Reflection on Internews Capstone

The culmination of my global communication degree was an internship with Internews, an international nonprofit organization that works to empower local media worldwide. The opportunity to pair with Internews was exciting, as its goals and areas of interest align with my own. That is, I have focused my studies on media in post-conflict or developing regions, with the notion that information can be a powerful tool in healing fractured societies. Internews similarly believes that giving people news and information means giving them voice, and its efforts focus on journalism training, providing the technology and means for local journalism, and media policy.

At the outset, my work at Internews was focused on a finite project, the MediaNEXT exhibition to take place in May 2013. This was envisioned as an event to highlight the work of Internews to the local DC community, particularly in celebration of the organization’s 25th anniversary. The two-day exhibition was to focus on young people and media across several developing regions. My work during this time, before the project was canceled in February, included both research for the exhibit and more administrative and planning work. For example, I undertook the initial image research along the decided content areas, as well as starting to plan an interactive media development timeline component. We were also planning to have a large panel event on the opening evening of the exhibit, which I was taking the lead at developing. Unfortunately, this project was canceled in February 2012, two months after we began. I have attached two documents to further contextualize the project and my work on it, including a final wrap-up report and preliminary document on our research by region.

When the exhibition was canceled at the end of February, my manager Manisha suggested that we collaborate on a paper instead. She had recently authored a paper on the inclusion of women in local media around the world, and we decided to focus on another area of importance for Internews—and what the MediaNEXT project had focused on—young people and media. Specifically, our research focused on new technologies and how they can be harnessed by young “digital natives” to empower local media, engendering strong “information ecosystems.” The piece includes interviews with citizens involved in media production from Bosnia, Kenya, and Afghanistan, as well as technology enthusiasts and experts such as Larry Irving and Bob Boorstin. It is meant to be a companion piece to a short video that Internews simultaneously produced on the subject. We submitted the piece to Internews for review on 4/29, and anticipate a revision process before publication later in May.

My experience at Internews was largely positive and always instructive. I learned a great deal about how the organization operates and views its place in championing local media, in addition to studying its important work in the field. I had been excited about our work on the MediaNEXT exhibition, so its cancelation was a setback at the time. The transition to collaborating on a paper was also difficult at times, because the post-exhibit mood was unsure and, as a result, disorganized. I had a hard time finding my appropriate place/role within the organization at times; learning the ropes of a new work place as an intern and calculating how to best utilize my skill set was often a balancing act. In retrospect, the opportunity to collaborate on the paper helped me to navigate this challenge, as working one on one with Manisha broke down the ‘intern’ barrier and strengthened my voice in the project.
The collaboration style between Manisha and myself on the paper was fairly successful. I wrote a literature review of the available research that she used, along with the interviews, to craft the bones of the piece. We then passed the piece between ourselves for several weeks, adding to it and editing. We met weekly to discuss our progress, and communicated daily via email. Though time consuming, I feel that our process led to a more coherent piece. It was a good lesson in teamwork and creating coherent voice in a shared piece. I look forward to seeing the final paper in print.

The documents that I have attached with this reflection include:

1) MediaNEXT – Preliminary research by region
2) MediaNEXT – Final report
3) Youth and Media – Initial literature review
4) Youth and Media – Link to video companion piece: https://www.box.com/s/ja70d24jf5ju9sab49iu
5) Youth and Media – Final paper
This document offers a preliminary road map for researching some exhibit components that are fixed. We will add to this list as we refine ideas with staff throughout the month of February.

Africa
Due dates: February 6 and Feb 13

Program Associate: Nina Sheth

Humanitarian Information- Feb 6
Refugee Communication and Media Interactive: Radio in a Suitcase
Recreation of a working mobile radio station in the exhibition, linked with radios from camps or other sites, showing technologies that offer multiplying effects (Frontline SMS, Nokia phone with antenna, etc.)

Design Note: This will be a significant chunk of real estate in the exhibit, potentially with a built out functioning radio and most likely large-scale images from a radio station or landscape images from a region with an important radio project like South Sudan. These may be some of the largest images in the exhibit, so the photos chosen need to be of the highest quality and dpi rather than field work images from staff.

To research:

1. In this footnote, please find a link to the Dropbox folder for images from Meredith Cohut. Some are exceptional. I would like to start creating a short Word document with a list of images related to radio in Africa from this set to include notes, a description and image number for the images I have listed here: 88, 98, 100, 102, 106, 112, 116, 119 (all of a set of 230). Separately, I would like to see if we can save these and other images you find in this folder to a separate Dropbox folder under Africa-Humanitarian Information. Once we have a final selection we can add those images to the excel database, listing image numbers, location, size, author, etc. following the column headings on the spreadsheet.

2. I would like to know what images of container radio stations and other radio projects from South Sudan or other regions of Africa are available on the general photo archive. We can work with Nina Sheth, PA for Africa, to find other sources for images once we exhaust the archive and Dropbox folder.

3. Sonya De Masi is the country director in South Sudan. By mid February, she will be in touch regarding my request for radio recordings in seven languages and any photography available. We will then add those to the same folder on Dropbox and decide

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1. Here is the link to the extended photo archive from Chad: [INTERNEWS Community Radio Stations in Eastern Chad](#) Password to view/download: [INTERNEWS](#) (all caps)

Images may be downloaded individually, or all at once by clicking, "batch download".
whether we will feature radio from South Sudan or some of Meredith’s work in Chad or the Dadaab camp in Kenya.

**Internet and Telecommunications/ Innovation and Learning- Feb 13**
Pilot projects in Africa with SMS technologies

For the Africa region, new technologies are nearly all related to SMS for M&E and two-way communication, especially the integration of this into radio stations. Anahi is our contact for this section and she is on travel now until mid February.

Design Note: The treatment for this section of the exhibit has not been worked out, so large-scale imagery may not be a necessity at all. However, this may evolve into an interactive touch screen component, so a variety of video and images from various projects, even if not of the highest quality, will be useful to set aside in a folder for Africa-Internet Telecom and Innovation.

**To research:**
1. There are pilot projects in Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya working on SMS and two-way communications. [Kenya was not a huge success because of the implementer so images may not exist.] However, Nina may be able to work with us to find content for Nigeria and Ghana if not available on photo database.
2. Ida Yoost is the country director in Kenya and we will be talking this week about content. At that point, we may have access to other databases or Dropboxes to review. For now, we should do a quick review of the database for SMS and Africa and then talk with Nina about specifics.

**Health Information- Feb 13**
Kenya: A Story a Day
HC3 Program

**To research:**
1. Once we speak with Ida about content for Kenya, I will have a list of projects and concepts to research. For now, a preliminary review of images related to HIV programs in Kenya, Kenya: A Story a Day and the HC3 Program would be a good place to start.

