

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE IALJS  
**LITERARY JOURNALISM**

VOL 2 NO 4

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES

FALL 2008

## OUR MEMBERS HAVE SPOKEN

For more information on the results of the recent survey conducted by our association, please see the "President's Letter" on this page. The outcome has been a huge help in assisting us in responding to your preferences in a number of important areas, including the scheduling of our annual conference, the production of our scholarly journal and the association's financial planning.

## FUTURE SITES FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCES

The following future IALJS convention venues and dates have been confirmed. For more information, please see <[www.ialjs.org](http://www.ialjs.org)>.

**2009:** IALJS Annual Convention at Northwestern University, Evanston, IL, USA, 14-16 May 2009.

**2010:** IALJS Annual Convention at Roehampton University, London, UK, 20-22 May 2010.

**2011:** IALJS Annual Convention at Ryerson University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 12-14 May 2011.

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[WWW.IALJS.ORG](http://WWW.IALJS.ORG)

## SHARED VALUES

### *The path ahead for the association.*

By David Abrahamson, Northwestern (U.S.A.)

One can only imagine the brave soul who—when starting the software company which would make it possible for the most statistically challenged person to create and administer a truly useful member survey—came up with the name "Survey Monkey." It was an act of courage matched only by the fact that the resulting program, to be found at [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com), is free. So in response to a number of issues raised at the annual meeting in Lisbon last May, it was decided that it would be helpful to survey the membership of the association, and, as most of you surely know by now, we used the software to seek your opinions on the questions at hand.

The results are now in, and it is certainly worth noting that the response rate of over 60 percent (40 out of 66 members) was very impressive. Equally commendable was the fact that, of those 40 members who completed the survey, the ratio of U.S. to non-U.S. respondents mirrored the ratio in the association as a whole. Since our founding in 2006, roughly one third of our members are in the United States and two thirds are elsewhere—an admirable ratio for any learned society claiming to be international. In the survey, 13 respondents were from the U.S. and 27 from elsewhere (three each from Australia, Brazil, Canada, France and Portugal; two each from Slovenia and the U.K.; and one each from Belgium, Chile, China, Finland, Greece, Ireland, New Zealand and Romania).

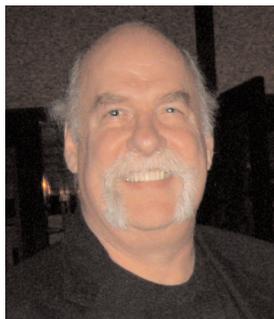
The first matter under consideration centered on the scheduling of our annual con-

vention. Since our founding we have met in the second week in May. And while this was "acceptable" to over 80 percent of us, when the suggestion was posed of alternating the annual meeting between the second week and third week of May, this was "preferred" by close to half (45 percent). Based on this feedback, we will try the "alternating" approach. Next year's conference in Chicago will be held on 14-16 May 2009, the following year's in London will be 20-22 May 2010, and the Toronto meeting will be 12-14 May 2011.

The second issue concerned our new scholarly journal, *Literary Journalism Studies*, Volume 1/Number 1 of which will be the Spring 2009 issue. With the whole world seemingly moving at break-neck speed into the brave new digital future, the question arose about whether the association's membership could best be served if the journal were offered in a print edition, an on-line web edition or both. The survey's results were unequivocal: 88 percent felt an on-line version was either very or somewhat important, while 75 percent felt the same way about the print version. So we will produce both.

The last matter spoke to the issue of raising our annual dues. The question read: "One aspect of publishing a print edition is the additional cost of foreign postage. It is estimated that, for a journal printed in the U.S. and mailed abroad, this may be almost \$10 per issue (approaching \$20/year for two issues). Since we aspire to be a truly *international* association, it has been suggested that we should *not* make this a special surcharge for non-U.S. members, but rather that we should consider raising our dues next year by \$10. Would this be acceptable to you?" A full 95 percent approved this approach.

In closing, it might be worth adding that there was an "open" section at the end of the survey in which comments were solicited. Please know that your suggestions will be taken to heart, and that we would warmly welcome any further ideas you might have to make IALJS an even greater success. ♦



PRESIDENT'S  
LETTER

## CALL FOR ARTICLES FOR OUR NEW JOURNAL

*Our association's scholarly journal, LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES, is now a reality.*

By John Hartsock, SUNY-Cortland (U.S.A.)

The underlying *raison d'être* of a learned society such as ours can be reduced to a simple pair of entities. One is a process, our annual conference. And the other is a product, specifically a peer-reviewed scholarly journal which serves as a forum for original intellectual effort; its objective, the dissemination of new knowledge. We now can assure you that this coming spring you will be holding



FROM THE  
LJS EDITOR

in your hands the inaugural issue of our new research journal. Our plans call for two issues a year, and, with the help of my colleagues, William Dow of the American University of Paris (France), Jenny McKay of Stirling University

(Scotland, U.K.), Tom Connery of the University of St. Thomas (U.S.A.) and Susie Eisenhuth of the University of Technology, Sydney (Australia), we will try to insure that it lives up to your expectations. Below you will find the Call for Submissions, and we urge you to contribute your work. ♦

### CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

*LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES*, a new peer-reviewed journal sponsored by the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies (IALJS), invites sub-

missions of scholarly articles on literary journalism, which is also known as narrative journalism, literary reportage, reportage literature, "new journalism" and the nonfiction novel, as well as literary nonfiction and creative nonfiction that emphasizes cultural revelation. The journal is international in scope and seeks submissions on the theory, history and pedagogy of literary journalism throughout the world. All disciplinary approaches are welcome.

To encourage an international dialogue, the journal is also willing to consider publishing short examples or excerpts of literary journalism

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The deadline  
for submission for the  
inaugural issue  
is 30 September 2008.  
Please do not delay!

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accompanied by a scholarly gloss about a writer not widely known outside his or her country. The example or excerpt must be translated into English. The scholarly gloss must be between 1,500 and 2,500 words long and indicate why the example is important in the context of its national culture. Together, both the text and the gloss must not exceed 8,000 words in length. The contributor is responsible for obtaining all copyright permissions, including from the publisher, author and translator as necessary.

E-mail submission (as an MS Word attachment) is mandatory, and submissions should be between 4,000 and 8,000 words in length, including notes. A cover page indicating the title of the paper, the author's name and institutional affiliation, and con-

tact information must accompany all submissions. The author's name should not appear on the required 250-word abstract or on the paper itself, as all submissions will be blind reviewed. All submissions must be in English and follow the *Chicago Manual of Style (Humanities)*. Please e-mail all submissions and/or related queries to the editor at <hartsockj@cutland.edu>.

