

Teamwork the key to creating TV news-writing guide

By John Northcott

Putting together a television newscast is never easy, but it is even more of a challenge when you are doing it in a language that is not your own.

This is what NHK World does every day with its 25-minute nightly "Newswatch" programme in English, as well as its hourly "Newline" updates. Now, thanks to the combined effort of the staff, NHK World has a new tool to help it tell stories even better.

As I was approaching the end of my two years with NHK World as an English advisor, I was asked by the senior producers to help put together a television news-writing guide.

The aim was to create a document that could be used for years to come as an educational tool to underline some of the basics of how to write and assemble English Language newscasts.

Different cultures tell stories different ways and while someone may be a very experienced journalist in his or her own mother tongue, communicating the news in English has a whole new series of challenges.

The guide was designed to cover such issues as the need to use the present and future tenses to make the news seem more immediate, the appropriate length of sentences (*the shorter the better!*) and the use of sound. There is also a section on how to write "on cameras" ("*standups*," or "*standing reports*") as well as tips about on-camera presentation.

Many of the issues covered in the guide arose out of daily work in the newsroom as well as the regular news-writing classes in which staff came to me with their questions. The goal was to be not only instructional, but entertaining as well. News is serious business, but nobody said learning shouldn't be fun.

The initial draft of the guide was distributed for comments from the staff. Once the final draft of the document was completed, the real work began with a team of NHK World staff swinging into action.



John Northcott editing a news bulletin in English



The NHK World news crew



John Northcott

Firstly, the Director-General wrote an introduction. Next, the entire document was translated into Japanese. Then came many late hours of work to turn it all into a CD-ROM. Staff worked late into many evenings to not only put the word documents on the CD (in English and Japanese), but also include a voicetrack guide so people could follow along.

There was also a section in realtime video. Included, too, was a bonus section on English Language usage. And, just like the DVD version of your favourite movie, the "NHK World TV News Writing Guide" also features behind-the-scenes photographs of the staff at work in the newsroom and even visiting a local temple on a weekend excursion.

Over 100 copies of the CD-ROM guide were produced for present and future NHK staff. NHK World was also kind enough to provide me with several dozen copies that I have been distributing to other ABU members as I travel across Asia.

No matter how experienced you may be, it never hurts to have the occasional reminder of the basics. As more and more broadcasters undertake their own English newscasts, perhaps the "NHK World TV News Writing Guide" will prove useful to an even wider audience of broadcast professionals. □

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Digital radio to start in Japan next year

Digital radio broadcasting – which offers CD-quality sound, still images and text data service – is expected to start in Tokyo and Osaka in 2006, five years earlier than planned, *asabi.com* has reported.

Japan's public broadcaster NHK, together with a new broadcasting company, is scheduled to provide the coverage throughout the nation by 2011, according to plans drawn up by the country's ministry of communication.

The ministry report calls for bringing forward the commencement date of digital radio broadcasts to compete with a new mobile TV

service which is also scheduled to begin in 2006.

The new radio broadcaster will operate multiple specialised channels, such as music and sports. There will be 20 to 30 channels carrying audio and text data broadcasts.

The company, which will own broadcasting facilities, will obtain programmes from existing radio stations and may edit or recompile the programmes. It will not produce programmes from scratch.

Services being considered include sending text-based traffic information to car navigators and full-length songs as ringtones to cellphones. □

BBC to launch online TV service

The BBC has announced that it is to launch an online media service that will let viewers watch TV shows on the Internet.

The publicly funded broadcaster has developed an interactive media player, or iMP, that will allow broadband Internet users to download selected BBC television and radio programmes.

A trial run of the iMP will offer the ability to search and filter about 190 hours of TV programmes and 310 radio programmes, plus local content and selected feature films.

The trial period involving 5,000 subscribers will run from September to December 2005 and will be used to assess the demand of particular types of programmes and determine whether iMP has an impact on the commercial market.

The iMP will function as a peer-to-peer network, in which content will be exchanged between users.

A digital rights management system will be put in place to ensure that only BBC licence-fee payers are able to watch and listen to the programmes online. □

Record turnout for Sports Group meet

“We have cracked the century!” David Astley told delegates at the recent Sports Group Conference in Bangkok.

The ABU Secretary-General used the popular cricket catchphrase to refer to the number of delegates (108) who attended the conference and associated meetings at the Montien Riverside Hotel.

Mr Astley thanked the ABU’s two Thailand members, TPT and NBT, for hosting the largest ever sports group meeting.

The gathering included sports executives and producers from ABU members, as well as representatives from satellite companies and sports marketing agencies.

Mr Astley said the record turnout was a great achievement.

“It is even more so when you look at how busy and competitive the conference schedule is around the world.

“Your attendance in Bangkok reflects how you, as delegates, feel about the importance of this conference, the associated meetings, and the chance it gives you to network with leaders in the field,” Mr Astley said.

In his opening address, Mr Astley warned broadcasters of the difficult times the future would bring, especially from large telcos wishing to enter into the business of television.

