

World Press Freedom Day lecture May 1, 2009
The Welsh Centre for International Affairs, Cardiff
Professor Ian Hargreaves:
Digital Britain – will it be good for journalism in Digital Wales?

It is a great honour to be invited to speak here, in the Temple of Peace, in what is now my home city of Cardiff on World Press Freedom Day, 2009.

On this day, events are held around the world to mark the importance of the free operation of journalists, to pay tribute to their work and to reflect upon what we can do ourselves, in the places where we live and work, to enhance those freedoms and to ensure that they are robustly sustained for the benefit of our democratic way of life.

I come to this subject as the wearer over time of many, perhaps too many, different hats. Peter Preston teased me in the Observer recently on this point and concluded that my professional versatility must make me a prize target for pub quiz teams across the land. Anyone who knows my skills at quick recall of general knowledge will have quickly concluded that Peter and I are not drinking companions.

But I have done a lot of jobs, most of them in journalism: local papers in Yorkshire, the Financial Times, the BBC, the Independent and the New Statesman. I have also, for the last ten years, been a Professor of Journalism here in Cardiff at the School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, one of the most distinguished centres in the world for the study of journalism. I've done some work in business communications and, until a year ago, I was a founding member of the board of Ofcom, the communications regulator.

I mention these things to make the point that what I have to say this evening is formed from a perspective inside journalism, but also from a wider set of points of view: economic, regulatory, academic and political.

Then there is my current day job at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London, where I am Director of Strategic Communication. Here I spend my time trying to work out how to make Government communications work better in a global landscape, most recently in delivering communications around the G20 London Summit.

But I am speaking today very much in my capacity as a member of the university, as a citizen of Wales and (who knows?) perhaps a journalist resting between assignments.

I must stress that the views I will express this evening are not those of the Foreign Office – indeed I will cover subjects that are of no concern to the Foreign Office. But I hope that my views will be of interest to you.

What I want to do is to begin by saying something about the state of media freedom globally, but then to connect that to the situation in the UK and specifically here in Wales. I make no apology for moving across such a wide dimension. Journalism today, because of the internet, is capable of being at once local and global in reach and availability.

One of the less debated consequences of this is that journalism in one country today much more easily influences journalism in another. A business model which shows promise in Australia or Germany might have something to say to Canada or Brazil. Here in Cardiff we educate journalists who will go on to work all over the world. Harold Wilson once said that a lie could be half way round the world before truth had got its boots on. Today the truth had better be prepared to run barefoot.

Wales, meanwhile, is at a pivotal point in addressing the risks and opportunities facing its own news media. Big questions, historic opportunities face us.

But let me say start with Unesco and World Press Freedom Day. This special day is now long established and always welcome. I don't think it's necessary in front of this audience to make a detailed argument about why press freedom matters. Liberty of the press has been at the heart of UK's culture for more than 300 years, though it took an American, Thomas Jefferson, to state plainly that given a choice between a free press and free institutions of government, we should choose the former. Today that choice remains in the balance in too many parts of the world.

My boss at the Foreign Office, the Foreign Secretary David Miliband, has today released a statement to mark World Press Freedom Day, which reads as follows:

"Freedom for the media to report and analyse what is going on in the world is of fundamental importance in holding governments to account. We must all increase our efforts to ensure that these values are protected at a time when the threat to the safety of journalists doing their jobs remains unacceptably high.

During the past year 60 journalists and media workers have been killed. These tragic deaths, along with over 900 attacks on media workers, 29 kidnappings of journalists and the closure of over 2,000 media outlets, harm our ability to understand the world.

Today I want to re-state Britain's commitment to promote, defend, and protect the right of journalists to do their jobs without fear of reprisal. We continue to support UN Security Council Resolution 1738, which calls for war journalists, media professionals and associated personnel to be respected and protected under the Geneva Conventions as civilians, and the need to bring to justice

those who incite such such violence”

I don't imagine there will be much dissent in the room to that, based on data from Reporters Sans Frontieres.

But beyond these shocking figures, two specifics of this year's World Press Freedom Day have struck me. One is the location of the main Unesco press freedom debate this year, bringing together a distinguished cast of people this weekend in Doha, Qatar.

Qatar is one of the small but prosperous Gulf Emirates and is famous today among journalists for being the home of Al Jazeera.

