

Writing the AIDS story online

Ruth Pollard

Journalist to Journalist

Global Media Training Program on
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What's different about online journalism?

- Online = interactive
- Online = reader-generated content
- Online = managing audience responses
- Online = soundslides and other tools
- Online = packaging stories differently

Online journalism in practice

- Tools of our trade are a little different - digital recorders and cameras are common
- Deadlines can be more frequent
- Stories may be repackaged to be published on several platforms
- More interaction with readers/viewers
- New ways of telling stories

Interactivity is key

- Online story telling requires us to interact with our audience or readers as never before
- One way is through maps, graphics and other visual tools
- Another is via reader forums where people comment on stories and talk to each other
- We can also ask the audience to both read, watch and listen via video and soundslides

Where does HIV/AIDS fit in?

- Go to the recently established Global Health Facts from the Kaiser Family Foundation

www.globalhealthfacts.org

- That site allows you to compare how your country is looking after the health of its people
- It provides recent data on HIV, TB and malaria, as well as other health indicators

Measure and compare

- Establish what you want to measure, such as:
 - access to clean water
 - the number of midwives and doctors per head of population
 - infant and maternal mortality
 - life expectancy
- Chose comparable or neighbouring countries and examine their data on each health indicator
- Tell your story visually, with maps, tables and graphics that readers can click on and study

Add new information

- Add in other data, such as the amount of money each country has received from the Global Fund
- www.aidsplan.org allows you to see how much has been disbursed to each country and their performance in program delivery
- Readers will then be able to see both the health and funding elements of the story, and debate the merits in your reader forum

Where are the people?

- HIV reporting can be very heavy with data and statistics, so people are important
- Record interviews on digital recorders so audio can be uploaded to your news site
- Where identification is not a problem, gather photos to add to the audio
- When appropriate, add video to the story

Create a paper trail

- You can also create paper trails for your readers, your government and opinion leaders.
- Reference UNAIDS statistics in the story online, and provide a link to the official site featuring those statistics, or link to the Global Health Facts site so you build your readers' knowledge and interest in HIV.
- Give readers graphics they can use themselves to search for statistics relevant to them.

Questions for journalists

- What strengths does online reporting has over traditional reporting via newspapers, television or radio?
- Is it possible to harness the benefits of the internet for HIV reporting?
- What about the weaknesses? Does the identification of people with HIV become more important because the internet has a much broader reach than our traditional readerships or audiences?
- What other ways can we engage readers, such as soundslides or video reports?
- What new skills, if any, do you need and how will you get them?
- What kind of online reporting should be avoided when doing HIV stories?

Examples of online HIV coverage

- This link to the *New York Times* website features three HIV multimedia presentations: *Washington's lone needle exchange program*, the *Battle over AIDS memorial quilt* and *AIDS in Africa sexual cleansing*.
- <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/health/diseasesconditionsandhealthtopics/aids/index.html?query=DRUG%20ABUSE%20AND%20TRAFFIC&field=des&match=exact>
- This link to the *Washington Post* website features a soundslide on HIV positive migrants.
- <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/gallery/2008/07/21/GA2008072101949.html>

Key HIV/AIDS websites

- UNAIDS site - great for global epidemiology
- www.unaids.org
- Global Health Facts - excellent interactive site allowing epidemiology comparisons between countries
- www.globalhealthfacts.org
- Global Fund Observer - measures country-by-country performance re donations from the Global Fund
- www.aidspace.org