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Summary Report

By

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Workshop on Editorial Management for Senior Women Journalists

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WORKSHOP ON "EDITORIAL MANAGEMENT FOR SENIOR WOMEN JOURNALISTS"

20-27 April 1994
AMIC Conference Centre
Singapore

SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

This report summarizes the proceedings of the workshop on "Editorial Management for Senior Women Journalists" held in Singapore from 20-27 April 1994. The seminar was organized by the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC) with the support of the Communication Assistance Foundation.

Sixteen editors, sub-editors and reporters representing English and local language newspapers and newsmagazines from Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand participated in the workshop. The participants were carefully selected from among a list of nominees from the respective Press Institutes, AMIC country representatives and reputable women journalists. Among the criteria used for selection include having at least three years journalism experience and having the potential to move up in the management ranks.

The objective of the eight-day workshop was to impart advanced reporting, writing and editing skills, to introduce newsroom management skills and to raise the consciousness of participants on the role of the media in Asian society and their professional obligations.

Programme

The workshop was an eight-day intensive and integrated programme with lectures, discussions, practical exercises, field trips and demonstrations. The workshop programme ensured a mix of lectures and discussions and practical exercises. Field trips were arranged to visit a development project and the offices of the largest newspaper group in Singapore,

Singapore Press Holdings (SPH).

The workshop proceeded with an overview of the situation of women journalists in South Asia in a panel discussion on "Women Journalists in Southeast Asia: Trends , Opportunities and Issues." The discussion generated an enthusiastic response from the participants, with each participant providing a situationer on the status of women journalists in their respective countries. The panel discussion set the tone for the entire workshop. The issues identified during the discussion were expanded in the course of the workshop proceedings by the resource speakers and in the open discussions following the presentations. Some of the issues identified include the harassment in the workplace, the lack of women in top editorial and managerial positions in newspapers, the difficulties of balancing work and domestic obligations and the cultural barriers affecting women journalists. Interestingly, the issues raised by the women journalists of Southeast Asia were very similar to the issues raised in the previous workshop in South Asia. Each lecture-session was followed by an open forum which allowed each participant to lend their own country's perspective on the topic and the issues discussed. A vibrant exchange of views and experiences ensued which the participants greatly appreciated.

The workshop had two main components: skills-oriented sessions and conceptual sessions on aspects of editorial management which the participants will be encountering when the move up the management ranks. Under the first heading, topics covered by the workshop include advanced newsgathering, writing development stories, copy editing, writing newsfeatures, editorial and persuasive writing, newspaper lay-out and design and newspaper graphics. Written exercises, which the respective resource persons provided comments and suggestions, followed each skill-oriented session. Experienced practitioners lent their expertise in the skills-oriented sessions (see the section on "resource persons" for their backgrounds). The resource persons also made it a point to make themselves available for

individual consultations with the participants.

Under the second heading, topics covered include "Development Journalism," "Public Service Journalism," "Interpretative Journalism," "Investigative Journalism," "The Use of Market Research in Newspapers," "Newspaper Printing Technology: An Overview," and "The Newspaper and its Publics."

One of the main outputs of the workshop was a 500- 800-word story based on a field trip to a development project. The participants went on a field trip to Seletar Treatment Works, a Singapore Ministry of the Environment-run sewage treatment plant. The participants were trained to write a readable news story on a highly technical subject. Field trips were also organized to visit Singapore Press Holdings, where the participants were able to observe newsroom operations, especially the electronic news processing and distribution system, and discuss with editors and staff issues of concern.

(see **Appendix A** for the workshop programme and **Appendix B** for the list of participants).

Resource Persons

Regional media experts served as resource persons. They made presentations, led discussions, and conducted practical exercises on the various subjects covered by the workshop.

Dr. Murray Masterton, currently a senior lecturer at Deakin University in Geelong, Australia, has thirty years experience as a print and broadcast journalist and editor in Canada, the United States, Britain, Fiji and Australia. He conducted the sessions on "Copy Editing," "Interpretative Journalism," "Investigative Journalism," "Writing Newsfeatures," and "Newspaper Layout and Design."

Mr. Virgilio S. Labrador, head of the seminars and institutional development programme of AMIC, has over ten years experience as a journalist and public relations and

advertising account executive in Asia and North America. He facilitated the panel discussion on "Women Journalists in South Asia: Trend, Opportunities" and he also handled or assisted all of the workshop exercise sessions.

Ms Sylvia Tan Jui Huang, is the Associate News Editor of the *Straits Times*. She has more than eight years experience in editing local news. She has been with SPH for more than 17 years working in the *New Nation*, the *New Paper*, which she helped to start up remaining with it for five years before transferring back to The *Straits Times*. She started journalism as a features writer, with the now defunct Singapore Herald which was closed down by the government, then joined the Straits Times Group to edit lifestyle pages, editorial supplements and business pages before turning to news.

Lulin Reutens recently left her job of almost 20 years with Singapore Press Holdings to set up her own editorial consultancy. During her long career as a journalist, she has held a variety of posts in the Company's various newspapers, including Features Editor, News Editor, Night Editor, Section Two Editor, Special Reports Editor. She was also head of the Editorial Support Unit and head of the Corporate Relations Department. Lulin has also represented the Company on several government and non-government committees.