Since it first started broadcasting television news in 1996, Al Jazeera has established itself as a major Arabic voice in global journalism, with an audience of around 50 million and a powerful worldwide network of bureaux and correspondents. Accused by some of promulgating the interests of terrorists, its true achievement has been to make a potent connection with the Arab street from which it draws its authority.

Along with other broadcasters raised in the digital age, Al Jazeera has helped to break the stranglehold of English language news in global broadcasting and generated strong competition for itself within the Arabic news broadcasting sphere, not least from Al-Arabiya, based in Dubai, and BBC Arabic. The recent growth and vigour of journalism in the Arab world often goes un-noted when we bemoan the crisis of resources in European and North American American journalism.

I was fortunate enough to be able to visit Al Jazeera at the end of last year, to hear about its plans to boost its reach through services delivered by the mobile phone network, which is today rapidly emerging as the core communications network of the non-wired world, the emerging economies. Al Jazeera set out to base its journalistic culture on a published framework of values which starts by proclaiming “honesty, courage, fairness, balance, independence, credibility and diversity, giving no priority to commercial or political considerations over professional ones.” Doha is a good place to discuss freedom of the media.

The second striking point about this year's World Press Freedom Day is the award of the Unesco, Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom prize. Guillermo Cano, whose name is linked with the prize, was an editor in Colombia, murdered by the stooges of drug barons, in Bogota, in 1986.

This year, the award is also made to a dead journalist. Lasantha Wickrematunga, the editor of a weekly Sri Lankan newspaper, the Sunday Leader.

Let me tell you the story of Lasantha Wickrematunga.

Lasantha was a lawyer, who came to journalism as a second career, setting

up the Sunday Herald in 1994: a politically edgy tabloid in a country riven by ethnic tension between the Tamil minority and the Sinhalese majority. We are particularly aware of this civil war because it has been in the news, as the Tamil Tigers or LTTE have been pinned into one small corner of the country by Government forces. Those of us who work in London have also seen every day for several weeks a gathering of Tamil protestors in Parliament Square.

This is the setting in which Lasantha practised his journalism. He was, by all accounts, a big man. Loud in his passions and compelling as a colleague and an editor.

On January 8, he was driving from home to his office when a posse of motorcyclists surrounded his car, smashed the front window and shot him in the head. Earlier that day, Lasantha had discussed with his wife suspicious behaviour around his home and commented on the risks involved in going about his normal business that day. But he took the view that he wasn't going to be kept away from his editorial meetings by fear. Those who knew him well testify that he spoke openly of the risk that he would one day be murdered. Indeed, we know that Lasantha was mindful of this risk because he wrote an editorial, to be published in the event of his assassination.

I would like to read you the whole of this editorial, but it is a little too long for that. But let me read enough to convey its impact and its character. It is headlined: And then they came for me. I cannot think of a better way for us to mark World Press Freedom Day here in Cardiff, or anywhere else for that matter.

“No other profession calls on its practitioners to lay down their lives for their art save the armed forces and, in Sri Lanka, journalism. In the course of the past few years, the independent media have increasingly come under attack. Electronic and print-media institutions have been burnt, bombed, sealed and coerced. Countless journalists have been harassed, threatened and killed. It has been my honour to belong to all those categories and now especially the last.

I have been in the business of journalism a good long time. Indeed, 2009 will be The Sunday Leader's 15th year. Many things have changed in Sri Lanka during that time, and it does not need me to tell you that the greater part of that change has been for the worse. We find ourselves in the midst of a civil war ruthlessly prosecuted by protagonists whose bloodlust knows no bounds. Terror, whether perpetrated by terrorists or the state, has become the order of the day. Indeed, murder has become the primary tool whereby the state seeks to control the organs of liberty. Today it is the journalists, tomorrow it will be the judges.

Why then do we do it? I often wonder that.

After all, I too am a husband, and the father of three wonderful children. I too have responsibilities and obligations that transcend my profession, be it the law or journalism. Is it worth the risk? Many people tell me it is not. Friends tell me to revert to the bar, and goodness knows it offers a better and safer livelihood. Others, including political leaders on both sides, have at various times sought to induce me to take to politics, going so far as to offer me ministries of my choice. Diplomats, recognising the risk journalists face in Sri Lanka, have offered me safe passage and the right of residence in their countries. Whatever else I may have been stuck for, I have not been stuck for choice.