John C. Hartsock, Ph.D.

Editor,

*LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES*

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INAUGURAL NOTE: Submissions will be accepted on an ongoing basis. To be considered for the inaugural Spring 2009 issue, contributions must be submitted by e-mail by 30 September 2008.

Contributors of articles selected for publication will receive one copy of the journal. Copyright reverts to the contributor after publication with the provision that should the submission be subsequently republished reference is made to initial publication in *LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES*.

BOOK REVIEWS: The journal will include a book review section and invites short reviews of 1,000-2,000 words on both the scholarship of literary journalism and recent original works of literary journalism that deserve greater recognition among scholars. Book reviews are not blind reviewed but selected by the book review editor based on merit. Reviewers may suggest book review prospects or write the book review editors for suggestions. Usually reviewers will be responsible for obtaining their respective books. Book reviews and/or related queries should be e-mailed to Tom Connery at <tconnery@stthomas.edu> or Susie Eisenhuth at <susie.eisenhuth@uts.edu.au>. ♦

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## A LETTER FROM AARHUS, DENMARK

*IALJS's "Literary Journalism and the Canon" seminar at ESSE.*

*By Viviane Serfaty, Université Paris-Est Marne la Vallée (France)*

### AN AARHUS DIARY

**F**riday: Getting to Aarhus from Paris means long waits at two different airports and a longer bus ride to the city itself. I

squeeze inside the tourist information office minutes before closing time and the start of the weekend. "You'll soon find out that in Aarhus everything is nearby," says the cheery young girl at the desk.

Saturday, 9:30 a.m.: It's now been 30 minutes since I passed the first red brick, ivy-covered building on campus, and still no trace of the conference building. I trudge along a wide, Saturday-morning-empty four-lane road in high heels under an intermittent drizzle. Bikers and occasional joggers politely tell me they can't show me the way. I wander by a vast lawn, where gentlemen in suits are playing croquet—an idyllic pastoral-academic scene. Perhaps the journey truly trumps the goal of the quest after all.

Saturday, 2:00 p.m.: John Bak and David Abrahamson kick off the literary journalism seminar, with John introducing each speaker. Theory comes first. Norman Sims shows that the existence of a canon for literary journalism would be the sign that it has established its own distinct identity. But because mutually exclusive canons exist, and because the very notion of the canon has come under fire, the definition of the genre is still a work-in-progress. John Hartsock concurs, describing the elasticity of a genre which started out in Europe and Russia as a vehicle for far-left ideologies but turned into a subversive, status-quo challenging, open genre when American writers embraced it. Anastasia Holivatou also attempts a general definition of literary journalism, using as her starting point T.S. Eliot's assertion that journalism and literature are almost indistinguishable. She then provides a historical overview of columns in Greek journalism and concludes that literary journalism is "a

hybrid text where literature and journalism meet ideally."

Saturday, 3:00 p.m.: The next three speakers all analyze specific examples of literary journalism. Bill Reynolds presents Tom Hedley, a figure of Canadian literary journalism who believed in the "fish out of water" scenario: for example, asking Marshall McLuhan to write a column about hockey, believing his inexperience would make for a fresh outlook. Isabelle Meuret analyses two of Joan Didion's recent works in which the language of political campaigns and that of post-9/11 political discourse is shown to be manipulative and propagandistic. I speak last and pre-

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Our panel at  
the conference of the European  
Society for the Study of  
of English both provided answers  
and raised a question or two.

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sent contemporary warblogs, whose techniques I compare with those used by war writers such as Michael Herr and Mark Bowden. The very extensive range covered by the six talks confirms that the literary journalism concept in use by our association remains very open and inclusive.

Saturday, 8:00 p.m.: Along with some of the seminar's audience, we all have dinner at a sidewalk café by the Aarhus River. It is drizzling again, and the gas heater burning overhead is no match for the dampness. The waiter brings a woman a large red woollen shawl which she wraps around herself. A few people order soup, which comes with a piece of fish tail stuck in the middle of the plate. "Why only the tail?" asks David. "It's a long story," answers John. A story for literary journalism, perhaps. ♦

### READING LIST

A number of our colleagues in the discipline have particular favorites in the

broad canon of literary journalism that they have found to have special meaning both in and out of the classroom. Their nominees are the books and/or articles they find uniquely useful examples of the craft.

- Susan Weill (Texas State, U.S.A.) recommends *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* by **Lawrence Wright**, the 2007 Pulitzer Prize winner for general nonfiction which she describes as "a narrative of astounding depth and importance."

- Willa McDonald (Macquarie, Australia) suggests **Malcolm Knox's "Cruising: Life and Death on the High Seas"** from *The Monthly* (September 2006), commending "the way it combines an investigative approach with personal observation and reflection."

- Rob Alexander (Brock, Canada) recommends **"Being Brians"** by **Brian Doyle**, from Lee Gutkind's volume, *In Fact: The Best of Creative Nonfiction* (2005), noting that "the piece is playful, thoughtful and moving—and can lead to interesting classroom discussions of the complexity of the relationship between journalists and their subjects."

- Doug Cumming (Washington and Lee, U.S.A.) suggests **Anne Fadiman's *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*** (1998) which he calls "an ethnographic masterpiece" and "an elegant, sensitive study of human cultures, of illness and belief, in conflict." He also recommends her personal essay, **"A Piece of Cotton,"** on relating to the American flag after 9/11, which appeared under the pseudonym "Philonoe" in *The American Scholar* (Winter 2002).

- Leonora Flis (Ljubljana, Slovenia) recommends two comic books by **Joe Sacco: *Safe Area Gorazde*** (2000) and ***The Fixer*** (2003) for "their real-life stories about ordinary people with extraordinary lives." She also suggests **William Finnegan's "The Countertraffickers"** from *The New Yorker* (5 May 2008), as "a chilling and heartfelt article on the victims of the global sex trade."

