amcb

asian media and communication bulletin

17th AMIC Annual Conference

Changing Media, Changing Societies: Media and the Millennium Development Goals

The Asian Media Information and Communication Centre is pleased to announce its 17th Annual International Conference, which will be held in Manila, Philippines from the 14–17 July 2008. AMIC will be organizing the conference in partnership with the Philippine Association of Communication Educators Foundation (PACE). This conference is open to academics, media industry professionals, government agencies, policymakers, regulators, UN agencies, donors, research groups, civil society organizations, independent consultants and students.

The theme of the 17th Annual Conference is "Changing Media, Changing Societies: Media and the Millennium Development Goals". The key focus of the conference will be to see how an active and vibrant media can help in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are a set of eight shared goals, responding to the world's

Dr Gerardo R Josue, President, PACE, Philippines, extended a warm welcome to the attendees at the closing ceremony of the 16th AMIC Annual Conference to visit Manila for the 2008 international event.

main development challenges, which both developed nations as well as less developed nations hope to achieve by 2015. The year 2008 will be around the half-time mark to the deadline

AMIC to launch high profile lecture series by eminent Asians

In our drive to make Singapore an intellectual hub and contribute to the growing prominence of the Nanyang Technological University as one of the leading Asian Universities, AMIC, the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information (WKWSCI) and the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) will be launching a lecture series featuring eminent speakers from Asia.

Asia Talks is a new and high profile lecture series by eminent Asian experts who will speak on key issues and topics of concern to Asia. The topics of this lecture series will include politics, international relations, economic development, security, environmental sustainability, health, education and the media.

The bi-monthly *Asia Talks* will also be a unique forum capitalizing on the strengths of its promoters AMIC, WKWSCI and RSIS which are all leading institutions in their respective fields. This will thus create a new synergy between these

17th AMIC Annual Conference (continued from pg 1)

year of 2015, at which point the eight MDGs should have been reached.

Today's media shapes public opinion which in turn shapes an individual's perception of the world. Today not only are the traditional sources of media being used, but there is an increasing emphasis and shift towards new media sources like the Internet, mobile phones, podcasts and blogging. How have these media helped in the achievement of the MDGs? Has knowledge sharing helped developing countries develop effective strategies to address and reach the MDGs? These are some of the questions that the conference aims to address.

AMIC's key event is the flagship Annual Conference, hosted in rotation by countries across the Asia-Pacific region. Recent Annual Conferences have been held in Singapore (2007), Penang, Malaysia (2006), Beijing, PR China (2005), Bangkok, Thailand (2004), Singapore (2003), Perth, Australia (2002) and Manila, Philippines (2001). The AMIC Annual Con-ference is the premier event on Asian media and attracts eminent inter-national

Mabuhay Philippines
Posters displayed at the closing session of the 16th AMIC Annual Conference, Singapore, beckoning attendees to Manila, Philippines for the 17th AMIC Annual Conference.

speakers and participants from the media industry and academia. It features high-profile keynote addresses, plenary sessions and several parallel track sessions. Networking events, cultural programmes, media visits and sightseeing events are also held in conjunction with the Annual Conference.

Themes & Topics
For the 17th AMIC annual conference, papers are invited on the following themes and topics:
* Media and the MDGs
* Media and Youth
* Media, Conflict and Crises
* New Media and Digital Technology
* Media and Development
* Media Law and Regulation
* Media and Gender
* Media, Democracy and Human Rights
* Alternative and Community Media
* Media and Culture
* Asian Perspectives on Communication
* International Communication
* Broadcasting
* Media Industry Trends and Dynamics
* Journalism Education

All papers will be selected on a competitive basis and an expert panel will be appointed for screening all the submissions.

Kindly email the full papers (approximately 20 pages in length and double spaced) or a maximum 2 page, typed double spaced abstract along with contact information and a 500-word bio to conf2008@amic.org.sg by 15th of April 2008. The deadline for the completed papers will be 1 June, 2008. Results of the call for papers will be sent out starting from 1 May 2008.

AMIC to launch bi-monthly lecture series (continued from pg 1)

institutions and provide the necessary intellectual and human resources to organize this unique and high-profile lecture series.

Asia Talks aims to provide a voice for Asia in the global arena. This forum will not only consist of lectures but also roundtable and panel discussions on key issues and topics on the Asian region. It will provide useful analysis and insights into burning issues which constitute significant challenges to Asian development. It will also provide policy recommendations which could be useful in overcoming all these challenges. At the end of each year, the lectures will be compiled and edited to form a publication that will be distributed

across Asia. The lectures will constitute a useful resource for those individuals and institutions who wish to gain a better understanding of the issues and challenges faced by Asia.

Dr Shashi Tharoor, a noted Indian novelist and former Under Secretary-General of the United Nations, New York will be the first speaker at the Inaugural Lecture to be launched on 26 February 2008 at the Nanyang Exectuvie Centre Auditorium, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Prof Tommy Koh, Ambassador-at-Large, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Singapore will chair the session.

For update on the lecture series, visit AMIC's website, www.amic.org.sg

AMIC completes media consultancy for Asian Development Bank

AMIC has successfully completed a media consultancy for the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to assist them to publish and promote the *Asian Water Development Outlook* (AWDO) report.

The AWDO was officially presented by the ADB to the Chair of the Asia Pacific Water Forum Prof Tommy Koh in Singapore on 29 November, 2007. The *Outlook* written by an eminent team of water experts was produced and published by AMIC for ADB along with a CD-ROM for which AMIC commissioned a series of feature stories on water and sanitation issues, as well as radio capsules and video features.

AMIC was also commissioned by the ADB to devise a media strategy to help promote the AWDO in the international media. The launch of the report was widely reported in the international media with leading news agencies such as Reuters, AFP, AP and IPS carrying reports on the day, with HWT and Bloomberg Television also reporting on it. The launch was also reported extensively in other Asian media.

In addition to the AWDO, AMIC also designed a media strategy to cover the first Asia Pacific Water
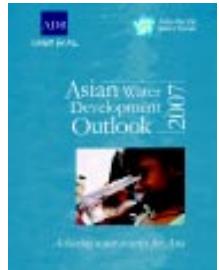
Prof Tommy Koh (left), Chair, Governing Council of the Asia-Pacific Water Forum and Ambassador-at-Large, Singapore, received a copy of the AWDO from Mr Xianbin Yao, Acting Director-General of the Regional and Sustainable Development Department, ADB on 29 November 2007, Singapore.

Summit (APWS) in Beppu Japan from 3–4 December 2007. In collaboration with Inter Press Service (IPS) news agency, a daily web-based newspaper the "Terra Viva" was published from the location. In addition, daily radio news reports were produced and disseminated to radio stations across Asia. AMIC also coordinated the production of a video documentary on the APWS by the Presidential Television Unit of the Philippines under the direction of Chi Chi Robles.

South Pacific Islands Communication Forum (SPICF)

Under the aegis of the Pacific Media Centre and AMIC, the South Pacific Islands Communication Forum (SPICF) aims to provide a common platform for an in-depth analysis of communication issues in the region; promote a dialogue between South Pacific Islands and the rest of Asia, encouraging a better understanding of each other, and promoting inclusiveness of South Pacific countries in pan-Asian events.

Most of the Melanesian, Polynesian and Micronesian microstates have been left out of the main communication developments caused by a number of reasons such as vast distances, scattered populations, traditions, persisting colonial influences, poor economies and unstable political regimes, lack of infrastructure, fragmented and insignificant market places for both goods and ideas. The consequences for their regional integration and most importantly their development as societies are many, and yet not addressed and debated.

Firstly, the impact of the forum in Asia and the Pacific lies in the comparison it enables between different regions and countries of different levels.

Secondly, this forum will bring together a number

of specialists from the region to share their knowledge. It will promote research and a better understanding of South Pacific Islands within the Asia region. There is little knowledge amongst Asian media specialists about the communication profile of these islands and their needs.

Further, training and other activities often tend to be initiated and dominated by Australia as the regional power. Regional organizations such as PINA and PIMA have provided a forum for media issues. However, they have not in the past provided research opportunities and other academic activities. The proposed forum would be well placed to do so because it would develop from within the region and could meet the perceived needs of these countries.