**Europe/Eurasia**

**Due dates: February 20**

**Program Associate: Jenny Holm**

Our research in this region will initially focus on television, convergent newsrooms, and the ElectUA map. We will have more of an emphasis on researching video than imagery but researching the photo
databases will be a first priority. I have sent an email with access to a Dropbox folder for archival research in this region.

Governance and Transparency- Feb 20
Interactive: Crisis Mapping- Ukraine (ElectUA.org) or Mongolia

We will have an interactive mapping section to include this election map.

To research:
1. We will follow up this week with Oleg Gant and our partners at Development Seed to define the data set to be used for the ElectUA interactive. This will need to be underway by Feb 13.
2. Ask Jenny or Oleg for access to the PSA for ElectUA

Internet and Telecommunications/ Innovation and Learning- Feb 20
Internet Initiatives and Convergent Newsrooms

We will need to work with Jenny to locate and find good clips from the following programs. I will write to Marat Bagaliev for Dropbox access to TV content.

To research:
1. NOW TV (satellite PBS-like network in the Stans)
2. News Exchange (3-5 minute clips)
3. Open Asia (Twelve year-old program produced in Ukbekistan)
4. The Matrix (youth oriented)
5. Info homes – community media centers in Armenia for citizen journalism training in new media
6. Intermole/Harmony- Kyrgz/Uzbek radio and new tv content
7. Search archive and Dropbox for convergent newsroom images per Oleg’s suggestions, which I will send when received.

MENA

Due dates: February 6 and Feb 13

Program Associate: Mayssa el Kazen

Our focus for this region will be on youth journalism and the Arab Spring. Internews has trained over 4,000 people across the region in blogging, radio, twitter and other forms of social media. Throughout the Arab Spring, Internews engaged in a variety of key projects including:
Libya-First media assessment post regime. 200+ media outlets identified post regime
Egypt- Taught social media technologies to youth (ask for more detail)
Syria- Refugee assessments in camps of 30,000 refugees
Iran- Created training platforms for young bloggers

Design note: We are looking for photos that can demonstrate the power of youth journalism during the Arab Spring. That will mean finding at least 1-2 strong high res images that can become large-scale backdrops for a built out section on the MENA region and social media journalism.
Youth Journalism - Feb 13
Gaza/West Bank

Julia Pitner is the country director for the Gaza/West Bank programs. Internews is becoming a resource for funders in the region with data and training materials available in their newly opened media and policy resource center, which will be online. We have spoken with Julia about video clips comparing training in each region; sky bridges with young journalists; interactive developed with graduates in Gaza and live streaming of their radio programming.

To research:
1. Any images from media labs at the 3 Internews university partners (Hebron and Alcuz) in West Bank.
2. Any images from Youth Beat Projects in West Bank or Gaza, which train young journalists in radio and other media.
3. Follow up with Julia after initial conversation regarding possible vox pops to record and collection of any video from West Bank and Gaza programs.

Interactive: Journalism Training – Feb 13

Work with two Youth Beat personalities to develop sky bridges and interactives; develop a possible large-scale projection of Tahrir or some other scene that could serve as a backdrop for a treatment of the role of Internews and blogging across the region. Live streaming of journalist trainings where possible; guests able to ask questions via twitter hashtags, email.

To research:
1. Please follow up with Mayssa, after our next meeting, regarding contacts for journalists in Tunisia. We will work with her to define ideas for this section.
Introduction

This report offers a summary of work completed for the MediaNEXT exhibit for Internews between the months of November 2012 and February 2013. Should this project move forward at a future date, the information here and the archive of work completed should serve as a guide to proceed easily with the project from the stage we reached with conceptual design and research.

Key Staff

Manisha Aryal, Special Advisor to the President, was the lead along with Amanda Frankel, Communications Officer. Heidi McKinnon, Curators Without Borders, was contracted to develop and lead the project through all phases of research, design and installation. Betsy Cantwell, George Washington University, worked as a Capstone Intern from January 2013 on to assist with research as well as event and production management.

Initial Research
December 2012-February 2013

Throughout the month of December and into February, Manisha, Amanda and Heidi interviewed between 15-20 Internews staff to gauge interest in collaboration and possibilities for access to archival content or new content development in conjunction with field staff for the exhibition. We compiled a preliminary list of projects that had sufficient archival information to be included in the exhibit, as well as staff who would be willing to work with us on the development of new media content.

From several Vice Presidents, COPs and Program Associates, we received interest and offers of general support regarding access to content and field staff1. When Betsy started in January, we began to define research areas within the Internews archives to cull images, text and audiovisual components that would become the main content of the exhibit.

Preliminary work began in Africa, with several archival sources offered for work in Chad and Kenya. Work was underway with the South Sudan and Kenya teams to identify imagery and content. Kenya offered very prompt and effective access to materials as South Sudan was in the process of proposal writing and could not get back to us as quickly.

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1 As a caveat, when we began to define content within each region, it became obvious that Internews needs to address an internal lack of archival resources for all of its current and previous projects. Central archival management is a necessity for the organization.
Venue Procurement, Cost Share and Sponsorships
November 2012-February 2013

Venue Procurement
The initial venue chosen for the exhibition, Long View Gallery, was immediately ruled out for excessive costs once we received a proposal for $30,000. After several weeks of research and site visits, the Ronald Reagan Building was chosen as the best option for the square footage, location, ease of access and cost. Preliminary contracts were underway when the project was terminated. While the decision had been made, floor plans were not made available to Internews to advance with design of the space.

Cost Share and Sponsorships
Project staff obtained sponsorships and cost share from SmartBoard and Google. SmartBoard offered a loan of several large-format touch screens whose retail value exceeds $12,000 each. Google offered two underwriting opportunities for $20,000+ to assist with exhibition costs and the inclusion of a Google Hangout space available for the reception.

Design Development
November 2012-February 2013

Conceptual and curatorial work began on MediaNEXT in late November 2012 with the development of a preliminary budget to gauge general costs of an exhibition of this size. Given the scope of the MediaNEXT exhibition that was defined among all parties, a venue no smaller than 2000-3000 sq ft was determined as necessary to adequately accommodate exhibition content.

A design questionnaire was created and distributed in lieu of a design and concept development charette with senior management in an effort to achieve greater buy-in. As there was not much staff response to the questionnaire, the team decided to manage design and content development internally. Heidi McKinnon created a series of sketches for possible design configurations, although a final venue had not been determined and managed a file of exhibit design concepts for use in the design development phase of the project.

Carlos Gomez, a graphic designer for Curators Without Borders, was contracted by Heidi McKinnon to develop the sketches into renderings, conceptual elevation drawings and floor plans to be edited once the final venue was chosen. Some preliminary graphic design work was done as well for the Ronald Reagan Building to show how window displays could be treated for the exhibition.

