GLOBAL BITS

CHANGE FOR A JUST WORLD

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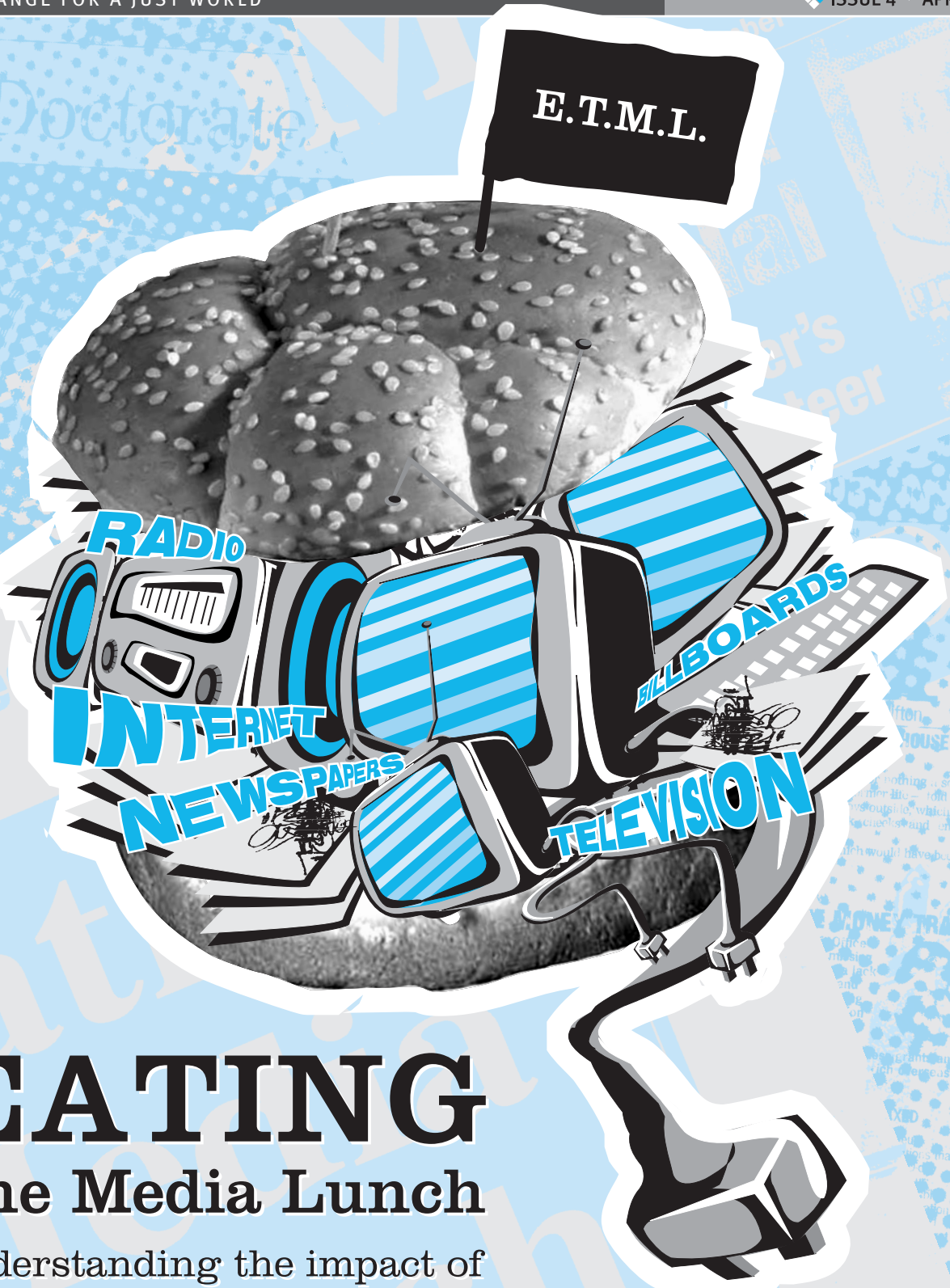

EATING

The Media Lunch

Understanding the impact of mainstream media on young people's development

global education centre
change for a just world

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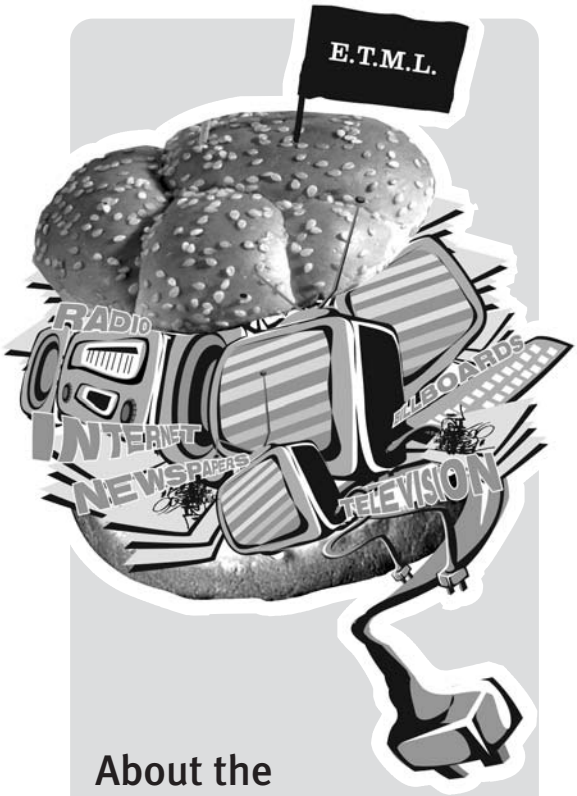

About the theme of this issue

We gain most of our understanding of the world through the news media. Therefore the increasing corporatisation of the news media has a significant impact on how we view the world. New cultural realities are being created but many voices and perspectives remain missing.

This issue of Global Bits will explore the news media and its impact on young people and their lives.

Special thanks to:

Paul Zoubkov (principle writer), Ilai Amir, Tessa Johnston, Mohammed Osman, Steven Price, Mike Regan, Alan Samson, Cass Simonson, Lisa Woods and Neil Young.