Calls for Papers

Papers focusing on small islands nations and in particular South Pacific Islands and their communication needs are invited for submission to the 2nd SPIC Forum that will take place during the AMIC Annual Conference. Contact: Dr Evangelia Papoutsaki, epapoutsaki@unitec.ac.nz, for details on the topics.

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Building the 3D Internet

The way we see and navigate the Internet is about to change. The success of 3D communities and mapping applications, combined with the falling costs of producing 3D environments, are leading some analysts to predict that a dramatic shift is taking place in the way people see and navigate the Internet.

Greg Sterling, founder of research firm Sterling Market Intelligence, said: "People were dismissing this as pure novelty just a few months ago".

Sterling suggests that the Internet could very well be on its way to shifting from a text-based environment to a visually-oriented 3D world.

The experience of interacting with another character in a 3D environment, as opposed to a screen name or a flat image, adds new appeal to the act of socialising on the Internet.

As the users become more immersed in the environment, advertisers see better ways to market their products.

Advertisements in Microsoft's Virtual Earth 3D mapping application are placed as billboards and signs on top of buildings, blending in with the application's urban landscapes.

3D worlds also hold benefits beyond simple social interactions. Companies that specialise in interior design or furniture showrooms, where users want to view entire rooms from a variety of angles and perspectives, will be able to offer customised models through users' home PCs.

Online 3D community Second Life reports processing over US$500,000 a day in online transactions. IBM, Sun Microsystems and Reuters all have 'offices' in Second Life, which boasts over 1.4 million users.

Google's 3D mapping application, Google Earth, has logged over one million downloads since its launch in 2005 and taken on a life of its own.

The 3D internet concept faces a number of challenges, however, as not all content will translate well to a 3D environment. Developers have yet to figure out a way to create a 3D version of one of the most vital applications on the Internet: the search engine.

"I think what you'll get is something like what is starting to emerge in Google Earth and Virtual Earth where you have a mapping environment and you have the search box", said Sterling.

Logistics also present major concerns in the implementation of a 3D Internet. The Internet as most people know it is comprised of pages encoded as HTML files combined with plug-ins such as Flash and JavaScript. No such standardised format currently exists for 3D environments. Google Earth and Second Life both exist as stand-alone applications.

Add the emergence of smartphones and set-top boxes as ways to access the web, along with broadband connections, and there will be major standardisation issues, according to Chris Nicholas, chief technology officer at Plan 9 Studios.

In order for a 3D internet to work, all devices, platforms and connection speeds would need some sort of standardised protocol similar to HTML.

Aside from specifying a platform and a common coding system, Nicholas believes that companies building a 3D Internet would have to determine who they're designing the worlds for and take the technical abilities of users into account.

www.itnews.com.au

"Aunty" PC aims to bridge digital divide

A Malaysian firm is producing a low-cost computer which it hopes will bridge the digital divide by reaching elderly users and those in rural areas, according to a report in *The Star*.

The easy-to-use "Mak-Chik" computer—or "aunty" in the Malay language, is expected to be on the market by the first half of 2008, *The Star* daily reported.

The lightweight model produced by state-funded research Mimos Bhd which is plugged into a TV and fitted with a wireless Internet connection is priced hovering between MR500 (US$160) to MR1000, "It is designed to be easy to use and mobile", Mimos chief executive officer Abdul Wahab Abdullah told the daily.

Mimos, which is acronym for Malaysia Institute of Microelectronic Systems, is wholly owned by the Malaysia government and is responsible to carry out Research and Development (R&D) initiatives that will introduce more home-grown technologies to the world.

"The Mak-Chik would be targetted at users in the rural areas ... as well as the elderly folk who may find the typical computer too complicated", he added.

Mimos said that users can use it to access information on the weather and education, and even market their agricultural products through the Internet.

Utusan Malaysia & AFP

Asia drives worldwide SMS volume

Subscribers across Asia are officially the most prolific users of mobile messaging, accounting for nearly 80 per cent of the total messages that were sent across cellular networks around the world in 2007.

According to a new report by technology research firm Gartner, nearly 1.5 trillion mobile messages were sent by consumers in the Asia-Pacific region and Japan over the past 12 months. This represented 78.9 per cent of all SMS traffic globally in 2007, which stood at 1.9 trillion messages.

In 2008, Gartner estimates that around 2.3 trillion SMS messages will be transmitted, a 19.6 per cent increase from 2007's figure.

Asia is still expected to account the bulk of this number, with regional volume slated to rise to hit 1.7 trillion by the end of 2007.

The market analyst said the usage of text and picture messaging is set to increase across Asia but growth rates are expected to slow down as the mobile market becomes increasingly saturated.

However, the volume of photos sent through the cellular networks will start to stall over the next few years as users are increasingly sharing their Kodak moments through mobile communities and social networking websites as opposed to sending them individually through the airwaves, the firm explained.

Mobile messaging is also set to increase in North America, Western Europe and Africa in 2008. While overall traffic is on the increase, Gartner expects revenue margins from messaging to get slimmer as a result of intense competition and market saturation.

To bump up revenues, telcos should look to social networking aplications to drive messaging usage, said Nick Ingelbrecht, research director for Gartner.

"Mobile search and advertising also offer attractive potential drivers for SMS traffic, although most carriers appear poorly placed to support end-to-end campaign management and reporting requirements of media buyers and advertisers", he added.

The Straits Times (Singapore)

Tap Web 2.0 for business

Social computing platforms like Facebook and MySpace have proven to be a hit with consumers but most businesses have not tapped on the opportunities presented on such Web 2.0 technologies.

A new website launched by AsiaOne will attempt to bridge this gap. Called AsiaOne Innovation (http://www.asiaone.com/static/innovation), the portal aims to promote greater awareness of social computing tools and provide business owners with the know-how to use them to facilitate collaboration with different stakeholders.

Content for the new website is delivered in partnership with IBM Singapore over a three-month period. The portal will consolidate information from multiple sources into a single, comprehensive content repository on Web 2.0 topics.

"Social computing technologies are poised to change the way businesses are conducted, just like the way the Internet revolutionised businesses a decade ago. This partnership offers an opportunity for individuals and companies to understand and leverage on the potential of social computing for their businesses", said Chris Tan, marketing manager of IBM Singapore.

Besides features and news articles, users can also expect videos and audio presentations on social computing on this website.

In addition, the site host an online forum to encourage user discussion and AsiaOne Innovation surfers can also be kept abreast of events such as breakfast meetings with business leaders.

The Straits Times (Singapore)

Singapore to build ultra-fast broadband

The race for Singapore's ultra-fast broadband network got under way when the Government announced its much-awaited tenders to build the new cyber highway.

In a strong showing of its commitment to develop the infrastructure, it said it was prepared to spend up to SG$750 (US$520) million, a hefty chunk of the estimated SG$1 billion to SG$2 billion needed to build the Next-Generation National Broadband Network (NBN).

Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts, Dr Lee Boon Yang, said the Government was stepping in because telecom networks were expensive. Its funding role will also keep the market competitive and avert the "natural monopolies" that now limit new entrants to the market.

When the all-new network starts rolling out in 2010, homes, offices and schools can hook up to the Internet at speeds at least 10 times faster than now.

By 2015, almost all these places will have been hooked up. At such blazing speeds, movies can be downloaded in mere minutes, not hours. Other expanded usage: virtual learning, online trading, and telemedicine. A user may even be able to consult his doctor from home.

Tenders will be invited to participate in building different aspects of the National Broadband Network. This "separation" is to prevent any one telecom operator from dominating the market. The network company will own the basic infrastructure.

The operating company, on the other hand, has to lease out bandwidth to other telcos — including newcomers or smaller firms — at an open price. Experts believe these three tiers may help break the duopoly of SingTel and StarHub, which together own most of the telecom cables here and have been dominating the market.

This "open access" model is not new. In Amsterdam, for example, the city council owns part of the broadband infrastructure, which is resold by service providers to consumers.

Although the Singapore Government will not own the network here, it hopes to encourage new entrants to package their broadband services, for example, with TV programmes, thus giving consumers more choice.

