Open Space Co-Learning Workshop

University of New South Wales

Sydney,

May, 2008
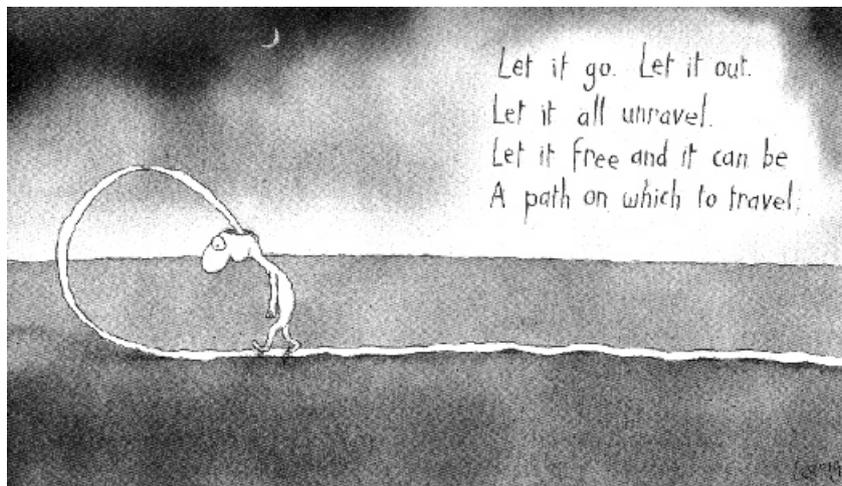
Let it go. Let it out.
Let it all unravel.
Let it free and it can be
A path on which to travel.

Book of Proceedings

The Open Space was held to focus on the question:

Beyond Blame: How can Australia's media best reflect the diverse faces and voices of Australia in news reporting?

The "Open Space" methodology is carefully designed to elicit maximum involvement and creativity in a constructive atmosphere. The goal was to create an Open Space in which clear thinking, learning and creativity could flourish. In being highly flexible, the agenda for Friday's experience was entirely determined by you -- the participants.

Hopefully you found the session inventive, creative, productive and full of surprises.

Open Space Meeting Principles:

- Whoever comes are the right people.

- Whatever happens is the only thing that could've.

- When it starts, it's the right time.

- When it's over it's over.

There is a single open space law:

The Law of Mobility.

The meeting may also include: bumblebees, butterflies and billabongs.

These proceedings represent the discussions that occurred on Friday 16 May, 2008 from 9.15am to 1.00 pm at UNSW.

These proceedings will be reviewed by the Reporting Diversity steering committee.

Attendees – Open Space

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TOPICS:

1B: Is diversity still an issue? (David)

1C: Vulnerability and resilience (Kerry)

1D: Promoting Peace Journalism (Kuranda)

2A: Values? Which? Whose? (Ian)

2B How can we move beyond simplistic community representation? (Georgie)

2D: Identity? (Ibrahim)

3A: How to make a Difference in the industry? (Gail)

3C: Checks and balances – Challenging the Reports and Constructive Criticism (Yasser)

3D: ??Can Diversity survive the future of Journalism? (Jonathan)

Session Code: 1B

Time: 10:35 am

Topic Title: Is Diversity Still an Issue?

Convenor: David Ingram

Recorder: David Ingram

Notes from Conversation….

Is multiculturalism:
a) finished business
b) irrelevant in a boom society
c) an issue of Muslims vs the rest?

- Questions of diversity for whom?
- Diversity will still be an issue for individuals and communities.
- More of an issue with media diversification
- Will people learn of national public life – no public sphere?
- Community may go to external media because disengaged from local media
- Semantics – multiculturalism – diversity – CALD
- What is culture? Has 'culture' lost meaning. Culture is not a category.
- Role of media reflecting national identity? Servicing national interest in face of globalisation, commercialisation?
- Role of public broadcasters (ABC & SBS)
- Have multicultural institutions abandoned multiculturalism? (eg ABC, SBS, politicians govt)
- Rebranding of SBS – focus of multiculturalism
- Terms of Multiculturalism or diversity
- Multiculturalism for many Australians means "multi-ethnic'
- Multiculturalism placed under immigration
- Multiculturalism should be mainstreamed
- Still images of anglo-Australia in mainstream media – need other faces and voices.
- NESB reporters fitted into anglo mould.
- SBS radio – differences between anglo newsroom and language broadcasters in the news agenda
- Is emphasis on multiculturalism or diversity part of problem providing a fracture point in cohesiveness
- Is SBS (radio) making it worse.
- Are language programs working against National conversations?
- Services provided by language problems are valued within communities (according to project research)

- On talkback radio, people with accents are being shuffled off
- Seeing/hearing more LOTE callers to shows like sport (Yasser)
- Some broadcasters patronising about accents on air – also subtitling on some TV networks (though not SBS)
- With commentators - media goes back to same people – eg indigenous community
- Media has some sources they use all the time to comment, vox pop etc
- Media don't approach non-anglo people for vox pops
- Have we moved forward in 15 yrs? Still facing some problems with mainstream media
- Try to make it attractive to mainstream/commercial media to use diverse voices and appeal to diverse communities
- Put audience research together with content research on central sites
- Government has a role to bring these issues to the fore
- One of roles MEAA should be playing
- Should be starting with board rooms to make arguments for diversity
- Pressure on muslim community has reduced with new federal government
- SBS could have media watch program?
- SBS doesn't take advocacy role because principles of objective journalism.

