

UGANDA RADIONETWORK™

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Handbook for the URN Advanced Radio Journalism Course in Political Reporting

Supported by



Ivor Gaber
Paul Kavuma
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UGANDA RADIO NETWORK

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IWPR- Africa

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with

Paul Kavuma and Stephen Eriaku

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INTRODUCTION

This Course Handbook has been produced to accompany the URN Advanced Radio Journalism Course, which is being run throughout Uganda for freelance radio journalists in 2005 and 2006. The Handbook, which follows the day-by-day course programme, contains transcripts of PowerPoint presentations plus additional supporting material. It is important to note that the material presented in text boxes represents the PowerPoint presentations and can only be properly understood in the context of the course itself.

Whilst most of this handbook has been specially written to accompany the IWPR Advanced Radio Journalism Course, like all trainers we also adapt and develop the best material we have used in the past. In this handbook we have reproduced, or adapted, material from the following open source sites. We are very grateful to these sites for making their material available and hope that they will feel equally free to make use, or adapt, any material found here that might be of use to them.

BBC Training - www.bbctraining.com

AMAC – World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters -www.amarc.org

I Train Online – www.itrainonline.org

The International Federation of Journalists - www.ifj.org

A Web Guide for Media Students - www.mediaknowall.com

We have also drawn upon the user guides to Cool Edit Pro and I-River 900 (digital recorder) to illustrate the details of the technology used on this particular course. In addition, the sections on location recording and editing, have adapted two chapters written by Brian Barber for a forthcoming book being produced by IWPR Africa - 'Reporting for Change' (which will be available in 2006). IWPR Africa has also published a short guide to Ugandan media law and regulation and we hope that all three publications – this handbook, 'Reporting for Change' and the law guide – will be of use to journalists and others, not just in Uganda, but throughout Africa as a whole.

SECTION ONE: RADIO JOURNALISM

1. RADIO, JOURNALISTS AND THE AUDIENCE

The Excitement of Radio

As a medium for journalism radio can...

- Carry live reports
- Convey atmosphere and events
- Is easy to report for (e.g. mobile phones)
- The technology is light and flexible
- Does not require a technical crew

What Makes a Journalist?

A journalist is

- Curious about the world but
- Questions what they're told
- Wants to tell people what they know
- Enjoys being the 'first to know'
- Passionate about accuracy & fairness
- Interested in people
- Obsessed with news and current affairs
- Never takes 'no' for an answer
- Always wants to know and do more
- ... and has just a tiny touch of 'ego'

What the Audience Want ...

- Information that directly affects their lives
- Information that we judge that they need
- News about their locality, tribe etc.
- Space for public discussion
- And to be entertained

2. NEWS REPORTING

What Makes News?

Debates about 'what makes news' take place in newsrooms, bars and university departments around the world. There is no one single agreed definition. Here are two to ponder:

"News is what someone, somewhere doesn't want printed – all the rest is advertising"

- Lord Rothermere newspaper owner

"News is what we call the stories we choose to put in our news bulletins – if it's not in the bulletin then it's not news"

- Anonymous British radio news editor

The reality is that there is no such thing as 'news' per se. What one society, at one time in its history, regards as 'news' would not be accepted as 'news' in other societies at other times.

Obviously there are certain major world events – the attack on the twin towers in New York (9/11) or the Indian Ocean Tsunami) - that most people would agree should be included in any newspaper or news programme. But, for example, in the former Soviet Union the annual wheat harvest was regarded as an important news item, partly because it affected such a large section of the population (both in terms of the incomes of those working on the land and the price and supply of bread) but it was also a useful means for the regime to advertise its 'successes'. However in most developed countries the size of the wheat harvest would not be regarded as news – except for those publications covering agricultural or the grocery trade.

Having said that it is possible to divine certain attributes of stories (rather than subject matters) –known as 'news values' - that make journalists say 'That's something we must cover'. (It should be noted that in offering these observations no judgement is implied as to whether or not these news values are, in themselves, of value to the broader society).

The 'Ingredients' of News

Something, or an event that:

Is new or 'apparently new'

Represents a 'disruption to the norm' (e.g. disasters and crime)

Involves conflict/difference/argument (up to and including violence)

Is relevant, and understandable, to the target audience

Can be told briefly and clearly

Is predictable enabling the media to cover it.

But is also 'unpredictable' – surprise is an important element of news

Falls within the media's 'timeframe'

Involves people – particularly celebrities, children, 'innocent victims' 'heroes' etc

Is about scandals – sex, money and abuse of power

Is about concrete contributions to the development process

Is unusual or 'quirky' or humorous

Involves large numbers of people, money etc.

Is the first, last, largest, oldest etc

And will provide the audience with entertainment, amusement and/or distraction

Constructing The News Agenda: Not What It Should Be But What It Is

New or 'Apparently New'

With major running stories we usually have to find ways of keeping them 'fresh', or 'moving the story on' and sometimes stories are initially missed. In both cases this requires finding new information or at least finding new angles to these stories. At other times, in an attempt to beat the competition, we try and predict what might happen as a result of some future event. These 'predictions' tend to emphasise the negative, rather than positive, consequences of the event.