Singapore is not the first city to seek ultra-fast broadband. Several cities have led the way. Japan is one of the fastest adopters of FTTH (fibre-to-the-home) and Tokyo is where many of the innovations began. From speeds of 10Mbps, users now enjoy 100Mbps from providers like Yahoo BB, and can expect more in the years ahead. Residents in Seoul, South Korea, get up to 100Mbs on FTTH plans from telcos KT and Hanaro. The Hong Kong Broadband Network recently also launched its FTTH service offering 1Gbps.

The Straits Times (Singapore)

Electronic media overtakes telephony as main communication tool

New research released by the Datacraft/Dimension Data (Didata) Group shows that e-mail has overtaken telephony as the primary communication tool in the workplace. Other electronic communication tools are also reaching high adoption levels.

The research, commissioned by Datacraft/Didata and conducted by Datamonitor, surveyed 390 IT managers and 524 end-users across 13 countries in the United States, Asia-Pacific and Europe, Middle East and Africa.

The study covers user requirements and decision-maker plans in the areas of unified communications. Unified communications ensure richer interaction by integrating most of the communication (voice, e-mail, fax, instant messaging, video) through a single interface.

"In today's corporate environment, there is a myriad of communication tools available including desktop telephony, mobile telephony and email, among others. However, our research indicates that end-users prefer to communicate using electronic media rather than voice services such as telephony", said Andy Cocks, Director, Strategy Execution and Solutions Development Group, Datacraft Asia.

The research reveals that e-mail and telephony are most widely offered by organisations, and just as popular among users. One hundred per cent of the end-users surveyed use email, followed by fixed-line telephony (80 per cent), mobile telephony (76 per cent) and instant messaging (66 per cent).

However, said Andy Cocks, the increase in email usage is widening the personal communication gap. In other words, people would rather email than speak to each other on the telephone.

www.enterpriseinnovation.net

Mobile Internet will open wide in 2008, IDC reports

The advent of mobile broadband in 2008 will push every mobile network operator to open its network to a wide range of devices, not just those offered by the carriers themselves, IDC says.

In making their industry predictions for 2008 today, IDC made the case that many different factors will push carriers toward more openness including the advent of smart phones, the wide array of mobile Web gadgets expected to hit the market in the near future, and the presence of the Open Handset Alliance, a multinational group with more than 30 members dedicated to promoting Google's open-access Android platform.

The result of this openness will mark an end to the "walled garden" model for mobile Web services that Internet guru Tim Berners-Lee warned about in November 2007 at the Mobile Internet World conference in Boston. Under the walled garden model, subscribers can connect only to networks using devices approved by the carrier, and can only use carrier-authorized applications on those devices.

In addition to their prediction about carriers opening up their networks, IDC predicted an explosion in the use of several different Web gadgets that will "bridge the gap between PCs and smart phones". Several of these devices, such as Amazon's Kindle e-book reader and the iPod Touch, have hit the market already. IDC expects that such vendors as Asus, Qisda (BenQ), Compal, Electrobit, and major software companies, such as Microsoft and Apple, will launch "dozens" of similar types of Web gadgets in 2008.

Some of IDC's other major predictions for 2008 are:
• Worsening US economic forecasts will lead to slower worldwide IT market growth. IDC projects that overall, the IT market will grow by 5.5 per cent to six per cent worldwide, while US IT spending could drop three per cent to four per cent.
• Major market movers, such as Microsoft, Cisco, Google and IBM, will move strongly into the software-as-a-service market
• The spread of Web 2.0 technology, such as Facebook and YouTube exemplify, will spur the market for content distribution networks to grow by at least 30 per cent.
• Companies that traditionally have focused on consumer markets, including Google, eBay, Yahoo and Apple, will begin making offerings to small-to-midsize businesses. Conversely, companies such as IBM, who have traditionally focused on enterprise markets, will begin thinking of how to market services and products to consumers.

www.networkasia.net

WiMAX narrows the digital divide in India

As part of the World Ahead Programme, Intel aims to connect another billion children and adults to the Internet and to the rest of the world by increasing the availability of high speed wireless connectivity.

Partnering with public and private organisations, Intel is driving WiMAX broadband deployments that will reach cities as well as suburban and rural communities that previously were either impossible or too costly for carriers to pursue.

WiMAX is based on a wireless access technology called Orthogonal Frequency Division Multiple (OFDM) which allows for highly efficient transfer of data bits across the air.

Several operators in India will roll out WiMAX networks in several cities by the end of 2008 while waiting for the government's final announcement on Broadband Wireless Access (BWA) and spectrum policy.

Intel has established ties with the Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) and the department of Telecommunications (DOT) for helping solidify the BWA and spectrum policy.

The trials done by Intel in India have all been focussed towards rural India, while the other global trials had a larger urban deployment scenario and success results are available extensively. The trials in India provided multiple state governments, central agencies, operators and service providers with enough information on the viability of WiMAX for last mile connectivity and backhaul, particularly for rural broadband connectivity. Extensive trials were done in the states of Uttarakhand, Karnataka and Maharashtra. These states provided varied terrain and geographical requirements to enable a fit in any state in India.

The key applications that will drive WiMAX in India will be:
• Internet Connectivity (Web browsing, email, etc)
• Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)
• Media and entertainment (audio, video clips, etc)
The first two are targeted equally to both corporations and consumers, while the third is targeted more towards the consumer.

www.egovernline.net

Indian mobile operators launch new firm to pool resources

Three leading Indian private mobile operators have announced the launch of a new company to share communications infrastructure to cut costs and help speed the roll-out of a nationwide phone network.

India's cellular market is growing by eight million subscribers a month and totals over 217 million customers, making it the world's fastest expanding market.

Now, three major private mobile firms—Bharti Airtel, Vodafone and Idea Cellular—have said that they will merge their wireless infrastructure operations in what they said is a move to make growth even faster.

They announced that they would set up an independent communications tower operator company, Indus Towers, to lower costs and push the mobile pone network deeper into rural areas.

"This is the first such venture to be launched in India and we're inviting other players—government and private—to join us in helping roll out mobile phone services to every nook and corner of this country", said Akhil Gupta, managing director of Bharti Enterprises.

So far, India's "mobile revolution" has been mainly confined to the cities but analysts said that the real prize lies in the vast rural hinterland where 70 per cent of the 1.1 billion population lives. Telephone penetration in urban India is around 25 per 100 people but just under 2 per cent in rural areas.

The new company also share infrastructure with other wireless service providers like broadcasters and broadband service providers, a statement said.

India's mobile phone costs are already among the world's cheapest at less than two US cents a minute. That has helped operators win customers among poor income groups who have been driving subscriber growth.

But the companies believe that they can push down costs even further, reaching a new layer of clientele.

The government is targeting 500 million mobile phone users by 2010. The easiest way to increase teledensity is through mobile phones as landline networks are more complicated and take longer to set up, analysts said.

The Business Times (Singapore)

The Internet and Governance in Asia: A Critical Reader
Edited by Indrajit Banerjee

384 pp   2007   ISBN 981-4136-02-6   SG$40/US$25 (Others)*
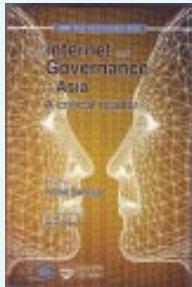
The Internet and Governance in Asia: A Critical Reader constitutes a first ever attempt to map the impact of the Internet on governance in Asia. It examines key implications for democratization, cyber security, e-government, technical coordination and Internet policy and regulation.

The book is divided into five sections, each containing a brief introduction to the specific section and consisting of three chapters. The five sections or topics covered by this book are:
• Internet and Democracy—ways in which the Internet has been harnessed to promote greater democratization, public debate and political participation;
• E-Government—the provision of services through the Internet and other ICT networks and their impact on public accountability and transparency;
• Cyber Security — the critical issues and concerns such as surveillance as well as the means by which the Internet can be effectively used to improve security as well as minimize risks from terrorism;
• Internet Governance—critical issues relating to the technical coordination of the Internet and the

prospects for the best possible means to govern the structure and operations of the Internet.
• Internet Policy and Regulation—key policy and regulatory issues and concerns relating to the use and impact of the Internet.