Global Youth Work

- Starts from young people's experiences and encourages their personal, social and political development.
- Works on the principles of informal education and offers opportunities that are educative, participative, empowering and designed to promote equality of opportunity.
- Is based on an agenda that has been negotiated with young people.
- Engages young people in critical analyses of local and global influences on their lives and their communities.
- Raises awareness of globalisation within an historical context, and encourages an understanding and appreciation of diversity locally and globally.
- Encourages an insight into the relationships and links between the personal, the local and the global and ensures that these links are based on equity and justice.
- Insists that the peoples and organisations of the north and south are seen as equal partners for change in an interdependent world.
- Encourages active citizenship by giving young people the opportunity to participate in actions, and build alliances, that seek to bring about change locally and globally.

Global Bits is a quarterly publication providing youth workers and educators with information and ideas for exploring global issues and how they impact on youth and their communities. It includes perspectives and suggestions from practising youth workers throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

Global Bits is free to all youth workers and educators.

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What Is News Media?

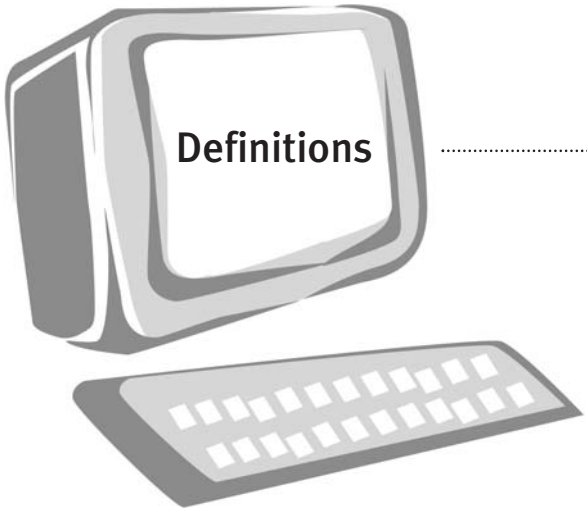
THE DESIRE FOR NEWS IS AS OLD AS COMMUNICATION ITSELF. HUMAN BEINGS HAVE ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE WORLD AND HOW IT WILL AFFECT THEIR LIVES.

In the current age of global television, numerous newspapers and 24/7-news coverage, this desire should be satisfied like never before. However, there is a definite sense of unease.

The news media has vast influence and reaches people from extremely diverse backgrounds and of all ages. For most, the news media is our main source of information about the world around us.

Despite technological advancement, the media increasingly fails to portray a realistic picture of our world. In search of audience and profit, serious issues are often trivialised and the trivial is presented as newsworthy. Many voices remain missing and the culture of Western consumerism is promoted throughout. Young people often grow up misinformed, disconnected and hyper-consuming.

Despite technological advancement, the media increasingly fails to portray a realistic picture of our world. In search of audience and profit, serious issues are often trivialised and the trivial is presented as newsworthy.



Definitions

News

"*News* is the reporting of current events usually by local, regional or mass media in the form of newspapers, television and radio programmes, or sites on the World Wide Web... Most news is investigated and presented by journalists ... and often distributed via news agencies. If the content of news is significant enough, it eventually becomes history."

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/News.

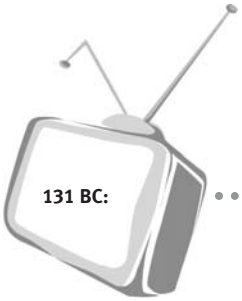
Media

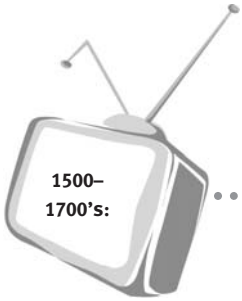
Media is a contraction of the term 'media of communication', which refers to the organised delivery of fact, opinion and entertainment in any medium such as newspaper, radio and TV.

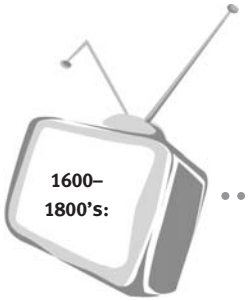
Mass media is used to refer to any form of the media aimed at a very large audience.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media

The News Timeline







Spoken word

Wherever people meet - at a crossroads, in a market place, around a well or a campfire - they share news from near or far. In time, elaborate systems of oral news develop: runners, town criers, ballad singers and 'bush telegraphs'. Some remain to this day.

Written news

Ancient Rome: written journalism begins with the publication of *Acta Diurna*. Produced for over 300 years, this handwritten daily was posted in public places around the Empire and covered areas such as government, military, crime, celebrities and sports. Gossip and gore dominate the news as far back as 2000 years ago. Similar bulletins circulate among government officials in imperial China.

Mass media

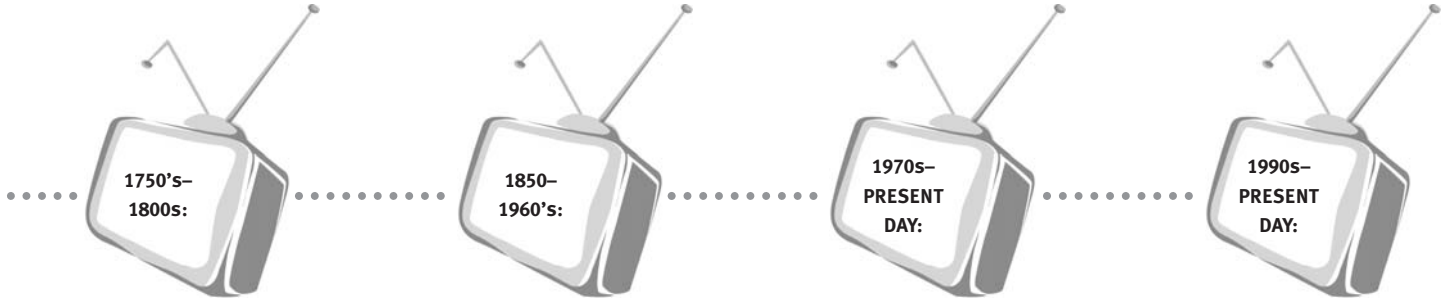
Invention of the printing press in 1453 unlocks the power of the written word and brings it to a wider audience. The recordable becomes affordable and stimulates its demand.

It takes another century and a half before the first printed newspaper appears in Germany in 1603, and later spreads throughout the world.

Advertising and freedom of the press

Following its first appearance in a German news pamphlet in 1525, advertising becomes an increasingly important source of funding for news proprietors. In time, it becomes the main source of revenue, often influencing the style and content of the published news.