Conflict/Difference/Disruption

Normal life is unexceptional. People get up, go to work and go home. It is disruptions to the norm that interest and excite us – a strike, a political argument, even a war. Hence journalists look for disruptions to the norm as a key building block as they 'construct the news'. Sometimes the conflicts are quite real, such as the war in the

North of Uganda but sometimes they are either 'found' or even 'created' by journalists looking for a story. 'X' says this, so the journalist goes to 'Y' and gets an alternative view.

Hence, the media is often accused of focussing on negativity. This is true but does not mean that the journalist has necessarily created the negativity only that he or she has asked him or herself, after receiving some information - who is this going to upset, offend or anger? He or she then goes and finds out what this person makes of the original information. Of course it would be better if the journalist also asked the question who is this going to benefit, please or enthuse and also sought out comments from them.

Relevance

Newspapers, radio and TV stations do not operate in a vacuum. They need to make a profit, or at least gain an audience. Hence news and programme editors should always be asking themselves the question - who is this going to affect? In other words what is the relevance of this information to my audience? But relevance also means stories that the audience can understand in terms of their own experiences and societies. Hence a story about the latest developments in internet voice telephony available only in the West is not going to resonate with a poor rural population that has no access to computers. Geographical proximity – i.e. is the event happening close to the audience – is a major determinate of 'relevance'.

Importance

In addition to 'relevance' journalists seek to make judgements about what is 'important'. Thus a summit meeting between the President of the United States and his Chinese opposite number might not be relevant to the life of the average Ugandan but it will make 'news' because by most criteria it is deemed 'important'. There is generally consensus about the 'importance' of major events but there is much debate about the importance of events that whilst still important do not fall into this category and are not strictly 'relevant' to the audience. This is one of the reasons why foreign stories, important as they are in their own right, tend to get less coverage.

Timeliness

In general, news media cover events that fall within their own time span. For example for a daily newspaper, anything that has happened over the last 24 hours makes 'news'. For a radio stations with an hourly bulletin it becomes more problematic. And some events don't always happen over the news cycle of a radio station or newspaper. On stories such as global warming we have to rely on specific events – such as the hurricane that engulfed New Orleans, or the latest findings from international scientists – in order to report on trends which otherwise might fall off the news agenda. Similarly, we need to find 'pegs' for stories such as environmental degradation, if we are to keep them in the forefront of public attention.

Personalisation/Celebrity

The media is 'people focussed, First, because most of us enjoy reading and hearing about other people - and there are certain categories of 'people that particularly interest us such as celebrities (including politicians), 'victims', a 'David' triumphing over a 'Goliath' children etc. Also because many stories can be more easily understood, couched in terms of individuals. For example HIV/Aids is a huge issue and most people cannot take in the fact that, for example in Uganda 8%, of the population is HIV positive. But if we hear the story of a family of six from Gulu in Northern Ugandan in which every member is HIV Positive and what this means for their daily lives, then the story becomes more understandable. We also tend to explain international stories in terms of personalities – 'Bush and Blair have invaded Iraq in order to overthrow Saddam Hussein', for example. People like David Beckham, Madonna or Chameleon need only do very ordinary thing for journalists to regard it as a big story.

Scandal

Putting together the media and audience's interest in personalities and in 'disruption to the norm' there is a great appetite for stories that involve 'scandal'. This is a notion that embraces individuals, usually well known, who have become involved in actual, or alleged, scandals which generally centre on three areas – sex, money and/or the abuse of power. The particular attraction of these stories is that they involve an element of curiosity about the lives of the 'rich, famous and powerful' but also they provide a sense of 'hubris' associated with seeing one of these figures fall

from grace. In addition the stories frequently contain references to ‘innocent victims’ and sometimes, in terms of whistleblowers, ‘heroes’.

Simplicity

Many stories are not simple in themselves – life is complicated – but they can be told in a simple way. The art of journalism is cutting through the thicket of detail in order to reach the essence of a story. Most events are susceptible to this treatment – some stories are not and as a result get less coverage than they might merit. For example, stories about the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank can appear to be complex. Many journalists shy away from doing these stories (which is a pity).

Expectedness

Newsrooms are driven by their diaries. Predictable events – press conferences, parliamentary sittings, state visits etc. attract coverage, irrespective of their importance. This is because news media need to plan their daily and weekly coverage. If they know something is going to happen they can allocate a reporter to cover it. For the reporter to be taken off that story and moved to a different one would require the second story to be guaranteed to produce more significant news than the first. Journalists are also attracted to running stories, they are clearly ‘news’ (because ‘we’ ran the story yesterday) they are easy for the listener to understand and they are easy for the journalists to follow-up.

Unexpectedness

If the diaries are the bread and butter of news the exciting ‘breaking story’ is the thing that motivates most journalists. Events happening out of the ordinary are what excite journalists and interest the public. However, the event has to be relatively easy to understand and happen within the news cycle of the media organisation. For example a sudden mud slide that kills 100 in Rwanda fits these criteria. However, one can envisage a situation in which 100 people are killed as a result of a mud slide in Rwanda but the slide might have taken place over a year and the people died not in the slide itself but as a result of drinking water from a river that had been polluted by minerals that were carried downstream by the mud.

Development

In developing countries both audiences and the media take a great interest in stories about development, particularly those that concern the provision of direct material contributions – new schools, the distribution of mosquito nets, a new road etc. These stories are of interest not just to the people whose lives are likely to be directly affected by the changes but by a wider audience that sees the overall development of the country as relating directly to their and their family's well-being and prospects for the future.