The three chapters in each of the sections provide a diversity of perspectives covering each of the specific issues addressed by the section. The idea here is to provide readers with different perspectives and case studies on the same issue. The authors bring to the debate their own views and experience and thus all the sections provide a comprehensive view of the issues covered.

"Recognizing the Internet as a double-edged sword, which can support the networking of terrorists as well as civil society advocates and government reformers, the authors focus on policies and practices that will enable the Internet to support development objectives in one of the most rapidly developing and globally significant regions of the world. This is must reading for educators and policy-makers who have a serious interest in the societal implications of the Internet and the future of governance in Asia."

Professor William H. Dutton
Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford

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Yahoo! settles Chinese journalists' lawsuit

Yahoo! Inc. settled a lawsuit filed by jailed Chinese journalist Shi Tao and cyber dissident Wang Xiaoning in November 2007 amid growing criticism from the US Congress. On behalf of both journalists and their families, the World Organization for Human Rights USA sued Yahoo! in April alleging the company "willingly" provided their e-mail and personal information to the Chinese government, which led to their arrest and incarceration.

According to an *Associated Press* report, although the details of the settlement terms are sealed, Yahoo! agreed to pay the plaintiffs' attorney fees and financially compensate the jailed journalists and their families. The company will also create a "human rights fund to provide humanitarian and legal aid to dissidents who have been imprisoned for expressing their views online".

Shi was convicted of "leaking state secrets" for e-mails he sent to New York-based, dissident news website Minzhu Luntan in April 2004, detailing the propaganda department's instructions to media outlets on how to cover the 15th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square protests. According to Wired, Wang was convicted of "incitement to subvert state power" for posting on a Yahoo! group the necessity of democratic reform. Both are serving 10-year sentences.

Yahoo!'s decision came after House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) severely criticized the company describing its actions as "inexcusably negligent behavior at best, and deliberately deceptive behavior at worst".

According to CNET News.com, Morton Sklar, Shi and Wang's lawyer, said the settlement "provides a precedent making clear that US companies have to do much more than just follow the orders of their host governments; that they have to look to US laws and US human rights standards when they make their decisions abroad."

A proposed bill called the Global Online Freedom Act of 2007, sponsored by Rep Chris Smith (R-N.J.), is currently in the US House of Representatives. If passed, US companies would be prohibited from cooperating with foreign nations in censoring Internet content and in providing information to track users down. It would also allow "affected parties" to file civil suits in the United States against companies who violate the Global Online Freedom Act.

www.ucla.media.com

Publishers launch global copyright initiative

The World Association of Newspapers (WAN) and a global coalition of newspaper, magazine and book publishing organisations has launched a new project that aims to improve the relationship between publishers and search engines by making high-quality content widely available while protecting copyrights.

The new project, ACAP (Automated Content Access Protocol), is a tool through which the providers of content can communicate permissions information relating to access and use of their material in a form that can be readily recognised and interpreted by a search engine "crawler", so that the search engine operator can comply with such a policy or licence.

ACAP is a technical solution to tell search engine "crawlers", or "spiders" which areas of a site can be indexed, and under what conditions. It will not only allow web site administrators to exclude spiders, but will also specify terms: "yes, please crawl my site, but please observe the following conditions". Existing protocols cannot do this.

With ACAP, a newspaper web site could, for example, allow all search engines to index its content, but only allow selected search engines—those who have paid a royalty or have a commercial agreement—to display articles, if they so choose, only for a limited time. It would also allow all images to be properly attributed, as they are in the newspaper.

"ACAP is not about good and evil, but about the management and promotion of quality content within the framework of our current and future digital strategies", said Gavin O'Reilly, the President of WAN, who launched the initiative at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2007.

"Via ACAP, we look forward to fostering mutually beneficial relationships between publishers of original content and the search engine operators, in which the interests of both parties can be properly balanced. Importantly, ACAP is an enabling solution that will ensure that published content will be accessible to all and will encourage publication of increasing amounts of high-value content online.

ACAP is being designed to be applicable to every type of content published online, including video and audio. It is intended that the completed system will evolve and develop to meet the changing needs of content owners, search engines, consumers and technology.

WAN

Difficult year for journalists in South Asia

The South Asia Media Commission has declared 2007 as the bloodiest and most difficult year for journalists in South Asia. The year saw 25 journalists and media workers getting killed in the line of duty. Besides, the media had to face "unprecedented restrictions and forced closures" in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.

In its report, the Commission found that barring Bhutan, no member country of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had been free of attacks on the freedom of the press.

Of the 25 deaths, Pakistan topped the list with seven journalists being killed. Sri Lanka came a close second with six deaths, Afghanistan third with a death toll of five journalists, and Nepal fourth with a tally of three. Besides, one media worker was killed in Afghanistan and three media workers lost their lives in India.

In India, the Commission noticed several disturbing trends ranging from the arrogance by the authorities to intolerance of militant groups.

About Pakistan, it said the private electronic media faced the worst times with successive draconian amendments made to the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Ordinance and later imposition of an arbitrary media code that took the life out of the private television channels. It drew attention to news channels being taken off air and the blanket restrictions on free debate and live coverage of events.

Referring to the struggle put up by working journalists and civil society organisations in Pakistan against the restrictions, the Commission said the pressure on media houses by the military regime was such that private television channels could not fight for too long and had to resume their transmissions under the most restrictive guidelines.

In Sri Lanka, the Commission found that as the ethnic conflict grew out of proportion, journalists and media houses became more vulnerable to conflicting pressures.

While Afghanistan remained a difficult area with journalists getting caught in the crossfire among various adversaries, Nepal and Bangladesh presented a "mixed picture due to a difficult and tenuous transition".

The Maldives, according to the Commission, remained a difficult country, and Bhutan offered the only good tidings. The country witnessed the careful opening of the media with the advent of constitutional monarchy and introduction of democracy.

The Hindu

World divided on press freedom, polls finds

The world is divided over the importance of press freedom, with not everyone sharing the notion that it is crucial to a free society, a polling institute said.

The survey by the Globescan polling institute found that in India, Singapore and Russia, more people favour stability over press freedom.

They survey also found that confidence in media reporting varies widely, with the Russian press along with British and US media among the least trusted while countries such as India and Kenya score strongly.

Pollsters interviewed 11,344 people in 14 countries for the survey. While, overall, 56 per cent believe media freedom is very important for a free society, 40 per cent think social harmony is more important, even if reporting suffers, said the survey.

"While people generally support a free media, the Western view of the necessity of a free press to ensure a fair society is not universally shared across all regions of the world", said GlobeScan head Doug Miller.

The strongest endorsement for press freedom came from North America and Europe, where up to 70 per cent put press freedom first, but in India, Singapore and Russia, 48 per cent support controls over the press to maintain peace and stability.

But some developed countries which strongly believe in press freedom are critical of their own media's honesty and accuracy.

In the United States, Britain and Germany, only around 29 per cent of those interviewed think their media does a good job in reporting news accurately.

Mr Chris Coulter, vice president of GlobeScan, said: "Despite the fact that people in Britain really value freedom of the press, when we asked specifically around news organisations how they are doing in reporting news accurately and truthfully, respondents were quite critical.

"Only about a third of people in Britain actually gave positive ratings to either publicly funded news organisations or privately funded news organisations."

The survey also identified concern in some countries over the concentration of private media ownership in the hands of fewer large companies.

In Brazil, Mexico, the US and Britain, more than 70 per cent of respondents agreed with the suggestion that ownership is an issue because the owners' political views emerge in the news.

The Straits Times (Singapore)

Print and online publications complement each other

The belief that the Internet has affected magazine sales was debunked by Mr Donald Kummerfeld, president of the International Federation of the Periodical Press (IFPP).

He said that the number of magazines sold in mature markets such as the United States, Western Europe, Japan and Australia have remained at saturation point since the 1970s.

Mr Kummerfield, who was chief operating officer of Rupert Murdoch's News America Publishing from 1978 to 1985, explained that print titles rarely face competition from wholly Web-based or "pure play" magazines because of the latters' high failure rate and small advertising clout.