Session Code: 1C

Time: **10:45**

Topic Title: **Vulnerability and Resilience**

Convenor: **Kerry Green**

Recorder: **Kerry Green**

Notes from Conversation….

- Interest from 'Trauma and the News' project
- The 'subjects' feel disempowered and want more control.
- Disabled news people etc feel lack of control & manipulated
- Look for consequence angle, not just news.
- Some people build resilience from it. How?
- One size doesn't fit all l (in terms of interview angles)
- The interview becomes 'the confessional'
- Good experience when subject feels they have some control over how they're represented.
- Empowerment agency catharsis (role of journalist) – conversation with rather than talking at
- News editor/EP can completely charge the angle of story.
- Stereotyping of subjects leads and is disempowering (<mark>using emotive? -</mark> expectations of the audience
- There is a marketability in humanising a story. Journos can make sensible arguments about this.
- Feminising news agendas through women reporting – shift is starting to happen.

Resilience
- Journos can put people in context contact? with organisations and support groups. Flipside – people want to continue to contact you as you're the one who talked to them in the first place.
  Conversations which take place after mic turned off.
- Direct editorial interference from advertising
- Community, interest generated by the story – builds resilience in the subjects – people want to help.
- Training after the effect (for journalists)
- Mindframe and responsibility/vulnerability – resources?
- Providing resources good but needs segmentation
- Helpful basic finding of key research, data, contact base.
- Taking the hard road.

Session Code: **1D**

Time: **10:35**

Topic Title: **Promoting Peace Journalism**

Convenor: **Kuranda**

Recorder: **Kuranda**

Notes from Conversation….

Objectives
- Tolerance and Harmony
- Use of stereotypes – endemic
- Prejudice
- Coping mechanism eg. scarf modesty – implies others are immodest
- Explanatory Journalism – enhance understanding
- Getting both sides of the story - more than two sides.
  Avoid polarizing into two sides or simplicity.
- Emotional ride for the viewer
- Change from inside
- Convergence- commercial model – eg SMH returns a profit to shareholders
- Charging ipods, Internet, Free-Media

Diverse communities
　　　　Right person to the interview
　　　　Understand the cultural context
Training of Cultural Groups

Session Code: 2A

Time: **Values? Which? Whose?**

Topic Title: **11:30**

Convenor: **Ian**

Recorder: **Ian**

Notes from Conversation….

- Gen Y don't care so much about diversity – they live in a diverse world and are focusing on diversity

- Conceptual difference

- Broadcasting in our baggage – ghetto-isation

- Values

- SBS role is changing - research criteria on the way out

- Trust is necessary but at price

- Differentiation within SBS

- Cultural diversity

- What does being "Australian" mean?
-
- Australians accept diverse appearances better than other cultures
- Portrayal of cultural minorities

- Young people are far more savvy than the media think

- In some ways the SBS and ABC are perpetuating differences by broadcasting in local languages (maintains differences)

Session Code: **2B**

Time: **11:20**

Topic Title: **Beyond Simplistic "community representation"**

Convenor: **Georgie**

Recorder: **Georgie**

Notes from Conversation….

Who speaks for the community?
- Requires proactivity
- Sense of ownership – media belong to them so they belong to media
- Distrust
- Web 2.0
  - interactivity
  - self representation
  - alternative practices
- Talk-back – demanding space to have views heard
- Feel "safe" in Arabic language space – need to improve mainstream
- Media training on working in media
- Elected representatives – not whole community
- 'Most'/'some' Muslims believe….
- Need to give 'one' opinion in media – range of views
- Salaam Café – positive response – except Muslim community some concerns
- Community leader vs comic
- Desire to be represented beyond the community representatives
- Increase in cross-cultural awareness sessions
- Fundamental tool as journalists is contact book
- Responsibility to establish contacts with communities "creative practice"
- Brings back better stories – marketability – more break news but still use official stories.
- Range – diversity – religious, cultural eg amongst Muslims

Reporting Diversity Directory (resource for working journalists – should have a comment space):
- Key themes
- Contact list
- Organisational listings
- "living database"

Move from easy reliable sources to "tick boxes" and cover key significant perspectives and cover balance requirements
More use of websites for in-depth discussion (from top line report)

SUGGESTIONS
1. Encouraging communities to use emails to journalists – mutual obligation
2. Current affairs online forums
3. Misrepresentations – becomes historical record, major concern
   - self perpetuating, archives for news
   - tag as error/read comments

4. Comment space – shared by all media and community
5. Media critique websites
6. Forum suggestions to do things better in future
7. Program portrayal requirements – tools – use well.

