he says. "We don't go out of our way to bombard people with crime stories; you know we don't make up crime stories, crime happens. So we are just reporting on what happens. Don't shoot the messenger."

The RCMP have a new weapon in their media arsenal. Earlier this year, they launched a new feature on their media relations website called "Setting the

Record Straight."

Police explained it as a "tool for elaborating on information published in the media."

Dan Ferguson, the Surrey Leader's crime reporter for the last seven years, says the RCMP can present information any way they choose. He says reporters have to learn how deal with criticism. "There's nothing more ironic than reporters who will cheerfully crusade and try to nail someone's hide to the wall, who then flip out and then go into a towering rage because someone somehow in some minor way questioned they way they do their job."

In terms of the relationship between the media and the police, Bellett says, "It's the same relationship that exists between us and anybody else. We're here to put news in the paper. That's not what they're for. They're there to solve crime and keep people safe."

Even when journalists are doing a negative story on the police, all they ask is reporters get all the facts and make sure the stories are balanced. "Ultimately our belief here is reporters should be looking for the truth, not trying to sensationalize something, overplay it or underplay it," says Fanning. "But," he laughs, "I don't think there is much of a fear of underplaying in my experience."

J/R

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