He said, "So far, nowhere in the world has been successful in collecting paid Internet subscriptions because people resist paying for something which has always been free".

This means that the sites have to be funded almost solely from advertising. Yet, research has shown that the Internet is the most negative environment for advertising, leading to online advertising rates being a fraction of print rates.

Surfers hate pop-up ads and online banners, while they have a much more positive response to magazine advertisements.

While one in free new print magazines make it to their second anniversary, only one in 1,000 purely Web-based magazines last that long because of the difficulties in establishing readership and credibility.

He said that the most successful Web magazines are those which already have established print versions, so that the online presence serves to promote and drive up sales of the print counterpart.

"Before the Internet, magazine publishers either had to buy expensive TV time or space in another print media to advertise. Now we have a very inexpensive opportunity to promote the brand", he said.

He gave the example of Forbes magazine, which in 1996 was one of the first print publications to invest in a "quality website".

Forbes.com started with 50,000 unique monthly users, and now has 16 million. And in that period, its print circulation has grown from 850,000 to over one million.

"There is no magazine that can't have a successful website if it works at it and is creative. And if you do both well, they help each other and make both publications stronger."

The key is not to replicate the print content online, but to provide up-to-date, suitable complementary editorial which matches the brand's values and quality.

Online magazines can never replace print versions because "optometrists tell us reading on the screen is five times as hard on the eyes, so online articles should be a maximum of about 200 words", says Mr Kummerfeld.

"Vogue.com will show a video clip of a model on a runway or interview with a fashion designer and direct the viewer to print for the in-depth articles."

And in the past two years, he has noticed a trend where white-collar workers have started spending more of their leisure time reading magazines and newspapers and less time on the Internet.

"It's a new phenomenon called 'escape from the screen'. People spend most of their day in front of a computer, so the last thing they want to do at home is pull out a laptop."

The Straits Times (Singapore)

Media's Challenge: Asian Tsunami and Beyond

One of the biggest lessons of the tsunami that is unravelling is that the modern journalist can also help to heal communities, rebuild lives, keep families intact and raise funds.

The question of media freedoms is also an important part of this equation. Beyond what journalists can do, there is also the matter of what authorities will allow them to do.

It is in the rehabilitation or healing process that the media face the most challenging task. In many parts of Asia and beyond, the mainstream media has been excessively commercialised. The tsunami became such a hot media issue around the world, because the dramatic pictures available were very attractive revenue making material for commercial broadcasters, but the rebuilding and healing process does not provide such pictures.

It is in such an environment, that this book examines the challenge journalists face in reporting a process that may not provide dramatic pictures. Focusing more on the print media, many interesting issues dealing with the reconstruction and rehabilitation process are explored, with analysis and commentary on why some stories are not given the exposure they deserve and how these issues may be made newsworthy.
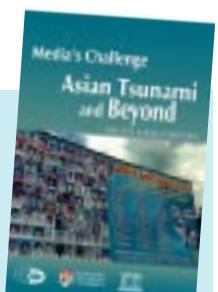
Global warming needs to hit home to non-supporters

The media should avoid giving time and space to a small group of scientists denying that global warming is due to human activities, a television news workshop on climate change reporting in Bali, is told.

Andreas Fischlin, a Swiss scientist at the Institute for Terrestrial Ecology (ETHZ) in Zurich said human made climate change due to human activities is real, and it is with us. "We will face a climate change in this century more than what we faced in the last century."

"A lot of people are not aware of how serious the problem is and they need to know the facts. The media should help increase awareness on the issue to better mitigate climate change."

Silvia Llosa, Programme Officer for the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) said climate change is not a hopeless situation and journalists need to understand climate change and the risks, and start communicating it to others.

"Journalists need to inform and educate their audiences about the threats posed by climate change related risks and what they can do to avoid being a victim of a disaster from a climate change related risk", she said.

"When there is a disaster, it provides journalists an opportunity to jump in and say perhaps this can be avoided. Journalists should investigate the causes and ask themselves if a government is doing enough to avoid such disasters."

Mr Fischlin and Ms Llosa were speakers at the ABU Climate Change Workshop held in Bali, Indonesia from 10–11 December, which brought together 20 broadcasters from 14 countries in the Asia-Pacific.

The two-day workshop was held on the sidelines of the United Nations Climate Change Conference that is being held in Bali. The conference hopes to achieve a comprehensive agreement to address the urgency of the climate change situation.

www.abu.org.my

Government urged to enact national broadcasting law in Bangladesh

Speakers at a roundtable urged the government of Bangladesh to constitute a national broadcasting commission comprising representatives of different stakeholders to help enact the law.

The roundtable titled "National broadcasting law: Why is it necessary?" was organised jointly by Mass-line Media Centre (MMC), Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication, and the Unesco at Biam Foundation in the city.

Presenting the keynote paper titled "National broadcasting policy: Rationale and challenges", Robaet Ferdous, associate professor of mass communication and journalism department of Dhaka University (DU) highlighted the necessity of a national broadcasting policy.

Although the Commission to Formulate Principles of Self-governance proposed in 1996 to formulate a "National Broadcasting Commission", the government is yet to take any initiative to implement the proposal, he said.

"National broadcasting policy is a set of rules and regulations that work as guidelines for mass media to help achieve the national development goals", he defined.

In order to ensure the coordination between the programmes of government and private broadcasting media, a broadcasting policy is required, he said, adding that it will also ensure participation of people from all strata in the development of programmes.

Ramendu Majumdar, a cultural activist and managing director of Expressions, said a national broadcasting commission comprising representatives of different stakeholders should be formed to enact national broadcasting law.

Bazlur Rahman, executive director of BNNRC, suggested formulation of a "convergence policy" regarding national broadcasting to cope with the ongoing technological development around the world.

Kamrul Hassan Monju, executive director of MMC, laid emphasis on the formulation of a national broadcasting policy apart from enacting the right to information act. "Access to information for all would not be possible unless a national broadcasting law is enacted", he added.

Speaking as chief guest Barrister Amir-Ul Islam, president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, criticised the media for making the nation culturally poor. He called for a revolution in education sector through introducing national broadcasting policy.

The Daily Star

China opening up to media freedom

Chinese researchers, speaking during the eighth Chinese "Journalists' Day", the last before the 2008 Olympics, said China is cautiously but resolutely on the road to media freedom.

"China has been very discreet about media opening up, because it is viewed as concerning state security", said Yu Guoming, vice dean of Renmin University's School of Journalism and Communication, one of the earliest journalism schools in China.

"Opening up brings consequences, some of which we can't predict. So the Olympics is a chance for China to experiment, to explore the consequences, and to work out ways to minimize damage, if any", he added.

At the start of 2007, China issued new media rules that granted easier access to overseas reporters and promised greater transparency.

According to the "Regulations on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists During the Beijing Olympic Games and the Preparatory Period" that took effect on 1 Jan 2008, foreign journalists would not necessarily have to be accompanied or assisted by a Chinese official when they report in China. Also, they no longer need to apply to provincial foreign affairs offices for permission to report in all Chinese provinces.

In April, China adopted regulations on "open government information" that promised public access to information on a range of issues including government spending and drug and food safety.

In August, China adopted the Emergency Response Law, which requires officials to provide accurate, timely information on emergencies.

Commentators called these moves "great leaps" from the past, when it was taboo to report on death tolls in natural disasters.

"The rules, including dropping the restrictions, suits international norms and makes possible a complete and balanced picture of China", said Jaime FlorCruz, CNN Beijing Bureau chief.

Zhao Qizheng, an outspoken former director of the Information Office of the State Council, said that "Chinese officials have started to realize that speaking to the media is speaking to the public".

Apart from legal preparations, local governments are also taking "encouraging" steps in reducing media restrictions.

Despite China's progress toward greater media freedom, there has been some concern that any relaxation would be temporary.

"The revision of the old rules is part of China's commitment to the IOC (International Olympic Committee), but it's also a commitment to the Chinese people and media", Prof. Yu said.

"There might be setbacks", he said, but China would make steady progress toward greater openness.

The view that negative reports would have negative results was still held in some quarters, but from a sociological point of view, more information would bring understanding, trust, and even intimacy, while the absence of information would mean the opposite, Yu argued.