But there is a calling that is yet above high office, fame, lucre and security. It is the call of conscience.

The Sunday Leader has been a controversial newspaper because we say it like we see it: whether it be a spade, a thief or a murderer, we call it by that name. We do not hide behind euphemism.

The investigative articles we print are supported by documentary evidence thanks to the public-spiritedness of citizens who at great risk to themselves pass on this material to us. We have exposed scandal after scandal, and never once in these 15 years has anyone proved us wrong or successfully prosecuted us.

The free media serve as a mirror in which the public can see itself sans mascara and styling gel. From us you learn the state of your nation, and especially its management by the people you elected to give your children a better future. Sometimes the image you see in that mirror is not a pleasant one. But while you may grumble in the privacy of your armchair, the journalists who hold the mirror up to you do so publicly and at great risk to themselves. That is our calling, and we do not shirk it.

Many people suspect that The Sunday Leader has a political agenda: it does not. If we appear more critical of the government than of the opposition it is only because we believe that - pray excuse cricketing argot - there is no point in bowling to the fielding side.

Neither should our distaste for the war be interpreted to mean that we support the Tigers. The LTTE are among the most ruthless and bloodthirsty organisations ever to have infested the planet. There is no gainsaying that it must be eradicated. But to do so by violating the rights of Tamil citizens, bombing and shooting them mercilessly, is not only wrong but shames the Sinhalese, whose claim to be custodians of the dhamma is forever called into question by this savagery, much of which is unknown to the public because of censorship.

What is more, a military occupation of the country's north and east will require the Tamil people of those regions to live eternally as second-class citizens, deprived of all self respect. Do not imagine that you can placate them by showering "development" and "reconstruction" on them in the post-war era. The wounds of war will scar them forever, and you will also have an even more bitter and hateful Diaspora to contend with. A problem amenable to a political solution will thus become a festering wound that will yield strife for all eternity. If I seem angry and frustrated, it is only because most of my countrymen - and all of the government - cannot see this writing so plainly on the wall.

It is well known that I was on two occasions brutally assaulted, while on another my house was sprayed with machine-gun fire. Despite the government's sanctimonious assurances, there was never a serious police inquiry into the perpetrators of these attacks, and the attackers were never apprehended. In all these cases, I have reason to believe the attacks were inspired by the government.

When finally I am killed, it will be the government that kills me.

The irony in this is that, unknown to most of the public, Mahinda [that is Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of Sri Lanka] and I have been friends for more than a quarter century. Indeed, I suspect that I am one of the few people remaining who routinely addresses him by his first name and uses the familiar Sinhala address oya when talking to him. Although I do not attend the meetings he periodically holds for newspaper editors, hardly a month passes when we do not meet, privately or with a few close friends present, late at night at President's House. There we swap yarns, discuss politics and joke about the good old days. A few remarks to him would therefore be in order here.

Mahinda, when you finally fought your way to the SLFP presidential nomination in 2005, nowhere were you welcomed more warmly than in this column. Indeed, we broke with a decade of tradition by referring to you throughout by your first name. So well known were your commitments to human rights and liberal values that we ushered you in like a breath of fresh air. Then, through an act of folly, you got yourself involved in the Helping Hambantota scandal. It was after a lot of soul-searching that we broke the story, at the same time urging you to return the money. By the time you did so several weeks later, a great blow had been struck to your reputation. It is one you are still trying to live down.

Sadly, for all the dreams you had for our country in your younger days, in just three years you have reduced it to rubble. In the name of patriotism you have trampled on human rights, nurtured unbridled corruption and squandered public money like no other President before you.

As for me, I have the satisfaction of knowing that I walked tall and bowed to no man. And I have not travelled this journey alone. Fellow journalists in other branches of the media walked with me: most of them are now dead, imprisoned without trial or exiled in far-off lands. Others walk in the shadow of death that your Presidency has cast on the freedoms for which you once fought so hard.

You will never be allowed to forget that my death took place under your watch. As anguished as I know you will be, I also know that you will have no choice but to protect my killers: you will see to it that the guilty one is never convicted. You have no choice.

People often ask me why I take such risks and tell me it is a matter of time before I am bumped off. Of course I know that: it is inevitable. But if we do not speak out now, there will be no one left to speak for those who cannot, whether they be ethnic minorities, the disadvantaged or the persecuted.