Entertainment

Radio news needs to attract and keep an audience. Hence bulletins have to have a varied range of material, some heavy some light, some national, some international and plenty of sports and showbiz. Of particular appeal for journalists, and audiences, is the odd or unusual story that people remember and talk about with their friends – the boy from Mbale who ate a live snake 'just because he was hungry', the Gulu woman who 'won' the Miss Ugly competition and so on.

Understanding News Values

Here's a similar, but different take on news values from an American perspective.

Your lead should emphasize the most "newsworthy" information in the story you are trying to tell. But how do you figure out what information is most newsworthy? There are no pat answers. The information you consider most newsworthy depends in part on your own values, experiences and knowledge. But some general guidelines exist. Below are several characteristics that can make information newsworthy. The more of these characteristics a piece of information has, the more newsworthy the information is.

By Ken Blake, Ph.D.
Middle Tennessee State University

Impact

Information has impact if it affects a lot of people.

- A proposed income tax increase, for instance, has impact, because an income tax increase would affect a lot of people.

- The accidental killing of a little girl during a shootout between rival drug gangs has impact, too. Even though only one person -- the little girl -- was directly affected, many people will feel a strong emotional response to the story.

Timeliness

Information has timeliness if it happened recently.

- "Recently" is defined by the publication cycle of the news medium in which the information will appear.
 - For "Newsweek," events that happened during the previous week are timely.
 - For a daily newspaper, however, events that happened during the 24 hours since the last edition of the paper are timely.
 - For CNN Headline News, events that happened during the past half hour are timely.

Prominence

Information has prominence if it involves a well-known person or organization.

- If you or I trip and fall, no one will be all that interested, because you and I aren't well known.
- But if the president of the United States trips and falls, everyone will be interested because the president is well known.

Proximity

Information has proximity if it involves something happened somewhere nearby.

- If a bus wreck in India kills 25 people, the Nashville Tennessean will devote maybe three or four paragraphs to the story.
- But if a bus wreck in downtown Nashville kills 25 people, the Tennessean will devote a sizable chunk of its front page to the story.

Conflict

Information has conflict if it involves some kind of disagreement between two or more people.

- Remember how, when you were a kid, everyone would run to watch a fight if one erupted on the playground?
- Fights have drama -- who will win? -- and invite those watching to choose sides and root for one or more of the combatants.
- Good democracy involves more civil -- we hope -- conflicts over the nature of public policy. That's why the media carry so much political news. Journalists see themselves as playing an important role in the public debate that forms the basis for democracy.

Weirdness

Information has weirdness if it involves something unusual or strange.

- Charles A. Dana, a famous editor, once said, "If a dog bites a man, that's not news. But if a man bites a dog, that's news!"
- Dana was saying that people are interested in out-of-the-ordinary things, like a man biting a dog.

Currency

Information has currency if it is related to some general topic a lot of people are already talking about.

- A mugging in downtown Murfreesboro generally won't attract much attention from reporters at the Daily News Journal.
- But if the mugging occurred a day after a report by the FBI had named Murfreesboro the city with the state's fastest-growing crime rate, the mugging would be big news.
- People would respond to news of the mugging by saying, "See, here's an example of just the kind of thing that FBI report was talking about. We've got to do something about the crime rate!"

Newsgathering

Reporting should be

<p>Accurate</p> <p>Impartial/unbiased</p> <p>Balanced</p> <p>Fair</p>

Note: The terms 'truth' and 'objectivity' are problematic. The 'truth' could involve the reporting of certain facts, selected with bias and partiality. Thus the individual facts within a story might be 'true' but the overall thrust of the story could be seen as biased and unfair. 'Objectivity' is equally problematic. Absolute objectivity is unobtainable - we are all affected by our background, age, gender, religion etc. What we have to do is to be aware of our 'subjectivities' and seek to ensure that they do not interfere with our reporting by being accurate, impartial, balanced and fair.

Where do we find stories?

The 'diary'
Follow-ups
Official sources
Unofficial sources
News releases
Press conferences
Other events
Agencies/other media/Internet
The public
Personal experience/knowledge

Radio Reporting – the basics

Find (or get assigned) a story (see above)
Do research – cuttings, web, phone calls, colleagues etc.
Set up interviews
Check equipment
Record interviews and 'actuality'
Work out the 'story'
Select clips
Write commentary and intro
Record commentary and clips

Make sure you can answer the basic questions

What happened?
Who was involved?
Where did it happen?
When did it happen?
How did it happen?
Why did it happen?
What does it mean?

Example: Uganda riots over treason charge

What? Who?

The arrest of opposition leader Kizza Besigye has sparked running battles between his supporters and Ugandan police firing tear gas and bullets.

Why?

Dr Besigye was arrested three weeks after returning from a four-year exile.

He has been charged with treason, as well as the alleged rape of a woman in 1997. Dr Besigye denies alleged links to two rebel groups.

When? Where?

He was arrested after addressing a rally just outside the capital, Kampala before being escorted to a police station in the centre of the city.

How?

Several cars and shops were set on fire as disturbances spread out from the city centre.

So what?

Suleiman Kiggundu, chairman of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), which is sponsoring Dr Besigye in the election, condemned the arrest. "This is a barbaric act that we are witnessing. This is a savage act," he told the AFP news agency.