During the Age of Enlightenment a tradition of dissent through print becomes firmly entrenched, and authorities crack down with censorship. In response, the idea of journalism as a guard dog of public interests begins to take shape. Many countries start to enact legislation protecting freedom of the press. But even now, what's on paper can be vastly different from what is happening in reality.



Bias and 'yellow' journalism

Until the end of the 19th century, most reporting is unashamedly biased. Hundreds of partisan newspapers spring up and compete in what are often small geographic locations. All push their own editorial line - promoting the interests of their audience, owners and advertisers. The distinction between fact and opinion is often blurred, and the concept of objectivity is not yet invented.

The steam printing press invented in 1812 allows for the printing of tens of thousands of copies per day. Increasing competition and the lure of greater profits lead to the development of "yellow journalism" where exaggeration and hyperbole take precedence over factual reporting.

Transformation and invention

The first New Zealand newspaper, *New Zealand Gazette*, is published in Port Nicholson in 1840. Also first Māori newspaper *Te Hokioi o Nui Tireni e Rere Atu Na* (The Warbird of New Zealand Soaring Above) is produced by the King Movement out of Ngarawhahia in 1861.

Slowly, journalism takes on a more serious form. Mid 1800s sees the development of news agencies like Reuters and Associated Press, whose role is to gather information and distribute it to various news publishers. In time, professional journalist groups are established and various training opportunities start to emerge. By the 1930s the concept of responsible, unbiased reporting becomes the norm.

Two other great news media - radio and television - are invented. Like the printing press 500 years earlier, they revolutionise the way we understand and receive the news. Now we can have immediate, constant and free information, but with much less influence over its content.

The age of corporation

Most news media is sold from private and public ownership to vast multi-national corporations. As they are required by law to maximise the return for their shareholders, any issues of morality or public concern in the delivery of news become secondary.

Under the influence of corporate lobbying and economic thought, governments progressively deregulate the media industry. Controls on ownership are removed, allowing it to become concentrated in a handful of global mega-firms. The media becomes an omnipresent cultural force. It no longer informs, but moulds our perception of the world, increasingly reflecting corporate interests.

Return to citizen journalism?

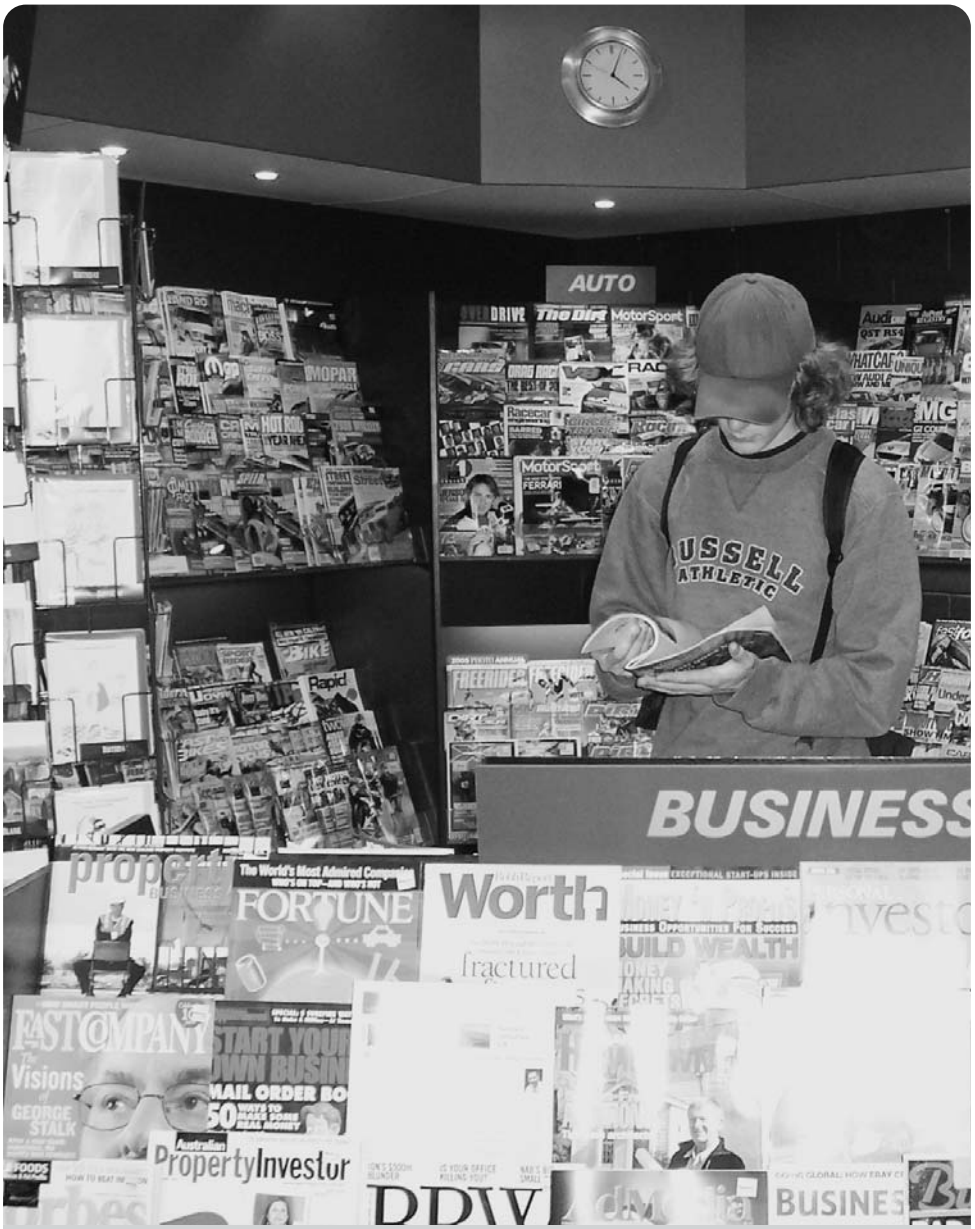
The birth of the Internet gives power back to the consumers. From now on, anyone can communicate directly with a global audience, promoting a multitude of knowledge and opinions. The challenge to the mainstream is overwhelming, and young people's technological literacy often leads the charge.

However, most of the world still cannot afford the technology involved, and the quantity of information can mean that less of it is actually shared.