“Technology now allows telecommunications companies to compete



TPT Chairman, Lt Gen Lertrit Wechsawarn, beckons to delegates to join him for Thai desserts

directly with free-to-air broadcasters,” he said.

Broadband penetration in South Korea, for instance, had reached 80 percent of Korean homes. In a country of 48 million people, that was a huge slice of the market.

“Broadband now permits telcos to distribute content – even multi-channel. Convergence is with us, and its poses big

challenges for traditional television stations,” Mr Astley told the delegates.

Ad-free technology

In an informative and entertaining address, the former IOC Director of Global Marketing and Media, Michael Payne, traced the development of sports – especially the Olympics – and explained how TV advertising was being marginalised.



ABU Head of Sport, John Barton, being pampered with Thai hospitality by hosts TPT and NBT

Now the personal advisor to Formula One chief Bernie Ecclestone, Mr Payne said that not too long ago there were many people who could not see how powerful television would become in building mass market support for major events.

The former President of the IOC, Avery Brundage, had been one of them.

Mr Brundage had been quoted as saying: "The Olympic movement has done perfectly well without television for the last 60 years, and believe me, we are going to manage for another 60."

However, the last two decades, the technology revolution, and the emergence of new media, had all combined to make the future more complex and competitive.

"The 30-second television commercial is now dead," Mr Payne said.

In its place, he said, would be integrated messages from sponsors and advertisers contained within the body of a programme or television sports event.

"Tivo (a technology that could remove television advertising) was already being used in 30 percent of households in the United States," he said.

However, it was very difficult to use in live sport which he said was 'Tivo-proof'.

Mr Payne left the enthralled audience with some predictions on convergence:

- What is a TV set?
- When is a computer a TV screen?
- When is a mobile phone a TV screen?
- When is a TV screen a computer and mobile phone?

"It's all entertainment, folks! And the viewer, the person with the device, would decide when to watch; how to watch; what to watch, in what language; with or without commercials," he said. □



David Astley (right) with Michael Payne after their respective presentations at the Sports Group conference

Strictly ballroom? Not likely!



Two of Thailand's top ballroom dancers provide a demonstration of sport dancing at the opening dinner

One look at the sports programme for the first Indoor Asian Games this year in Bangkok, and you could be forgiven for thinking that the organisers are taking advantage of the success of the Australian ballroom dancing movie, 'Strictly Ballroom'.

Yes, Sports Dancing is a gold medal event, and yes, it's very ballroom. But the name can be deceiving.

This is a sport for the very fit, the very agile, and the very skilful. It requires physical prowess that deserts most when they head towards their prime.

Delegates to the Sports Group Conference in Bangkok were treated to performances by Thailand's two leading pairs at an evening dinner recital, and the dancers didn't disappoint.

Athletic, rhythmic and highly skilled, they enchanted and enthralled the delegates.

The Indoor Asian Games are being staged in Bangkok in November and will combine nine sports.

But all eyes will be riveted upon the event pictured above. No need for guessing why! □

ABU members benefit from IABM bursary

Some 41 technical officers from ABU member organisations were recently given the chance to learn from expert trainers in India through fellowships from the Tom McGann Bursary of the International Association of Broadcast Manufacturers (IABM).

The US\$36,407 (£20,000) award was used to conduct two training courses at the Staff Training Institute (Technical) in New Delhi, which is the technical training institute of All India Radio (AIR) and DDI-India.

Prasar Bharati – India’s broadcasting corporation – had approved the two ABU courses which were prepared in close consultation with the ABU Technical Department along with the close scrutiny of the engineers-in-chief of AIR and DDI.

The course topics were based on radio transmitters and TV studio equipment. Participants – who were all selected from developing countries – were offered full fellowships with the exception of Malaysia and Brunei which were required to meet the cost of their airfares.

The STI (T) hostel was refurbished before the training took place. The welfare



The newly refurbished STI (T) hostel in New Delhi

of the participants were looked after by a liaison officer who had also taken up residence at the hostel. A weekend excursion for participants included a visit to the Taj Mahal.

Sixteen participants from 13 countries arrived in New Delhi for the 10-day course on radio transmitters. They were from Afghanistan, Bhutan, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Laos, Maldives, Malaysia, Mongolia, Mauritius, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. AIR was represented by five participants.

The radio transmitter course included presentations from manufacturers such

as Harris and Bharat Electronics. It also touched on audio compression and the development of an expert system for fault-tracing of transmitters by AIR.

The expert system is designed for each type of transmitter and is able to guide a technician through the steps required to trace a fault by first entering the fault indications into a computer which runs this system.

The technician will then be asked to carry out measurements and checks and enter the results into the computer in order to identify the fault. The advantage of such a system is that it does not require experienced transmitter engineers to be posted at regional and remote stations.

Meanwhile, the TV studio equipment course was attended by 15 participants from Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Mauritius, the Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. In addition, there were six participants from DDI.

The TV course covered digital formats, audio and video compression, VTR formats, camera chain, studio lighting and computer networking, among others. □



Participants of the radio transmitter course paying close attention during a particularly engaging session

Khabar Director-General killed in car crash

The Director-General of Kazakhstan's Khabar Agency, Zhanar Abdildina, died in a car accident in Almaty on 9 May.