3. RADIO INTERVIEWS & PRESS CONFERENCES

A. INTERVIEWS

Types of Interview (form)

Principles/participants
Eye-witnesses
'Views' people
Experts/observers
Two-ways
Vox pops

Types of Interviews (content)

Subject/friendly - what happened?
Subject/hostile - why did you do it.....?
Information/eyewitness - what did you see?
Information/VIP - what are you going to do/announce and why?
Object – what's your view (vox pop)

Planning the Interview

What do I want out of the interview?
What does he/she want?
If there's a gap, how do bridge it?
What do I know (subject & interviewee)?
What does he/she know?
What do I need to find out?
What areas do I want to cover?
In what order shall I cover it?
Is there a 'nugget' I'm looking for?
How do I find it?
How do I begin?
How do I end?
Write out a plan

Conducting the Interview

Check equipment

Arrive on time

Find the right location

Do a brief level/recording test

Be observant

Converse informally but do not get into the interview with your recorder switched off!

First question should be open but focused.

Questions should be open i.e. they should not invite one-word answers such as 'Yes' and 'No'.

Ask why, how, what etc.

Avoid sounding as if you are putting your own point of view into questions

Don't be afraid to.

Re-phrase badly put questions

Put questions from both, or all, sides of the argument

Interrupt when you don't understand or for brevity

Maintain eye contact unless...

Silence is golden..for both of you

At end of interview ask if anything missed

Always be polite even in hostile situations

Further Thoughts On Interview

- Converse informally with the interviewee before the interview starts but do not get in to the meat of the interview with your recorder switched off!
- The first question should be open but focused. In other words use the question to set out the general direction you want the interview to take.
- The other questions should also be open i.e. they should not invite one word answers (Yes, No etc)

- Questions that begin “Why”, “How”, “What” are better than those that begin ‘Do you agree/support/favour ...’ or “Are you going to?”
- If you have phrased a question badly don’t be shy about re-asking it, especially if you are intending to use your questions on air.
- Don’t be afraid of putting questions from both, or all, sides of the argument. But you should phrase these in terms of ‘What would you say to those who claim....?’ or ‘How do you respond to the criticism that?’
- Avoid sounding like you are putting your own point of view. You are there to ‘test’ the interviewee on behalf of the audience.
- Interrupt for clarity and also if the interviewee is going on too long
- How to interrupt...

Use eye contact to ‘ask’ for the interviewee to pause

A light touch on the arm can make interviewees pause

Listen out for breath-breaks and then jump in firmly

Phoney segues – repeat the interviewee’s words and turn them into a question

- Before doing any interview it is important to research your subject thoroughly and choose your interviewee carefully. You are looking for an interviewee who can speak clearly, concisely and with authority. Research is important because it enables you to focus the interview. An interview should be to the point; it should not be long and rambling.
- Control - no matter how important the interviewee is, once the interview has been granted, you should be in control.

The Confrontational Interview (opinion interview)

This is an interview with a politician, a trade union leader, an activist, or anyone who represents an interest group or a party in a dispute/conflict. The interviewer must balance the interview, by putting the opposite point of view and making the interviewee justify, explain and defend his/her position.

The “Expert” Interview (factual interview)

This could be with an academic, an analyst or even an expert journalist. The aim is to extract information, explanation and analysis. The interview is not confrontational - the expert is here to try to help the audience better understand the story.

“Ordinary” People

For example, a vox pop - when you ask people in the street for their opinion on a topical issue. It can also be an interview with an ‘ordinary person’ when they have had an unusual experience. Because most people are not experienced in doing interviews, it’s best to keep your questions simple.

Studio Interviews (Live & Recorded) - Some Tips And Techniques

Before Going On The Air:

Know WHY you're doing the interview. This is also known as "focussing" your interview. What exactly do you need to know from the person you're interviewing? The clearer you are about why YOU think this is an important subject, the clearer it will be for your listeners.

LISTEN to your prospective interviewee carefully BEFORE making a commitment to have them on the show. Talk to them on the phone first. Do they know their subject? Are they a good talker? Can they talk about their subject in a way that ordinary people can understand? If yes, book them for an interview. If not, thank them for the useful information and look for another guest.

PLAN your on-air questions in advance – though don't write them out word-for-word, they should sound conversational. Every good interview has a beginning, middle and end. By planning your questions in advance, you won't have to make it up on the

spot. If your interviewee is a good talker, you will need fewer questions. Figure on six questions for a ten-minute interview if your guest is reasonably verbose.

There are seven key questions that work for most interviews - Who, What, When, Where, Why How and What does it mean?

Write the intro you will use on air. Do it before the show.

The most important function of the intro is to "hook" the listener. Make it catchy and appealing. Most important, tell your listener WHY they want to stay around to listen to your interview.

Don't try to make up your intro on the spot. You have a lot to think about - making your guest feel comfortable, your upcoming questions, what's going on in the studio and outside etc. By pre-scripting you won't run the risk of forgetting your interviewee's name (easily done).

On Air:

Be organised and calm. If you are flustered, your guest will be flustered too. The best way to relax your guest is to be relaxed yourself.

Keep your questions short and tight. The listeners want to hear your guest, not you. Your function is to get your guest to talk about the issue/subject.

Don't become part of the story by launching into editorialising, debates and commentaries -- that's not your role. (That doesn't mean you shouldn't ask critical questions. Just don't make the story your own personal issue.)

