

Written by Jerome F. Keating Ph.D.
Sunday, 08 November 2009 23:24

In session two of the conference, Jeffrey Cole Ph.D. Director of the Center for the Digital Future at USC addressed new trends in media technology advances and their relevance for Public Diplomacy (PD). He pointed out how the environment and the ways you reach people are constantly changing. He contrasted how people in previous decades would suffer withdrawal if there was a newspaper strike; today's people would suffer more if the internet or mobile phone use was disconnected. TV was introduced mainstream in the home in 1948 - though this author can remember watching Notre Dame vs. Army on TV in a Chicago tavern in 1947. (Of course I had accompanied my father there, I may be old but not that old). TV had a way of bringing people together (but actually radio did that previously with the difference that while listening to programs on the radio in a family circle, one could be doing other things as well - whereas with TV, one had to focus on the screen).

That aside, as Cole went on; just as Gutenberg had transformed things with the printing press, now with internet at least 30 per cent of newspapers were in decline. With TV, the communication was the few to the many, but now the many can communicate back. The barriers of entry as to who controls and shares information have been removed. TV has also now escaped the home as mobile phones have many capabilities of internet and watching programs. (This is an area where the USA still lags behind in that mobile phones are used with greater frequency in other countries than the USA). With this changing environment, the role and importance of diplomats will grow, but they must be able to adapt to the new environment. A key question one has to ask is what technology will you notice most when it is gone? In this arena, newspapers and magazines while not out of the picture have dropped several notches.

Thomas Hollihan Ph.D., Professor of Communication at USC followed with discussion on how nations and governments must think strategically, be conscious of their audience and know how to do the appropriate story-telling. Long term goals are needed and they should be linked to policies; one must be conscious of what one says but also on how what one does not say and what one does not do communicate as well. (The US vaunted search for Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Iraq ended up communicating a totally different message than was originally intended. Audience consciousness is clear but even in that arena, what is intended as a good message for one audience may have a totally different effect on another audience. In story-telling, living people's experience is important; what principles define the story and how does the story shape identity and the way the world perceives it are vital. Finally one must know the language of meaning. For example, how we name the poor determines how we characterize poverty. Who are the poor? What discourse is embedded in the story? Who frames the story? If a nation poses as being heroic but does not act that out, it can be disastrous. Audiences now utilize "pull technology," that is they pull out from the plethora of information, the stories that have interest to them. Teaching media literacy is needed as well as awareness of media tricks. Those who remember Dustin Hoffman in "Wag the Dog" can relate to that.

USC's Annenberg School for Communication Brings Soft Power to Taiwan: Part II

Written by Jerome F. Keating Ph.D.

Sunday, 08 November 2009 23:24

Tso Chen-Dong, Associate Professor of Political Science at National Taiwan University wrapped up the second session and raised more questions. How will the internet influence elections? Do ideas take the lead? Will local circumstances decide the way that it serves an election? Power is diffused with the internet. With blogs, we may hope for depth, but often don't get it; Twitter and Facebook are flowing and brief; Utube allows more creativity, but in it all the audience has to take more responsibility. Will it be a permanent jury or see life as a campaign? A sense of distance is created often leaving out intimacy, and a problem comes, when does a continuous conversation end and overselling begin? The conference presented issues and challenges for the future; in Part III I will present some personal reactions.

Source: [Jerome F. Keating's writings](#)