Zhan Jiang, director of the School of Journalism and Communication, China Youth University For Political Sciences, said that "research has shown that international factors accounted for increasing China's GDP growth, and blocking information flows is at odds with the degree of openness in the Chinese economy".

news.xinhuanet.com

Non-Malays to appear more in national radio, TV programmes

The Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) has plans to produce more programmes that would feature or are handled by non-Malays, Information Minister Zainuddin Maidin has said.

The initiative has been planned as many of the current programmes in the national language (Bahasa Malaysia) aired by the TV station only involve Malay actors with no active participation from other races.

"This could lead to non-Malays feeling that they are marginalised in the television industry. Even if there are non-Malays in RTM's entertainment programmes, they only hold minor roles", the minister noted.

"Many non-Malays from the professional groups were proficient in Bahasa Malaysia, with some even better than the Malays in the language," official news agency Bernama quoted Zainuddin Maidin as saying.

He said there would be no reduction in Mandarin or Tamil programmes over RTM2 and neither would such programmes be translated into Bahasa Malaysia, *The Star* newspaper said.

Malaysia has a multi-ethnic population of 27 million, of which over 60 per cent speak Bahasa Malaysia, about 33 per cent are of Chinese origin, and eight percent are ethnic Indians—predominantly Tamils, but also from other parts of India.

The Star

Film-makers say Asian films need to cross cultural barriers

Makers of Asian films need to break out and create productions that cross cultural barriers. MediaCorp Raintree Pictures' Managing Director Daniel Yun made this point at the 2007 Asia Media Festival held in Singapore.

The company's "Home Song Stories" was made in partnership with Australian partners and private investors.

It is an example of Asian films that are doing well overseas, receiving 14 nominations at the 2007 Australian Film Institute Awards.

In a panel discussion on the challenges facing Asian film producers, Mr Yun spelt out the need to address an emerging new movie language that is borderless.

"We are not about making Singapore films by Singapore for Singapore. A lot of film-makers are not making films for Hong Kong or for Japan or for China specifically. Actually, it is an Asian movement", he said.

Mr Yun added that movie-makers in Singapore have little option to work locally and are forced to look to the East and the West, so producers need to know what their goals and markets are when making the films.

Earlier, CEO of Singapore's Media Development Authority, Dr Christopher Chia, said banks, international private financiers and investors view Asian films as having an increasing global appeal.

But in Singapore, fostering talent in a young but growing industry is a task companies here have to deal with.

Upside Down Entertainment's Executive Producer Chan Gin Kai said: "Sometimes what people look at is not just whether you are talented, but also how experienced your industry is".

At the opening ceremony of Festival, Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts, Dr Lee Boon Yang, had announced a collaboration between MDA and international talent agency, William Morris Agency (WMA).

The MDA-WMA Masterclass series aims to internationalise local capabilities and nurture the next generation of Singapore executives and talents to learn from industry veterans, and facilitate exchanges between Singapore and the Hollywood creative community.

Ms Grace Chen, managing director of William Morris Asia said: 'This series is a unique opportunity for WMA to bring our entertainment relationships to Singapore in a very tangible way.' MDA and Canal France International also announced two key joint projects in 2008.

The first project is a digital broadcasting workshop to provide technical and policy training so that Asean countries can adopt a common digital TV broadcasting standard.

www.channelnewsasia.com &
The Straits Times (Singapore

Thai filmmakers protest bill

Filmmakers and artists of the Free Thai Cinema Movement protested outside parliament, stepping up their call for the removal of the state's power of censorship from the Film and Video Bill.

Poet Jiranan Pitpreecha submitted an open letter and detailed suggestions to Wallop Tang-kananurak, a member of the National Legislative Assembly (NLA) panel scrutinising the bill, which the assembly is due to begin deliberating in early December, 2007.

"The movement believes the new Film Act will have an impact on film professionals as well as on audiences, especially young audiences who will be deprived of the opportunity to develop intellectual and analytical skills", the letter said.

The group proposes the NLA remove clauses that empower the state to ban films and order filmmakers to cut scenes deemed inappropriate.

They also want the NLA to consider increasing the number of non-government members on the film rating committee that is to be set up.

Under the bill's provisions, the committee would be made up mainly of bureaucrats and government-appointed representatives.

Well-known film directors who led the protest included Pen-ek Ratanaruang, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Wisit Sasanatieng, Pimpaka Towira and Manit Sriwanichapoom. They were joined by 30 independent filmmakers, film crews and social workers.

Mr Wallop said the lawmakers may see the ban as important in order to prevent inclusion of sensitive content that might undermine the security of the nation and the sacred institution.

But the cinema movement maintains there are already existing laws that cover those offences and there is no need to single film out as a medium that could be potentially harmful.

Bangkok Post

India's entertainment, media policy to be finalized

India's Information and Broadcasting minister Priyaranjan Dasmunsi said that the future policy for the entertainment industry would be decided by mid January 2008 at a plenary to be held in Mumbai.

For this, five committees have been set up on issues of piracy, digitisation, exchange programmes and so forth.

"I have sat with four of the committees and heard them, and one more remains, to make their presentation in Chennai in early January and then, all of them will meet at a plenary at Mumbai where the crucial decisions will be taken", he said.

Dasmunsi said that fighting piracy, which is an absolute must, must be balanced by getting a legal vehicle to reach entertainment to the masses, and for this digitisation is the only solution, towards which the government is committed.

"Please do not forget that it is not the Inoxes that create the icons. These icons are created in small theatres, and it is there that people first change their hairstyles to imitate the heroes and that is where icons are created", Dasmunsi said.

Dasmunsi, who was addressing the Assocham Global Media and Entertainment Summit, Focus 2007, said that there were three key issues facing the Indian media and entertainment industry.

The first being that of technology, which he said is a serious challenge. "We are wedded to overall digitisation, but yet to reach the final score", he said.

For instance, whereas digital cinema is the balanced answer for fighting piracy as well as reaching out to the farthest areas, the people who would operate the new system have to see their benefits and this process takes a long time.

He said the second aspect is to go for more exchange programmes with players from across the world, but for that to happen infrastructure needs to be developed, which he regretted India lacked.

"We have signed an exchange programme with Italy and are doing so with Germany and England, but when these people come here they are faced with bad roads, transport and so forth, so it does not really encourage foreigners."

The third challenge for the media is also to have exchange programmes for technology experts, instead of just the creative or business people in the entertainment industry, so that at some point in time people can compare Bollywood and Hollywood at the technological level.

He said that today there is a big demand in the West for Indian entertainment and mentioned Stuttgart and Morocco, from his personal experience, where festivals of Indian films have massive attendance.

www.indiantelevision.com

IOC awards Internet rights in China for 2008 Olympics to CCTV.com

The International Olympic Committee(IOC) announced that CCTV.com, a part of Chinese state broadcaster CCTV, has been awarded the internet and mobile platform exhibition rights within China for the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games.

As a member of the Asian Broadcasting Union, CCTV has already acquired over-the-air TV rights for the Beijing Games.

No details about the deal was released, while the IOC said it selected CCTV.com because it could work closely with its television arm and fully exploit digital broadcast rights on a number of platforms.

"By granting digital rights to CCTV. com, the IOC believes CCTV.com's digital team will work closely with the broadcast team at CCTV to develop joint executions across media platforms. This will ensure Chinese Olympic fans have access to the best possible Olympic coverage in 2008", Richard Carrion, a member of the IOC's TV rights and new media commission, was quoted as saying by an IOC statement. It also indicated that the IOC wanted "satisfactory guarantees of anti-piracy and security measures".

In March, the IOC launched a tender for the internet and mobile platform broadcast rights in the Chinese mainland.

www.chinaview.cn & Reuters

New digital watermarking to track online distribution

The Nielsen Company says it has a new product that can help major media companies police the distribution of their video content on Web sites like YouTube, and ultimately make money on the consumer-driven phenomenon.

The media research firm (parent company of Mediaweek) has partnered with the Beaverton, Or.-based technology vendor Digimarc Corporation to launch a new service—Nielsen Digital Media Manager—designed to aid TV networks, independent content producers and various online video distributors in tracking where users are posting and streaming copyrighted video content. Rolling out in mid 2008, the new service combines two tracking techniques: digital "watermarking" and "fingerprinting"—that in tandem should provide producers with a complete picture of where their content resides on the Internet.