Kumkum Ghose is the Research Director of ACORN Market Research, Singapore. She holds an M.A. with special training in Statistics and Econometrics. She took up marketing research actively in 1984. Prior to that, she had been teaching Economics and Statistics for twenty years, as well as conducting research studies. A Ford Foundation Scholar in Economics, she has also had training and experience in designing computer software. Mrs Ghose has had extensive experience in large scale research in diverse consumer markets requiring both qualitative analysis, as well as the application of advanced statistical techniques and marketing models. Some of the clients she had handled include the Inchcape Group of Companies in Singapore, Caltex (Singapore), Leo Burnett, MORI

(England and Australia), NETS (Singapore), DHL, Citibank N.A., Scott Paper, Unilever, Union Carbide (India), ITC (The Indian Organisation of British Tobacco Company), Remington Rand (India), Lipton (India) and a number of other organisations.

Asad Latif began his journalistic career in The Statesman, Calcutta, where he worked from 1979 to 1983 as Sub-Editor and then Staff Reporter. In 1984, he worked with Asiaweek as Copy Editor in Hongkong and Staff Correspondent in Calcutta. The same year, he joined Business Times, Singapore, where he became Foreign Editor in 1988 and to The Straits Times as Senior Leader/Feature Writer in 1990. He read English for his Honours at Presidency College, Calcutta and did an M.A. in English at Calcutta University. He read International Relations for an M.Phil. at Cambridge University in 1987-88, and returned to Cambridge in 1997-93 to read for his M.Litt. in History.

Thomas Jacob graduated with honours in Electronics and Telecommunication Engineering. He joined Mathrubhumi Group, publisher of Mathrubhumi newspaper with half a million circulation, as their Electronics Engineer. At 26, he became the youngest manager in the group to head a department. Currently, he holds two portfolios - head of Press Development Programme in AMIC and Asian representative of IFRA. He also serves on IFRA's Advisory Service Panel as an expert on PrePress. He is the first and only Asian to serve on the panel.

Peter Ong is an Art and Photo Editor with the Straits Times. He was formerly the Assistant Editor of the New Paper and Regional Director of the Society of Newspaper Design. He has conducted seminars on Newspaper Design and Graphics in Geneva, London, Paris, San Francisco and Kuala Lumpur.

Professor Juan Jamias is Professor Emeritus at the Institute of Development Communication at the University of Philippines at Los Banos. He has a Ph.D. from the Michigan State University, MS from the University of Wisconsin and AB from the

University of the Philippines. He was also Advisor to Ph.D and master's communication students from Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines. He was a reporter with the Sunday Times Magazine, Philippine News Service and Depthnews Service Asia.

Julie Chatterjee, is a photojournalist and writer. She is Features Editor and Helpline Counsellor for GO, The Straits Times Group Magazine. She has been covering youth and women's rights related issues for 15 years since she first took up journalism as a career in India. She has actively contributed to the Women's Right Movement in India and Australia and continues to be interested in related issues. Julie worked in Australia, prior to this, as a Senior Journalist and Press Attache for the Minister of Science and Technology from 1983-85. She has travelled extensively in the region - particularly Vietnam and Cambodia. She studied English Literature as a commonwealth exchange student at the University of Oxford, and then did a Masters degree in English. She is currently working on a Ph.D on D.H. Lawrence.

Margarita Logarta completes her fourth year in Singapore this September, three of which has been spent as local correspondent for *Travel News Asia*, a regional trade newspaper for the tourism industry. She has worked with the *Chicago Tribune* in 1988 as Alfred Friendly Press Fellow. She has a bachelor of arts degree, major in communication arts from the prestigious Ateneo de Manila University and was a departmental awardee upon her graduation from the Jesuit-run institution.

Medium of Communication

All the participants had a working knowledge of English. As such, the presentations and discussions were conducted in English.

Workshop Materials

The main reading material used in the workshop was an AMIC publication, *Newspaper Management in the New Multimedia Age*, edited by Achal Mehra, a copy of

which was provided to each participant. This was supplemented by handouts from relevant references on the subject.

Workshop Management

AMIC organized and implemented the workshop, including the development of the workshop programme, the preparation of training materials, and the invitation of resource persons.

Evaluation

The participants rated the sessions satisfactorily, giving mostly ratings of between 3 and 5 on a scale of 1-5 (where 5 is the highest). 94 percent of the participants expressed that the right number of participants were selected for the workshop. The majority believed that the right target group was selected.

The overwhelming majority of the participants gave the sessions a rating of between 3-5. On the overall quality of the programme, 14 percent of the respondents gave it a 5, another 172 percent gave it a 4 and the majority, 14 percent gave it a 3. No respondent the overall quality a rating of 1 or 2. On the relevance of the workshop to their work, 38 percent gave it a 5, 31 gave it a 4 and 31 percent gave it a 3, and no rating of 1 or 2 was given.

With regards to the objectives of the workshop, ie. to impart advanced reporting and editing skills, 6 percent gave it a 5, and 31 percent gave it a 4 and 37 percent gave a 3. On the objective of introducing newsroom management skills, 19 percent gave it a 5, 38 percent gave it a 4 and 36% gave it a 3. On the objective of introducing the role of newspapers in society and their professional obligations, 13 percent gave it a 5, 37 percent gave it a 4 and 43 percent gave it a 3.

The participants appreciated the mix of lectures and practical exercises. However, they generally felt that more time should have been given to practical exercises. Most of the participants however appreciated the opportunity not only to exchange views and experiences

with resource persons, but with other participants from other countries. One of the highest ratings were given to the opportunity to exchange with fellow participants.

Follow-Up

After three months, a follow-up survey will be conducted by mail with all the participants as respondents. The survey will measure any changes achieved made as a result of the inputs provided during the workshop. It will also determine if any follow-up action or activity is necessary.

Conclusion

On the whole, the workshop was a success. The main objectives of the workshop were met and the participants were generally satisfied with the result. A number of the participants suggested that follow-up workshops be conducted in the future.