An example that has inspired me throughout my career in journalism has been that of the German theologian, Martin Niemuller. In his youth he was an anti-Semite and an admirer of Hitler. As Nazism took hold in Germany, however, he saw Nazism for what it was: it was not just the Jews Hitler sought to extirpate, it was just about anyone with an alternate point of view. Niemuller spoke out, and for his trouble was incarcerated in the Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps from 1937 to 1945, and very nearly executed. While incarcerated, Niemuller wrote a poem that, from the first time I read it in my teenage years, stuck hauntingly in my mind:

First they came for the Jews

and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the Communists

and I did not speak out because I was not a Communist.

Then they came for the trade unionists

and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for me

and there was no one left to speak out for me.

If you remember nothing else, remember this: The Leader is there for you, be

you Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim, low-caste, homosexual, dissident or disabled. Its staff will fight on, unbowed and unafraid, with the courage to which you have become accustomed. Do not take that commitment for granted. Let there be no doubt that whatever sacrifices we journalists make, they are not made for our own glory or enrichment: they are made for you. Whether you deserve their sacrifice is another matter. As for me, God knows I tried.”

Lasantha Wickrematunga, posthumous winner of this year’s Unesco Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize.

Most journalists, of course, do not live with the dangers faced by those on the Colombo Sunday Herald. My own work as a reporter took me into some tense situations, but I was never a war correspondent and the only person who ever looked like he genuinely wanted to kill me was a man who jumped into the middle of the road with a gun when I was riding a motorbike in the Bahamas, heading for an interview with that country’s Central Bank governor.

That was life on the Financial Times, which could be physically dangerous but mostly wasn’t, unless you were minded to alter without precise consultation the copy of one of the more famous writers or misread someone’s balance sheet.

I will, however, never forget the day I drove through the night from London to Brecon to tell the mother of my friend and colleague David Thomas, the FT’s Energy Correspondent, that her son had been killed driving among the blazing oil wells of Kuwait following the first Gulf War in 1991. Great journalism requires great courage.

But so far as I’m aware no journalists have died in Wales this year and nor are any imprisoned, at least not as a result of their professional activities. So let me turn to matters closer to home.

In this lecture slot a year ago, Geraint Talfan Davies posed the question: Is new media killing journalism? He replied that journalism was in all kinds of trouble in Wales, but that the blame could not be laid at the door of new media; indeed many of the problems he identified: a weak all-Wales newspaper sector and a piecemeal radio broadcasting network are problems that long pre-date the internet.

But that doesn’t stop Geraint and others, quite rightly, looking to the architects of the current Digital Britain programme to help solve old problems as well as new ones. Hence the title of my lecture today: will Digital Britain be good for journalism in Wales?

The re-framing of the question indicates that things have moved on a lot in the last year. Ofcom has completed its second review of public service broadcasting. Lord Carter of Barnes (that is Stephen Carter, formerly of Ofcom) now Minister for Communications, Technology and Broadcasting, has published the first phase of his Digital Britain Report. And the Welsh Assembly Government has been amongst those making a strong reply to both

these documents, with the result that the debate about journalism in Wales is better informed and more plainly staked out in the public policy debate than probably at any time. Carter's final report is due next month.

As someone who came to Wales just over ten years ago to run the Centre for Journalism Studies at Cardiff University, I have to say that these facts in themselves give me pleasure. Back in 1998/9, when I set up something called the Wales Media Forum and argued for a Wales internet strategy, there weren't many takers. Today, our politicians and many others have recognized that the stakes really are very high and that post-devolution, Wales has the capacity to get a meaningful grip of the issues. Ed Richards, the Chief Executive of Ofcom, said just this week that the opportunity facing Wales and other parts of the UK about a new broadcasting settlement is "historic."

The issues are now well aired. Newspapers, ITV and commercial radio have all been battered by competition for advertising from the internet and by the recession. Outside the BBC, journalism is shedding jobs and reputation. But to anyone who doesn't follow all of this quite closely, the remedies proposed here in Wales must sound quite confusing.

ITV, having scaled back its news mission in Wales and in the English regions has talked about partnering with the BBC to preserve Wales's Channel 3 news service beyond digital switchover, which happens this year and next here in Wales.

S4C has suggested that it might step out in a new role as commissioner of an English language news service for Wales to compete with the one provided by BBC Wales.

