

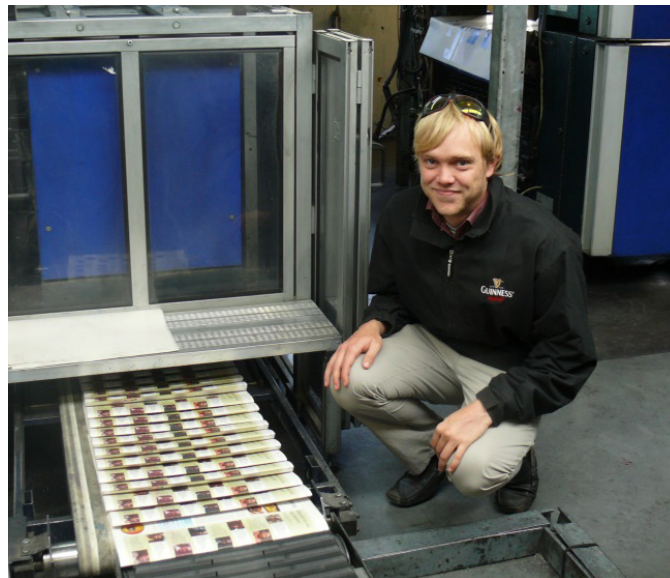
High hopes for Harare: SPI graduate launches a new free sheet in Zimbabwe

Peter du Toit

Postgraduate Diploma in Media Management 2012 alumnus Harry Davies has wasted no time putting the skills and knowledge he gained from the Sol Plaatje Institute's year-long course to work. Harry is the business manager of the *Harare News* which launched in Zimbabwe on 1 July this year. The free sheet has a print run of 10 000 copies and can be read online at [www.hararenews.co.zw]. SPI Deputy Director Peter du Toit (PDT) asked Harry (HD) about the launch of the new title.

PDT: Can you tell us what motivated you and the others involved to start the publication?

HD: I have always wanted to work in the media and always wanted to live in Zimbabwe. After graduating from Rhodes University in 2007 with an Honours in literature I lived in Ireland and London for a spell, and then in South Korea for two-and-a-half years. Seeing the way people use technology and interact with the news and each other in these developed nations made me see how far Zimbabwe and indeed Africa still have to go in many areas. I was always seeing new and innovative concepts and services in marketing and communication and the manner in which



Postgraduate Diploma in Media Management alumnus Harry Davies feels the addictive pull of print as the first issue of his paper, the *Harare News*, rolls hot off the presses. *Pic: Supplied*

Africa is leapfrogging technology means that there is a lot of scope for some of the finished products I saw in Asia over here already. I came to the end of my contract as the curriculum coordinator at a government language institute in Korea and started to scour for training opportunities that would invigorate my thinking about how to start a media business. I looked at options in India and America, but kept returning to the SPI website where the allure of the PDMM curriculum beckoned. I was reluc-

tant to return to Rhodes (diversity is best) but ultimately the offering seemed unparalleled.

There was a massive absence in Harare of community news other than *H-Metro*, which is a tabloid riddled with mythical creatures and gossip. It was also surprising to me how much good stuff is going on in this city every day. This place is blossoming, culturally, socially and economically. Unfortunately this is not reflected in the big dailies and weeklies which are caught up with political mudsling-

ing. We saw the need for something positive, community-focused and representative. A newspaper with issues that the average reader is actually able to influence. We are hoping to cultivate a bit of grassroots activism around issues that affect us as a community.

PDT: Who is your target audience?

HD: We are trying to be hyper-local so anyone in Harare really. Our coverage is mass-market.

PDT: Where and how are you distributing the paper?

HD: We are starting with 10 000 copies for the CBD and northern reaches of Harare. As we build capacity and brand awareness we will grow into the southern parts early next year with an additional 20,000 copies. It is being delivered to supermarkets and shopping centres for mass distribution. We have about 150 read-only copies in waiting areas across the northern part of the city — coffee shops, doctors' rooms, etc. In being a true community paper, the paper is in most schools and the hospitals too. I have a big map of the city in the office divided into zones. Everyone on the team gets a section to deliver to and monitor.