*Continued on Page 5*

## THE INDISPENSABLE TENSION

*Welcome to our small—but crowded and expandable—tent.*

By Bill Reynolds, Ryerson (Canada)

There we were, all sixteen—or was it fourteen?—of us, at the first conference at Université Nancy in Nancy, France in May 2006. During the final plenary, when the unanimous decision to create an academic association, one dedicated specifically to literary journalism, was sealed, much talk of nomenclature surfaced. David Abrahamson told me later that “taxonomy” was how Norman Sims chose to describe intermittent



DEFINITIONAL  
ISSUES

attempts to nail down what *literary journalism* might exactly mean. A well-defined nomenclature would provide clear direction for scholars to place their insect specimens in glass jewel cases. Much more talk ensued on what literary journal-

ism was—exactly. And, oh my, were we liberal! One scholar thought novels written by former newspaper journalists—such as John Steinbeck and Ernest Hemingway, to name two of many—ought to qualify. Personally, I thought that was stretching it a bit. But then, who was I to say, especially when one considered the origin of the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies: the antecedent to its formation was this particular Nancy conference, which, in its original formulation, was an attempt to organize a conference dedicated to one particular work of fiction—2006 being the centenary of a classic piece of agitprop, Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, which (naturally) was laced with Sinclair’s five weeks’ worth of reporting on Chicago slaughterhouses. Talk about your classic information gathering process for literary journalism!

So you might say that the association was formed out of a confusing but happy chaos surrounding the definition

of literary journalism.

And moreover, I would argue, this is precisely the strength of the IALJS. In May 2006, on that final day, I marveled at Herculean attempts to jam and ram literary journalism into nice neat little boxes (Open that jewel box! Shove that definition in! Quick, before it gets out again!).

I asked myself at the time: Why on earth would we bother? I can say this now, with all due respect to the passion of the contestants, because, being a philosophy degree procurer twice over, the one thing I swore I would not do when moving over to journalism was to fall into the swamp of definitions for literary journalism. Let’s get to the ideas and the stories and the many, many, many ways in which we can tell them, and not get stuck on replotting the roadmap!

Yes, literary journalism’s tent is not all that large. It includes only journalism that is literary, not journalism as a whole, or journalism as it is related to public relations or journalism as it pertains to advertising or journalism *qua* media studies plus that inevitable, ultimate intellectual parlour game, communications theory. And so, yes, the IALJS sticks to literary journalism.

Ah, but here inside this small-ish tent we find crowded many a strange beast with elbows up: narrative nonfiction, creative nonfiction, narratological studies, memoir, travel writing, reportage. The list is lengthy and can include even those pesky fiction writers who chose to adopt techniques learned in the grimier world of newspaper reporting, those just-the-facts-m’am techniques.

And so now time has passed, and there we were in Lisbon this past May, at the third conference—the third conference, already!—listening to scholars who had all rallied under the tent. One scholar made the case that newspaper columnist Mike Royko, with his distinctive style, might indeed be a literary journalist. Another scholar claimed that short bits of nonfiction, if executed properly, might be considered part of the canon. Yet another scholar argued that it was actually a particular gaggle of writers and edi-

tors from the American south who played the crucial roles in the formation of the New Journalism in New York City. Another scholar claimed that newspaper editors were in fact stealing magazine editors’ trusty lightning bolts and publishing something that might look suspiciously like literary journalism. Another came all the way from China to proclaim that literary reportage did in fact historically exist in Olympics land, although in ways journalists and scholars in the West might not entirely recognize. Another invitee claimed that, for heaven’s sake, even a stalwart of the English fiction canon such as E. M. Forster might be considered to have indulged in literary journalism during the war.

The list goes on. My friend Mike Doherty from University of Toronto’s English department twisted literary journalism into a pretzel when he said the events of September 11, 2001 in New York and Washington had caused a kind crisis of conviction in certain fiction writers—how could they not respond to these events with anything but nonfiction?

Tent erectors? More like empire builders and terrain graabbers, these literary journalists. Why, they’re encroaching on John Steinbeck and Ernest Hemingway territory? Speaking of which, in my latest research on Canadian literary journalism I’ve discovered something that may be obvious to a certain cohort of writers—say, those that came out of the New Journalism wave of the 1960s and 1970s—but not necessarily me. It turns out that there is direct link between the following: the Lost Generation of fiction writers in Paris, Canadian fiction giant Morley Callaghan (a newspaperman who worked with Hemingway at the *Toronto Star*, and hung out and wrote in Paris in 1929), the New Journalism as practiced at *New York*, the supplement edited by Clay Felker at the *Herald Tribune*, the Harold Hayes–edited *Esquire*, the *Toronto Telegram* and *Toronto Life* magazine.

And this is where the two silos of journalism and English intersect. News journalism’s tendency is to cut out the style, the personality, the clutter, the depth, and tell the story as cleanly as possible. Literary journalism’s tendency is to put it all back in, and tell the story as richly as possible.

Therein lies the creative tension residing in our little—or not so little—tent. Long may it roil. ♦

## LITERARY JOURNALISM IN CHILE

*History first stifled, but now has freed, our journalists.*

By Gonzalo Saavedra Vergara, Universidad Católica (Chile)

I should start with a declaration of skepticism: I confess that I am not very fond of the terms “literary journalism” or “narrative journalism.” For example, every piece that tells what’s going on should, naturally, be a good narrative. And if it is well reported and carefully written, this piece should be labeled plain “good journalism.”

During Pinochet’s dictatorship (1973-1990) it was very difficult to do good journalism, of course. All TV channels and newspapers were under control. But there was a number of magazines that tried to investigate the other side of the official truth, and they suffered from censorship several times. In these magazines one often found the best written journalism available. In *Hoy* magazine, for instance, out-

standing journalists such as Ascanio Cavallo, Antonio Martínez and Patricia Verdugo, wrote stories that became examples for a whole generation of journalism students who were still being taught that the inverted pyramid was the only acceptable way to write journalism.

Among the most important pieces of that period is Verdugo’s *Los zarpazos del puma* (*The Claws of the Puma*), about the so-called Death Caravan, a group of Army officials who traveled through the country on board a Puma helicopter in the weeks that followed Pinochet’s *coup d’état* on September 11, 1973, and executed more than 120 opponents of the regime. The book was published in 1989, and, for the first time, it told this story with its macabre details—16 years after it had occurred!

In the years that followed Chile’s return to democracy, journalists slowly began to do their job better. But it was a difficult task, because many of them were simply not used to asking the tough questions, and newspapers were still being written in

the traditional inverted pyramid way.

But new generations came and journalism education changed considerably, so much that Universidad Católica’s School of Journalism, where I work, became the first journalism school outside the United States recognized by the U.S. Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. Today our students learn storytelling from the very beginning of their college education, reading pieces from the anthologies of Norman Sims, Ben Yagoda and Kevin Kerrane, and from Colombian Daniel Samper. They learn theory from Daniel Leman’s *Matter of Fact*, as well as from Catalan professor Albert Chillón’s *Literatura y periodismo* (*Literature and Journalism*). As a result, the quality of writing in Chilean newspapers has improved considerably.

