



XV EURASIAN MEDIA FORUM
15 years of EVOLUTION:
HOW THE WORLD IS CHANGING AND HOW THE WORLD CHANGES US
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NEWS RELEASE

MODERN MEDIA METHODS DEMONSTRATED BY WORLD EXPERTS

Almaty, Kazakhstan, 22 May 2018 – The 15th Eurasian Media Forum (EAMF) got underway in Almaty on Tuesday with a full day of expert master-classes, covering a challenging range of modern media methods and issues.

The professional programme, run by international specialists, set the stage for the plenary Forum taking place at the Ritz Carlton Hotel, Almaty, on Wednesday and Thursday. The master-classes were aimed primarily at an audience of national journalists.

About 150 mainly young people packed into the conference hall for the master classes. Meanwhile hundreds of international and regional delegates – politicians, public figures and journalists – began registering for the Forum for two days of dialogue on East-West relations and other topics on the world news agenda.

Master Classes

1. MoJo – Mobile Journalism

The series of master classes began with a fast-paced gallop through the latest techniques for telling stories using only smartphones. **Yusuf Omar**, an Indian journalist based in South Africa, enthused the audience with an inter-active demonstration of his innovative working methods.

A colourful character himself wearing video-active dark glasses, Omar described in hands-on detail how his organization, *Hashtag our Stories*, trained people in disadvantaged communities to tell stories about their lives and their concerns, using video and text editing techniques on their mobile phones.

“We’re not talking traditional television,” he declared, playing down the importance of editing and picture quality. “Being resourceful is better than having resources. Ninety percent of our generation get their news on smartphones. They don’t care about production values. Reality is the new quality.”

Criticising traditional media for emphasizing negative news, Omar argued in favour of constructive journalism, telling positive stories based on achieving solutions. But he said the traditional media principles of responsible journalism were even more important in an age of ‘fake news’.

“Be cautious,” he warned. “We must still spend time on research and fact checking. We must be the first guard against fake news.”

2. Conflict Reporting

In the second master class, Uzbek reporter **Shahida Tulaganova**, based in the UK also talked about the importance of respecting the responsible journalistic principles of truth and balance in covering warzones.

Calling on her own frontline experience as correspondent and filmmaker, she described the dangers and the pressures on journalists who reported on conflicts involving both regular and irregular forces.

“It may sound glamorous, but it’s actually very dangerous,” she said, citing the killing of 81 journalists in different warzones last year, the majority in Syria.

First there was the physical danger of being shot. Secondly, the psychological trauma of getting used to violence and cruelty. And thirdly the risk that a reporter’s view would become coarsened and distorted by the pressure, she said.

There was now more danger than in the past that journalists themselves could become the targets of armed groups or even regular armies. This was another reason why war reporters needed to make sure they reported the truth, even when limited access to both sides made it difficult to remain neutral, Shahida Tulaganova warned the media audience

3. The Baikonur Effect

The third master class soared off into outer space, with a lively and graphic account by **Tira Shubart** of the dynamic world of space exploration and the part played in it by Kazakhstan’s Baikonur Cosmodrome, the oldest and largest satellite launching facility on earth, and the only station now offering manned space flights.

Recalling the East-West space race of the Cold War, the award-winning space journalist described the relationship between the space industry and the media. “Much of the new communications and other facilities being used by the media is only possible because of the development of space technology,” she said.

Space technology was also producing valuable information, from enhanced satellite photography, about stories of importance for our own planet, such as melting glaciers and mass immigration flows.

One of the issues in near space, she said, was the problem of ‘space junk’, the presence of tens of millions of bits of plastic in orbit around the earth.

Further into space, important issues for the future included the rival ambitions of the major private investors in space developments, from colonizing Mars (Elon Musk) to moving manufacturing off our planet (Jeff Bezos), Tira Shubart predicted.

4. Mass Media in the Digital Era

Back to earth for the next class but looking forward to new media developments, **Viktor Yellisseyev** from Kazakhstan called on journalists to master new digital skills. This did not necessarily mean expensive training because many tools were freely available. He listed a number of useful apps and sites.

There were even programs that could help journalists acquire basic story telling techniques, how to create interest and develop the theme through to a result.

“It seems simple but many journalists just don’t know how,” he said.

Viktor Yellisseyev, who is Founder and CEO of Select Communication Group, described his concept of ‘convergent journalism’.

He disagreed with a general view that content was the prime factor in all journalism. In modern multi-media production, he argued that the order of importance was ‘connect, contacts, content’, implying that the preparation and distribution of material was an essential part of the process.

“And don’t forget feedback,” he urged. “The work is not finished when the story is released: people need personalized communication.”

5. The Future of News

CNN is one of the world’s most essential sources of mobile and video news. It has built upon its success as a 24 hour TV network and now reaches nearly 200 million people worldwide every month.

Ryan Smith, CNN’s Commissioning Editor of Global Projects, said the CNN of 2018 was committed to being on as many different video platforms as possible and on as many different screens as possible. It had created niche Channels such as CNN Politics, CNN Money, CNN Style, CNN Travel and CNN Arabic plus “Great Big Story”, a video platform, but mobile now made up 60% of its viewers and CNN is currently on at least 35 video platforms.

The recent “Earth Day 24” project was a classic example of the collaboration between TV and all other departments. The 24 environmental stories from different countries had been fitted to the relevant hour of the world clock. TV and digital journalists around the world had contributed the stories with input from Developers, Product Managers, Audience Growth Specialists and others. CNN’s policy was then to engage the viewer. “Publishing is not the end; follow up and engage,” was one of CNN’s mantras, Ryan said.

Asked by a member of the audience about reports that Time Warner's share price had fallen because Facebook and Google were taking a lion's share of the advertising, Ryan said that only applied in the United States and was a problem common to all digital distributors who were busy thinking of an appropriate business response. CNN International, for which he worked, had actually seen an increase in advertising revenue and viewers.

6. Gender Balance in the Media

The media plays a significant role in perpetuating stereotypes as well as challenging social norms that condone discrimination or violence against women.

Gizem Yarbil Gurol, UN Women Communications and Advocacy Specialist for Europe and Central Asia, said that when journalists and media outlets present a more balanced representation of women's and men's roles in society, new opportunities open for all.

In an interactive and participatory master class on gender balance in the media and gender sensitive reporting practices, Ms Gurol let media representatives take a step back and assess their news coverage from a gender perspective.

Accepting gender stereotyping was harmful to both men and women, but it was important to be careful in calling for a change of culture, she said.

«We want to move to a more equal portrayal of men and women in the media, not change a whole culture. We want to see equal rights and opportunities for everyone around the world,» she declared.

The master classes for journalists are organized with the support of the Forum's Social Partner – «Samruk-Kazyna Trust» Social Development Foundation.

Social Partner