Ms Abdildina, aged 36, was travelling with three others in a Khabar vehicle which was hit by another car. Her companions – Raushan Sarsembayeva and Timur Urmanchejev – and driver Serik Bakbayev were all injured.

Ms Abdildina was a graduate of the Almaty Architecture and Civil Engineering Institute and the National High School of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Before taking over as Khabar's Director-General in February last year,

she served the CJSC Eurasia+ORT as Deputy Director-General.

Ms Abdildina had worked very closely with the ABU, of which Khabar is a Full Member. The public broadcaster was the host of the ABU General Assembly in Almaty last year.

ABU Secretary-General, Mr David Astley, said he was very saddened to hear of Ms Abdildina's death, and extended the Secretariat's condolences to her family, work colleagues and friends.

"We were shocked when we heard this tragic news because it was only a few days earlier that we were all enjoying Zhanar's company at the



Zhanar Abdildina

Administrative Council meeting in Islamabad. It is difficult to believe that she is no longer with us."

He added that Ms Abdildina was well respected and fondly regarded by ABU Secretariat staff who had come to know her better during the General Assembly in Almaty last year. □



GlobeCast Australia is a leading provider of professional broadcast services and enterprise television in Australia and overseas. Based in Sydney, GlobeCast Australia distributes digital transmission services via satellite and fibre, and provides a 24 hour Broadcast Control facility for Direct To Home pay television services. We also operate a large professional teleport. We are currently seeking applicants for the following positions:

SATELLITE NEWS GATHERING ENGINEERS

GlobeCast Australia is seeking to recruit experienced SNG operators to supplement existing staff in the deployment and operation of our mobile satellite facilities.

Applicants must have extensive experience in the field of satellite broadcasting, as related to SNG applications, with a comprehensive knowledge of television broadcast and operation standards. Experience in the operation and maintenance of land transport and 'fly-away' satellite systems is essential.

Please submit your application to the CEO, GlobeCast Australia
 Fax: +612 8258 7990 or Email to resumes@globecast.com.au

MASTER CONTROL OPERATORS

Our Broadcast Control Centre operators are responsible for day-to-day broadcast transmission and related services. Applicants should have a background in satellite and/or terrestrial television broadcasting with experience gained in either Broadcast Master Control or Outside Broadcasting coupled with a comprehensive knowledge of television operations and disciplines.

An attractive remuneration package is offered and applications will be treated in strictest confidence. Details of relevant qualifications and experience are essential.



New appointment at ABU

The ABU has welcomed a new staff member at its Secretariat in Kuala Lumpur in May. She is Vijay Sadhu, who has joined as Senior Officer, Radio in the ABU Programme Department.

An Indian national, Vijay is a broadcast programming professional who has more than 14 years' experience in the field of radio and TV programming.

She has produced over 1,400 radio and TV programmes throughout her career. Most of these were themed programmes on family life, health and music, as well as morning shows, news and current affairs.

At the Secretariat, Vijay will be responsible for the planning, organising and managing of activities to assist ABU members in raising the standard of their radio broadcasting and programming skills.

Her new responsibilities will also include implementing the planned audio news exchange, co-production projects, seminars and workshops which are related to radio programme development and production, radio programme advisory services, and the radio components of ABU competitions such as ABU Prizes.

Vijay had been attached to All India Radio since 1980, and her last position was Deputy Director in



Vijay Sadhu

charge of the Nodal Network Station's programming, supervision and planning at AIR New Delhi.

An accomplished musician, Vijay holds a Bachelors' degree in Indian Classical Music. She has held public performances playing the sitar (a stringed instrument) and guitar. □

New staff join Asiavision



Zarina Omar (seated) and Kiren Kaur

The ABU's daily news exchange, Asiavision, has welcomed two new members of staff.

Journalist Zarina Omar has joined as Asiavision Coordinator.

A Singaporean married to a Malaysian, she has lived in Malaysia for the past three years.

Before that she worked for four years in the Current Affairs Department of Singapore's MediaCorp News, mainly producing Malay current affairs programmes.

Zarina also covered news stories and produced a travel programme for Channel NewsAsia, which is owned and managed by MediaCorp News.

Kiren Kaur is the new Secretary to the Managing Editor, Asiavision. A Malaysian, she has seven years' experience as a secretary, most recently with a quarry company in Kuala Lumpur.

Kiren's duties include helping the Managing Editor organise meetings and assisting in the smooth running of the Asiavision centre in Kuala Lumpur. □

KBS appoints new executive vice president

Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) has appointed Kim Hong as its new Executive Vice President. Mr Kim was Managing Director of the News and Sports Division before his promotion.

Mr Kim joined KBS in 1980 as TV news reporter. Eight years later, he was promoted to Director of Mobile Reporting and also held the position of Director of Cultural Affairs.

In 2000, he became Director of Unification Affairs and a year after that, was appointed Director of New Media Broadcast Contents.

A philosophy graduate of Korea University, Mr Kim won the ABU Special Prize in 1981 for his coverage on the documentary "Grief of Karakoram Himalaya". □