The best work, however, is still to be found in magazines or books rather than newspapers. Alberto Hurtado University’s Best Journalism Award has recognized feature stories that have appeared in magazines such as *Paula*, *The Clinic* and Chile’s edition of *Rolling Stone*. The extended anthology published annually by the Universidad Alberto Hurtado entitled *Premio periodismo de excelencia*, is ample proof of the fact that journalists are investigating and writing is much better than in the past.

Remarkable books have been printed just this year, including *Los fusileros* (*The Infantry*) by Cristóbal Peña about the attempt to kill Pinochet in 1986. Another is *El pecado del rucio* (*The Blond Boy’s Sin*) by Daniel Halpern, Jorge González and Pablo Unda. It focuses on the assassination and corporeal disintegration of an impoverished street teenager in 2006. Both publications show in-depth research and excellent writing, with carefully selected details yielding beautifully controlled suspense.

Both these works, one might certainly argue, could be labeled literary journalism or narrative journalism, of course. But I still prefer to call them plain good journalism. ♦

READING LIST  
(CONTINUED)

• Isabelle Meuret (Free Univ. of Brussels, Belgium) nominates **Joan Didion’s *The Year of Magical Thinking*** (2006)

for its “sensitive exploration of the nature of grief and mourning.” She also suggests **“The Woman at Abu Ghraib”** by **Phillip Gourevitch and Errol Morris** from *The New Yorker* (24 March 2008) which “successfully penetrates the mind of the woman who took the notorious photographs and highlights the inhumanity of a situation in heart-rending detail.”

• Namrata Gogoi (English and Foreign Languages Univ., India) suggests **Nirmal Shekar’s “God of Big Things”** from *Sportstar Weekly* (21 September 2002) for the author’s skill in using “the perspective of an omniscient narrator.”

• Sonja Merljak Zdovc (Ljubljana, Slovenia) suggests **“True Crime”** by **David Grann** from *The New Yorker* (11 February 2008) for its especially powerful storytelling, as well as **Geraldine Brooks’s “The Book of Exodus,”** also from *The New Yorker* (3 December 2007) for “its complex and engaging portrayal of Sarajevo and its citizens—an achievement because writing about the Balkans is never an easy task.”

• Carolyn Edy (North Carolina at Chapel Hill, U.S.A.) commends **“Anguish in the Ruins of Mutanabi Street: In Baghdad’s Literary District, Mourning Loved Ones and a Once-Unifying Place”** by **Sudarsan Raghavan** from the *Washington Post* (10 March 2007) for the author’s “ability to place the reader in the scene as he conveys a single hour of despair in Iraq.”

• Nancy Roberts (SUNY-Albany, U.S.A.) suggests **Adrian Nicole LeBlanc’s *Random Family: Love, Drugs, Trouble, and Coming of Age in the Bronx*** (2003) as “a superb example of immersion reporting and an unsentimental investigation of poverty with great depth and literary panache. It’s in the documentary testament tradition of Agee’s *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, although the tone is less overtly advocacy.”

• Nikki Hessel (Massey, New Zealand) recommends **Joe Cinque’s *Consolation*** by **Helen Garner**, one of Australasia’s best literary journalists. The 2004 book is “a wonderful example of her style as she attempts to uncover the personal stories behind a bizarre and high-profile murder case.” ♦



AROUND THE WORLD

## IS STALE NEWS STILL NEWS?

*How journalism might transform itself.*

By Sonja Merljak Zdovc, University of Ljubljana (Slovenia)

In the contemporary media world, the future of newspapers and traditional media in general seems to be the key question. Will they die? Will they change? How? Will the readers, listeners and viewers still need professionals who will choose which local or



GUEST  
ESSAY

world events merit the space in their media and will contextualize these specific events? Media scholars, owners, producers, editors and journalists are looking for the answers; however, it seems that the secret will not be revealed so soon. In the meantime, the circulation and revenue of newspapers is dropping (Edmonds, 2007). According to some predictions, in the future the circulation will drop from three to seven percent per year (Morgan, 2007). On the other side, despite the information that more and more people are looking for information online (Morgan, 2007), nobody has yet developed a successful model for market-

ing the online media. Online revenue is rising; however it is still relatively small in comparison with the revenue of print media (Project of Excellence in Journalism, 2007). In fact, it is so low that many newspapers could not afford to shut down the print division and keep only the digital version of their product (Kuttner, 2007). Things might change by 2020 when it is expected that half of the revenue would come from online and most of the readers would read the online version of the newspaper (Kuttner, 2007).

Among the number of reports about the bleak future, there is also some more optimistic news. One of them, perhaps, was the recent 60th birthday celebration of the eminent political German magazine *Der Spiegel*. *Der Spiegel* was the first magazine in the world to start its own online version, and now is one of the few non-English magazines with an English version of its website. The aim of the website is to allow its readers to see a German or Central-European perspective of world events. *Der Spiegel's* celebration happened approximately at the same time when news came from the other side of Atlantic that another publication, the magazine *Life*, died the third time; this time it could not survive even as a supplement of some major American dailies.

Additionally, there is some optimism also in the report of the World Association of Newspapers. According to their information the future of the newspapers could be more optimistic. The global circulation of newspapers has risen for 9.95 percent, and the number of dailies reached 10.000 in number for the first time. Almost a billion and a half people pay for information on paper (World Association of Newspapers, 2007).

However, news reports in newspapers and magazines might seem obsolete to a reader at the time when a news story from, for example, Zimbabwe circulates the world in few seconds, and when the first pictures from an event are sent to editors by news consumers, as in the case of London bombing in July 2005

(Owen, 2005). At the time of publication, such reports are usually too old to be interesting. At such difficult times for the newspaper business, the salvation of newspapers can only come if some additional value is added to conventional news stories. Currently, newspapers in Slovenia follow in the steps of glossy magazines, which try to attract readers by offering lipsticks or different accessories. They choose books and DVDs as add-ons, and they are selling them for a reasonable price together with a copy of the newspaper. Often such DVDs are B-rated (as is for example the case in the current promotion of the Slovene national newspaper *Delo*, which is offering DVDs of the sitcom *Friends* that ran from 1994-2004 (Delo, 2007). What is the solution for the future of the newspapers? Is it dumbing up or dumbing down? Should the salvation of newspaper business come from better contents of newspapers? Or should newspapers continue providing stale news wrapped in books and DVDs?