Lord Carter is entertaining both these ideas, as well as a review of media ownership rules, which might well permit owners of newspapers in Wales to become broadcasters. He has also called up another review of digital radio, where Wales has important issues at stake, and undertaken to force the pace on getting firm decisions on public service broadcasting before it is too late.

Carter's Digital Britain review is also ambitious to establish a universal, high-speed broadband infrastructure across the UK – and has called for a new "universal service obligation" to make quality broadband available everywhere, to replace the USO which made voice telephony universally accessible in an earlier age.

All of these issues are of vital moment in Wales: to our economy, our politics, our culture and our way of life.

It is worth recalling the key passages in Lord Carter's Digital Britain report which speak to the values and goals at work in his pre-legislative thinking. Here is what he says:

"It is important for the UK that we enjoy content over digital networks that relates to our culture and experiences as a society and informs us as citizens

in a democracy. In practice, this means content generated in the UK for UK consumers, and plural sources of informed, accurate and impartial news, as well as of informed comment and analysis. The market will always provide some of this content, but we need to decide what else we require, and make policy decisions to achieve that. What do we, as a society, expect and require, and what institutions and policies will best deliver it?"

We can, indeed we must, be able to substitute Wales for the UK in that sentence, without fear of contradiction.

Much of Carter's analysis is economic, aimed at boosting UK performance in the creative industries, building upon the fact that measured against the size of its population, the UK is currently doing better in the global creative marketplace than either the US or France, but certain to face ever stiffer competition. For Wales, the creative sector is crucial for jobs, for prosperity, for self-respect, for the future.

Carter agrees with Ofcom that we cannot rely only on the BBC to provide public service broadcasting or public service journalism. There must be, in his words, "competition for quality and innovation across a wide range of programming and for a publicly funded plurality of impartial news sources at regional and national levels."

Finally, Carter notes Ofcom's suggestion "that the current regional news slots in ITV's schedule could be opened to a third party, contestably-funded, news provider or indeed that the whole process, including distribution, could be made contestable. This suggestion has the advantage that it could bring in other news-providers from related media who can offset their news-gathering and production costs across a range of outlets, not just commercial television. It could also provide a clearer route to more broadband-focused delivery at some stage in future. It has the disadvantage that, if adopted wholesale now as the only approach, it may require additional public expenditure."

In its comments on the Digital Britain report, the Welsh Assembly Government backed Ofcom's proposal for a Wales news service within slots made available by ITV, to be delivered by a third party, contestably-funded and possibly even with contestable distribution. The WAG noted, but more non-committally, the idea of a BBC-ITV partnership and the proposal for an S4C-led English language news service. In its own response, S4C said intriguingly that "a progressive and open rights ownership model would be developed with a view to sustaining and promoting other forms of local journalism." S4C's English language News Pilot would be overseen by a "strong and representative board, appointed by the S4C Authority."

The expert group that advised the WAG proposed the establishment of a Welsh Media Commission to oversee the creation of this new force in Welsh journalism, among other responsibilities.

I know that all of this has sent sparks flying across the media institutions which cluster in the Cardiff Media Village. And the debate does indeed raise tricky questions about governance of public service media in Wales and, as ever, of where the money will come from.

But none of these problems is insoluble. And they must not be allowed to distract us from the task of taking the historic opportunity which now lies before us. We are not now in the early rounds of this drama, we are approaching the finale, the Britain's Got Talent moment when everyone has strutted their stuff and the judges must decide. It's make your mind up time. But thankfully not with Simon Cowell and Piers Morgan in on the bench.

The debate has, I think, delivered clarity on the following points:

- an Assembly Government capable of clear policy specification in this area demands and deserves to be heard;
- none of the matters under discussion can sensibly be resolved in London; equally what works in Wales must work alongside what happens in England;
- in designing a solution based upon "plurality" around the BBC, we should make sure that any new institutional arrangement will plug and play into the age of universal broadband;
- any new commissioning machinery must be clearly insulated from direct political interference

One big specific question is whether the main focus should be upon looking after the Channel 3 news slots or something broader and more ambitious. My answer is that we must for sure keep Channel 3 healthy, indeed we should take this opportunity to improve its health and so its life expectancy, but that we must also look further into the future, as a previous generation of politicians did when they created the BBC, nearly a hundred years ago, or S4C and Channel 4.

