

2008 - International Symposium on Online Journalism

Opening Session

Symposium Chair:

Rosental Calmon Alves, Professor, Knight Chair in Journalism and UNESCO Chair in Communication, School of Journalism, University of Texas at Austin

Symposium Research Chair:

Mark Tremayne, Assistant Professor, School of Journalism, University of Texas at Austin

George Sylvie, Associate Director, School of Journalism, University of Texas at Austin

Rosental Calmon Aves: To keep my cultural tradition of a Brazilian to be a little bit late, for not being too Americanized in the punctuality aspect of it. But thank you very much for all of you for coming here, especially those of you who came from very far away. And we are very happy to have certainly the largest symposium, the biggest one. We have about 260 people registered. And, you know, we have an excellent program and very diverse in the subjects to be covered. And as you know, we do this since 1999. So next year, we'll be celebrating the 10th Anniversary of this conference. And one of the important aspects of this conference is that we record everything, and we post those videos and transcripts on the internet, so we have -- nowadays, we have sort of a collection of testimonials of the evolution of online journalism since the last century, literally. So this is going to be a very brief opening session just to welcome you. And I have here with me two colleagues from the School of Journalism: George Sylvie, who is the Associate Director, and Mark Tremayne, who is actually the Chair of the research part of this symposium. Actually, he has been helping me since we changed it four or five years ago, this symposium, to add the research component. So I'm going to ask George first to welcome you on behalf of the School of Journalism.

George Sylvie: Thank you. I appreciate it. Well, welcome. We're not always this wet, but we hope we'll dry off as we go through the day. On behalf of Professor Branham who cannot attend because of an illness in the family, I would like to welcome you earnestly to Austin, especially those of you who it's your first time being here. I hope you enjoy it. This is a very exciting weekend for the campus and for the city in general. But also it's an exciting weekend for the School of Journalism. We have a special commitment to this topic, obviously, because we have Rosental in the Knight Chair, and he puts on this symposium, as he says, every year, and I'm sure

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will continue for years to come. And we wish it will, because we believe in the future of the online medium and in multimedia in general. And we have a commitment to that thanks to the Belo family, Jim, and the Dallas Morning News. And we would like to see, you know, from this symposium, we're looking for new ideas for, obviously, for that building and for our curriculum and also to encourage our -- students, excuse me, to become students in this area. So we just want to say welcome and thank you very much for coming, and I hope you enjoy your stay.

Mark Tremayne: Yeah. Well, I'd like to also welcome everyone. As Rosental mentioned, I've been involved in the research side of this symposium for a number of years. And I think this event, in general, is a good one for one major reason, and that is, it brings together people from industry and from the online journalism business, along with people in academia. And if you are working in industry, you're making decisions every day, often on the fly, sort of making it up as you go along. By the nature of the beast, it requires you to do that. And of course, academics have the time to sit back and reflect, but don't always have the insight that people in industry have, and so this is a good event to bring those two sides together.

On Saturday, we'll have research presentations of people who've been doing research on various issues related to online journalism. Every year, as you know, the industry evolves, there's new issues that arise. Last year, we talked a lot about user-generated content and the role of readers and how, sort of, to handle that aspect. Years before, we talked about blogging. This year, we've got a panel on social networks and the ways journalism and social networks are combining or are not combining. And so we've got a variety of interesting topics to discuss tomorrow.

I'd like to raise one more, I think, very big issue for the field of journalism that perhaps we can touch on. I think it will continue to be a big issue in the years to come. And that is the role of objectivity, which was a 20th century tenet of journalism. And I think it's a debate whether it will as big a tenet of journalism in the 21st century. I think you can look at some things that are happening online and on cable television, for that matter, and you can make a very strong argument for a drift toward partisan media. It's succeeding in a variety of outlets. How do you handle that if you are in the business of traditional journalism or journalism that centers around the idea of objectivity? I think those issues will be big, continue to be big. Because the audience has shown some degree of an appetite for partisan media. How do you deal with that if you are in the business of non-partisan media?

So, welcome, and I hope you enjoy the event this weekend.

Rosental Calmon Alves: Thank you, Mark. I think we owe an apology for those who are coming from out of town that I promised nice spring weather here, very nice, and it was pouring this morning. This was a little accident,

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but I have already talked with the manager, and in just a couple of hours, it's going to be sunny and beautiful in Austin. Believe me ... this time, at least. [chuckles] We also want to let you know that we have our brilliant students from my class, from the mantles of Multimedia Journalism around here. They are going to be covering this symposium. Each seat has, you know, a power outlet and internet connection for those of you who have a computer and need to connect with the internet. Let us know if you are having any difficulty. We have also students blogging, so on the website of the -- of the symposium, you have a link to the blog that the students of my class put together. We have some people twittering also, so it's going to be linked there. And some of them will be -- will be working with cameras doing video interviews and uploading it immediately to YouTube and to the symposium website. So be ready for that journalistic pressure there.

I am not going to extend more, because we are really late. I want to now introduce our keynote speaker, Jim Moroney, who is the publisher of the Dallas Morning News and Executive Vice President of Belo of the new composition of Belo, and is a very special guest speaker. Because I was telling him when I invited him that I don't know anybody with this kind of profile that is someone that worked in the broadcasting, was an executive in the broadcasting component of Belo. For those of you who are not from here and don't know, Belo is a coast-to-coast media company that has several assets. It's a multimedia company, but basically has newspapers and television stations. So he was in the part of broadcasting of the company. Then he moved and was the President of Belo Interactive and had a lot of experience in the Belo ventures on the online sector. And then he moved to the newspaper. So he has this broad vision and a very privileged point of view. And the other reason that it's a privilege for having him here is because he's a good friend of [UT]. He's an alumnus, hook 'em Horns. He's a UT guy, and has been very generous for many, many years as a member of our, you know, college advisory board. And like George mentioned, Belo has just been generous to give us a donation for the new building that our college is going to have. And the emphasis of the building is exactly new media.

And in addition to that, I think, what is in the headlines now is the crisis of the newspapers. I mean, the newspaper industry. And I don't think I could find a better speaker to come and explain to us what newspapers are doing to get out of this crisis and to adapt to the digital era. How they are moving from the industrial era to the digital era. So Jim Moroney.

[Applause.]