Sources:

A History of News (1996) Mitchell Stephens
Media Myth Makers (2003) Benjamin Radford
Newspapers (1973) S W Bradley
http://www.criticism.com/md/kellner.html
http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/article409.html
www.wikipedia.org

Why is News Media Important?



The news media has the ability to educate or entertain, manipulate or inform, set social agendas or make profit. However, the delivery of news is more than just business and also serves an important public function.

By keeping us informed, the media allows us to meaningfully participate in the issues affecting our lives. Just imagine trying to vote, comply with laws, or heed travel or health warnings without publicly available information! The news media is also a force against the abuse of power. Journalists have a great opportunity to fight corruption, exploitation and even propaganda, due to the public delivery of their work.

Media accessibility

Because of its importance, it is essential that the media remains accessible and unbiased. In 1949, the UK Royal Commission on the Press suggested that the media should be:

- **Truthful:** avoid excessive exaggeration, bias or deliberate suppression or omission of relevant facts, but ...

  "We paid $3 billion for these stations. We'll tell you what the news is. The news is what we say it is!"

  A Fox Network executive, on firing two reporters who refused to change their story on the danger of Monsanto's beef growth hormone.

- **Diverse:** sufficiently numerous to present all important points of view catering for differences in taste, public opinion and education, but ...

  "In 2004, only nine global corporations own most of the world's media."

  Bill Rosenberg, *News Media Ownership in New Zealand*

- **Non-sensationalist:** it should not give excessive attention to crime, private scandal, entertainment or human interest, but ...

  "With over 3000 reporters ready to cover the event, the Michael Jackson trial is already set to become the trial of the century."

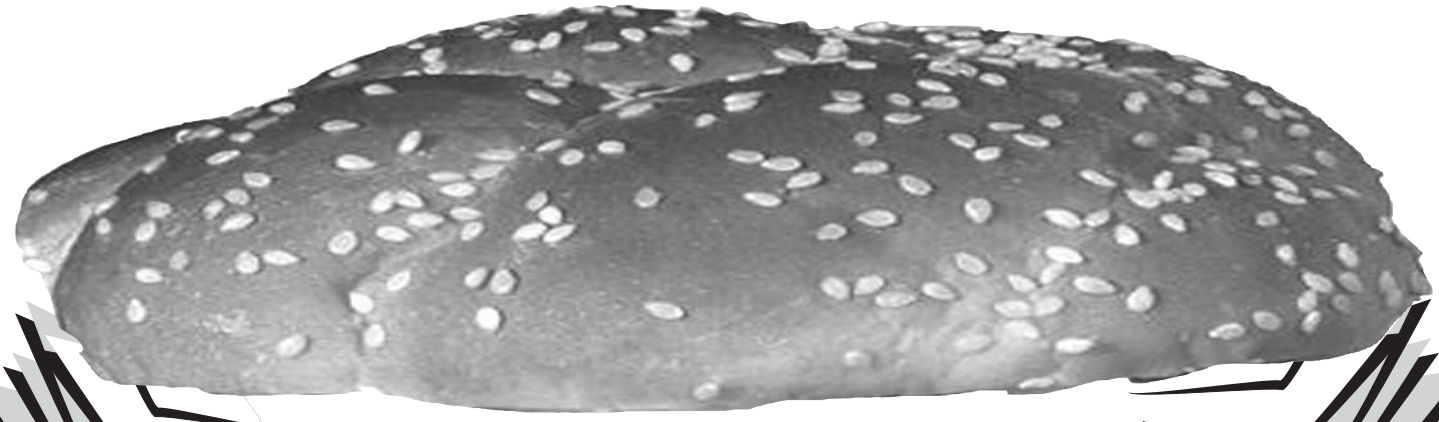
  TV3 News

Eating Media for Lunch

How often do we hear or see the message that we are what we eat? Over the last few years we have been forced to become more aware of what we eat as growing health issues related to obesity and ill health take a toll on young people.

But how often do we consider the impact that media is having on young people? If we were to view media in much the same way as our diet, can we separate good media from fatty, sugar-laden media?

We often assume that news media is an exact mirror of our world: people, values and events appear as they are and the amount of coverage for any particular issue is directly related to its importance. However, this is not always the case. A number of elements (filters) select, shape and redefine the news before it appears in our papers and on our screens.



The Politics of News Sources

The news is increasingly drawn from sources well choreographed by the public relations (PR) industry. PR's general role is to put the best spin on the events involving its employer in the hope that journalists will use it and the public will accept it.

PR can be harmless and even sometimes helpful, if there is enough time and resources to seek alternative sources. However, given current audience demand for 24-hour news, and increasing budget cuts in order to raise profits, the ability of media to analyse and verify information is considerably smaller. This combination of convenience, time pressures and decreasing funds makes the media over-reliant on polished, dusted and groomed information provided only by those who can afford it.

Advertising

Most news media profits come from selling advertising space, rather than delivering news to the public. In a regular newspaper, the share is close to 70%, but with a free medium like television it approaches 100%. This creates an enormous dependency on the advertising dollar, and changes the entire focus of news media operations.

The result is an overall submission to advertisers' interests. The news is "dumbed down" to reach the widest possible market, and shaped to fit the highest spending demographics. Advertisers pressure publications not to put their ads next to sombre pictures or analytical articles as it may interrupt the "buying mood". At the same time, the media refrain from publishing stories that are overly critical of core funders.

In a 1994 FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) survey, 60% of reporters indicated that they have felt pressured, by the advertisers, to change their stories.

Ownership

Ownership implies control. This means that media owners have the power to influence the content and the presentation of the news. As Conrad Black, the owner of the *Daily Telegraph* says, "What is the point of running a newspaper if you have absolutely no say?" This influence is often used to assist a political, social or economic agenda favoured by the media owner.

This is not necessarily dangerous. Diversity in media ownership can ensure a variety of different views. However, currently mainstream news media is owned by an ever-decreasing number of global corporations. These corporations value consumerism, capitalism and profit, which act as filters, affecting what and how news is reported.

- In 1983, there were over fifty global media corporations owning the world's media, now there are less than nine.
- In New Zealand, the vast majority of daily newspapers, community papers and magazines are owned by only two companies - Fairfax, and Wilson and Horton.

Infotainment

The concentration of ownership and the Internet has brought more competition. To ensure profits, the news media companies increasingly turned towards entertaining, rather than informing. The result is a host of "soft journalism" full of sensationalism, gore and sound bite reporting. It also allows for greater sales, making it harder to go back to less profitable alternatives.