Avoid long and rambling questions. They are usually a sign that you don't really know what your question should be. Especially if your guest has to ask "excuse me, what was the question?"

You don't have to stick to the questions you've pre-scripted. If something interesting comes up, and you have time, follow it up. But keep an eye on your original question list.

Avoid jargon. If your guest uses a term that your listeners won't understand, ask, "What's that?" Your listeners are not experts. Your role is to make the interview understandable.

Avoid acronyms and abbreviations - tell them what the abbreviations and acronyms stand for. You can't take it for granted that your listeners will know what the UNDP, UNESCO or the ILO stand for. It's the same with technical terms (the ones that nobody knows unless they have a doctorate in the subject).

Watch the clock. If your interview is scheduled to go ten minutes, don't make it fifteen. Or five.

After The Interview:

Listen back to your interview if you've taped it. Figure out what you'd do differently next time. Get used to hearing your own voice on tape. EVERYBODY says, "I don't sound like that". Guess what - you really do. So get used to it.

Listen to yourself as though you were a listener who doesn't know you. Did you follow all the steps above? Use the experience to do an even BETTER interview next time.

Ask the other people working on your show for feedback - or (if you're feeling courageous) the programme director at the station where you are working.

And above all remember that interviewing is an art, not a science. There is no RIGHT way to do an interview. Develop your own style, and keep working on it.

The Radio Journalists' Guide To Vox Pops

- Vox pop is short for vox populi - Latin for voice of the people. It sounds simple enough, recording voices of passers-by, but there's more to vox popping than meets the ear:
- A Vox pop consists of a montage of voices and opinions recorded on location (often your nearest main shopping street)
- A Vox pop should include a range of voices: young, old, male, female, multi-ethnic, sensible, outraged, funny, unreasonable
- Vox pops are cut together, rather than carefully mixed
- The vox pop should be audibly on location but not drowned by passing lorries, blaring music etc
- A vox pop is normally 20-40 seconds - any longer will sound very laboured
- The best vox pops are pacey, quirky, memorable
- A vox pop is an excellent piece of texture for a radio package or as an introduction to an interview or discussion
- Normally the reporter's voice does not appear in a vox, except perhaps to ask an additional question or to reiterate the original question
- The vox pop purports to be the views of the general public but it never is - it's those six people you persuaded to stop and talk to you on a cold rainy Friday morning. Don't present your vox as being a scientific survey of public opinion
- The subject of your vox pop needs to be something that people will have a definite opinion about - often an item that's in the news.

- Choose a specific or topical subject (such as the current political controversy)
- Avoid vague or woolly subjects (the existence of God, the future of the world etc)
- Remember that you're asking busy people to stop and talk into a microphone, so you need a juicy question about which they're likely to have an instant opinion.
- Ask an open question so that you don't end up with a series of yes/no responses.
- The question should be simple and quick to understand.
- A location with steady background atmos. is good but avoid distracting noises, e.g. sudden surges of loud traffic, music etc.
- Check that your recording equipment is in good working order before you leave the news room.
- Take spare batteries.
- Wear comfortable shoes!

B. PRESS CONFERENCES

Some Tips

Find out as much as you can in advance
Do your preparation
Arrive early
Sit at the front or near the PA system
See if you can use the PA sound feed
Arrange any post-conference interviews
Ask if speeches available in advance
Make notes of the Q. and A.
Don't perform
Work with other reporters
Listen and learn
In post-conference interview, seek clarification of press conference exchanges

Press conferences [or News Conferences] are often a valuable source of news for broadcast journalists. However, they can often pose difficult problems for inexperienced (and even experienced!) journalists. Below is a list of checkpoints to consider.

Is it worth going?

Do not automatically assume that every press conference merits your attention. Some will not. If possible, try to find out as much as you can beforehand, and assess the likely news value of the story. If the news value is low, you can perhaps just write a few paragraphs based on what you know from the organiser's press release.

Yes, it's worth going. But what do I want from it?

First, you want to understand the story, and prepare some questions based on it. There will usually be some sort of printed sheet available. If you don't see one, ask in case you've missed it. You'll usually want a short, good quality interview with the principal speaker (s) covering the principal points. Ideally you will require an interview but you also want good audio during the press conference. Try get as close to the speaker (s) as possible.

The table is too far away. I can't get close. What do I do?

Don't panic. At some point, preferably before the action starts speak to the organisers and tell them you are a radio reporter and need an interview. Tell them the table is too far away. Of course, there are occasions when it will not be possible to get the speaker close-up, e.g., a VIP etc. But you can still try. Find a good vantage point, where you expect the VIP to pass, and shout your question as they go by. Many journalists succeed in getting a few valuable words from VIPs in this way. VIPs are accustomed to media attention. The worst they can do is ignore you.

Remember

Your job at a press conference is NOT somehow to re-create the atmosphere of the press conference. The Conference is NOT the story. Your job is simply to report the basic details of what was said, by whom, about what. There is no point in recording for half an hour, use a pen and paper instead! Handwritten notes are quicker to check than a long recording.

Some journalists regard a press conference as a chance to perform in front of their colleagues, to ask long, grand-sounding questions and to monopolise the floor. Don't be intimidated, don't get dragged into discussions, and don't feel small. You may be inexperienced, that does not mean you are insignificant. Some of the best questions are often asked by inexperienced reporters.

