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2004

## Globalization in News Editing

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### Recommended Citation

Olson, Lyle, "Globalization in News Editing" (2004). *Bush Project Anthology*. 6.  
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# GLOBALIZATION IN NEWS EDITING

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## The Problem

“Globally informed and prepared for a diverse world” and “internationally competitive in academic preparation” are two important Lead Forward Land-Grant Goals for South Dakota State University graduates.

In an editing class last year, the author asked students if they could identify a hot topic in higher education that begins with “g.” Only one of the 20 students (all juniors and seniors) readily identified the word—globalization. The student had taken an SDSU honors course on the topic, had traveled overseas, had studied six foreign languages at SDSU, and is currently teaching English in France.

Students’ lack of response to the question revealed to the author that he did not have an answer to another key question: How globally aware are journalism and mass communication majors at SDSU?

## Background

To help answer that question, the author conducted a literature review and surveyed students in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication.

On a national scale, the literature review revealed that although globalization is a hot topic in many academic circles, journalism and mass communication is not one of them. In a key journal, Holm (2002) discussed what he calls “The Forgotten Globalization of Journalism Education.” He argued that “journalism education needs to break out of the national mold in which it has been traditionally cast” (p. 67). Another article a year earlier in the same journal titled “Educating ‘New’ Journalists: Challenges to the Curriculum” addressed several key topics, but it did not discuss globalization (Deuze). There was no other pertinent research on globalization awareness of journalism and mass communication students nationally.

To gain a SDSU perspective, the author created a three-page survey that included Cushner’s (1986) Inventory of Cross-Cultural Sensitivity.<sup>1</sup> The first page gathered demographic information including students’ international experience. The second page was a Likert-scale survey with items related to students’ awareness of international newspapers and media. The third page was the Cushner inventory.

A seven-point Likert scale was used with 1 as “strongly disagree,” 2 “disagree,” 3, 4, and 5 middle range responses, 6 “agree” and 7 “strongly agree.” Seventy-seven students (about 30 percent of majors in the

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication) in reporting and editing classes volunteered to complete the survey. Twenty-five percent were seniors, 31 percent juniors, and 42 percent sophomores.

Of the 77 students, 40 percent had traveled to Canada, 17 percent to Mexico, and 32.5 percent overseas/abroad. Although 61 percent of the respondents had visited an Indian reservation in South Dakota, 45 percent of those had only spent “hours or less on a reservation.”

Results of the survey are shown in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**

Survey Item	n = 77	% strongly agree or agree	% strongly disagree or disagree
I don't know very much about media outside the United States.		39.0	11.7
I know a lot about newspapers outside the United States.		5.4	61.0
I know something about the media in at least one country outside the United States.		35.1	24.7
I can name at least one non-American journalist.		13.0	76.6
Knowledge of media outside the United States will be valuable to my career.		50.6	7.8
I have at least one friend who is not a United States citizen.		49.4	35.1
In the past year, I have discussed some aspect of journalism with at least one non-American citizen.		41.5	53.2
In the past year, I have had a significant conversation (more than five minutes) with at least one person for whom English is his/her second language.		59.7	22.1
Knowledge of Native American culture in my state will help me understand international cultures.		37.7	11.7
I regularly read international news in a daily newspaper.		24.7	45.5

Student responses to 10 items concerning international media awareness.

In an open-ended item, students were asked to list the country, city, and name of up to three newspapers outside the United States. Sixty-eight percent did not name any. Only five percent named three correctly.

The survey clearly revealed that although journalism and mass communication majors at SDSU understand the value of an international mindset, they are not particularly globally astute in their own field.

What kind of project could the author design to help break SDSU journalism students out of the national mold the literature review identified and help them gain a more global perspective?

# The World's Best-designed Newspapers Project

By examining the Society for News Design's annual *The Best of Newspaper Design*, students learn effective and award-winning editing and presentation techniques. In previous years, students examined American newspapers. The obvious next step was for students to examine award-winning newspapers outside the United States.

Twenty students paired up and selected a non-American, non-English language newspaper to research from an edition of *The Best of Newspaper Design*. Sample recent award-winning newspapers include *Le Devoir* from Montreal, Canada; *Helsingborgs Dagblad* from Helsingborgs, Sweden; *Die Welt* from Berlin, Germany; *a.m. De León* from León, Mexico; *Diario de Noticias* from Pamplona, Spain; and *Correio Braziliense* from Brasilia, Brazil.

Students researched both the newspaper and the country's press system. They e-mailed or telephoned editors to ask questions about the staff (i.e., size, training) or production software. Students searched the Internet for information on journalism education or working as a journalist in the country. Some students interviewed SDSU sources (i.e., a Spanish or German professor, an international student from Sweden or Mexico) about the press in the country and used these sources as translators.

Students presented their research via a tabloid-size poster using QuarkXPress, the world's leading page design software. The poster report, printed in color, displayed the foreign newspaper's nameplate and sample pages from the paper's Web site or scanned from *The Best of Newspaper Design*. The reports contained comments from the Society for News Design judges, comments from the staff members contacted, and an "in our opinion" analysis in which the students briefly discussed the newspaper they examined. The reports contained a related article about either the press, journalism education, or working as a journalist in the country. Each report listed the country's press freedom index assigned by international watchdog Reporters Without Borders<sup>2</sup>. Students presented their posters and reported orally to the class on the newspaper they researched.

## Impact of Project

The pairs of students were required to exhibit mastery of a variety of journalistic skills. The author evaluated in detail the design, editing, reporting, and writing. As a bonus to help meet two of SDSU's Lead Forward Goals, students learned about the press in "their" country as well as in countries their peers researched. Incorporating an international component, the assignment reinforced and expanded course content and, at the same time, broadened students' global perspectives. It was a win-win project.

At the start of the semester, some of the 20 students in the class were among the 95 percent of SDSU journalism and mass communication students surveyed who said they could not list the country, city, and name of three non-American newspapers. After the project, 100 percent could name

three non-American newspapers and 100 percent knew something about the press systems in a few countries.

Student response to the project was positive. The author will continue using, refining, and expanding the assignment to assist journalism majors in developing more global awareness.

## BIOGRAPHY

Lyle D. Olson, a professor in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, teaches design, editing, and writing and directs the graduate program. He is nationally known for his research in scholastic journalism and teaching writing. He earned a B.S. in journalism from South Dakota State, an M.A. in journalism from the University of Oklahoma, and an Ed.D. in higher education and English from Oklahoma State University.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Maria Krane, international programs director from Creighton University, administered this cross-cultural sensitivity survey at the Bush Faculty Development Conference titled "A Community Understanding of Global Competence" on January 6, 2003, at South Dakota State University.

<sup>2</sup> The second world press freedom ranking created by Reporters Without Borders is located at [http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id\\_article=8247](http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=8247). The list is compiled from questionnaires distributed to journalists, scholars, rights activists, and jurists. According to the list, North Korea is the worst state oppressor of journalists, while Finland, Iceland, the Netherlands, and Norway tie for the most press freedom.

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