



Role of the Media

Writing Stories, Avoiding UNglish

Bangkok, Thailand
June 29, 2009

[The Role of the Media]

Typically, journalists say it is their role:

- To report true and accurate information
- To inform about *new* matters
- To educate, to entertain, to explain

[Also:

- To reflect society
- To protect the interests of the people
- To be a voice for the voiceless
- To write for their *readers*

[The “bridge” role]



[Other roles: Watchdog]

- A “check and balance” on those who hold power, whether political or economic. Hold them accountable
- “PM vows to end poverty in three years”
- What ever happened to the health insurance fees collected from migrants – who gets that money and how is it being used?
- Who’s getting the gov’t contracts?

[Social conscience]

(To comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable)

- To shine light on community problems (homelessness, poverty, etc.) through in-depth reporting and interviews with those affected
- Explore possible solutions
- During elections, voter-driven reporting
- Civic or public journalism

[Full-service newspaper]

- To be an indispensable part of readers' daily lives
- To know what's important to readers and provide information that helps them make better decisions (where to send their kids to school, what products to avoid, how to save money.....)

Daily Herald motto:

To fear God, tell the truth, and make money

- News is a *business*
- A balance between giving readers/audience what *they* want and what *you* think they need.
- It's a special kind of business, though. More like a public service.
- The bottom line: media companies need to produce *compelling* stories to attract, maintain and build audiences.

[A high calling]

- “Readers don’t read for what but for why; to discover what isn’t and what may be; what if and how come; what’s he or she really like; and, most of all, **what does it mean to me?** ...
- The reader depends on writers to make sense of their world, to provide at least what Robert Frost described as a ‘momentary stay against the confusion.’ **The reader needs writers who reveal, explain, entertain, persuade, and, most of all, articulate readers’ own feelings and thoughts.**

[And, finally ...]

- To be writer in a newsroom is to have a high calling; the writer reveals the world to those living in it so that they can make sense of their lives. And in doing so, we enjoy the gift of first sight, the glimpse of pattern that explains our world to us.”

-- *From Donald Murray, US writing coach, “Writing for Your Readers”*