Globalisation

Global concentration of ownership means that it is much cheaper for a media company to produce one generic, rather than many culturally specific, programmes or reports. The result is that European and American perspectives heavily dominate our news. For example, not one New Zealand newspaper has a permanent staff member based overseas. It is virtually impossible to see a developing-nation produced news report on our 6 o'clock news.

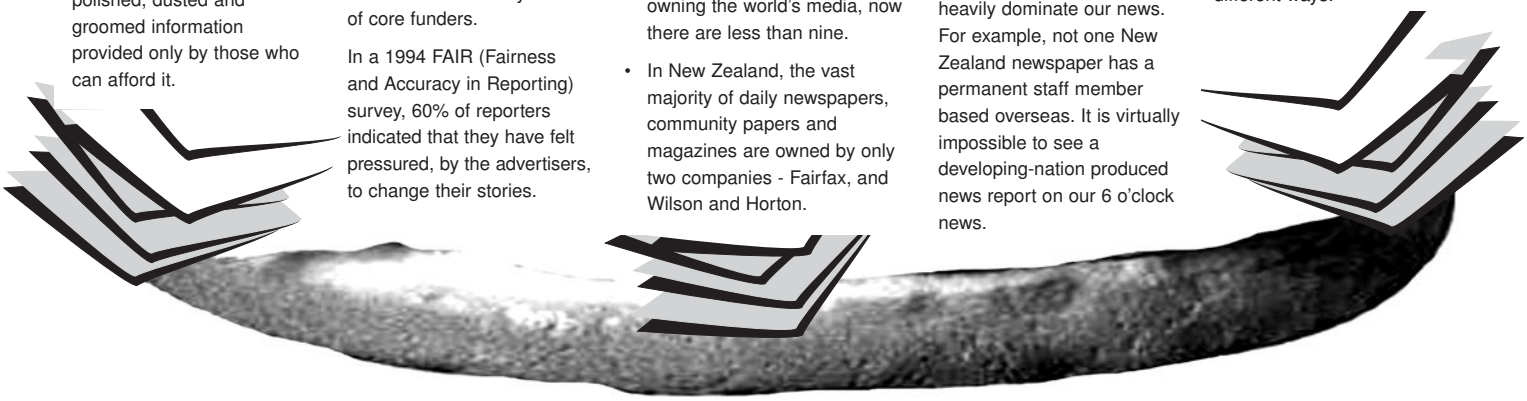
Individual Bias

Despite claims of media objectivity, total impartiality is a myth. Bringing news to the public involves making a lot of decisions, including:

- what is newsworthy
- which sources to use
- what angles to take
- what style of presentation.

These decisions are made by individuals with their own values, prejudices and beliefs. Naturally, this is reflected in the final product.

Consider for example, a reporter's choice between using the words "terrorist", "militant", "insurgent", "revolutionary", and "freedom fighter". Any decision will colour the story, but in very different ways.



Consumerism

Spurred by advertisers and corporate owners, mass media promotes *a culture of over-consumption*. Along with news stories, it carries a sea of ads encouraging us to buy, discard, and buy again - always bigger, better, more!

What remain invisible in the media, and hence to young people, are the vast social, economic and environmental effects of consumerism. For example, even where the media does report on the impossible demands placed on our planet, it almost always fails to link it to our immediate consumer choices.

Marginalising

Alienation and disempowerment are amplified when media stories concern young people who are already disadvantaged through social or historical circumstance. In Aotearoa New Zealand this is most acutely apparent in the ongoing negative portrayals of everything Māori in the mainstream media.

Professor Judy McGregor notes: “what does the news say to Māori about Māori? The tragedy of contemporary, mainstream newsrooms is that it says Māori news equals bad news.”

Professor Ranganui Walker adds: “Mainstream is in the business of confrontation and sensation, that’s what supposedly makes good copy. Yet a hell of a lot of things are missed, you only have to read the Māori newspapers. Sometimes, you wouldn’t think we were living in the same country”.

In order to address social inequalities and to move towards cultural understanding, our news media needs to reflect a variety of cultural views.

Narrow worldview

According to commercial criteria, voices that are seen as too radical, too critical, too unorthodox or just not interesting enough, are kept out of the public – and hence young people’s-eye. This self-censorship is often not a conscious decision but a result of the many constraints within which news workers operate.

The result of limiting information for young people is either total unawareness or a skewed perception of many issues of high social importance. For example, a recent study by Glasgow University Media Group showed that the “limited nature of media coverage of the developing world and the focus on disaster and conflict produces negative attitudes and a very partial understanding amongst audiences of the wider world”.

Non-Participation

The mainstream media have been accused of preventing youth participation. The combination of news and entertainment and lack of youth-appropriate reporting means that young people are not prepared for political involvement.

The stereotyping and absence of youth issues can turn young people away from mainstream media. The concern is that in doing so, they fail to access alternative sources of information, and become even more alienated from the political and social decision-making process.

Disconnectedness

Young people are stereotyped and marginalised in the news media. A recent UK study by the Positive Images Campaign, has found that over 70% of press stories about young people are negative and only 14% are truly positive. In either case, young people were quoted in only 8% of the stories about them. And of the positive stories, a vast majority focused on sporting and academic achievement rather than youth culture, contributions to community, or personal initiatives. Informal research by the Ministry of Youth Development confirmed these trends in the New Zealand press.

How many of our inner city curfews, alcohol bans, and various measures against skaters and boy racers were born of knee jerk reactions to sensationalist stories in the media?

www.ypnmagazine.com

Culture of Fear

Nothing keeps us interested as much as fear for our safety. This principle is well understood in the media, and used wherever possible to increase ratings and profits.

For young people, this means growing up in a community filled with imaginary dangers. In a recent Global Education Centre survey, young people named terrorism as the number one global concern. Yet the likelihood of dying in a terrorist attack is much less likely than getting hit by lightning.

Sources:

Sue Abel *Shaping the News: Waitangi Day on Television*; James Lull *Media, Communication, Culture*; Graeme Burton *More than Meets the Eye: Introduction to Media Studies*; Judy McGregor *What's News?*; John Saunders *Skin Deep: The News Media's Failure to Cover Māori Politics*; Michael Shermer *Culture of Fear*.

www.criticism.com/md/kellner.html
www.ypnmagazine.com
www.globalissues.org/HumanRights/media
www.childrennow.org/media/mc94/news.cfm

What Can You Do?