A draft design brief was discussed between Heidi and Carlos and written in outline form only before the exhibition project was closed. The design brief uses the Internews style guide as a base for the look and feel of the exhibition. A draft narrative walk through was written and revised once the Ronald Reagan Building was chosen as the exhibition venue.
The scope of exhibition content was broadly divided into three conceptual areas. The first was a brief overview of Internews’ history, in the form of a time line with possible archival footage and a historical display of ICT tools over the decades. The second was to offer a generous focus on current programs and recent projects that reflect the breadth of Internews’ reach across all media platforms and geographic regions. This section was to be grounded in the eight global issues, weighing them differently depending on available content and participation from the field.

A final conceptual area was to weave a consistent underlying focus on the future of media and development throughout the exhibit, highlighting Internews projects with a focus on women, youth and new technologies, and how those projects might work to shape media in the future. This final section was conceived as a series of in-person demonstrations, conversations or multimedia displays in the corridor outside the main exhibition that would engage visitors with a series of critical big picture questions to consider and revisit during their walk through the exhibition.

Archived Work

Amanda Frankel has created an archive of all MediaNEXT exhibit documents available for future use. This includes a variety of documents and renderings for future use. This archive includes notes from interviews with staff, budgets, vendor quotes, information from research and site visits to venues, design drawings, concepts and renderings, folders of preselected photos for several regions in Africa, notes on sponsorships and cost share procured and various exhibit design and content development documents and archives of imagery.
The research available on youth media studies is wide and complex, covering a range of demographics and specialties within the field. This review of the literature will try to simplify the complex environment by answering the how and why surrounding youth media. That is, what are the particular habits of young people in today’s media environment (how do they use it), and what are the underlying motivations behind their use (why do they use it)? These two points converge at the end to examine opportunities for better youth media engagement.

**Media Habits: Multitasking, Mobile, and Glocal**

A large subset of the literature on youth media usage assumes the “digital natives” theory, which holds that young people’s cognitive processes are altered by growing up in a world mediated by technology (Prensky 2001). Digital natives tend to be “active, experiential learners, natural multitaskers, using a range of digital devices and platforms simultaneously to drive their own informal learning agendas” (Bittman et al. 2011). The prevalence of media multitasking among young people is well-documented (Foehr 2006), though its effects on their attention and mental processing are not fully clear. In one study with young people in their 20s, participants were found to switch media venues (i.e. screens) 27 times per nonworking hour on average (Boston Innerscope 2012). In the United States, where the media multitasking phenomena is perhaps most extensive, young people report spending 29 percent of their time switching between different media simultaneously (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts 2010). These patterns of digitized youth use translate to the global south as well. A study of 1000 college students in 10 countries across five continents found that “most college students, whether in developed or developing countries, are strikingly similar in how they use media and digital
technologies...and a clear majority in every country admitted outright failure of their efforts to go unplugged” (ICMPA 2011).

Digital technologies top the list of media used by young people (Lindsay 2010, Livingstone 1999). Within the realm of digital technology, mobile dominates because of its relatively lower costs and versatility. It is particularly important in the developing world, where Internet penetration and cost is more limiting (Pew 2012). For example, Internet versus mobile usage in China is 20% vs. 57%; India 4% vs. 41%; Brazil 32% vs. 86%; and Indonesia 5% vs. 66% (Lindsay). The versatility of mobile is also key, with one study calling SMS “this generation’s Swiss Army Knife” (ICMPA 2011). Young people can use mobile to interact with numerous groups, using various levels of familiarity—i.e. texting to friends, social networking with different social groups, or emailing for more formal interaction. Mobile also offers immediacy to multitasking youth; a report from the Associated Chambers of Commerce highlighted that young people in India are moving away from social media and toward mobile because they find the former, “boring, confusing, frustrating and time consuming” (2012).

Though digital media dominates the literature on youth and media, young people are still using traditional media for entertainment, and to a lesser extent, information and news (McMillin 2009, Shukla 2010). Television leads the pack here—its universal popularity across both the developing and developed world reflected in increased television sales and viewership in the latter (Lindsay 2010). A study on young people in the Middle East reported that respondents consume television at similar levels to digital media, though less often for news or information (Melki 2010). Sports, telenovelas, and reality shows top the list of traditional media consumed by youth around the world; for example, one-third of the Afghani population tunes in each week for ‘Afghan Star’ (Lindsay 2010). Print media, while facing financial hardship in the United States and Western Europe, is on an upswing in the developing world. Asia, Africa, and Latin America experienced annual double-digit increases in their number of print publications and circulation since 2005, and China and India boast half of the world’s top 100 daily newspapers (Lindsay 2010).

The discussion of youth media habits thus far has focused on multitasking digital
natives, the prominence of mobile, and the continued presence of traditional media for
entertainment, especially in the developing world. Another important media ‘habit’ involves
the sources that global youth ingest, as well as the languages they rely on for consumption and
sharing. For example, before globalization started to make new sources available to young
people around the world, the global circulation of media consumed by young people—who
were primarily viewed as a consumer category—generally flowed from West to East and from
North to South (Oserby 2004). Today, digital technologies translate to an increasingly
international media landscape that merges the local and global. Instead of passively consuming
traditional Western media, young people in developing countries are using global media and
reconfiguring it for local use (Wong and Ling 2011; Oserby 2004). In support of this “glocal”
mentality, a recent VIACOM study of 15,000 “millennials” (ages 9-30) across 24 countries
revealed that young people are displaying an increased sense of national pride and interest in
maintaining local traditions, while simultaneously reporting more tolerance and openness to
other countries and cultures (2012).

Language is a major factor in this movement, as media sources are increasingly available
in local languages. Lexander (2011) studied texting among Senegalese youth, and found that
the increased use of local African languages, as opposed to French, in texting had implications
for the social acceptance of local languages in other Senegalese media. While African languages
were still primarily used for friendly interaction as opposed to conveying information, the shift
is telling. Another study of Middle East young people and the media takes this trend a step
further, revealing that respondents prefer Arabic for news, an arena that English had previously
dominated (Melki 2010). The study also found that the choice of language for media
consumption delineated socioeconomic status; those of low-to-middle income chose Arabic
more often, and those of middle-to-high income were more likely to choose English. This not
only demonstrates the convergence of global and local, but also suggests that socioeconomic
status is less of a boundary to digital technology ownership in the Middle East, perhaps due to
the growing affordability of mobile.