### USING STORYTELLING ON THE WEB

It seems that editors from Slovenia to Morocco agree that a good way to attract readers is shorter articles about simple topics with attractive headlines, or sensationalistic stories in the style of the penny press. When asked why, they usually answer that this is what readers demand. The idea is that readers want less important and complex stories. The old journalism adage also goes "if it bleeds, it leads." Supposedly, this is related to the fact that readers want to feel better by reading about other people's misery. However, should the newspapers follow the wishes of the readers? Should they offer only what readers want? Will such editorial policy help newspapers to survive?

Dean Baquet, the former editor of *LA Times*, who left the newspaper in November 2006 after he refused to obey the wishes of the newspaper's owners, the Tribune Company, to make budget cuts and let go another group of employees, never shared the populist vision of editors giving readers whatever they demand. In an interview, he told *The New Yorker's* Ken Auletta: "It's not always our job to give readers what they want...What if they don't want war coverage or foreign coverage or to see poverty in their communities? Southern newspapers are still hanging their heads because generations ago they gave readers what they wanted—no coverage of segregation and the civil-rights movement" The job of newspapers, Baquet added, was to help readers understand the world. "If we don't do that, who will?" (Auletta, 2005)

In the era of blogs, user-generated content programs, and especially the abundance of information avail-

*Continued on next page*

STILL NEWS? *Continued from previous page*

able online, the newspapers and magazines should try to reconsider their advantages. The job that Baquet was talking about is one of them—probably the biggest. Bloggers have already proven that they can do journalist’s job successfully: that they can uncover information and reveal irregularities even such that journalists won’t because of the political or economical pressures; however as Nicholas Lemann, dean of Columbia University, argues: “It ought to raise suspicion that we so often hear the same menu of examples in support of its achievements: bloggers took down the 2004 *60 Minutes* report on President Bush’s National Guard service and, with it, Dan Rather’s career; bloggers put Trent Lott’s remarks in apparent praise of the Jim Crow era front and center, and thereby deposed him as Senate majority leader. The best original Internet journalism happens more often by accident, when smart and curious people with access to means of communication are at the scene of a sudden disaster.” (Lemann, 2006).

Besides, as Kuttner writes (Kuttner, 2007), the *State of the News Media 2006* report found that only five percent of information on blogs was the result of journalistic work. According to Lemann, no Internet journalism “yet rises to the level of a journalistic culture rich enough to compete in a serious way with the old media—to function as a replacement rather than an addendum.” (Lemann, 2006).

Many researchers (see for example Antonov in Borko, 2007; Lemann, 2006) agree that only traditional media have the knowledge, experience, time and money to thoroughly report a story and write about it in an attractive way. These stories are the originals which are then copied, transformed or linked in blogosphere. John Carroll, the former editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, for example, said: “Take any story in a blog and trace its origins, about eighty-five percent of it can be traceable to newspapers. They break nearly all of the important stories. Who’s going to do the reporting if these institutions fade away?” (in Kuttner, 2007).

We agree with Carroll that newspapers break nearly all of the important stories. However it still often happens that newspapers in their print versions

publish stale news, as Stephens writes in his piece (Stephens, 2007). Thus, newspapers should pay more attention to the contents of the stories they publish. One of the suggestions would be to reconsider the old adage and see what else out there needs explaining (for example the world of African immigrants, see below). Only this way their audience will not experience a letdown described by Stephens, and journalists will preserve their job “to help readers understand the world,” which distinguishes newspapers from blogosphere (Stephens, 2007).

Just as important as the original contents is, it is also its wrapping. In fact, traditional newspaper publishers are right in their attempts to package news contents with a gift. However, instead of books and DVDs the gifts should be jour-

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One of its  
pioneers, Tom Wolfe  
said it best:  
It would read like  
a novel

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nalistic tools. A tool that has already been accepted as the only true antidote in the fight against declining circulation is narrative journalism, known also as literary journalism, a form of journalistic writing which is mainly written and researched in the States, however mostly neglected elsewhere. Literary journalism, “in contrast to standard reportage (characterized by objectivity, direct language and the inverted pyramid form) literary journalism seeks to communicate facts through narrative storytelling and literary techniques” (Royal & Tankard, 2004) and was defined by its pioneer Tom Wolfe as journalism “that would read like a novel” (Wolfe, 1973).

Kramer (2000) writes that in the United States of America, publishers are increasingly aware that “good feature story writing in the form of narrative journalism is the only true journalistic ‘antidote’ on the list of many remedies (i.e. more celebrity and sports reportage, colour printing, fuller TV schedules) to be

applied to widespread current business problems (declining or stagnant circulation, aging readership...). It alone moves newspapers toward deeper coverage, toward fulfilment of the civic mission that distinguishes the worthy profession.” (Kramer, 2000)

This way—well-reported and well-written stories that will be read because they are attractive, inspiring and make readers care—will still remain the domain of journalists working for traditional media.

However, publishing such stories only in the print versions of newspapers will probably not suffice in the future. Beside the contents and the form, there is another relevant question regarding the future of newspapers: the platform. In his column “Which Major Newspaper Will Be First?” Dave Morgan asked which major newspaper will truly and dramatically change its business model and recognize that digital is its future and mass print is its past. He writes: “Every day, someone somewhere launches another new niche media product—many times, a print product—that continues to whittle away advertising revenue. That is daily newspapers’ future, and they must confront it.” (Morgan, 2007)

American researchers and scholars have already established that Internet offers more possibilities than paper, especially because its hypertextuality and unlimited space. However, in order to start using its advantages, newspaper producers should stop regarding the Internet merely as a platform for republication of their print contents.

There are different scenarios for the future of print products. The bleakest is probably one presented in the now legendary video EPIC 2014 (later it was updated into 2015), which predicts that the *New York Times* will close its website in protest, after Google and Amazon and a number of amateurs will take over the world of journalism. According to this scenario, *New York Times* will turn into a paper of the elderly elite (Sloane, 2004). According to Robert Kuttner, however, a far more hopeful picture (than EPIC’s) is emerging: “In this scenario the mainstream press, though late to the party, fig-

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STILL NEWS? *Continued from previous page*

ures out how to make serious money from the Internet, uses the Web to enrich traditional journalistic forms, and retains its professionalism—along with a readership that is part print, part Web. Newspapers stay alive as hybrids. The culture and civic mission of daily print journalism endure.” (Kuttner, 2007)

Kuttner gives an example of successful hybridization in the *Washington Post*, which for several months last year ran a highly praised series called “Being a Black Man.” According to Leonard Downie, executive editor of the *Washington Post*, the Web allowed a vivid extension of what could be done in print, including narratives, photo galleries, videos, and extensive reader involvement (in Kuttner, 2007).