Apart from these few notes, it is difficult to talk in theoretical terms about how to handle a press conference. Only press conferences can teach you how to handle press conferences. Your natural, initial reaction upon arrival may be "What is going on? Who's who? Where do I start?" But relax, keep your ears and eyes open, be polite, be confident, be courageous. The picture will clear in time, and somewhere in that room is the person who will give an interview to illustrate your story. All you have to do is wait, watch and it should soon become apparent whom you need to speak to. When you've spotted your target, wait for your chance, when it comes, grab it.

4. WRITING FOR RADIO & VOICEWORK

A. WRITING FOR RADIO

“Get the story right and the words just write themselves”

What’s the top line?

Don’t save the best bits for last

Show me don’t tell me

Never assume

The Crucial First Sentence

“The first sentence in a radio news story is all-important. It must have, partly the character of a headline. It must instantly establish the subject in the listener’s mind, show him or her why the story is worth hearing and signpost the direction it is going to take. But it should not try to say too much”

- (BBC Guidelines)

And the Last Sentence

The last line should round off the story and point ahead to any developments. The last words are the ones the audience will remember – so make them memorable without introducing any startling new information.

Does the story tell the listener...

What has happened?

Where it has happened?

When it happened?

Who was involved?

How did it happen?

Why did it happen?

What (if anything) does it mean?

It's a listening medium

Write as you speak, in simple sentences
It doesn't have to be grammatical
Shorten words as we do in speech
Test your script as you write
Weigh each word – if in doubt, leave out

There's no going back

Use simple tenses where possible
It's a conversation with a listener - not with your colleagues
Write brief sentences using the "active" voice
Minimise your use of adjectives, adverbs pronouns and lists
Full name first, then shorten

Make it easy on the listener

Don't overload her or him with too much information
Simplify and use round numbers
A bracket/quotation mark is hard to hear
Don't use abstractions, repetitions and tongue twisters

It's got to be heard and read

Layout the script for clarity
Do you understand it?
If necessary re-write to suit your own reading style
Mark it up – as you want to say it
Practice it aloud
Record and learn

It's got to be heard and read, as in the example below.

Example

Newsreader:

In a surprise announcement/ the Chairman of Gulu District Council/ Colonel Walter Ochora/ has said that he wants to be the NRM's next presidential candidate.//

Speaking to reporters/ at a Uganda Radio Network seminar in Gulu/ the controversial LC5 chairman/ said that making peace in the North/ would be his campaigning priority//

Our correspondent/ Charles Ewoku/ now reports from Gulu//

Package Ocora

In: "The leader of Gulu

Out: ... up to the people."

Dur: 1.24

Back Anno

That report from Charles Ewoku

Marking Up – commonly used signs in Script Reading

/	=	Brief pause,
//	=	Longer pause,
–	=	Emphasis

How does this sound?

The Kampala taxi drivers strike, which began September 10 (now in its 17th day) and involving 317 members of the Uganda Owners and Drivers' Association (UTODA) in a dispute about changes in Kampala's traffic system shows no sign of resolution, despite warnings by UTODA, to which the majority of Kampala's 439 taxi drivers belong, that drivers in other towns could be asked to join the strike in solidarity with their Kampala colleagues

Or is this better?

The Kampala taxi drivers' strike could spread to other parts of the country. The strike, now in its third week, is over proposed changes in Kampala's traffic system. Now the drivers' union – UTODA - has warned that drivers in other towns could be called out in solidarity. More than 300 drivers are involved in the current action.

Not everything is as it sounds

1. *Sudan said the Eritrean leader had a bad record when it came to upholding human rights.*

Or:

Sudan, said the Eritrean leader, had a bad record when it came to upholding human rights.

Or:

The Eritrean leader said Sudan had a bad record when it came to upholding human rights

2. *Because of the fall in interest rates, which has stimulated home buying, house prices are going up again.*

Or:

House prices are going up again. The fall in the mortgage rate has led to an increase in home-buying.

Exercise

Here are some facts that have been received by your radio station. This is all the information you have to hand. A news story for your bulletin must be written now.

At around 12.00 in the morning on December 26, 2004 – the day after Christmas - authorities say a massive earthquake under the Indian Ocean, near Indonesia, created a giant wave – known as a tsunami – that affected coastal areas around the Indian Ocean with Indonesia and Sri Lanka being the worst affected but coastal areas in Thailand, India and Malaysia were also affected as were four other countries surrounding the ocean.

The United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, who is Ghanaian, speaking at UN headquarters in New York, reportedly said the devastated areas would take years to rebuild. The support of the international community would be much needed.

The exact death toll is not known but it is expected that it will be in the tens of thousands.

The massive wave washed over entire towns and villages. Official sources say the wave caused so many fatalities because so many people live along the coastal areas the high number of deaths was due to the concentration of people along the coastline because of the tourist industry, fishing and so on.

The sea suddenly withdrew, bays and inlets became devoid of water, before the tsunami hit the coast with a terrible force. Everything was smashed to pieces - and tens of thousands of people died almost instantaneously.

Here's one version of the finished story:

A tsunami or gigantic wave has caused tens of thousands of deaths in nine countries in the Indian Ocean. The most devastated countries were Indonesia and Sri-Lanka.

The tsunami engulfed whole communities at midday on December 26, 2004. Authorities say the tsunami was caused by a massive earthquake below the sea off Indonesia. The high number of deaths was due to the concentration of people along the coastline because of the tourist industry.