Young people are also “prosumers”—simultaneously consuming and producing, or
sharing, information, in person to family and friends and widely through social media networks.
Middle East college and high school students report using family and friends to ascertain news and information more frequently than digital or traditional alternatives (Melki 2010). In the United States, 72 percent of young people that use social media choose which news stories to read based on recommendations from family and friends (Pew). This is partially explained by the changing definition of “news” in the eyes of young people; a 2011 WorldUnplugged study of young people across five continents concluded “news to students means anything that just happened—and students most care about ‘news’ of their friends and family, before any news that might be globally momentous” (ICMPA). Though young people are consuming and producing more content than ever, they are not inherently more engaged with media, or sharing with a specific purpose. Oserby (2004) concludes that information production and sharing online are often ‘bored’ activities, rather than being planned or structured.

Youth Media Habits in Context: Explanations and Opportunities

The review of the literature has sought to focus and describe the current trends in youth media habits: heightened digital use (mobile) and multitasking, the consumption of traditional media for entertainment, the increased weaving of both global and local media, and the rise of “prosumerism.” It will continue by examining the literature that contextualizes these trends, highlighting what motivates young people in their media interaction. In particular, this will focus on identity formation, upward mobility, and political activism. From here, issues and opportunities for further research are identified and described.

The youth media field emerged around 1999 with the rise of information and communication technology (ICT), though it “stands on the shoulders” of many social, cultural, and educational movements, particularly the youth development discipline (Coryat 2004, see Inouye et al. 2004). Each of these fields emphasizes the importance of identity construction for young people—the search for self-knowledge through various means, foremost self-expression or voice (Michener et al. 2004). Digital media technologies, which have been linked to increased feelings of social capital and civic participation in participants (Hargittai and Hinnant 2008), assist the construction of identity both through active participation and passive network
affiliation. Young people are especially likely to place importance on their online identities. For example, Walton et al. (2012) found that young South Africans “carefully chose and edited the content they stored on their mobile phones, managing impressions, and representing individual identities and social relations” (409). Even in a poor, less developed region of South Africa, younger people were found to personalize their mobile callback messages twice as much as older people (Bidwell et al. 2011). The youth media habits described previously—i.e. constant media use and multitasking—reflect this drive for establishing identity.

However, not all youth media engagement in the name of identity formation is meaningful. While media dexterity means that young people can find information with more speed and ease than ever (Adams 2012), constant multitasking raises questions about concentration, and the ability to choose quality information sources (Bittman et al. 2011). Livingstone (2003) found that teens have less patience and worse research skills than older adults, and that they also lack the skills necessary to evaluate online material. That is, young people are more likely to lack media literacy, or “the ability to access, understand, and create communications in a variety of contexts” (Buckingham 2005). Additionally, though the diversity of sources used by young people would positively seem to mitigate agenda-setting effects, Coleman and McComb (2007) found that young people, who are using traditional sources less and the Internet more, only saw a slight decrease in agenda-setting. They attribute this to the redundancy of available news, for example repeat stories from wire services, and the lack of interest and ability to seek different sources. Still, agenda-setting in terms of digital media is a gap in the literature that should be explored further.

These trends have led to a growing discussion on the role of youth media literacy training in helping young people to achieve upward mobility—i.e. enhanced social, financial, and human capital (Hargittai and Hinnant 2008, Boonaert and Vettenburg 2011). Socioeconomic status and class is the biggest barrier to media literacy, invoking the idea of the “digital divide” between the haves and have-nots (Buckingham 2005). Though the divide is traditionally considered a lack of media access, often stemming from low economic status, Hargittai (2002) distinguishes between access and ability, coined the term “second-level divide” to highlight the importance of media literacy. Improved media literacy has important
implications not just for enhanced online searching, but also for finding employment and increasing civic engagement. For example, the 2012 Arab Social Media Report on Social Media, Employment and Entrepreneurship found that social media is the primary mechanism through which young people search for employment. Buckingham (2005) highlights broadcasters and regulators as potential enablers of media literacy, as well as parents and teachers in the case of children.

Youth media creation is a potential solution here, as it merges youth identity construction with lessons on literacy, offering a way for “young people to express themselves, come to voice, and experience transformation—personally, politically, or socially—while developing skills for future career use” (AED 2009). As discussed earlier, individual youth media production, or sharing, is typically a digital, unstructured activity undertaken when bored. Much of the literature on youth media creation, however, emphasizes the value of structured projects, such as training on print or broadcast media. While these projects are undoubtedly effective, they are more difficult and costly to implement. A more recent vein of research highlights the potential for DIY media projects in promoting media literacy. Peppler and Kafai (2011), for instance, evaluated a new digital programming environment called Scratch, which allows users to design online games and stories; since its start in 2008, the online community already has more than a half million users and one million uploaded projects. Buckingham and Burn (2007) also champion game design as an approach to media literacy because the design process integrates cultural experiences that can vary across age, gender, and media knowledge, while instilling important professional skills. While YouTube is a huge source of DIY youth media projects (Pepperl and Kafai 2011), environments like Scratch provide more structure and enhance learning potential. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are another example of a somewhat structured, low cost online vehicle for upward mobility. Courses endeavor to create an online classroom community for users around the world. However, the format has been criticized for overreaching—as critics cite that tutoring and feedback are essential to the classroom experience but not available with such a low cost alternative (Petre 2012).

Despite the heavy emphasis on digital technologies, traditional media offers another opportunity for engaging young people. As discussed previously, television is still widely
popular among young people around the world, though primarily for entertainment rather than news or information. Radio is still the most widely available ICT across the developing world, for example in Africa (Kamlongera and Yasin 2012). Print media is also on the rise in the developing world, especially in India and China where subscriptions are booming. These mediums, while not as hip as digital alternatives, will promote interest in the media, and pave the way for increased media literacy. Television programming promoting pro-social values or health communication can also be refined, as the medium has had messaging problems in the past. Tully and Ekdale (2012) discuss the case of a Kenyan educational program that endeavored to convey a set of values against bad deeds, but resulted in test subjects extrapolating the opposite lesson.
1. SET UP THE PIECE

When Zainab Mohaqeq returned to Afghanistan in 2001, she found herself in a country in the midst of information darkness. Taliban rule since 1996 had stymied the growth of independent media in the country and had weakened state radio and television’s capacity to provide accurate and useful information to the 35 million Afghans. Even basic information on health, education, security and development was difficult to come by.

Today, a decade after the fall of the Taliban, independent media has blossomed in the country, along with civil society organizations working to bring about social change. Afghanistan now has more than 75 television stations and some 175 independent radio stations covering its 34 provinces. The country has also seen a rapid expansion of broadband and mobile networks with more than five percent of Afghans online and upwards of 17 million mobile subscriptions, many of which are owned by young people.

Mohaqqeq now works as a monitoring and evaluation officer with Salam Watandar, a radio program network established in 2003. The 47 stations in its network reach some 10 million listeners in 29 provinces and are instrumental in giving voice to the concerns of rural and urban Afghans.