AS YOUTH WORKERS, WE HAVE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE UNDERSTAND HOW THE MEDIA WORKS AND HOW IT AFFECTS THEIR WORLD. FURTHERMORE, WE CAN ASSIST YOUNG PEOPLE IN HARNESSING THE POWER OF THE MEDIA FOR THEIR OWN GOOD, ENSURING THEY ARE WELL REPRESENTED AND CONNECTED MEMBERS OF COMMUNITIES. SO HOW DO WE DO THAT?

Understand the issues

Share with young people the knowledge gleaned from this Global Bits. Give it to them to read and allow them to share it with their friends. The information in this issue of Global Bits is a brief introduction to the topic, so encourage yourself and others to learn more. There are some further resources listed on the back cover.

Alternative media

Read alternative news sources. They will help you and your young people to understand the breadth and depth of newsworthy events from around the world. They will also demonstrate a number of perspectives and alternative approaches that are missing from the mainstream media. Provide some balance!

Media literacy

Encourage young people to *critically* consume news media. Help them to understand the hidden pressures, underlying agendas, and biases involved. Help yourself and others to identify what information is missing, which sources are used, and how the visual impressions are created. Media literacy skills help us to understand not only the surface content of media messages, but also the deeper and often more important messages.

Make your own media

Encourage young people to create their own media. Set them loose in the community with a camera, tape recorder or pen and paper. Help them to publish their own bulletin and distribute it to the wider public. Blogs or personal Internet-based journals allow you to upload content and images to reach others around the world.

Use existing media

Support young people to contribute to existing media, but on their own terms. For example, the Just Focus website being set up by the Global Education Centre allows young people the opportunity to express their opinions about global issues and become informed by other young people. Initiate stories, send out press releases, write letters to the editor and always follow up if anything is misrepresented. Finally, establish relationships with journalists to promote positive youth images in the media.

Use the activities

Use the interactive activities included in this issue of Global Bits. There are lots more in the Global Education Centre library, and an infinite number on the Internet. Maybe write your own, and share it with other youth workers.

"It is no longer enough to simply read and write. Students must also become literate in the understanding of visual images. Our children must learn how to spot a stereotype ... distinguish facts from propaganda, analysis from banter, important news from coverage..."

Ernest Boyer, past president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and former U.S. Commissioner of Education

Activity: A Double Take

THIS IS A SIMPLE ACTIVITY THAT PROVIDES A CONCRETE FRAMEWORK FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION AND AN ONGOING CRITICAL LOOK AT THE MEDIA.

1. Record a TV news item, and play it back to your group of young people.
2. Ask them to discuss the questions below. Smaller groups could discuss all the questions or just focus on one section, i.e. information about the source.
3. Facilitate a discussion around the answers. Start to focus on underlying causes. Why do biases and omissions exist? Is it a question of accident, purpose or practical limitations? What does this mean for young people?
4. If there is time, get the young people to prepare their own news report. They could re-present an existing news report or create their own. The news report could then be presented to the other people in the group.
5. An alternative is to allow young people to be creative in filling the information gaps found in the original report. Perhaps get them to act it out, sign it, or paint a picture, and again get them to present back to the group.

A. THE WHOLE STORY?

Were you told:

Who was involved? – Was there anyone else involved that they did not mention?

What took place? – Does this make sense? Were there related events that were not mentioned?

Where it occurred?

When it happened? – Was it a result of or response to anything?

Why is this story being reported and why is this story getting so much attention? Is it vital news?

B. INFORMATION ABOUT THE SOURCE?

Were you told:

Who supplied the information (what was their involvement or background?)

What corroboration exists?

Where the information originated?

When the facts were revealed?

Why the story was released and why now?

C. IMPORTANT BACKGROUND?

Were you told:

Who was previously involved?

What led up to the event?

Where contributing events took place?

When earlier incidents occurred?

Why the events are connected?

D. A BIASED PERSPECTIVE?

Were you told:

Who has a different view of the events?

What part of the story was speculation?

Where opposing viewpoints can be found?

When political gain is possible?

Why no challenge has been offered?

E. A PREPARED SCRIPT?

Were you told:

Who stands to gain political points or media ratings?

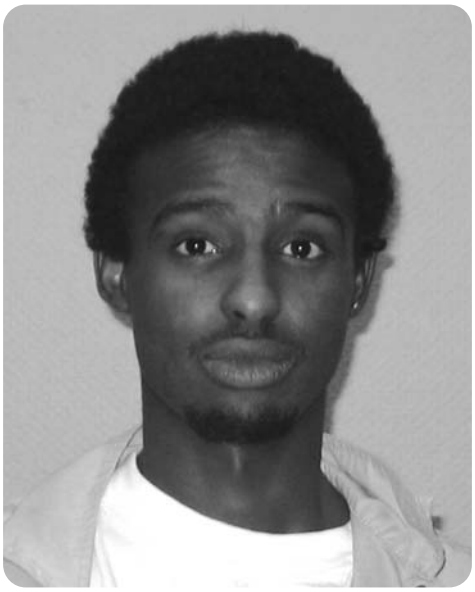
What facts are missing or glossed over?

Where does the opposition stand on the issue?

When the story will be corroborated?

Why there is no supporting evidence?

Questions have been sourced from www.tvnewslies.org/html/how_to_watch_the_news.html



Mohammed Osman (19)

Youth Worker, Peer Support Worker

Evolve Youth Service, Wellington

"By performing, we show people what we're really like and that we are not what the media portrays us to be, it's really about cultural awareness and trying to get past the labels."

How do you think the media impacts on young people?

It influences people's beliefs, thinking and judgements. Everything we do and say is affected, for example our perceptions of people from overseas are heavily influenced by portrayals of them in movies, in the news and other media sources. More often than not this leads to groups being treated unfairly because of negative, or inaccurate media stereotypes.

Is there a discrepancy between reality and the media?

Yeah, the media exaggerates everything. Drama sells so the media will not necessarily tell it like it is, they want to put a spin on it, which ends up making the story come across as something that it's not.

What are the predominant messages in the media?

