Internet Literacy—the Way to Information Equality
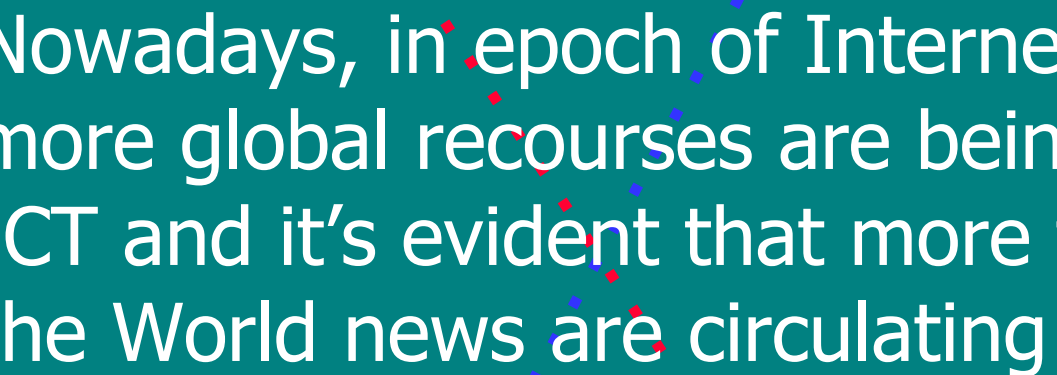
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Guaranteeing Media Freedom on the Internet

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In the beginning of 20th century, in epoch of telegraph, Czech writer Karl Chapek said   'Only dilettantes might think, that content of newspapers is made of original news which journalists get in daily searches. The reality is that more than 60 % of newspaper compiled in editorial office from telegraph agencies' news.

Nowadays, in epoch of Internet, more and more global recourses are being allocated to ICT and it's evident that more than 90% of the World news are circulating in Internet.

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The single most important of ICT-related benefits is the broadening the expansion of technology-assisted communication medium, enabling new and more efficient methods of producing and transmitting information, increasing its availability and acceptability, which in tern can help to close the digital divide between nations and inside of nations.

The question is "are the journalists always prepared to effectively use benefits of on-line medium in their professional activity" ?

Identified issues and specific needs in raising of Internet literacy in media :

1. The journalists graduated universities aren't advanced in using Internet.

⇘ Universities gives journalists only general knowledge on ICT at most.

⇘ The academic courses need to be improved allowing to gain specific knowledge and vocational skills   on ICT-accelerated new media applications.

Identified issues and specific needs in raising of Internet literacy in media :

2. The digital divide existing between capital and outlying regions has regard to the level of Internet literacy of journalists.

People of regions get daily news mostly from few state controlled TV channels broadcasted to *regions*.

Journalists from regions if would be advanced in ICT take advantages of using on-line medium to produce news, features and analysis about most critical global and local issues of today and to improve the amount of information conveyed to people of province.

Regional Journalists are restricted to gain basic practice in new media. Internet training courses are mostly conducting in capitals.

It's necessary to develop the special journalists training programs, combined the ICT-assisted media learning distance-courses with periodical training seminars.

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Identified issues and specific needs in raising of Internet literacy in media :

3. **Elder generation** stay mostly unaware of possibilities that ICT applications offer to strengthen the freedom of new online media.

⟫ Mature journalists face psychological barrier in getting on-line working practice, in learning new skills through Internet training courses along with young peoples.

⟫ It is necessary to develop special on/off-line vocational courses on "Improving qualification and retraining"for that group of peoples to let them totally use their professional potential in building of Information society.

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Identified issues and specific needs in raising of Internet literacy in media :

4. **Pure Internet literacy among native language speaking journalists.**
   The foreign speaking are more advanced in ICT therefore they work more effective.

∿ There is a lack of training courses and learning programs on vocational practice in Internet in local languages.

∿ Lack of on-line information in local languages. Though a lot has being done but it is still not enough to meet the basic needs of mass media. Insufficient volume of on-line news and regular official information doesn't encourage journalists' striving for Internet literacy.

∿ The special on/off line Internet training courses combined with foreign languages learning needs to be arranged .

∿ It is necessary to facilitate the realization of many e-government projects that foster citizens' freedom to receive and circulate on-line information regarding government and state bodies activity.

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GIPI with partners in several NIS countries carried out the projects addressed some of these issues.

The last project "Internet Training and Web Page Improvement for Azeri Journalists" was aimed to advance the professionalism and independence of the media, expanding access to information.

The project was based on details of media landscape founded out during project.

In Azerbaijan with population of 8 million:

- 436,000 Internet users;
- 0.29 DAI (digital access index);
- ICT services covered 78% of territory with population of 93%;
- more than 500 newspapers are published. Almost all have own websites;
- about 23TV stations are broadcasted regularly;
- 4 TV stations broadcast on-line also;
- all main newspapers and information agencies have frequently updated websites;
- there are no any specialized social-politic oriented web sites, though there are several on-line news agencies;
- about 60% of journalists haven't got a permanent Internet access;
- 53% don't use Internet at all;
- only 30% regularly use Internet;
- the journalists being fluent in foreign languages (mostly Turkish, English, Russian) more often work on-line;

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Project included four six-day seminars was focused on training in each session of 15 different journalists from regions.

The themes of trainings were :

 ✎ **Learning the better Internet assisted reporting methods;**

· ✎ **Basic computer and Internet literacy. Navigating the Internet;**

· ✎ **Beginning practice on new ICT-applications for media;**

· ✎ **Identifying useful sites as they pertain to Azerbaijan;**

· ✎ **Using the Internet to establish information contacts outside of Azerbaijan;**

·   ✎ **Searching for parallel stories to compare and contrast events in Azerbaijan with those of other countries;**

· ✎ **Using the Internet to form a "local angle" to an international story;**

· ✎ **Skills on virtual researching. Researching the track records of international companies through press release archives and news stories.**

· ✎ **Basic skills on media websites designing and practice featuring media information on websites.**

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· ✎ **Basic practice on arranging the online discussions.**

The project ultimately increased the amount of information available to the Azeri public through better reporting methods, and succeed in improving the professionalism of the Azeri media.

Following the trainings, all participants practiced on completing an article or news piece in which they have used the Internet to increase the amount of information published or broadcast

Thanks for your attention.

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OSCE conference

Amsterdam,Netherlands