Mohaqqeq has a front-row view of the changes taking place in Afghanistan’s media and information landscape.

“In the last decade, I have started to see things getting rebuilt – schools, radio stations, girls coming out of their houses and going to study,” she says. “People now talk about their problems in social media, and the government has started listen, pay attention and solve the problems.”

Media has become vital to the functioning and transformation of Afghan life and society. According to 2010 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs statistics, 74 percent of Afghans were under 30 years of age. It is these young Afghans, says President and Chief Executive Officer of Internews Jeanne Bourgault, who are engaging with media and in the frontlines of social change.

“We’re really excited about what’s happening online in Afghanistan with young people producing and sharing content,” Bourgault says. “We see the power of news and information, of young people, of emerging voices. They’re making a difference at their very local level, and at the national level.”

A diversity of voices and opinions makes for a healthy information ecosystem. Media and civil society development initiatives, says Bourgault, need to learn how young people, and especially those referred to as digital natives are interacting with information and communication technologies and support them in getting out their voices through new tools and emerging platforms.
The concept of an information ecosystem has evolved significantly since its emergence in the 1970s, coinciding with the rising density of mass media outlets. The information landscape then, while increasingly interconnected, was still characterized by few producers—newspapers, television, publishing houses, etc.—creating content for many consumers.

Today’s information environment more closely likens that of an ecosystem in nature; just like a jungle is supported by the interaction of a diversity of organisms, the current information ecosystem consists of a multitude of voices, tools, and information that are connected in subtle but important ways.

Though information and communication technology (ICT) tools have enabled mass participation in the ecosystem, they are only one organism among many. In 2009, The Knight Commission on the Information Needs of Communities in a Democracy produced a community toolkit for addressing local information needs that highlights three areas that make up local information ecosystems: the supply of needed and desired information to a local community; the digital and media literacy skills held by community members; and the media infrastructure, including the mediums—e.g. Internet, print media, mobile, etc.—available for information distribution. While participation in the ecosystem is enabled by tools like mobile, Internet, and radio, it also relies on factors such as media literacy, access to technology and information, the level of free expression allowed by local governments, and the quality of local journalism, among others.

Internews believes that diversity—of voices, opinions, tools, information—is necessary for building strong local information ecosystems that can in turn have a democratizing effect on communities. Our efforts to improve the quality of local journalism and increase access to information are born out of this notion—that by strengthening individual organisms, we will create viable information ecosystems.

2. MEDIA AND INFORMATION ECOSYSTEM

Until the late 1980s, the information needs of the millions of people in the developing world were served by each country’s state radio (often AM), terrestrial television, and half a dozen newspapers and news tabloids. They had limited reach, conveyed official information, and put out the views of those in power. Media was the means of controlling information and solidifying hold on power. Regulatory reform and technological change over the last three decades have started to change how information is produced, delivered, and consumed. Communities in various parts of the world now access news and information through local newspapers, community radios, satellite and local cable television, and now increasingly through platforms driven by the internet and mobile phones.

The story of media development in the global south is linked to political changes following World War II and supported by the availability of international aid. Starting in the mid-1980s, the U.S. government funded a range of media training and pro-democracy initiatives in Latin America. With the breakdown of the Berlin Wall in 1989, democracy promotion became the agenda of both the diplomatic and the development community, who started to see free media as crucial to the process of political change. The U.S. and the European governments began to invest resources in supporting independent media in the newly free nations of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Private foundations and individual philanthropists stepped in and by the mid-1990s, emerging democracies around the world experienced major investments in print media, radio stations, and television networks. When the Balkans conflict flared up in the 1990s, the United States provided another injection of resources to Southeast Europe to support the peace process and help rebuild the region; media was seen as key to this strategy.
That dozens of countries were emerging from communism and decades of autocratic rule was seen as proof that media development delivered results. Aid organizations and foundations increased their investments in media, citing it as key to fostering responsive governments, democratic societies, open and fair elections, strengthened legal systems, and engaged civil societies.

Post September 11, the focus of media development activities shifted to the Muslim world. The majority of these projects, especially in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, emphasized strategic communication, with some focusing on strengthening information and media. Media development programs around the world now range from community radio projects in Africa to broadcast program production in Central and South Asia to regulatory reform and digital transition in Eastern Europe. Recent efforts have emphasized citizen journalism, Internet governance, humanitarian information, and digital security and online safety in various regions of the world.

Media is credited with assisting democratic transitions in countries like Bosnia, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Egypt, and Tunisia — most visibly perhaps during the 2010 Arab Spring. Media has likewise been viewed as a tool for dispensing health and humanitarian information in countries suffering from famine and civil war, and more generally for improving government accountability, government transparency, and as a human rights monitoring tool globally.

“Now, in many respects, information has never been so free,” said former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in a speech on Internet freedom in 2010. “There are more ways to spread more ideas to more people than at any moment in history. And even in authoritarian countries, information networks are helping people discover new facts and making governments more accountable.”

Access to information – content, tools, and platforms – is now considered essential in the development of society. While established mainstream print, radio, and television media continue to provide information to communities not yet in the embrace of social media, they are increasing in reach and influence.

Google Director of Public Policy Bob Boorstin says Internet and mobile phones have changed media and information in a number of ways. “First, they have turned media from a one way street into a two way street and have given populations a chance to talk back, whether it is to the media itself or to the government. Second, they have increased the scale of media, both in terms of audience and in terms of who is participating when they talk back. And the third thing is that they have radically increased the speed with which news travels.”

And all this, Boorstin says, has had an unprecedented effect on communities, societies, countries, and media itself. “Everything is impacted – whether print, television, radio, or the 5th estate as you call it, the untraditional media, or the new media.”

“This has definitely changed the way Internews thinks about media,” says Internews’ Bourgault. “When we think information now, we do not just think print, radio, and television. We also think Twitter, Facebook, SMS.”

She adds, “We like to say that we’re platform neutral now as an organization. We work with whatever technologies are working in various communities to get quality content out there. In the past, we were deeply rooted in journalism; now we’re really much more expansively looking at those healthy information ecosystems...sort of the full array for what it takes to make sure the quality content is flowing to local communities around the world.”
The piece that has not changed since the founding of Internews in 1982, says Bourgault, is the importance of local voices. “Getting to vulnerable communities that don’t have access, focusing on a plurality of voices, helping produce local content with local voices and local ownership to improve lives.”

3. MEDIA, INFORMATION AND MDGs

In 2000, the member states of the United Nations agreed to a set of eight goals to be achieved by 2015. Collectively referred to as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), they include halting extreme poverty, achieving universal primary education, and improving health, gender equity, and fair resource use, among others.