The media labels people and groups. Take terrorism as an example. If an Arab group does something that could be labelled as terrorism the media would call those actions acts of terrorism, however if a Western group did something similar they would be labelled more positively, they would be called something like freedom fighters. What George Bush is doing in Iraq is technically terrorism but you won't hear the media call it that. Another example is how the media portrays developing countries. All you ever see is poverty, but in Western countries it's the opposite, all you ever see is the good stuff, you don't see the poverty. The media (and those who influence it) have particular images of countries that they want to maintain. Those images inform people's knowledge on what different countries are like.

Do you do any work with young people to try and challenge the messages in the media?

We have a group made up of young people from lots of different backgrounds called Talk Back Youth. We talk about how the media labels different people and use theatre to try and counter the stereotypes in the media. By performing, we show people what we're really like and that we are not what the media portrays us to be, it's really about cultural awareness and trying to get past the labels. It's also about fighting the negative media that surrounds young people. The media always portray youth as irresponsible and getting into trouble, it never shows all the good things young people are doing. We hope to change that by showing that young people are doing great things and are not what the media say they are.

Why is the media important?

It's what people see and influences what people think. Young people are influenced by many things, for example school and friends, but the media is also a significant influence. Media is about communication, which is important in a society, it's right up there with food and water. It's an important resource that can change things, it's powerful.

How can the media be used more positively?

Presently the media is mostly controlled by those with a vested interest in making a profit or maintaining power. That means that what is shown will usually support this interest. However if the media focused on good outcomes for society it could be a force for good. I think we can address the issues concerning media; people just need to get passionate about change and get together to put pressure on the media. It's about raising awareness and making the media tell it like it is, or put together your own stuff and tell your own story.

"There are no messages about thinking critically and questioning what you are bombarded with and being an active participant in your life; it is those messages that would benefit people the most."

Cas Simonsen

Cas is from Westport on the West Coast of the South Island and is the coordinator of the West Coast Youth Workers Collective. She is also involved with a community art space called InterSpace, a Conscious Open Space Organisation. What is an Open Space Organisation? Take a look at this site to find out: www.openspacetechnology.com

How do you think the media impacts on young people?

Young people are searching for information on how their world works; the desire for this knowledge is very strong. The media uses young people's desire for information to bombard them with messages. These messages are not necessarily accurate or personally relevant but it's a supply and demand situation. Young people want information and the media supplies it. We get hooked into this process. No-one has to go out and gather information and discern what is relevant to us, there is information coming at us all the time and all we have to do is sit still and keep our eyes and ears open. This discourages people from being active in the process, it breeds passivity.

Do the messages in the media affect the reality of your community?

We live in a small community which has its own particular culture as does any community, large or small. The media plays to the mainstream which doesn't account for difference. It seems our young people feel they are missing out, not making the grade, not part of the mainstream. I believe that the mainstream is just a construct, it's made up, and most people probably are aware of this. We are just not having enough conversations about it.

What are the predominant messages in the media?

It's quite conflicting, on the one hand young people are told to get an education, a good job and then they will live happily ever after, but then also, the media portrays a counterculture where it's cool to rebel. Either way that's not the point. The point is if you let someone else tell you what to do and how to do it - it's not going to work for you. We need to think for ourselves and put the effort in and living happily ever after is not the point either. The point is the here and now.

There are no messages about thinking critically and questioning what you are bombarded with and being an active participant in your life; it is those messages that would benefit people the most. People are 'dumbed down', we're told to stay in the mainstream and it will all be okay, but there is no guarantee. We need to get past that and take responsibility for our own lives. Yes, our trust has been broken, but we can choose how to respond to that.

Do you do any work with young people to try and challenge what the media puts out?

There is a family I know here who are consciously unschooling their children. They have conversations about the impact of the media and other socialising forces and how institutions operate with an agenda. They provide a balance to what the media says and have created in their children from an early age an ability to discern what is going on. I am also learning from this.

Why is the media important?

It is important because it is so insidious. It's a constant challenge to recognise its influence and maintain choice in our lives and not just react.

How can the media be used more positively?

There is always an agenda behind whatever message the media offers, they're always pushing something. We can use this to develop our analysis skills. We have the choice of believing whether what we're presented with is true or not. If the media was more passive we would have to exercise our power to choose. We would need to develop our critical thinking in order to make the right choice for ourselves as individuals because the message - what to do, what to buy, who to be - would not be as strong. As we develop our process of discerning what is right for us personally, we become stronger individuals, more aware. We can choose to develop our awareness using the media, even as it is now, as a catalyst.

Young People's Perspectives

Kia ora, my name is Ilai and I am an 18 yr old student from Waitakere. I come from Israel in the Middle East originally but I have lived in NZ for 16 years and proudly call this beautiful place my home. I have a huge passion for helping people especially young people, and volunteer with various different organizations such as youthline. I also have a strong interest for being conscious of, speaking out against, and educating others about things that are un-just in this world.

In a world where there isn't enough time to do everything that we want, we end up relying on mainstream media to show us the world beyond our front doors.

I'll talk a little bit about one of the issues associated with mainstream media- *Sensationalism*

News media is no longer brought to us solely as an accurate source of information about local and global issues. In reality, it is driven by a corporate agenda that has identified a profit opportunity for fulfilling our need to know about the world around us. Increasing corporate involvement has added a whole new dimension to what we know only of as 'the news'. Now things like reviewing ratings and advertising play more critical roles, all of this ultimately affects the content of the information being provided.

When a news media organisation is driven by profit and the profit is dependant on the ratings you receive its very important to them to take steps to ensure people keep watching. Causing a reaction in an audience will get them to tune in the following day. Getting people to tune in everyday is money.

There are many ways a story is made sensational. The word sensational can be defined as: "arousing or intended to arouse strong curiosity, interest, or reaction, especially by exaggerated or lurid details."(Oxford Concise Dictionary). From this we can gather that the goal is to spark or arouse a reaction in the audience.

News media achieve this in many ways sometimes by showing graphic images of events and/or using emotional voice-overs to tell us of how shocking and tragic an event is. They often also use a human subject whether it be footage or an interview so that we can identify with them as a person, which makes it easier for us to sympathise with the tragedy.

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Stories are glorified so frequently on the news that it's hard to be certain of the difference between entertainment and reality. This leaves us, the consumers of the news, sitting comfortably in our armchairs, in our heated living room absolutely heart broken at the state of this planet and the people dwelling upon it.... Yet that won't change what's for dinner tonight.

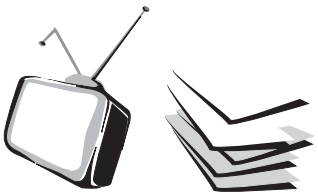
Sensationalism is as easy to see as picking up your local daily paper.