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Editor: Lwando Helesi
Deputy Editor: Bella Boqo
Sub editor: Gill Rennie

Editorial team:

Reporters: Buhle Nkonki, Okuhle Dotwana,
Yvonne Amukwaya, Regina Pazvakavambwa
Designer: Dudu Luthuli

Kenyan editor learns newspapering at Rhodes

Lwando Helesi

Prior to Kenya's general elections on 4 March this year, trepidation mounted among Kenyan journalists who feared a repeat of the violence following the disputed 2007 elections. However, reports show that this year's elections were largely peaceful, with fewer reports of assaults against journalists. This can be attributed to the newly adopted 2010 Kenya Constitution which enshrines media freedom. Charles Kerich, deputy editor of *The Star* who recently attended a media management course at the Sol Plaatje Institute (SPI) for Media Leadership at Rhodes University, took time off to share his views on the coverage of the Kenyan elections with Lwando Helesi, the editor of Ilizwi Lolwazi and a student on the SPI's Postgraduate Diploma in Media Management.

Kerich said that *The Star* newspaper covered the 2013 general elections with fairness. "Our paper, luckily, is not owned by any politician, nor do we have any

politician as our shareholder. It is all private. As a result, when there are elections we are not given to favour anyone."

Kerich said that an audit carried out to evaluate newspapers' coverage of the election campaigns and referendum for Kenya's new Constitution revealed *The Star* to be the fairest of them all. He said that the newspaper had continued with this tradition, both prior to and following the election.

Reporter Habil Onyango was assaulted by unknown people just two days before Election Day, the deputy editor said. He acknowledged little is done to prevent such incidents from occurring time and again.

"The problem with Kenya is that we do not have a strong union for journalists. As a result, some of these cases do not get the attention they deserve," Kerich said.

He stated that media freedom



Deputy editor of *The Star*, Charles Kerich
Pic: Dudu Luthuli

watchdogs such as the Kenya Editors' Guild and Media Council of Kenya had condemned the attacks on Kenyan journalists.

"We have an Editors' Guild, which is a grouping of editors which is now almost taking over the function of speaking out on behalf of journalists," he said. As a consequence this puts pressure on political candidates to control their followers.

Kerich attended the Essentials of Newspaper Management course

run by the Sol Plaatje Institute (SPI) for Media Leadership to widen and refresh his knowledge on the dynamics of running a newspaper successfully at a time of deep change. He believes that the course has given him further insights and a better understanding of other aspects of newsroom operations, including circulation, distribution, marketing and the struggle for media freedom in Africa.

The SPI invites experienced practitioners in the media industry to teach theoretical concepts using practical examples on these short courses. "The advantage of attending the course when you are an experienced person is that the examples and the classes are not only lively but actually grounded on a lot of facts and experience," Kerich noted.

With this, he hopes to become a better editor with an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of newspaper management.

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PDT: What has been the response from the advertising community?

HD: Our first issue was very well received, though the improvement in sales from selling a concept to selling based on our first issue has been slim and hard fought for. A lot of businesses are in a cash-flow crisis at the moment, and the biggest companies have reigned in their marketing ahead of elections. We work for the promise of the future.

PDT: How would you describe the editorial vision for the paper?

HD: Community-driven, hyper-local, accurate, responsive, positive and enabling.

PDT: How do you think this vision supports your commercial objectives?

HD: We are unique in the market and hugely interactive. We cover issues not picked up on by other publications and thus have an ap-

peal to an untapped suite of advertisers. Our social mandate is earning us a response from donors too as we negotiate financial support for various aspects of our business (e.g. sponsorship of female journalists, bulk subscriptions to cover distribution costs, etc.)

PDT: To my knowledge the free-sheet model has not worked in Zimbabwe until now. What made you decide to use this model?

HD: This is true: a free paper folded, as recently as the end of last year, which was running on a very similar model to ours. We are different to our predecessors because:

- we have a strong digital strategy (they had none).
- we are aiming to cover the whole city (they were focused on small sections).
- the economy is on the mend in several sectors (and will hopefully improve across the board).
- we have a short term plan to use our core skills and expertise to

create alternative revenue streams through partnerships with other companies and people.