As the goals are broken down into a series of manageable tasks, says Kathy Calvin, President and Chief Executive Officer of the United Nations Foundation, it is understood that media and information technology can be a core driver toward achieving the MDGs. Calvin’s organization mobilizes resources, builds partnerships, and executes many of the UN’s worldwide programs focused on health, climate change, and disaster relief.

Emerging technologies are giving people the ability to ask for help and to use the tools in their hands to send a signal or demand a change, Calvin says. “If there was a drug missing, or out of stock, communication used to be sent on paper to an agency thousands of miles away and three months later someone might replenish the drugs. Now a simple text message saying ‘We’re out of the polio vaccine, please send’ will get the job done.”

According to economist Jeffery Sachs, “Poverty is almost equated with isolation in many places of the world.” Lack of access to markets, to emergency health services, to education, and the inability to take advantage of government services, all result in poverty. “What the mobile phone, and more generally ICTs do, is end that kind of isolation in all its different varieties,” Sachs said.

People need information to make decisions that benefit them and they also need to be able to have a say in the decisions that are being made about them. “We all feel passionate about national and international news,” says Bourgault. “But if you think about your day-to-day decision making, information is the way you keep yourself healthy and prosperous.”

A healthy information ecosystem nurtures all these voices, she says, and “media is the place where individual voices can be heard, where you get the most important information you need to make informed decisions for yourself, your family, and your community.”

Innovations in digital technology, the introduction of affordable devices, and recent advancements in Internet and mobile telephones indicate the prospect that information will help tackle many of the world’s development problems, says Calvin of the UN Foundation. New media technologies, she adds, offer the possibility of a future where information is interactive and in the hands of anyone who owns a simple handheld device.

The impact of new communication platforms and digital tools in the developing world will bring unprecedented changes, says Larry Irving, strategic communication expert and co-founder of Mobile Alliance for Global Good, an organization that convenes NGOs, corporations, and philanthropists to take on global problems with mobile innovations. During his tenure as assistant secretary of commerce in the Clinton administration, Irving worked on a series of initiatives that explored how the Internet could be used in education. He is an enthusiastic advocate of technology, and especially mobile-driven social change.
Plunging cost of handsets, business models set up for selling services to the poor is making cell phones affordable has caused a quantum leap in services.

Leading this change are initiatives like U-Report, a mobile application launched by UNICEF in Uganda in 2011 that allows any citizen with a mobile phone to text 'join' to the application and start sharing their views on a range of issues. The U-report team at UNICEF periodically picks topics for discussion and texts them to U-reporters, soliciting either a simple menu-based response, or a personal message. In the year after the application was launched, 89,000 citizens signed up to be U-reporters.

“U-report is incredibly powerful. It allows people to monitor fraud in a nation that was fraught with fraud,” said Irving. “If you can take fraud out of the system, first, you create more wealth for the system and, secondly, you can hold elected officials accountable. That’s incredibly empowering. And a model like U-report can go global; it goes viral, then it goes global—and all of a sudden if you are a corrupt official anywhere in the world and you know that young people with a mobile device can start checking on you and is open to new transparency, that’s liberating for folks.” A series of small changes, says Irving, can lead to overarching transformation in the long term.

Najibullah Amiri, chief editor of Afghanistan’s Salam Watandar, agrees. “People in Afghanistan have many questions about health, about education, politics. Yet, they do not have access to government officials to ask them those questions,” says Amiri. Salam Watandar has reporters spread across all 34 provinces, who increasingly use digital media tools to file stories from remote provinces like Zabul or Parwan. Even people in the remote parts of his country can now address their governments or political representatives directly, says Amiri.

In a 2011 UN Human Rights Council report, Frank La Rue, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, stressed the urgency behind expanding digital access. "Given that the Internet has become an indispensable tool for realizing a range of human rights, combating inequality, and accelerating development and human progress, ensuring universal access to the Internet should be a priority for all states."

4. MOBILE AND INTERACTIVE

Some 3000 miles away in Kenya, Jimmy Gitonga, community lead for iHub, an open community workspace and incubator for young technologists, social entrepreneurs, tech companies and hackers, is seeing first-hand the effects of new media, information, and communication platforms on the African continent. Emerging from colonialism in the mid-19th century, many African countries have had very little access to technologies that are taken for granted elsewhere in the world.

“Africa doesn’t have a background of technology – just the telegraph, telephone, and now mobile over the last 100 years,” says Gitonga. Yet, the digital revolution has taken the African continent by storm. “Us guys are going from nothing to Twitter and tablets in no time. And that in itself means there are so many changes on so many levels.”

A 2012 report of the UN Human Settlements Program says that Africa and Asia will go through rapid urbanization and massive population growth in the next two decades. Africa’s urban population is set to outstrip that of Europe by 2025, and Asia currently contains half of the world’s urban population. Amidst this population trend, the African continent is also seeing decreased costs for broadband connection, mobile telephones, and handheld devices. From 2008 to 2012, for example, the price of fixed-broadband in the developing world dropped by 82 percent. This
convergence — of urbanization, demographic shift to young people, and technology access — will have implications beyond economics, but around the world.

Judith Owigar is the founder of Akira Chicks, a Kenyan company that supports women in technology. Owigar gets most of her information from social media. “Information is empowering,” she says. “If you are ignorant, you cannot make decisions that benefit you and the people around you.” Owigar visits websites of media houses to confirm the news she gets on her mobile, and reads newspaper and magazine stories on the weekends.

Owigar represents the growing number of digitally literate young women and men who rely on emerging platforms for news and information. According to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, world population surpassed 7 billion in 2012; data from the same time shows that mobile penetration simultaneously reached 6 billion. In the span of 15 years since mobile technologies were introduced to the public, the world went from no connections to almost universal coverage.

Access has been quickly followed by consumption, creation, and distribution of content. Today people are simultaneously consuming and producing, or sharing information, in person to family and friends and widely through social media networks. According to a Pew Research Center report on the “State of the News Media 2013,” 72 percent of young people in the United States who use social media choose which news stories to read based on recommendations from family and friends.

This is partially explained by the changing definition of “news” in the eyes of young people; a 2011 University of Maryland study of young people’s media habits across North America, South America, Europe, East Africa, and Asia concluded “news to students means anything that just happened—and students most care about ‘news’ of their friends and family, before any news that might be globally momentous.” Though young people are consuming and producing more content than ever, they are not inherently more engaged with media, or sharing with a specific purpose.

Once a luxury item, mobile phones are now considered essential to daily living even by the poorest in the world. A continent-wide survey conducted by Gallup in Africa in June 2012 amongst the lowest-income Africans, shows that of all the Africans surveyed living on less than $1 a day, half had access to mobile phones. Majorities living on less than $1 a day owned their own cell phones and, together with those reporting access to the mobile of a relative or friend, cell phone penetration exceeded 80 percent amongst poor Africans. While data may not be reliable, the trends are telling.