"Content owners have lost the ability to track and control the distribution of their content", said Dave Harkness Nielsen's senior vice president, strategy and development. "They feel that they can no longer control their own destiny."

Harkness explained that since media giants like Viacom have clashed with YouTube over the unauthorized distribution of video content on their sites, several companies have begun peddling technological solutions to the problem. Most are offering either fingerprinting—which involves extracting audio or video snippets from content that can identify copyrighted materials- or watermarking—which requires the implementation of some sort of tracking code within content.

He believes Nielsen can offer both solutions, and is best suited to do so. "We are in a unique position to a offer a comprehensive, practical solution", he said. "The problem that other companies have is that they need the content ahead of time [to implement their tracking]. For Nielsen, that's no problem at all."

That's because Nielsen automatically gets its hands on the vast majority of TV content before it airs, and already regularly implements both fingerprinting and watermarking, locally and nationally.

While not available initially, Harkness said that Nielsen Digital Media Manager could eventually include a feature that automatically places some sort of advertising adjacent to a media company's professionally produced content—once it's found to have been posted somewhere on the Web. In that scenario, both the content company and the distributor would have had to work out the ad sales parameters ahead of time.

Eventually, Nielsen plans to expand the usage of the service to other forms of media, including music and DVDs, said Harkness.

www.mediaweek.com

Myanmar imposes hefty hike in satellite TV fees

In an apparent attempt to stop people from watching dissident and international news broadcasts, Myanmar's military junta has ordered a massive 166-fold rise in annual satellite televison fees.

With no word in the state media of any licence fee increases, the first satellite dish owners knew of the hike was when they went to pay the 6,000 kyat (US\$870) levy, only to be told it was one million kyat, three times the average citizen's annual income.

The increase is way beyond the meagre means of virtually all the country's 56 million people, for whom international broadcasts such as Al-Jazeera or Norway-based dissident network Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) are the main source of news.

An official at Myanmar Post and Telecom said the hike was meant to discourage people from watching foreign news channels.

Without satellite, the only other television news is on the rigidly state-controlled MRTV. The few private television stations avoid all current affairs in favour of a diet of soap operas and pop music.

Foreign and external media played a major role in the dissent in August and September 2007 that mushroomed from a handful of sporadic demonstrations against shock fuel price rises into major protests against 45 years of military rule.

The regime has responded with a crackdown and has sustained a relentless assault on the BBC, DVB, Voice of America and Radio Free Asia.

The Straits Times (Singapore)

Media literacy campaign aimed at teenagers launch in Indonesia

A junior high school student, Ramadhan Kemal, said, at a recent media literacy campaign, he hated that no matter which TV channel he switched to, almost all he could find were soap operas and celebrity gossip shows.

"It's as if TV stations don't have anything better to broadcast and we don't have a choice", the 14-year-old boy said at the event at the University of Indonesia in Depok.

Ramadhan also noticed how his female schoolmates often talked about soap operas and imitated TV stars' behaviour, from the way they dressed to their hairstyles.

His school, SMPN 252 state junior high school in East Jakarta, is one of six schools visited by UNICEF, Children's Media Development Foundation (YPMA) and University of Indonesia's Communications Students Association, as part of their campaign to increase media literacy among teenagers.

According to YPMA, Indonesian teenagers are loyal television watchers, spending on average some 1,600 hours a year in front of TVs, but only between 1,200 and 1,400 hours on homework.

The campaign sees teenagers as a group with low critical literacy toward the media. It recommends teenagers are to be provided with certain skills to filter messages they receive from the media every day, which often contains misleading messages about violence, sex, alcohol, gender roles and interpersonal relationships.

Widuri Lisu Pakan, a student from state junior high school SMPN 2 in Depok, said that after attending a 90-minute media literacy lecture two weeks ago she reconsidered what she wanted to watch on TV. "I think, as a teenager, it's normal because all my friends do the same thing. Now at least I know I must decide what is negative, and what is positive."

YPMA director Guntarto said teenagers are in a vulnerable position and could be harmed by exposure to the media without adequate critical literacy.

"The situation has worsened with the lax enforcement of media regulations in our country and poor media content monitoring", he said.

He also said there were more than 170 episodes of some 38 different soap opera titles on Indonesian TV each week.

According to YPMA, the seven private TV stations in Indonesia allocate 5,640 minutes to soap opera broadcasts each week.

Ade Armando, a media expert who joined the campaign, said people watch television for the sake of watching, without considering its impact.

The Jakarta Post

Media and entertainment industry growth in India to double soon

The Indian media and entertainment industry will grow at twice the rate of the country's GDP in a few years, driven largely by the emergence of regional players, technology and digitisation, says a joint study by Ernst and Young and Assocham.

The study also reveals that around 28 per cent of the 100 million pay TV households would be going digital by 2010, as a result of this trend. The report further said that in a digitised Indian media and entertainment environment, DTH would emerge leader over the next three years while IPTV would gain close to one million subscribers by 2010.

The report says that owing to an increase in addressability and consolidation in post digitisation period, broadcasters and multimedia service operators stand most to benefit.

Television advertising is expected to grow at 14 per cent for next three years and will continue to garner 43 per cent share of the total spend, while home entertainment would account for 25 per cent of a film's revenue within three years, the report added. Digital music sales are expected to account for 88 per cent of the total music market of Rs 4,200 crore in the country within two years.

The study highlights the fact that India, the third largest cable and satellite market in the world, witnessed a phenomenal CAGR of 38 per cent for the past 17 years. It says that as Indian consumers become frequent users of digital platforms, media

"The pay TV market in India has not been able to maximise revenues due to restrictive regulations, unorganized value chains and lack of addressability in the analogue platform. However, with digitization of the platforms more value will be created for each player across the value chain and the revenue shares will get redistributed amongst key stake holders creating a win-win situation for all", said Farokh Balsara, national sector leader of media & entertainment, Ernst & Young.

www.indiantelevision.com

Children face barrage of unregulated advertising while on Internet

Children surfing the Internet are subjected to a barrage of sophisticated advertising techniques that escape tight regulations imposed on other mediums, according to a report published in the United Kingdom.

The study found one-quarter of adverts on websites popular with seven to 16 year olds were aimed at adults, including for gambling and dating services, and contained instances of inappropriate content.

While children were adept at navigating the Internet, they were often unaware of the subtle integration of advertising with factual or entertainment content, and did not realise supposedly free sites were vehicles for marketing. advertisement.

The National Consumer Council and Childnet International, which commissioned the research, called for better regulation on website advertising to protect young users, particularly over privacy and data protection. However, their criticism was rejected as out of date by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) because it did not take into account new rules on regulating and monitoring gambling advertising introduced.

New guidance issued by the Committee of Advertising Practice and Broadcast Committee of

Advertising Practice also curtailed the use of "free" claims in adverts which would extend to those posted online, the ASA said in a statement.

The report, *Fair Game?*, was based on analysis of a list of 40 websites most popular with a sample of more than 500 children aged nine to 13 taken from previous research. Researchers who looked at just two web pages for each of the 40 sites found 211 marketing messages.

Most of these were selling or promoting something, or instilling "brand buzz", and 95 per cent of the websites contained some sort of commercial activity, ranging from marketing and advertising to selling goods and services.

The majority of websites and adverts requested some personal data from users, but few websites have privacy policies children can understand, it was claimed.

Numerous examples were found of children lying about their age in order to access websites designed for adults. Five advertisers encouraged children to give away their friends' details or send them information in return for free offers.

Children were also encouraged to fill in online surveys in order to enter competitions, the *Fair Game?* report said.

www.theherald.co.uk

Media Pluralism in Asia
The Role and Impact of Alternative Media
Edited by Kalinga Seneviratne   2007 300 pp   SG$30/US$20 (Others)

This book is the result of a research project covering eight countries in South and South East Asia examining the role and impact of alternative media. The definition of alternative media depends very much on the political, social, cultural and economic environment you live in. Thus, this book gives the reader an idea of the diversity of alternative media sources available across Asia, which is very much a result of the different media regulatory regimes in the countries we have included in this study.