The sea retreated, emptying bays and inlets, before the tsunami smashed onto the coastline, destroying everything in its path and killing tens of thousands of people in a matter of minutes.

Devastated areas will take years to rebuild with the support of the international community, said the UN Secretary General.

And does it answer the key questions?

What? Who?

A tsunami or gigantic wave has caused tens of thousands of deaths in nine countries in the Indian Ocean.

Where?

The most devastated countries were Indonesia and Sri-Lanka.

When?

The tsunami engulfed whole communities at midday on December 26, 2004.

Why?

Authorities say the tsunami was caused by a massive earthquake below the sea off Indonesia. The high number of deaths was due to the concentration of people along the coastline because of the tourist industry.

How?

The sea retreated, emptying bays and inlets, before the tsunami smashed onto the coastline, destroying everything in its path and killing tens of thousands of people in a matter of minutes.

What does it mean?

Devastated areas will take years to rebuild with the support of the international community, said the UN Secretary General.

Commentary

Commentary – this is how we describe those portions of the script that are written to link the clips – follow the same basic rules as any writing for radio. In particular:

Commentary should...

Summarise what needs summarising Clarify what needs clarifying Set-up the clip to come (including explaining 'atmos' or noise distractions) Link the clip to what is coming next and sometimes Back-announce (back anno) what the listener has heard
--

Commentary should not...

Describe the process 'I went to see so and so and asked her Repeat the words of the clip Distract the listener Sound as if it was written without knowing what clips came before or after
--

B. VOICE TRAINING FOR RADIO

What are your aims?

To get people to listen
To communicate your message
To bring a script to life
To speak so that you are understood
And to sound as if you are talking to a person - not reading a script

How do you start?

Read your script before you broadcast
Mark up your script, re-write if necessary
Check pronunciation of difficult words
Get to the studio in good time – never run

How do you prepare to read?

Sit with the mike should be around 12" away
Sit up straight
Have water nearby
No alcohol before you broadcast
Get your breathing right

How do you read?

Speak clearly – no mumbling
Concentrate on pronouncing the first and last letters of each word
Speak slightly slower than normal
Try and vary your pitch and tone
Sound like you are interested
Emotion and enthusiasm help
Uses pauses but not heavy breaths
The words you emphasise should help, not hinder, comprehension
Listen and learn

Further Thoughts On Using Your Voice

A fundamental principle in radio presentation is the harmonious blend of sound elements with your voice. Whichever radio format you are presenting, it is important to remember:

Voice is the best tool that radio has to keep its listeners tuned in.

Who are we speaking to?

Knowledge of one's listeners is crucial. It allows you to understand the tone to use when speaking to them and to know which topics will interest them. Knowing your audience facilitates contact and determines the kind of relationship that you can develop with the listeners. Your station may have done an audience survey in the past. It is recommended reading to gain a proper understanding of your audience.

Elements of a good radio voice

Rhythm

To master one's rhythm is to speak at a proper speed, taking time for pauses and to catch one's breath. Proper rhythm allows you to read a long paper in a consistent fashion, with no difference in speed between the beginning and the end. Proper rhythm will prevent you from losing your breath before you have finished reading a story.

Tips

If you often feel out of breath while reading a text, review your sentences to make sure they aren't too long. If you find it difficult to find a proper rhythm, imagine you are talking to a friend and start from there.

Pronunciation

For listeners to understand you fully, good pronunciation is essential. Words must be pronounced fully and properly. Do not cut words short. Radio pronunciation is not informal speaking - all words must be pronounced fully. Proper pronunciation means proper articulation. Pay attention to how you articulate when you speak.

Using your voice

Since there are no images in radio, voice is the main instrument used to convey emotion. Speakers must learn to convey the emotions of the text with their voice. An obituary is certainly not read using the same tone as the coverage of an anniversary. Use the proper tone at the proper moment. Try and make your voice musical by using inflection.

Emotion

Voice conveys emotion. Listen to a friend over the phone. You can normally tell how the person is feeling - good or bad. Listeners should be able to perceive the emotions of the text through your voice. Apart from having a pleasant voice, you must learn to make it express emotion.

Fluctuation

When reading for radio, your voice must fluctuate. There are moments when one's tone must be higher and other moments when it should be lower. Certain words deserve more emphasis than others. For instance, the beginning and ending of a news story will not be read with the same intensity as the middle of the story.

Breathing, pauses and emphasis

Breathing is the spoken word equivalent of punctuation. Short breaths, for instance, represent commas. Longer and deeper breaths should serve as periods or full stops. They serve to mark the end of a phrase or the end of an idea. When scripting for radio, it is always useful to mark longer pauses in your text. You can use a slash (/) symbol for pauses and underlines (-) for emphasis.

Silence

When speaking, avoid silence. Your listeners may not understand what is happening and may choose to change the station. Do not panic if you stumble on a word, just breathe, re-read the word and keep on going as if nothing had happened. Always be ready in case the next planned audio is not available because, for instance, a mistake has been made somewhere along the line.