Despite the use of narrative, “Being a Black Man” could not be categorized as literary journalism, because it lacks the narrative and descriptive modalities typical of literary journalism (see Hartsock, “Is Literary Reportage Literary Journalism? Yes, No, and Maybe,” 2007). However, because of its length and some use of narrative, we can compare it with literary journalism and we can conclude that if the *Washington Post* series proved effective on the Internet, literary journalism, traditionally a long and slow form of journalism, would prove even more so, due to the fact that one of the crucial characteristics of literary journalism is the narrative technique that engages the reader and drives the story along.

There is not much scholarly research of the future of literary journalism on the Internet; however there are some findings that prove that hybridization of literary journalism and Internet can successfully provide readers excellent journalism. Cindy Royal, one of the few scholars who analyzed this sort of hybridization, writes that in the case of the *Philadelphia Inquirer’s* Blackhawk Down site, “the World Wide Web was being used for a particularly compelling kind of journalistic storytelling” (Royal & Tankard, 2004). Similarly, Sarah Niblock writes that immersion journalism, as she calls literary journalism, is “a form that fits very well with the Internet.” According to Niblock, “the use of multiple perspective can be presented through links, which take the viewer to different

sites” (Niblock, 2007).

Although we agree with Norman Sims, who says in his paper on future of literary journalism that “people typically won’t read anything longer than three screens, and it really should be only one screen in length” (Sims, 2007), we argue that the future of newspapers lies also in literary journalistic stories about relevant and original contents which are being published on the Internet, too, not only in the print version of newspapers. Besides, we believe that non-English newspapers should provide some of the contents of this kind also in English as this is a unique opportunity for them to fill the void and offer readers across the world a different, non-Anglo-American perspective on the world events. An additional reason would be that in Europe,

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*Der Spiegel*  
as the first magazine  
in the world  
with an on-line edition  
in 1994

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English is one of the three working languages of the European Union, and at the same time lingua franca of the world.

A CASE STUDY FROM  
*DER SPEIGEL*

To outline how well long-form narrative can function on the Internet and how we think that literary journalism should be seriously considered as an important tool in producing hybrid journalism as suggested by Kuttner, we shall examine a case from *Der Spiegel*. It is in line with Baquet’s definition of the role of journalism, i.e. to help the readers understand the world they live in.

The German magazine *Der Spiegel*, which celebrated its 60th birthday this year, was the first magazine in the world with an online edition (in 1994). Ten years later, it launched its English website, which aims to provide English-speaking readers with a different, more

German or European perspective on world events (Spiegel Online International, 2004). The magazine, which was in the past famous for its investigative journalism and analytical articles, recently became also one of the European beacons of literary journalism. Literary journalism stories appear on the magazine’s website, where they combine the advantages of the Web with those of the narrative.

In January 2007 *Der Spiegel* published “An African Odyssey: John Ampan’s Four-Year Journey from Ghana to Europe.” The series, which had two parts, is still available on the Internet. It is one of many articles from the magazine’s website which use narrative techniques. “An African Odyssey” starts like this:

*There are journeys that change a traveler, that transform him into a different person. And there are travelers who, by the end of their journey, want nothing so much as for life to return to the way it used to be. But they discover that there is no turning back, that their world has changed irrevocably.*

*For John Ekow Ampan, Africa was his home throughout his journey. Then he lost his security—his friends, his customers, his language and his laugh. He wanted to become a European. Today he dresses like a European, works like a European and buys European TVs and washing machines.*

*“But I’ll never be one,” he says.*

*Ampan, 46, wears his hair cropped close to his head and sports the crescent-shaped scar of the Fante tribe on his left cheek, a mark of belonging the Fante slice into their children. Wearing a green T-shirt, grey Levis, a blue cap and headphones, John is returning home with gifts for his children—they fill many, many plastic bags. (Brinkbäumer, 2007).*

In the series we can find many literary techniques:

- Third person point of view: He wanted to become a European.
- Dialogue in full: It doesn’t take long before the quarreling starts over who owns the house. “Come to my house tomorrow at one,” says John. “Our house,” says Eva. “Your house,” says John.
- Status symbols: The sparse furnishings

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**STILL NEWS?** *Continued from previous page*

include a portable gas stove with two burners, two laundry lines running diagonally across the room and two plastic bowls where Vida and her daughters wash glasses. The boom box at the entrance, which helps attract customers, was the first present John sent from Europe.

• Scene-by-scene descriptions: John approaches his family, opens his mouth as if to speak and then closes it again, and his wife closes her eyes. The two raise their arms to embrace but then drop them to their sides again. They stand facing one another. Vida and the three adolescents smile shyly, the youngest extends her arm but drops it again, and John pushes his baggage cart and approaches his family. They stand there, silent, as he embraces his wife. They stand there as strangers, the children not recognizing their own father. Who is this man? "Dad?" Alice asks. After five awkward minutes, they begin making smalltalk -- chatting about the luggage, who will take which car and where to find the taxis.

The special web techniques used in this article are:

- A picture gallery.
- Maps.
- Related links.
- Blogs discussing this story link.
- An "About this series" note.

There are no hyperlinks in the text, however, but this, too, doesn't seem like a story that would need them.

The fact that the series was published online and in English enabled the readers around the world to access it; had it not been published on the Web and in English, it would be available only to the German readers of the print version. Besides, the interactive features make the reading more interesting and help the readers to get better acquainted with the world of a refugee immigrant, into which otherwise they have only limited access. Research from the States indicates that readers prefer news writing with a narrative structure (ASNE, 1993), and the compelling narrative of "An African Odyssey" was probably one of the major attractions of the story. Although readers' disliked the fact that the story was long, they nevertheless read it and even found it fascinating (Technocrati, 2007).

There are 16 links to the blogs

from this story. On July 13, 2007, we checked blogs linking to today's stories on *Der Spiegel's* website. Except for the story on the mini-penis scandal, which got 15 links, all of the stories had less than 9 links (Spiegel Online International, 2007). Because there was a possibility, that "An African Odyssey" got more links as it was an older story, we also checked the links to the stories on *Der Spiegel's* Magazine archive website. Of the first ten stories on the website, one had 167 links, one 75 links, one had 17, one 16, one 15, two 7, one 4 and two 1 (Spiegel Online International, 2007). From this we can conclude that "An African Odyssey" was widely read. As a result, it is a good example of successful hybridization of literary journalism and web techniques in European journalism.