The ambition must be high because the matter is of such high importance. As the Institute of Welsh Affairs media audit said last year, we are called upon to meet "the pressing need in Wales for investment in quality journalism: journalism that demands time, talent and space; journalism that can link the local with the national and vice versa, and where opinions derive from trusted, assiduous investigation; journalism whose intelligence and ambition measures up to the new democratic reality in Wales that we now have the capacity to pass laws to govern ourselves."

If you already have, as we fortunately do have, the BBC: a large and self-confident global institution, probably the best news organization in the world, and arguably the most important single institution in Wales, what you need to create competition and difference is not a second large institution, a poor man's BBC, but a way of investing in and supporting what people have started to call "networked journalism," so that it can thrust its roots across the whole of Welsh life.

Networked journalism delivers from diverse voices a multi-media presence on-line and it builds its strength through the brilliance of its linkages and alliances, whether to individual bloggers and citizen journalists or communities of interest within Wales along with sources of news, information, comment

and creativity of interest to Welsh people, no matter where they live. It offers an interactive, conversational, disputatious, rock and roll journalism for Wales, its diaspora and anyone else who wishes to join in. And, of course, it needn't and shouldn't stop at journalism. Such a network can also nourish and animate much else.

This cannot be provided by a single organization with a single board of governors bound to a 20th century mentality. It must be a patchwork of organizations, mutually nutritious, as well as competitive with each other. It may benefit from or even depend upon the investment of public funds, but it should also seek private and voluntary funding. It is a journalism which, in business terms, is the work of entrepreneurs, not corporate giants or established public sector institutions.

Some say that the business model for on-line journalism, and therefore for networked journalism, won't work because we are swimming in free content, much of it the very high quality offerings of the BBC.

But even in a brutal recession which is hammering jobs and profits in all parts of the media, there are important reasons not to be too pessimistic: the fact that readership of many local weekly papers (including those in Wales) have held up in recent years, demonstrating the value we place on real local news and discussion; the spread of broadband; the imminence of digital switchover; the successful emergence of community radio, which blends public and private finance; the fact that advertising on the internet has already overtaken the value of advertising on radio; the continued low cost of access to on-line publishing; the evidence, from survey after survey, that people want their politicians, they really do expect them, to look after journalism in Wales.

If I were starting out in journalism today, in recession-beaten Wales, or England, or America or Africa, I'd be looking for a way to make this networked journalism model work, pushing trial and error, confident in the belief that democratic societies will always value the facts and evidence that good reporters bring to light and the high quality media debate which help us to reach judgments and settle our differences. A business model will emerge. It always has.

I remember being in Pembrokeshire in 2004 when the local paper there, the Western Telegraph, now part of the Newsquest group, was celebrating its 150th anniversary. The Western Telegraph's founder got started by taking on himself the combined roles of reporter, editor and ad salesman, which was not unusual for the time. Having created his news sheet, he then set about selling it personally door to door. That's how newspapers made the transition from high-cost single sheets from which the literate few read out loud to the illiterate many to become the engine of economic and democratic progress.

It's the spirit of the Western Telegraph in 1854 that we need today: a spirit of risk-taking, challenge and hard work that ignites a contest for quality and better journalism in Wales; journalism which makes life less comfortable for government and big institutions, public and private, even though journalism

will continue to turn to big institutions and the taxpayer for financial support.

On World Press Freedom Day here in Wales that must be our focus. What is it that Lasantha Wikrematunga says to us, from beyond the grave?

“A free media which serves as a mirror in which the public can see itself sans mascara and styling gel. From us you learn the state of your nation, and especially its management by the people you elected to give your children a better future.”

In the future, I am as sure as I can be that the most adventurous journalism will express itself first and in greatest depth in some kind of on-line format because on-line does what journalism has always striven for: to be fast, to be first, to engage hearts as well as heads. Which means that the internet, in all its disruptive but creative glory, is the key to the future of journalism in Wales because it is the key to reporting and persuasion, to the transfer of facts, knowledge and understanding, to public conversation. The internet carries radio and television, as well as print. It is, essentially, invincible.

One proof of that, if you want one, tucked away in the last year's Reporters Sans Frontieres statistics of media repression is that 2008 saw the first recorded murder of a citizen journalist and an unprecedented growth across the world of techniques designed to suppress or control the internet.

The journalistic medium may be new, but the battle for its freedom is very, very old.

For Wales, this is a pivotal year for media freedom.

A historic opportunity. We should take it.

Thank you.