While Bangladesh has had alternative media, in the form of community theatre and other artistic expressions for a long time, yet, community radio is slow to take off, because the regulations still do not allow it. Meanwhile in Indonesia and Thailand, community radio has taken off rapidly, with regulators struggling to

come up with a formula to help regulate the sector while not shutting it down. In the Philippine community radio has existed legally for many years and is thriving, thus, there may be lessons others can learn from this experience. In Malaysia, where legislation tightly controls the establishment of media outlets, there are yet, some interesting examples of how alternative media could be effectively operated via the Internet. Sri Lanka, offers an interesting model where elements of community broadcasting could exist within a public service broadcaster.

For your order/enquiry, contact:
angie@amic.org.sg
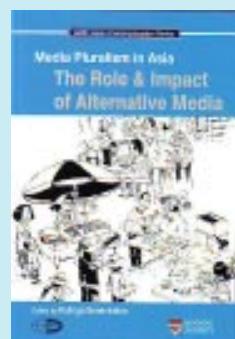
Wherever you fly, ads will follow

Soon you'll be beset with ads even when you're flying. We are not talking about the in-flight advertisements that are placed at the back of aircraft seats, but the view from the aircraft window.

Ad-Air, the outdoor advertising company based in London, has started a concept wherein it will place outdoor ads as large as 20,000 square feet (almost 5 acres) targeted at air passengers. This segment of consumers is a highly desirable demographic segment for advertisers and it is fully captive while flying. The ads will be placed flat on the ground alongside flight paths in and out of the world's busiest airports, and will be clearly visible from the sky because of their massive size.

Ad-Air plans to set up such sites near 30 of the busiest airports in the world. The outdoor advertising agency has already set up a site near Dubai International Airport. It is estimated that more than 14 million people will see this site every year.

Ad-Air said that the company is very bullish on the booming Indian aviation sector and is currently in an acquisition phase on the Indian subcontinent.

Each airport will carry a maximum of four Ad-Air sites, which can be seen from both sides of the airplane. The impacts of such sides will be calculated on the basis of average number of annual passengers per runway, the number of flights during visible periods (daytime only where there is no illumination, and taking into account bad weather), average plane capacity, visibility from all window seats, plus those immediately adjacent, less those over the wing.

Experts in the country have their doubts about the high costs involved and the feasibility of finding a suitable location around airports.

Mandeep Malhotra, senior vice-president, Bates David Enterprise, says, "In such a fancy outdoor media, which is considered expensive for small players, only a handful of big advertisers such as telecom giants, liquor behemoths and new brands looking for instant recall will be keen on Ad-Air".

Outdoor experts in India believe that outdoor advertisements are judged and qualified on their reach to unique viewers. As airline passengers come from the highest socioeconomic group and many travel only one or two times a year, the number of unique viewers Ad-Air sites will reach outweighs any other outdoor medium. Therefore, the first factor considered by Ad-Air in selecting appropriate target airports is passenger traffic.

Pratap Bose, CEO, O&M India, says, "There is a novelty factor involved in this and it will generate huge interest not just among advertisers, but also among passengers once the word spreads".

Talking about the impact of such sites around the airport, Bose says, "Such sites should be used very judiciously; if the ads are not in sync with the medium, they could be grossly ignored by the passengers. For instance, a huge outdoor space can symbolise the gigantic operations of a company. Measuring the impact of such sites will be really difficult as one can only give a tentative figure based on the number of eyeballs".

www.agencyfaqs.com

UN aid agency seeks YouTube ads

The United Nations' food aid agency has called on budding film-makers to help it raise awareness of hunger and bring the reality of abject poverty and suffering to the "YouTube" generation.

The World Food Program (WFP) launched a contest on Wednesday for "edgy 30 or 60 second video(s) that will make the online community buzz about global hunger," it said.

"For those of us doing the day-in, day-out backbreaking work of getting food to hungry people, it's sometimes discouraging how few people understand that hunger stalks and kills a child every five seconds," said WFP communications director Nancy Roman.

The five best films will be posted on the WFP's YouTube site, with the overall winner receiving a trip to one of the agency's relief operations.

Filmmakers stand a better chance of winning if they get play on blogs or networking sites like Facebook or MySpace before the competition's July 2008 deadline, WFP said.

The agency has posted its own video at its site www.youtube.com/hungerbytes, which shows footage of people in eating competitions bolting down hotdogs and plates of spaghetti, accompanied by The Beatles' song "Piggies."

At the end of the video, the text reads: "850 million go to bed hungry every night ... Share."

It is not the first time WFP has used computer technology to raise awareness of its work. In 2005 it launched a video game for children called "Food Force" in which players can plan and deliver emergency food drops to starving people.

www.reuters.com

Silly brand names get serious attention

Wakoopa, Squidoo, Woomp. Renkoo, Eskwela, Zillow, Wega, Wii.

It sounds like an invented children's language or even a magic spell, but the fact is these words are becoming part of the everyday lexicon-for some, at least. They are brand names that don't mean anything at first glance.

And then there are the misspelled names like Rokr, Razr, Flickr and Grazr, and names that are difficult to pronounce or spell like Scribd and Phrasr.

The reason for these names is often pretty simple: the URL was available. Seth Godin, the founder of social media site Squidoo, said that every six-letter word in the English language is already taken as a URL "and we're closing in on seven." In other cases, like Nintendo's Wii or Motorola's Razr or LG's ENV cell phones, the unexpected "wrong" spelling is also meant to be jarring and familiar at the same time and perhaps appeal to today's texting-happy young consumers.

Firms that specialize in naming companies and product names say such nonsense names are an increasingly sensible option. "People are being exposed to so many more brands", said Danny Altman, creative director of naming firm A Hundred Monkeys, Sausalito, Calif., which works with Jamba Juice, among other clients. "The sheer mass is encouraging people to find wacky corners."

Naming experts say their business is captive to fashion trends. During the dot-com boom, there was a mania for placing an i or an e, usually in lower-case, at the beginning of a brand or product name. (Apple is still embracing this trend, as evinced by its recent iPhone launch.) Before that, the previously neglected @ sign was hot (remember Gateway's 2000 "Gateway@Work" campaign or the cable Internet service Excite@Home?). And before that, tech firms in the '70s and '80s had a penchant for putting "compu-" and "-tech" at the front and back, respectively, of their brand names.

Now, the trend seems to be not only for made-up names (after all, Alpo, Kodak and Frisbee have been around for awhile), but ones that sound goofy. Finding such a moniker can be a serious challenge. "As a start-up we feel it's quite important to get a name that is unique and stands out in a crowd", said Robert Gaal, one the founders of Wakoopa, a social networking firm based in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. "The name Wakoopa was just a term that sounded alright in our ears, something cheerful, yet a bit relaxing. Naming your company like this helps when trying to find a decent domain name, but also to track the conversation about our company."

On the other hand, Anthony Shore, global director of naming and writing at Landor Associates, San Francisco, noted that it is much harder to create a brand based on a made-up name than it is to build one based on dictionary-verifiable words. "We would predict it would cost more money to build a brand and create an emotional connection using made-up words", said Shore.

Perhaps that's why consumer packaged goods firms usually take a half-step by introducing brands that look weird, but are pronounced familiarly. Though there are a few examples of out-of-the-blue names like Sony's Wega TVs (which Shore calls a "spectacularly bad" name) and Panasonic's new Kuro plasma-screen TV (which is based on a Japanese word meaning "blacker than black") and others that seem to be rooted in real words like the Nestlé/Coca-Cola marketed energy-burning drink Enviga (which sounds like "invigorate"), the norm is to look odd and sound normal. Hence such names as Flickr, Rokr, ENV and Wii.

The latter, which is, of course, pronounced "we", was not an instant hit. Bloggers largely trashed and lampooned the name when it was unveiled in spring 2006. But Shore said that gave the company a chance to define itself. "It just goes to show how a name that's ridiculed initially can go on to become wildly successful", he said. "People had a positive experience and associated it with this new name, which created a virtuous cycle."

www.brandweek.com