**N**ewspapers seem to be telling their readers what they already know. They have either read it the day before on the Internet or heard it on television. Can Slovene newspapers survive under such circumstances? Moreover, how? "Views not news" is an old phrase, yet it seems to reveal the one true advantage of the traditional newspapers: the well-researched and written articles and opinions about relevant topics that should be important to the readers. However, these well-written analytical pieces should not only be available in the paper edition, but also online, and should not appear only in the newspaper's mother tongue, but also in English.

Research in the States already showed that readers prefer news writing with a narrative structure. Despite the fact that literary journalism is still relatively rare in European journalism, we believe that it would prove useful in the newspapers' struggle for higher circulations. First, however, the editors and journalists would have to reconsider the role and use of genres in journalistic writing, the need to follow demands of the readers and the tools they use to attract readers.

In Slovenia, for example, it would be useful to conduct a readership survey to determine which topics the readers are interested and whether they pay attention to the form (i.e. genres and style of writing) or only to the contents.

However, research (Merljak Zdovc, 2007) showed that publishers in Slovenia are not particularly interested in forms of writing.

Nevertheless, at the time, in which many publishing houses in Slovenia compete for readers only by selling cheap DVDs or books with their newspapers, it would seem sensible at least for those newspapers, which still aspire to quality journalism, to follow *Der Spiegel's* model of providing quality narrative in English language and thus contribute to the palette of unique European perspectives.

Bloggers in Slovenia and elsewhere have already shown that they can also do what journalists are supposed to be doing: expose the wrongdoings and injustice. However, until their posts are picked up by news media, their efforts are usually limited to the blogger community. Besides, blogosphere and Internet-only media provide more comments than serious reporting because serious journalism costs money. Well researched and well written articles that can attract a large number of readers, inspire them and make them care, are therefore still in the domain of journalists. That is why readers still want and need newspapers—in their print or online version.

The need of citizens for information is as old as humankind, and journalism, a profession that lives off this need, is centuries old. Radio did not kill newspapers, television did not kill radio (however we should not forget that it did kill illustrated magazines, such as *Life*), Internet will probably not bury the newspapers and even less journalism. The form of news stories and the platform for their publication will probably follow the development of technology; however, the contents and the noble mission of journalism will remain the same: to help readers understand the world they live in. ♦

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## INTERNATIONAL ARTS AND HUMANITIES CONFERENCE

The 7th Annual Hawaii International Conference on Arts & Humanities will be held 9-12 January 2009 in the Hilton Hawaiian Village Beach Resort & Spa Honolulu, Hawaii. Sponsored by the University of Louisville's Center for Sustainable Urban Neighborhoods, the conference will provide many opportunities for academicians and professionals from arts and humanities related fields to interact with members inside and outside their own particular disciplines. Cross-disciplinary submissions with other fields are welcome. Examples of other disciplines include Anthropology, American Studies, Archeology, Architecture, Art, Art History, Dance, English, Ethnic Studies, Film, Folklore, Geography, Graphic Design, History, Landscape Architecture, Languages, Literature, Linguistics, Music, Performing Arts, Philosophy, Postcolonial Identities, Product Design, Religion, Second Language Studies, Speech/Communication, Theatre, and Visual Arts. For more information, please e-mail <humanities@hichumanities.org>.

## CALL FOR NOMINEES FOR JOURNALISM HISTORY BOOK PRIZE

The History Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication is soliciting entries for its award for the best journalism and mass communication history book of 2008. The award is given annually, and the winning author will receive a plaque and a cash prize at the August 2009 AEJMC annual conference in Boston, MA. The competition is open to any author of a relevant history book regardless of whether he or she belongs to AEJMC or the History Division. Authorship is defined as the person or persons who wrote the book, not just edited it. Only those books with a 2008 copyright date will be accepted. Compilations, anthologies, articles, and monographs will be excluded because they qualify for the Covert Award, another AEJMC History Division competition. Entries must be postmarked no later than February 1, 2009. Three copies of each book must be submitted, along with the author's mailing address, telephone number, and email address, to: Prof. Carolyn Kitch, AEJMC History Book Award Chair, Journalism Dept., Temple University, 2020 N. 13th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19122. For more info, please e-mail <ckitch@temple.edu>.

## STILL NEWS? *Continued from previous page*

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# CALL FOR PAPERS

## INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR LITERARY JOURNALISM STUDIES

**“Literary Journalism: Past, Present and Future”  
The Fourth International Conference for Literary Journalism Studies**

**Northwestern University • Medill School of Journalism  
Evanston, Illinois, USA  
14-16 May 2009**

The International Association for Literary Journalism Studies invites submissions of original research papers, abstracts for posters and research in progress, and proposals for panels on Literary Journalism for its annual gathering of international scholars.

**About IALJS:** The International Association for Literary Journalism Studies is a multi-disciplinary learned society whose essential purpose is the encouragement and improvement of scholarly research and education in Literary Journalism. As a young association in a relatively recently defined field of academic study, it is our agreed intent to be both explicitly inclusive and warmly supportive of a wide variety of scholarly approaches.

The conference is a forum for scholarly work of both breadth and depth in the field of literary journalism, and all research methodologies are welcome, as are research on all aspects of literary journalism and/or literary reportage. For the purpose of scholarly delineation, our definition of literary journalism is "journalism as literature" rather than "journalism about literature." All submissions must be in English.

**Download the official conference call at:**

[http://www.ialjs.org/IALJS\\_2009\\_CFP\\_v05.pdf](http://www.ialjs.org/IALJS_2009_CFP_v05.pdf)

**Details of the programs of previous annual meetings can be found at:**

<http://www.ialjs.org/conferences08.html>

**For more information regarding the conference or the association, please go to**

<http://WWW.IALJS.ORG>

**or contact:**

Prof. David Abrahamson

Northwestern University (U.S.A.)

President, International Association for Literary Journalism Studies

E-mail: <d-abrahamson@northwestern.edu>

**DEADLINE FOR ALL SUBMISSIONS: NO LATER THAN 31 JANUARY 2009**



## CALL FOR PAPERS

International Association for Literary Journalism Studies

**“Literary Journalism: Past, Present and Future”  
The Fourth International Conference for Literary Journalism Studies**

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The International Association for Literary Journalism Studies invites submissions of original research papers, abstracts for research in progress and proposals for panels on Literary Journalism for the IALJS annual convention on 14-16 May 2009. The conference will be held at the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, USA (Evanston is the first suburb immediately north of the city of Chicago).

The conference hopes to be a forum for scholarly work of both breadth and depth in the field of literary journalism, and all research methodologies are welcome, as are research on all aspects of literary journalism and/or literary reportage. For the purpose of scholarly delineation, our definition of literary journalism is "journalism as literature" rather than "journalism about literature." The association especially hopes to receive papers related to the general conference theme, "Literary Journalism: Past, Present and Future." All submissions must be in English.