5. FROM JOURNALISM TO RADIO: PRODUCTION

The Four P's of Production

Preparation - the information, the interviewees, the logistics & equipment

Production – keep it simple, 'less is more'

Post-Production - focus on the story and meeting the deadlines

Presentation – think about audience. audience. audience

A News Report can contain

Script/commentary

Interviews

Vox pops

Actuality

'Atmos./ Atmosphere/ Ambience

Standupper

News Bulletins can consist of

Straight read

Cue and clip

Cue and voicer

Cue and actuality

Cue and package

Cue and two-way

Cue and live/recorded interview

Cue and discussion

News Programmes can consist of

News bulletin

Package

Studio interview

Studio discussion

'Remote' interviews

Two-ways

Phone-ins

The News Package Production Process

Find/research the story/interviewees/locations

Work out structure

Record the interviewees/locations

Select the clips

Write and record linking commentary

Final mix

6. UGANDA RADIO NETWORK & THE INTERNET

Introduction

Research makes up the core of any serious journalist's daily programme. Without it, one is left to one's own devices, creating the potential danger of failing to report accurately. As every journalist should expect to perform their work in a highly competitive environment, only the best informed will survive in this profession. The emphasis laid on building background knowledge for each feature or project can never be overstressed.

Research methods can be broken down into two categories:

1. Field Research
2. Desk Research

Field Research

Field research typically includes the usual work a journalist will find her/himself involved in, such as conducting interviews, whether by phone, e-mail or face-to-face. It can also involve meeting with experts and informants, visiting locations, conversing informally with local people and using your eyes and ears.

Desk Research

This includes the time a journalist spends working at a desk reading or studying material, which may be either in written hard copy (like newspapers, magazines or books) or in soft copy, off a computer. Of all the resources available to fulfil the ever-growing need for more up-to-date information every day, none can surpass the vast information mine we know as the Internet.

The Internet acts as a vault of data, news, statistics and virtually every other form of information. It is therefore imperative that the serious journalist harnesses and makes the utmost use of the Internet.

The Internet can be accessed at internet cafes or at one's place of work, and with the ever-decreasing costs in connectivity, it may soon be available to the average

Ugandan in their own home. The Internet operates in such a manner as to make it fairly simple for any literate person to use.

If one is looking for information on the Internet, it becomes easier with the various search engines available on the Web. Search engines are like slaves who search, on your behalf, trillions of bytes of information and deliver whatever you have requested within microseconds. You then select what you feel will be useful from the options presented.

The most popular search engine on the Internet today is Google - this can be found at the website www.google.com. Type this in the address field of the Internet browser, click 'go' or hit the 'enter' key to commence the search process. When the page appears, type the key words for whatever you are searching in the field where the cursor is. Depending on the speed of your Internet connection, you should get an immediate feedback on all the information you requested. Click on the link that best describes what you are looking for. By default, this will open that link in the same page that Google opened in.

Alternatively, for those using Microsoft Internet Explorer, in order to keep your Google page available, you could right-click on each of the links you feel best describes your chosen key word(s) and select 'Open in new window'. This will open the link in another page other than the Google page. The newly opened page should now have the information you requested.

But remember search engines, even Google, cannot read your mind. It might be obvious to you what you are looking for, but search engines can be awkward. Be creative in your searching. If at first you don't get what you're looking for, keep trying. Find new words, or different approaches to your search. Don't give up easily – persistence usually (but not always) pays off.

Some websites that can come in useful for a journalist's online research include:

1. www.powerreporting.com
2. www.journalismnet.com

3. www.wikipedia.com
4. www.refdesk.com
5. www.virtualsalt.com

Journalist training resources on the web include:

1. www.bbctraining.com
2. www.itrainonline.org

As a radio journalist, it's important to note that while you may read hundreds of pages' worth of material, you may only get to use a few seconds when you have done editing your work. Remember that none of your research is ever wasted – it will always come in useful as background knowledge.

The Uganda Radio Network Website

URN has a website that only registered users can access for use. Others, known as guests, may view a few pages to familiarise themselves with the site's services. Some of the eligible users include editors, contributors (including URN correspondents), stations, and of course administrators.

Among the students who go through this course, URN may pick some to become contributors. This means this handbook shall also address, however basically, the use of the site for elementary familiarisation purposes. Following is a breakdown of the process from a contributor logging in to upload a story and sound clip to it being accessed for use by a radio station.

The Contributor

1. The site is accessed by typing www.urn.co.ug in the address field of the browser window.
2. Once the site is displayed, a contributor can log on using her/his own username and password. (It is assumed that the contributor has their work ready for transcription rather than beginning the entire process of writing once logged on to the Internet).
3. The contributor then clicks on the 'manage' link in order to upload their story and sound clip.

4. On the 'Manage' page, he/she then fills the required fields, marked in red, and, even if they do not have a sound clip, MUST upload a clip, normally given as a blank audio file by URN. The text of the story is entered accordingly in its field.
5. On completing all the required fields, the contributor then submits his/her story using the given button at the bottom of the 'Manage' page and logs out.

The Editor

1. The editor logs on to the site with their username and password, clicks on the manage link, accesses the contributor's story, and edits it.
2. The editor can download the contributor's sound clip, edit it, re-log in as the contributor and re-load the edited clip back onto the site.
3. Upon satisfactorily editing the contributor's work, the story is costed and validated and thus made available for the customer who, in this case, is the subscribing radio station.

The Station

1. A radio station's News editor logs in, searches through the stories and selects the ones she/he intends using for their news bulletins.

The station's editor then advises their 'agents' to download the stories and sound clips they have selected and a log is automatically taken of which stories they have chosen.