“Mobile phone is a real game changer in terms of improving access to information,” says Erica Kochi, who co-leads innovation initiatives at the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in New York. While radio has traditionally had the most penetration in the developing world because of affordability, access, and mobility, it is still unidirectional. For this reason—the desire to talk back—radio is slowly being nudged aside by mobile phones, which offer possibilities of multidirectional communication.

“For the first time there is a two-way communication device in even the most remote location and the real value that we can see is not only just in the growth but in the amount of time, energy, and money that people spend to keep their mobile phones charged,” Kochi adds. For example, in Burundi, a country where only 3 percent of the population is on the electrical grid, UNICEF reports that people spend up to two months’ salary each year keeping their phones charged.
The value placed on information access, says Kochi, has to be seen not just in the growing number of mobile phones, but also in the amount of time, energy, and money people spend on their upkeep. “You can tell this provides value – the value being access to information, the value being the ability to not only reach friends and discuss things with them, but to also find out information that’s necessary for them to lead complete, fulfilling lives. Like the best prices to sell their goods at, when the next bus is, and to use it as a device not just for information and media the way we would think of it in Europe or the United States, but as a tool to save time and money.”

A 2012 survey by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) found that young people in the country are moving away from social media and toward mobile because they find the former, “boring, confusing, frustrating and time consuming.” Mobiles are used to interact with numerous groups, using various levels of familiarity — texting to friends and family, networking socially or professionally, and emailing for more formal interaction.

Within the realm of digital technology, mobile use tops the list of technology adopted by the young because of lower costs and versatility. This is particularly true in the developing world, where broadband and Internet penetration and affordability are major factors driving technology adoption. Global media trend shows Internet versus mobile usage in 2010 in China as 20% vs. 57%; India as 4% vs. 41%; Brazil as 32% vs. 86%; and Indonesia as 5% vs. 66%. The University of Maryland study on youth media habits, for example, calls SMS “this generation’s Swiss Army Knife” — small and versatile. And powerful!

5. EMERGING PLATFORMS, EMERGING VOICES

As tools and platforms become ubiquitous, the cost of media production has dramatically declined, catalyzing an increase in the volume of content being produced, as well as the number of voices starting to be heard. Emerging technologies are also making access to traditional media easier, as people can listen to news and information programs on their mobile phones when they do not have radios at home. Mobile technology allows rural citizens to engage with media in ways that were previously not possible—by sending text messages to a radio station, or even sending opinions to newspapers and television stations.

“The ability to get diverse voices and local news at a really hyper local level is just vastly easier than it was when we started this work 30 years ago,” Bourgault says. “You can do a lot of production right on a mobile phone now.”

These emerging platforms are giving all people with access a chance to be content producers. They can be eyewitnesses to an unfolding story, contribute to on-going discussions, and help drive and sometimes change the direction of conversations.

“If there’s a protest going on in Iran, for example, somebody who we’ve never heard of before can upload a video to YouTube that shows the news in Tehran that day,” says Boorstin. And that has the potential to change the tenor of even mainstream media’s coverage of an issue. “Twitter, exchanges on Facebook, video uploads on YouTube by citizens – this is a whole new way to get your sources of news and to push forward new lines.”

There are fewer barriers to entry in this new media market, which welcomes, encourages, and embraces young people and many more nontraditional contributors. “Whether that’s women in countries in the Middle East like a Saudi Arabia or a Bahrain, where they’re not allowed to contribute, or people who have grievances with the
government, they are now able to communicate their viewpoints and share their ideas, both inside the country and very importantly outside the country with the diaspora,” says Boorstin. “These linkages are proving to be very important and effective in using this new media to communicate with the folks inside the country.”

An estimated 2.7 billion people worldwide have some kind of access to the Internet. The number of mobile-broadband subscriptions in developing countries more than doubled from 2011 to 2013, from 472 million to 1.16 billion, even surpassing the number of subscriptions in developed countries. While access is becoming more affordable, it is still largely out of reach for poor citizens. The cost of a 1GB data plan in Africa, for instance, represents on average more than 50 percent of gross national income (GNI), whereas in Europe this cost represents only one percent of an average person’s income.

“Until the cost of devices comes down, until people are connected to electrical grids, the benefits of technology will not be available to majority of the population,” says Erica Kochi, Innovation Co-Lead at UNICEF. “Until that power issue is resolved, it will be hard to deliver sort of the rich media, whether that’s video, streaming content, or just data intensive communication.”

Where there is access, it is often through affordable handheld devices, among which pre-paid handsets are the most popular.

“Young people want to have a chance to speak out and the medium that they are choosing for the most part a mobile medium,” says Kochi. “If they have access to the web it will be through a data connection but it’s still mobile. And I think that as people who are trying to strengthen the delivery of services, to strengthen economies, to strengthen international development, if we want to work with young people and really engage them we need to adopt the medium that they are using and this medium has become ubiquitous now and it very much is the mobile.”

A recent snowstorm that left Mostar, that left Bosnia under six feet of snow and closed all but two local radio stations demonstrates the continued importance of broadcast media. Studio 88, the local Mostar radio station run by Amna Popovac, successfully leveraged its social media presence to dispense crucial public safety information about the storm and help reconnect storm victims.

“People would leave notes on our Facebook page, we read those notes on air and their family members would reply,” says Popovac. “When half of the city was without electricity, the other half of the city would offer space. One caller said, ‘We have a spare room, so if there’s a family with small children, they can stay as long as need.’” The media ecosystem fostered by Studio 88 was able to provide crucial services to the community – giving information, connecting people, and changing.

This nexus between traditional and the emerging technology is perhaps where the most exciting work is happening, says Bourgault. “Take the networking and social power of the new media, and then you combine it with the amplifying power of traditional media and that is when you get the biggest impact.”

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**Box 3: DIGITAL NATIVE VS. DIGITAL IMMIGRANT**

Coined by researcher Marc Prensky in 2001, the term *digital native* refers to any of the 4.5 billion young people around the world born after 1980, over half the world’s total population, who largely grew up in a world with technology—Internet, mobile, Google, online social networks, etc. The theory holds that their cognitive processes have been altered from growing up in a world mediated by technology; young digital natives are natural
multitaskers, experiential learners, and extremely active in their technology use. Digital immigrants, on the other hand, are viewed as less conversant in ICTs, having learned acquired digital skills at a later stage in life. Like a foreigner who masters a new language while retaining an old accent, digital immigrants face more obstacles in adapting to all aspects of new technologies.