The International Association for Literary Journalism Studies is a multi-disciplinary learned society whose essential purpose is the encouragement and improvement of scholarly research and education in Literary Journalism. As a relatively new association in a relatively recently defined field of academic study, it is our agreed intent to be both explicitly inclusive and warmly supportive of a wide variety of scholarly approaches.

Details of the programs of previous annual meetings can be found at:

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<http://www.ialjs.org/conferences2006.html>

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**I. Guidelines for Research Papers**

Submitted research papers should not exceed 7,500 words, or about 25 double-spaced pages, plus endnotes. Please regard this as an upper limit; shorter papers are certainly welcome. Endnotes and bibliographic citations should follow the Chicago Manual of Style. Papers may not be simultaneously submitted to any other conferences. Papers previously published, presented, accepted or under review are ineligible. Only one paper per author will be accepted for presentation in the conference's research sessions, and at least one author for each paper must be at the convention in order to present the paper. If accepted, each paper presenter at a conference Research Session may be allotted no more than 15 minutes. To be considered, please observe the following guidelines:

- (a) Submission by e-mail attachment is required, in either an MS Word or Adobe PDF format. No faxes or postal mail submissions will be accepted;
- (b) Please include one title page containing title, author/s, affiliation/s, and the address, phone, fax, and e-mail of the lead author.
- (c) Also include a second title page containing only the paper's title and the paper's abstract. The abstract should be approximately 250 words in length.
- (d) Your name and affiliation should *not* appear anywhere in the paper [this information will only appear on the first title page; see (b) above].

**II. Guidelines for Poster/Work-in-Progress Presentations (Abstracts)**

Submitted abstracts for Poster/Work-in-Progress Sessions should not exceed 250 words. If accepted, each presenter at a conference Poster/Work-in-Progress session may be allotted no more than 10 minutes. To be considered, please observe the following guidelines:

- (a) Submission by e-mail attachment is required, in either an MS Word or Adobe PDF format. No faxes or postal mail submissions will be accepted;
- (b) Please include one title page containing title, author/s, affiliation/s, and the address, phone, fax and e-mail of the lead author;
- (c) Also include a second page containing only the work's title and the actual abstract of the work-in-progress. The abstract should be approximately 250 words in length.

**III. Guidelines for Proposals for Panels**

- (a) Submission by e-mail attachment is required, in either an MS Word or Adobe PDF format. No faxes or postal mail submissions will be accepted;
- (b) Panel proposals should contain the panel title, possible participants and their affiliation and e-mail addresses, and a description of the panel's subject. The description should be approximately 250 words in length;
- (c) Panels are encouraged on any topic related to the study, teaching or practice of literary journalism;
- (d) SPECIAL NOTE: A panel on the subject of the practice and/or teaching literary journalism in the new era of digital media is already under consideration. Anyone interested in participating as a panelist is invited to contact the Conference Program Chair (e-mail address below).

**Evaluation Criteria, Deadlines and Contact Information**

All research paper submissions will be evaluated on originality and importance of topic; literature review; clarity of research purpose; focus; use of original and primary sources and how they support the paper's purpose and conclusions; writing quality and organization; and the degree to which the paper contributes to the study of literary journalism. Similarly, abstracts of works-in-progress and panel proposals will be evaluated on the degree to which they contribute to the study of literary journalism. Submissions from students as well as faculty are encouraged.

**Please submit research papers or abstracts of poster/works-in-progress presentations to:**

Prof. Isabel Santos  
Universidade Técnica de Lisboa (Portugal)  
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**Deadline for all submissions:** No later than 31 January 2009

**For more information regarding the conference or the association, please go to <http://WWW.IALJS.ORG> or contact:**

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## STAYING IN THE CHAIR

*After all the matters related to technique are addressed, the more important issues arise.*

By Barry Siegel, University of California, Irvine (U.S.A.)

As we all know, there are many ways for writers to go astray. Yet the problem for struggling students usually comes down to one of two issues: Either they don't have it in their notebook (lack of reporting), or they



TEACHING  
TIPS

haven't fixed on what their story is truly about (lack of thinking). Not infrequently, they face both of these challenges. So I send them back out to fill up that notebook, reminding them they must "report for narrative," not just gather up quotes and facts. And I

urge them to keep their hands off the keyboard for awhile, to instead sit and consider why their story really matters. Beyond the immediate, particular subject, what is the more fundamental one that resonates, that suggests a universal dimension? If you can grasp that, you can start making informed choices about what material to use and how to build your structure.

We spend a good deal of time in

my workshops considering those many critical choices. We talk about structure (of course). We talk about building characters with inner lives and motivation. We talk about plot. We talk about dialogue and scenes, about narrative summary, about narrative arc, about staying *in* narrative, about not writing on the nose. We explore how to *mine* interviews for third-person character point-of-view (rather than use interview quotes). We talk about how our characters will want something, how our characters in some fashion will always be on a quest. Something must be at stake. The story must be *headed* somewhere, must *arrive* somewhere.

Finally, though, none of this is my chief focus. What I address more than anything is the *psychology* of writing. Students in my workshops, for good reason, often feel overwhelmed by the challenge of writing literary journalism; they are excited but also filled with panic, angst and despair. They don't feel they know what they are doing, where they are headed. As they move through the quarter, they feel certain of only one point: "*I don't have a story.*"

Of course, all writers feel this way, which is what I tell them. I feel exactly the same way, I explain. No, not just when I was their age—*now*. Every

time I tackle a project, every time I sit down to write. My message is: *The ability to face down these feelings is what separates the "wannabe" writer from the real thing. Nerve, will and determination are finally more important than brilliant, creative imagination.*

"Stay in the chair"—my students hear that mantra over and over. Don't bolt and run into the street. Keep writing that lousy rough draft even when you know it's no good. Writing, after all, is a *process*. You must plunge in, muck around, evolve. Then you must critically examine what you have just created.

I assure my students that we all write fairly bad working drafts. What's so critical, I tell them, is your ability to evaluate that draft, to judge if it is working or not. Then, if it's not working (the norm), you must be able to say exactly *why*. Finally, you must be able to figure out how to fix it. That's what writing is. *Writing is rewriting.*

"Now we begin," I tell my workshop students when they turn in their rough drafts late in the 10-week quarter. They learn that's true: I often see wonderful improvement from working to final draft. The reasons are many, but I think the most pivotal is: The students (most of them) stay in the chair. ♦

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