Session Code: 2D

Time: **11:40**

Topic Title: **Identity?**

Convenor: **Ibrahim**

Recorder: **Jonathan**

Notes from Conversation….

Who are we?
LBS: woman of Australian national – 5th generation
born overseas – came here in 1961 aged 18 months – naturalised

Q: why non indigenous? Belonging to the land?
I have a connection to the land of Australian. I would feel uncomfortable
describing myself as indigenous because of legal definition – not a member of
a clan – no connection with the traditional owners of land

Q: What is indigenous?
LBS: not to do with colour of skin – legally you could be of Anglo background
and if you are accepted by a community then you can be indigenous
Lisa Waller: white people can develop an identity within indigenous
community – are allowed to take part in ceremony
J: Defining yourself by your job
I've always seen myself as part of the human race but as much as you want
to be, you can't escape (?) your influences: Australian, Turkish, muslims
empowering – I draw bits from different buckets – all components have
something to offer

LBS: Identity is constantly evolving – identity can be managed

*LW: it's the way I operate as a person – connections
*Brigitte: being part of a community of interests

* Friends from the future

Identity can be defined by the community of which you are a part.
Connections – common ground

Brigitte: Identity is about belonging – at school I see myself as a certain type
of person – because of blonde hair etc in a Turkish, Lebanese sector.

Session Code: **3A**

Time: **12:00**

Topic Title: **How to make a difference in the industry**

Convenor: **Gail**

Recorder: **Gail**

Notes from Conversation….

Encourage journalists to be more subversive (do it editors way as well as you own way – photographers do this all the time - journos do have power over their own work.

Journalism education:

- Talk to managers about journalism practice
- Including it for consideration in editorial meetings
- When material is delivered look at it with an eye on how it can be developed with diversity in mind

To sell to management target key levers of power who will have the industry credibility to influence them to change practice
- Identify editorial managers
- Take roadshow to them for seminars and presentations

Combating Media cynicism
- get people talking to them that they respect.
- Also get advocates who aren't part of the news industry – Sports people? Business high flyers?
- Approach media representatives/proprietors who are part of the Future of Journalism project, Right to Know Coalition, etc
- Be wary of 'political correctness' label'
- Be wary of perception this is an attack on editorial independence – mine research to feed the argument about diversity so it has credibility
- Check how researchers on mental health and trauma have been able to establish their credibility and get changes in industry protocols. Trauma was put onto the industry agenda as it was presented as an occupational health and safety issue.
- Bring out business arguments , eg audience growth; modelling to show it makes financial Journalism Quality Project in the US shows that quality sells. Funnel through finance journalists?
- sense by embracing a broader audience to sell to advertisers.
- This isn't about being 'worthy' - If they do this well they can create a sense of ownership in the community.

Public Relations represents another concern: media ask for newsworthy talent which means PR organisations narrow their choice to comply. This cuts off one avenue for broadening talent base for stories.

- Target PR operatives who furnish product, also news agencies.

Should CALD be hitched to another wagon to get it into the public arena – eg gender equity, disability. Should there be an alliance of all these groups, or should we learn from their project models?

Different forms of reporting could be used : social justice, peace journalism. Need to combat 'worthy' tag attached to them. Provide examples of how different news approaches work.

Can the Web help? Evidence of audience appeal of alternative views in the blogosphere especially for younger audiences.

Use awards to encourage good journalism practice.

Session Code: **3C**

Time: **12:00**

Topic Title: **Checks and Balances**

Convenor: **Yasser**

Recorder: **Yasser**

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Notes from Conversation….

- Need to educate the public about how the machine runs.
- There is a difference in values and standards based on cultural perspectives.
- Educating the public about the media should be part of the media's responsibilities.
- There is a need to establish an advocacy community organisation to follow up the complaints on behalf of the community.
- Community leaders media training.
- Teach
- Media self regulation and self critique should be developed further where perhaps a unit would be funded by the media and be independent and act in an across the board fashion like Media Watch (ABC).

Session Code: 3D

Time: 12:00

Topic Title: **Can Diversity Survive the Future of Journalism?**

Convenor: **Jonathan**

Recorder: **Jonathan**

Notes from Conversation….

"Unbundling" journalism
- stuff outside the mainstream? What happens to that?
- alternative sources growing in influence.
- fight against internalising.
- Media is losing control of the audience. Media needs to learn how to connect.
- what makes story important – front page news or chatter generated?
- lowest common denominator?
- danger of following your own interest only – dangerous because you won't hear about anything else new.
- lack of confidence in mainstream media.
- <u>can the mainstream of journalism survive diversity?</u>
- journalism matters – journalists don't
- gender of journalism has changed and so has demographics.
- diversity is becoming more accepted especially at journalism schools.
- there are a lot of difference spheres but they are necessarily part of the whole.
- is it still part of the common good?
- shift to the audience (backchat from the audience).
- public sphere -> radio
- commercialism in public service leads to erosion of public good.
- Organisations have to look 'out' rather than just tell audience.
- people formerly known as the Audience…..
- Accepting that audience will talk back to you.