

TRAINING PROGRAMME TO BETTER SKILLS OF ARAB MEDIA PERSONS

The London-based International Centre for Training, Consultations and Development held a training programme here to hone the skills of media professionals. A number of media persons from Jordan and abroad participated in the five-day programme.

The journalists took part in seminars and workshops on media professionalism, the skills of Press writing and a special focus on keeping abreast with the latest developments in the media field. The programme shed light on the state-of-the-art technology in the print and electronic media. Well-known media personality Ahmed Ramadan lectured to the participants on anticipating the future media trends in the region and what challenges that entail for media professionals, especially those from Arab countries.

The training programme and workshops also delved into the new happenings in the European media. The participants dealt with the theoretical and practical aspects of the various mass media — from the print media to the satellite channels that are witnessing a big revival throughout the Arab world.

Training was also imparted on the new, journalistic writing styles and photojournalism. Throughout the programme, the focus was on the job criteria for journalists, especially with the increasing growth in the size of the Arab media and the global media. In this framework, the programme shed light on the necessity for media objectivity, rules and regulations, credibility and the neutrality, along with understanding some practical applications in the media field.

The participants joined in the practical exercises collectively, in the skills of Press writing and their forms. The training programme also included working in the Press during times of crises and emergencies. The International Centre had arranged in the past, a group of programmes and courses for media persons and journalists, to handle the professional requirements and the principles of dealing with the mass media in a number of European and Arab countries.

The centre said that it aims to continue and broaden the dialogue between the East and West through the media, and also intends to make it a place to share different media experiences from different countries. Its participants in the training programmes include print and electronic journalists, policy makers and public relations officials. The centre also provides continuous training and services to those who are interested in improving their communication skills with the general public and other categories.

Source: Khallejtimes

TECHNOLOGICAL SCRIBE

As newspapers move towards online content, journalists will need to learn new skills

According to multimedia specialist Duy Linh Tu, many journalists are simply terrified of learning new skills. However, if they want to keep their jobs, Duy insists they will have to overcome their fears and get to grips with the technology.

In this brave new world, with newspapers moving online and adding video content to their pictures and words, there is no place for reporters who can only interview and write. This New Yorker spends much of his working hours trying to remove the aura that surrounds some of the latest electronic gadgets and showing print journalists that they really can come to terms with the internet revolution.

He says, "The technology is such that it's so user-friendly. Teenagers create their own MySpace profile, for example."

"However, a lot of journalists do not recognise that they can learn this technology really easily. You have to demystify it for them. There is no magic to it," says Duy, who recently visited the UAE to train journalism students in multimedia skills.

Juggling work

In order to avoid the dole queue, journalists will have to juggle work that in the past was carried out by several people - reporters, photographers and cameramen.

"I show them the kit I have in my bag - a digital SLR camera, a point-and-snap camera, a laptop, a movie camera, some wires and tapes and a microphone," Duy says.

"The journalist can go to their town hall meeting with all of this and rather than take notes, they can video it and edit it on their laptop. If it's a small local election, instead of waiting to go to print or for the local television station to report on it, they can produce a video and post it on the internet almost immediately," he adds.

"If you have the editorial and news judgement, you can pick up the technical skills. It's more difficult the other way - you cannot teach the guy at the local video store to become a journalist," he says.

Duy says it is vital that editors do not bury their heads in the

sand, believing that good journalism alone will help them weather the storm they are caught in. They simply will die out. "When you look at the circulations, it shows that the changes that the new technologies are bringing are not hypothetical anymore, so papers will have to act."

"Many are still trying to figure out how they will respond - The New York Times has a multimedia section and some of it is horrible, but they are trying."

Referring to smaller papers, Duy says: "They have the advantage of being more nimble. Because they are so small, they can respond to changes in the market."

Duy has recently been to the West Coast of the United States, helping to pass on skills to journalists working on smaller papers with circulations of between 30,000 and 100,000.

At the moment, he says, some of their websites are "pathetic", but there is evidence that they are getting their acts together. "They are stopping the emphasis on print and re-training to make what they have online better. It is a trend in the United States - the smaller groups and individual newspapers are folding their print operations and taking everything online. But it's not enough to just to take print and put it online - you have to make it multimedia, using video and slide shows. That's the way to survive," he says.

Dr Jeffrey Cole, a University of Southern California academic who delivers joint lectures with Duy, predicts that "in some countries, such as the US, the print versions of newspapers will disappear in 25 years". Many of the biggest titles in the US, for example, have seen their circulations go into freefall, dropping by 17 per cent annually in the case of the San Francisco Chronicle.

Local and national newspapers in the United Kingdom also saw their sales plummet - and there seems little that can be done to stem the decline.

Transformation, not death

"The internet does things cheaper and faster. Online newspapers are free and they are up to date. I, however, think that there is really good news for newspapers because of the internet.

"Teenagers are more interested in news and the news brands they know offline are important to them online," Duy says. "When it comes, you won't actually notice the death of newspapers because they will have already converted to putting so much of their content online."

News magazines, he says, are under the greatest threat because so much of their content will be available online.

However, Cole, the founder of the World Internet Project that tracks how behaviour has changed due to internet, says there are a few privileged editors who will be able to carry on with what they are doing now.

"The Vogue and Vanity Fair which women read as much for the adverts as for the editorial, will survive. Magazines like GQ will, as well," he says.

Most of Duy's work is in the US, where he travels widely, showing reporters how to use the latest technology, but he has also worked with journalists from Hungary, Japan, Austria and, recently, the UAE.

Duy visited the UAE along with Dr Jeffrey Cole and conducted workshops in multimedia production and citizen journalism for students at Zayed University in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and the University of Sharjah, amongst others.

Since 2001, he has been an adjunct professor at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism and is also the co-founder and creative director of Resolution Seven, a New York-based video production studio.

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