Though youth attraction to technology can partially be explained by constant exposure, young people are also drawn to it by their desire to establish identity. Identity construction is intrinsic to youth, and the search for self-knowledge, or voice, aligns with the use of digital technologies, which have been linked to increased feelings of social capital and civic participation. Young people likewise face fewer cognitive barriers to technology adaption, as they tend to be faster learners than those that are older.

Still, digital nativism does not directly translate to successful participation in the information ecosystem. Young people may display digital literacy while lacking media literacy, or the ability to analyze information accessed through the media. Young digital natives may be more adept at accessing, sharing, and creating content via digital technology, but the quality of this content is questionable where media literacy is low.

6. NURTURING EMERGING VOICES

Traditionally, local media has been dominated by the older elite, while global media has treated young people primarily as consumers. Now, with young people around the world taking to producing, consuming and sharing media content, the information ecosystem looks a lot more vibrant, with multiple platforms and voices—merging traditional with new, local with global.

Instead of being passive consumers of media, young people, more so in developing countries, are using new platforms to report on events, express and share ideas, analyze global events for relevance to their lives, and to share with their peers. A 2012 Viacom International Media Network study “The Next Normal: An Unprecedented Look at Millennials Worldwide,” which looked at 15,000 “millennials” (people ages 9-30) across 24 countries, found that young people are displaying an increased sense of national pride and interest in maintaining local traditions, while simultaneously reporting more tolerance and openness to other countries and cultures.

Young people who grew up as digital natives are comfortable with a wide array of media platforms, simultaneously using them to get information. In a 2012 study by Innerscope Research, a media research firm, participants in their 20s were found to switch media screens 27 times per nonworking hour on average. Another study carried out in the United States, reported that young people spend 29 percent of their time switching between different media. While these are U.S.-based studies, similar patterns are emerging in the global south. The 2011 University of Maryland project that interviewed 1000 college students in 10 countries found that “most college students, whether in developed or developing countries, are strikingly similar in how they use media and digital technologies...and a clear majority in every country admitted outright failure of their efforts to go unplugged.”

Mirza Ajnadzic is a multimedia journalist. He started his career as a photographer and a radio show host in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and now also works for an online video company in addition to being an avid blogger. “Social networking sites, radio, TV, multimedia on the Internet, or just text on the Internet, or printed media-- they’re just tools if you want to change things, or to talk to the people and say to them, ‘Ok, this is what we should do.’” A journalist, he says, is someone who has the need to change things.”
But defining who journalists are and navigating this information and media landscape is not so simple. While young digital natives’ media dexterity may mean they can find information with speed and ease, sharing does not constitute the ability to create quality media content, or the ability to analyze, contextualize and use the information—or even just to share the information safely.

Valentina Hvale Pelizzer runs Foundation One World Platform for Southeast Europe, an online portal accessible in four languages – Albanian, Macedonian, Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian and English. Her organization studies young people’s access to information, runs trainings for young people in the region on issues about media access, on using emerging media tools and platforms to tell stories and on digital privacy and online security.

“We need more stars. And when I say stars, I mean new faces, new voices. Not the old journalists who are called to talk and explain what is good, what is bad. We need young people,” says Pelizzer. They will make mistakes, they will say stupid things, but I’m sure that among all this, there will be something brilliant—something that will change the life of an event. So I think that if you have access, if you use—it’s just a matter of time when quality will surface.”

Pelizzer says we need to keep the space open, so emerging voices will continue to have an opportunity.

While there is already a digital divide between those with access and those without, media literacy is possibly a second-level divide — the ability of those who have access, to engage meaningfully with information and media. Improved media literacy means not just enhanced online searching, but also the ability to share pertinent information with others, to add to an ongoing discussion, to use information for personal advantage, and to be more engaged. The 2012 Arab Social Media Report on Social Media, Employment and Entrepreneurship found that social media is the primary mechanism through which young people search for employment. In terms of young journalists, media literacy is crucial to critically evaluating the information received and sharing with the public.

Adjnadic believes that we need to teach the young today how to think. “Afterwards, they will learn how to use the five W’s, or how to record video or audio, or how to produce films. But first, you need to learn to think. Young people know how to collect and share information,” he says. “But they don’t know how to process it.”

Amna Popovac, owner of Studio 88, a radio station operating in Mostar, BiH since 1999 says; “Young people are more open to social media and they are using it much more than I expected. They are using it to make comments about each other, but also they are using it for good purposes — to get together, to organize for events, to travel together, to go and do joint projects. Being from the older generation, I was skeptical. I was thinking that people will only use it for fun, for photos from travel. But no, people are using it to organize themselves. So we now have protests organized exclusively via Facebook groups. There are also projects developed by young people exclusively through Facebook groups. Also what we experienced here in February when we had the terrible snowstorm when people were not able to talk to each other, they were exchanging information via Facebook, via social networks. They became more or less, very important information exchange channel for young generation. They are using it for good purposes”

Digital tools have expanded the set of tools available to communicate and made the work of investigative journalists, citizen reporters, bloggers and other communicators easier. People now carry their address books on SIM cards, contact sources using SMS, research stories via search engines, conduct interviews using audio and video chat, and file stories using email and make their and others’ voices heard through websites, social networks and blogs. However, these technologies come with a risk attached — every share, tweet, email and SMS means that the person sending them is share more about themselves than they realize or intend to. Mobile phone conversations, and their locations, can be monitored; emails sent through popular services can be read by people who work at the
local Internet Service Provider or at the Internet café. And activities on Facebook or other online accounts can be visible to others when connected through unencrypted public Wi-Fi access points.

“While things have become more transparent, these new tools have also armed governments and particularly oppressive governments, with the ability to investigate their citizens in ways that were not previously available to them. So has made activists transparent in ways that perhaps they do not want to be.”

Built in security features in a device may lull people into believing that that the device in their hand in personal and private, but in an ecosystem, everything is interconnected. “They feel that when they’re on a mobile phone or they’re operating a laptop that because of built in security features that they’re safe from prying eyes or surveillance and nothing can be further from the truth.”

Content producers, whether they are professional journalists, citizen journalists, human rights activists or individual citizens, new challenges and risks are emerging when it comes to privacy and security. There are new pressures, new security risks emerging every day for people who engage with the Internet and are part of the information ecosystem.

A recent Knight report focuses on the need for training in digital media skills worldwide. “Community-based technology centers can provide the training and equipment for citizens to take advantage of all the available media for creating and sharing community news and information. Enhancing the capacity of individuals to produce, organize, and disseminate information should not be limited to online platforms.”

Technologies will continue to evolve, says Bourgault. “Internews is trying to take the technology questions out and really put people at the center of what we’re trying to do, ways of producing content, distributing content, the best way to get information out in a given environment – with people at the center of what we’re trying to do.”

Ends/