Other practical reasons include:

- A desire for some media to reach people for whom newspapers are a luxury.
- A desire to reach people disenchanted with the news.
- a simpler licensing and accreditation process for our business and journalists.
- A means of addressing the challenge of competing with free digital media.
- The ability to guarantee 10 000 copies are being read.

PDT: The launch of the paper so close to an election could leave people thinking you have political motives. Is this the case? If not, how would you respond to this suggestion?

HD: I would have to say... read the paper. Everything in Zimbabwe is highly politicised, especially at the moment, so ultimately issues around the environment, sport, education, etc. can end up being

hauled into the political arena. I would be surprised, however, if anyone found the content we have published so far to have some sort of agenda.

PDT: What have been the biggest challenges you have faced so far and what do you anticipate will be the biggest challenges in the future?

HD: Getting the right people in place and working effectively, managing money, and selling advertising have been the toughest challenges so far. In the future... these will probably endure as our big issues.

PDT: Do you have any advice for current and future members of the PDMM class?

. Start trying to develop your personal time management skills ASAP, they are the cornerstone of everything else that you do. Mine are poor and I sometimes drop the ball on simple but crucial tasks as a result. Working on it though!

SPI's value in the media industry

Buhle Nkonki

As print media circulation declines, so comes the time for digital development and adaptation. Buhle Nkonki spoke to Stephanie Mary Saville, news editor of daily Pietermaritzburg newspaper *The Witness*. Saville commented on the role played by the Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership in providing guidance through these tough times.

Recent figures from the Audit Bureau of Circulation suggest that the print industry is slowly losing the circulation battle. "I think the entire media industry is facing challenges with declining circulation and smaller newsrooms with

“You come to a course like this and you realise that our challenges are not unique, they run through all newsrooms”

more junior reporters,” Saville said.

Regardless of these spiralling challenges, this news editor remains passionate about the print industry and is determined to pull all the strings necessary to ensure *The Witness*' survival. Saville attended the Essentials of Newspaper Management short course, offered recently by the Sol Plaatje

Institute. She believes that the week-long course has put things into perspective. "You come to a course like this and you realise that our challenges are not unique, they run through all newsrooms," she said.

For Saville, this course has affirmed the paper's current digital strategy. She does, however, recognise that "there is now a need to bring different aspects of newspaper distribution and new management perspectives". The *Witness* has responded to this by making a digital edition of their print newspaper available online. This means that readers can enjoy the look

and feel of the printed title from anywhere in the world. The digital edition is also enhanced with the latest tools, including RSS feeds, social networking and blogging.

Saville said that such developments are important when encouraging people to sign up for subscriptions.

The emergence of digital may bring with it many challenges, but it has simultaneously created a platform for newspapers to reach larger audiences. It is therefore important that print publications develop their digital offerings so as to take full advantage of online opportunities.

New media, new marketing perspectives

Regina Pazvakavambwa

Media companies need to keep tabs on technological changes and the changing dynamics of the media markets in order to survive. So says Simangele Precious Gumede, marketing executive of Zulu-language paper *Isolezwe*. Gumede, who attended the Essentials of Newspaper Management course, at the SPI recently, shared her views on how digital developments can complement newspapers' performance.

Gumede does not think of newspapers as a dying breed, but acknowledges that they need to utilise emerging technologies to be more sustainable. She especially urged people in marketing to keep abreast of such developments. "If we do not adapt to technological trends as newspapers or media companies, there is a danger in being left behind by our audiences, so a person in marketing should be aware of new changes in technology," she said. This however, varies from one publication to another. *Isolezwe*'s position in the market makes it the leading Zulu language newspaper in the country. "Our newspaper does not use what people call 'Zulu English', but we use pure Zulu and that's a reason that has

contributed to our success," she said. She attributed the success of the newspaper to knowing its audience and producing content relevant to readers.

"New media has had little effect on the paper's circulation," she said. "Most of its readers do not have access to internet; therefore they still rely on newspapers for news." She quickly pointed out that using the internet as a news platform is inevitable, but the newspaper is treading carefully as its audience is not technologically savvy. "If we move too fast there is a big possibility of alienating our existing audience," said Gumede.