Here is the full list of headlines and teasers appearing on the front page of Wellington newspaper The Dominion Post on 18 January 2005.

- "Twins brought to life" (with pull quote - 'There are dead babies in the water!)
- "I'm bringing Caitlin in - fugitive dad"
- "World's oldest mum - birth at 66"
- "Aussie sheilas hunt Kiwi blokes"
- "In Britney's bed: Weird travel"
- "Epic madness: Hollywood's historical obsession"

That same day were the stories regarding the tsunami in Asia, Tuhoe claims on Uruwera National Park, Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and rights of Muslim women to wear burqas in New Zealand courts. None of these appeared on the front page.

Useful Resources and Websites



Outfoxed: Rupert Murdoch's War on Journalism
(DVD)

Examines how media empires, led by Rupert Murdoch's Fox News, have been running a "race to the bottom" in television news. This film provides an in-depth look at Fox News and the dangers of ever-enlarging corporations taking control of the public's right to know.

Between the Lines (Eleanor MacLean)
(Book)

A great introductory resource on critical media analysis, it is full of ideas, activities and information about how to critically evaluate our news media and "de-code" its messages.

We the Media (Dan Gillmor)
(Book)

A look into the rise of grassroots journalism; created by the people for the people, and challenges the dominance of corporate media. The book also involves heaps of practical ideas on how you can get involved and start to create your own news media.

Pacific Journalism Review

A quarterly magazine dealing with journalism issues in the Pacific. A more in-depth and slightly more academic look at the questions covered in this issue of Global Bits.

Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media
(Video)

The original look at how various forces shape the news media in our democratic world. Full of concrete examples, it uses Noam Chomsky's ideas to demonstrate the biased nature of our mainstream media and the narrow interests that it serves.

Alternative Media Sources

http://news.google.com

Google News presents the most up to date information culled from over 4500 news sources worldwide, and grouped together by their related headlines. Done by computers rather than humans, the selection process remains free from political influence, and allows you to see a vast variety of news, and compare different media treatment of the same story.

http://maorinews.com/karere/

Local and world news from a Māori perspective. Updated daily, it also contains a variety of great links related to Māori and media issues.

http://www.crikey.com.au/

The best news media site in Australasia, breaking more stories than any other and providing a great challenge to the establishment. Though Australian based, it still carries loads of relevant content, and is a great example of what an alternative can achieve.

http://www.indymedia.org.nz

A web-based organisation, Indy Media seeks to present news and viewpoints unlikely to make it into the New Zealand for-profit media. As with any news organisation, treat it as but one of many sources to inform your views.

Make Your Own

http://www.livejournal.com or http://www.blogspot.com

Allow you to create your own website (blog), upload pictures and information, chat to other people, and effectively make your own media available to millions worldwide.

http://www.evc.org

A great example of grassroots action, this New York-based NGO teaches documentary video production and media analysis to young people, educators and community leaders. Check out its very impressive list of youth-made documentaries.

http://www.justfocus.org.nz

A youth led project.

Find Out More

http://www.globalissues.com/HumanRights/Media.asp

A more detailed look at the nature, influence and operation of mainstream news media. Really accessible and easy to read, it's a great supplement to this issue of Global Bits.

http://www.cultsock.ndirect.co.uk/MUHome/cshtml/index.html

Amazing website that's been called the "A to Z of media studies". Loads of information on culture, politics and psychology as it relates to the media. Click on "ToC" for table of contents. For the more academically minded.

http://www.fair.org/index.php

FAIR stands for Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, and that is exactly what this US-based media watch group tries to ensure. It scrutinises the news, challenges media bias and identifies censorship.

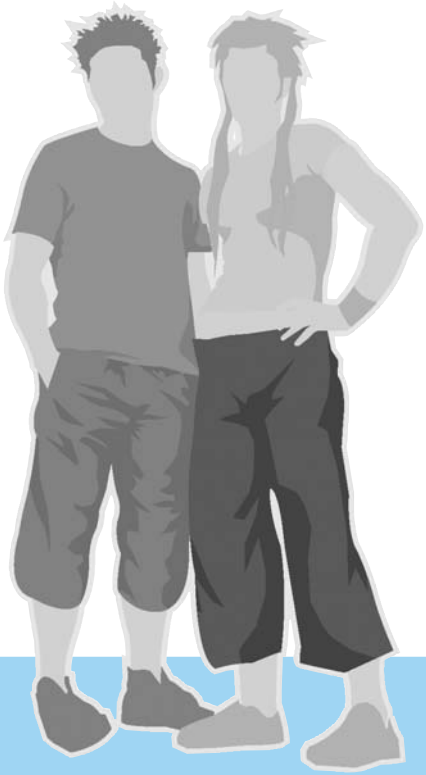
http://www.rsf.org/

Reporters Without Borders investigates any threats, abuse, or censorship levelled at the media worldwide.

These resources and more, are held in the GEC library.

Membership is free. To register, or search the catalogue, visit the library section of our website: www.globaled.org.nz/library.html

Please contact us if you would like to receive a comprehensive listing of youth worker resources.



About the Global Education Centre

Global Bits is produced by the community youth arm of the Global Education Centre (GEC), a programme of the Development Resource Centre (DRC) – a not-for-profit, non-governmental organisation governed by a charitable trust. We are core funded by NZAID Nga Hoe Tuputupu-mai-tawhiti (The New Zealand Agency for International Development). The DRC's vision statement is *change for a just world* and its mission is *informing and educating to empower people to take action to create a just world.*

The Global Education Centre (GEC) provides services to the formal and informal education sectors, and the youth and community sectors on global education through its Schools and Community Youth programmes. GEC provides training and resources to teachers, teacher trainees, students, youth workers and community groups. Services include workshops, youth advocacy, Global Issues magazine, teaching resources, a website including fact sheets and links, and a free lending library.

GEC's sister programme at the Development Resource Centre is Dev-Zone, a resource centre focused on international development and global issues. They operate a free library, manage a comprehensive website, and publish a magazine *Just Change*. Services include answering quick enquiries, email updates, information projects, and literature searches on a variety of development topics. Dev-Zone works with the development and human rights sector, as well as students and the general public.

The Global Educaion Centre is core funded by NZAID – Nga Hoe Tuputupu-mai-tawhiti