She asserts that the internet has provided opportunities for marketers as they use social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to drive promotions and maintain brand awareness. Gumede added that journalists themselves are also part of her newspaper's brand. "Our most valued asset is our journalists and we use them to uplift the brand," she declared. This does not make them more important in the organisation but, as a marketing platform, they are invaluable.

When asked about what she had gained by attending the SPI



Simangele Precious Gumede of Isolezwe

Pic: Dudu Luthuli

course, Gumede remarked that it had surpassed her expectations. "I am a marketing executive for a media company. It is crucial for me to understand all aspects of the media and this course has afforded me that opportunity," she said. She said that the newspaper business is about team work and, after this course, she will be able to give input on decisions relating to circulation and distribution. "With the new understanding of

newspaper management, I can now come up with new ideas as part of a management team that's not concentrated on marketing but on other facets of the organisation."

She explained that through the course she now has an insight into the way journalists work. "Journalists are deadline-driven people and since I work with them I need to understand what makes them tick."

SPI courses attract new players

Yvonne Amukwaya

Barely three years old and already labeled as a government mouthpiece, *The New Age* claims to have brought a new voice to the South African newspaper industry. The publication's managing editor, Gary Naidoo, spoke to Yvonne Amukwaya about the daily's unique stance.

"The country is provided with news by mainly four media companies that have been around since the old regime and we felt there is a need for a publication

from the post-apartheid society to come in and bring a different voice," stated Naidoo.

Naidoo said that while the media generally focuses on high crime rates and corruption within the country, *The New Age* aims to instill national pride in the hope of bettering South Africa.

Being funded almost entirely by the ruling party, Naidoo admitted that the newspaper is pro-government. He is quick to assert, however, that this does not make

them government puppets. "We see ourselves as fair and balanced reporters and as a result we do not report any less accurately on government," said Naidoo. He believes that there is more that can be achieved by working hand in hand with the government. This, he added, does not make them any less critical.

The New Age (TNA) Media company, under which the eponymous print title is published, has also expanded its reach

into broadcast. The company introduced a weekly business breakfast, The New Age Business Briefing, which is broadcast live on SABC. Despite being met with similar controversy, Naidoo sees the program as an invaluable part of fulfilling TNA's vision in contemporary South Africa. The main idea of the show is "to encourage open dialogue between public figures and ordinary citizens," Naidoo said.

Alumni- Where are they now?

Diligent, committed go-getter

Nomonde Ndwalaza (PDMM 2012) was awarded a Primedia Scholarship for her studies and did her participant observation at Talk Radio 702, Eye Witness News and Comutanet. She is now working at Talk Radio 702 as a Junior Content producer. Her role includes research and generating content ideas for different shows such as *The Money Show* with Bruce Whitfield and *SportsTalk* with Udo Carelse. This is what she said about the PDMM course: "[it] sharpened me in ways I could not have imagined, in ways that are still revealing themselves to me. The PDMM, in



addition to my BA degree from Wits University, has given me a competitive advantage. [It] awakened me to the integrated nature of the elements necessary for the creation and maintenance of a successful media organisation." She still craves for the heart-shaped chocolates the SPI gave out on Valentine's Day.

Holding a high-end job

Chipiliro Kansilanga (PDMM 2012) moved back to Malawi and returned to work at Blantyre Newspapers Limited (BNL), where she is now the Editor for *New Media* (Digital and Online). BNL, the oldest and biggest printing and publishing company in Malawi, publishes several newspapers, including *The Daily Times*, *Malawi News*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Weekend Times*. Her job entails managing and running all New Media projects to ensure that the company is moving with the global technological trends. In this role, she sources, plans and manages the online content for all newspapers

according to the publication style, editorial policy and publishing requirements. "As I undertake my daily tasks, I connect and use the knowledge and skills I gained in the course. Because the PDMM deeply integrated theory and practice so well, it is easier for me now (as I hope it will be in the future) to undertake any media-related responsibilities not only in the newsroom but within the business side of media. So I can comfortably say that the PDMM is exactly what every media manager in Africa needs because it is critical in dealing with challenges in the industry and beyond," Chipiliro said.

New roles in newspaper industry create demand for SPI courses

Okuhle Dotwana

South Africa's newspaper industry is undergoing continuous transformation, experiencing changes in its production and management operation. In an attempt to adapt, East London publication *Daily Dispatch* has recently appointed Cheri-Ann James as managing editor, a newly created role in the paper. James, who attended the Sol Plaatje Institute's Essentials of Newspaper Management short course, spoke to Okuhle Dotwana about her new position and the value of attending the course in the changing newspaper landscape.

"The role of managing editor is new within the newspaper; the *Daily Dispatch* has never had one before. My aim in attending the short course was to take in as much as I can so that I can go back and use that to help define my role as managing editor," said James.

She describes herself as dedicated and committed to her job. "It's important to me to show commit-

ment to my work and try to make our product a good one," said James. At a time when many media companies feel pressured to prioritise profits over quality content, James asserts that quality should be non-negotiable as this will attract more readers. This, she asserts, is essential in ensuring that journalism fulfills its service to the public.

"I wanted to go into journalism because I had this romantic notion of what journalism is about: fighting a cause, exposing the bad and standing as a voice for people in the community who go through all these problems and have all these issues and they have no-one to tell their stories," explains the Border Technikon (now Walter Sisulu University) graduate.

James has a wealth of experience on her CV. She has worked at *Die Burger* in Port Elizabeth, as well as at the *Daily Dispatch*, where she started out as a council reporter in 2007.



Okuhle (left) talks to Cheri-Ann James (right) of *The Daily Dispatch*

Pic: Dudu Luthuli



Mail & Guardian ombudsman and Director of Wits Radio Academy Franz Kruger shares his views on leadership with the PDMM class of 2013.

Pic: Regina Pazvakambwa

SA media at ‘crossroads of change’

Bella Boqo

Despite having a constitution that esteems media freedom and the public’s right to know, it seems that the state of media in South Africa has marked a significant crisis. Bella Boqo, deputy editor of Ilizwi Lolwazi and a SPI student, met up with Franz Kruger, director of Wits Radio Academy and ombudsman for *Mail & Guardian* to discuss this. “You can’t describe [the state of our media] in a sentence or even a paragraph. You can say that there are some real pockets of excellence, but there’s also some really shoddy work,” said Kruger. He ascribed this to the divisions in our country’s history, many of which are reflected in the media landscape. “We have to acknowledge that print media is an elite game. The business of publishing

is inherently biased towards the wealthy; print media particularly does not reach the majority of South Africans. It’s just a fact.” Unfortunately, according to Kruger, it is this majority that gets really “poor media”.

In a seminar on media ethics for The Essentials of Newspaper Management short course, he highlighted the importance of access to information and quality content in ensuring that journalism plays its role in society. He believes that this reality can best be addressed by paying attention to two sectors: the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) and community radio. “Community radio has enormous audiences, about 25% of the adult listenership at some point in the week listens to a community

radio station,” said Kruger. He added that community radio stations are weak, and vulnerable to power play at the local level. “I think what happens is that the local district council or municipality takes an interest, gives them a premise and suddenly they are constrained.” The lack of skills and confidence of the workers minimises their contribution to democracy, he said.

This instability is indicative of the kind of pressures experienced at the SABC. Although Kruger left the public broadcaster in 2000 to become a freelance journalist, he expresses great concern about recent events. “The SABC is really the source of information for most South Africans, but at the moment they are having a renewed soap opera and it’s a

complete mess,” said the director. He suggested that editorial independence lay at the heart of this chaos. Moreover, SABC must create a public space that’s independent of the state. “It needs to grow in confidence; it needs to grow in stability,” Kruger said.

He stressed that the instability of the organisation more than the ministers’ interference is at the root of underperformance.

This uncertainty has a direct bearing on the extent to which media can successfully achieve its transformation mandate. According to Kruger, this simply means “giving people good quality broadcasting that shows the richness of South African life”.

Contact SPI:

Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership, Great Hall Building, Prince Alfred Street, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 6140

Email: lsnam@ru.ac.za | Tel: +27 46 603-8949 | Fax: +27 46 603-7527. SPI © 2013
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