

Crafting the News in a Digital Age

The digital age has created an entirely new medium for journalists. Just as they did during the earliest days of radio and television, journalists explore this new medium, learning how to find and present the facts in cyberspace.

by Brad Kalbfeld

For example, a person sitting in their garage could create a site that purports to represent a giant corporation. Because the reporter sees nothing more than the site after all, the whole idea of the Web is that they don't have to physically be there...

In 1996, a site with the URL www.dole96.org looked, at first glance, like the official site of Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole. A casual observer would not have noticed that it was, in fact, a parody site...

The Internet connects uncounted computers around the world, making it possible for an elementary school student in Akron, Ohio, to read files on a university's server in Bern, Switzerland, or a journalist in Tokyo to see the latest news release on a government file server in Washington.

This makes the Internet an unparalleled research and reporting tool. A reporter today can, with a few minutes of searching on the World Wide Web, find information that would have taken hours of expensive long-distance telephone calls just a decade ago.

In addition, the Web has made it possible to interview someone without actually having a conversation. If a news source can't be reached by telephone, he or she can always be e-mailed.

Interviewing someone on paper isn't new, of course. Mark Twain famously told The Associated Press by telegram in 1897 that "reports of my death are greatly exaggerated" but in today's world, the question and response can be exchanged in minutes...

All this convenience has its drawbacks. How does a reporter know that the person receiving or answering the e-mail is the person they purport to be? There's no voice to recognize, no face to see...

The same problem arises when a reporter or researcher goes to a Web site for the first time. All the person sees is what the people who created the site want to be seen. So,

This is not to say that everything on the Web is untrustworthy or even that a majority of sites are. But it does mean that, with more information available to the general public (and journalists) than at any time in human history, the skills that journalists practice fact-checking, identifying and qualifying their sources of information, and displaying a healthy skepticism about appearances are more important than ever.

Edward R Murrow once said that "a loud voice which reaches from coast to coast is not necessarily uttering truths more profound than those that may be heard in the classroom, the bar, or country store..."

Paradoxically, this also means that "being there" to cover news stories is more valuable than ever because of the premium put on having rock-solid facts. Few companies can afford to invest in in-person news coverage...

What's more, the Web's point-and-click format makes it possible to present this depth in "layers." If a reader wants more depth, links are provided to sidebar stories, biographies of people quoted in the story, and transcripts of events.

News sites even provide links to newsmaker sites, enabling readers to see for themselves, in great depth, the information provided by the people covered in the story, unfiltered by journalists.

This has transformational implications for news consumers and the journalists who serve them.

Despite its depth and extensive use of text and still photographs, Web journalism is not newspaper journalism. Even though it uses audio and video, and reports information in real time, Web journalism isn't broadcast journalism, either. It's something in between.

On the Web, the consumer is in control of how much depth he or she sees on a story, and whether the story is "experienced" through audio or video, "described" by a reporter's prose, or both.

How will all of this choice affect the news consumption habits of the public? It's too early for anything conclusive, but a June 2000 study by the Pew Research Centre asked Americans who regularly get news online what kinds of news they seek when they log on.

The biggest, most visited Internet sites have links to general news coverage, giving consumers the opportunity to navigate through the top stories or click down to specific topics. There are, of course, editors for these information pages, people who make decisions about what stories to display most prominently...

With all of this work on the part

of journalists in-person reporting; gathering video, audio, and still photos; making graphics; verifying facts; and applying professional news judgement and standards of accuracy and objectivity newsgathering companies are making significant investments in Web journalism. The technology makes it work available to everyone. But the same technology also makes it possible for unscrupulous Web sites and other media outlets to misappropriate the results of a competitor's original work.

This, of course, is illegal, and harms the newsgathering organizations that make the investment to send reporters to cover stories and to check facts. But this sort of cyber theft is hard to police.

That is why copyright notices, and specific licenses regulating how information on the Internet may be used, are so important. Web viewers often think that, if they can see something, they can use it. Before downloading a photo or sound bite or article, the copyright terms so easy to ignore should be read and respected.

The consumer as editor, the use of technology to misinform, the need to protect intellectual property: it is surely a complicated world for today's journalists. The Internet is a powerful new reporting tool, giving reporters easy access to detailed information on the full range of human knowledge.

One hundred fifty years ago, most newspaper readers couldn't get to that ship bringing news from overseas, so they needed journalists to do it for them. Today's new consumer can go directly to the source behind a news story. But even in the Internet age, journalists do more than bring information to the public. We've gone from an age of too little information to an age of overload.

The author is Deputy Director and Managing Editor of the Associated Press, Broadcast Division. —USIS

PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT Flickering Hope in Sight!

by Mohammad Amjad Hossain

There appears to be a flickering hope in the conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis when we heard that Shimon Peres, former Foreign Minister in Yitzhak Rabin's cabinet, was looking for the seat of the premier in the next general elections scheduled to take place in about 60 days' time. Rabin was brutally assassinated in November 1995 by an ultra-rightist element in Tel Aviv following signing of Oslo peace treaty with PLO. Shimon Peres, who became Prime Minister after the assassination of Rabin, is banking on the support of the left liberal Meretz party, which is an arch enemy of Ariel Sharon of Likud Party.

Shimon Peres is likely to be elected the next Premier and the peace process be on the right track as he has been maintaining friendly relations with Yasser Arafat and other Palestinian leaders.

One wonders why a few Israeli politicians are behaving irresponsibly and irrationally with their Palestinian brethren in the first place. The history of Judaism points out that Jews in today's Israel were the most persecuted and tyrannized minority in Europe at the hands of the Nazis of Germany, fascists and communists and now they have turned out to be perpetrators of genocide against the Palestinians.

enjoying better life there. I met a number of Palestinians in Germany, who became the citizens after marrying German girls and are maintaining a comfortable living standard and there was no reason for them going back to Palestine state in the near or distant future.

The Palestinian refugees of the 1948 war think to return to homes in areas west of the armistice lines those parts of Palestine. The PLO's decision to give assent to a two-state solution is implicitly acceptance of the principle that state and homeland can be construed as separate concepts for the Palestinians. Meanwhile, President Bill Clinton of America, who seems to be little desperate in his effort to seek a solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians in order to have his name registered in history as a peacemaker before he leaves office on 20 January 2001, floated a compromise idea which reportedly involves Israel turning over control in Arab neighbourhoods of occupied East Jerusalem to the Palestinians along with the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound while in return Palestinians would waive the right of return of refugees, with only a small number allowed back to Israel for family reunification.

First Total Lunar Eclipse of the Century

by Syed Ashraf Uddin

The first Total Lunar Eclipse of this century will take place today (January 9). The eclipse will be visible throughout the whole country. The eclipse will begin at 23h 43m 33s BST and will end at 04h 57m 37s (the next date). The local circumstances of the eclipse for Dhaka city are given below:

Eclipse Prediction for Dhaka City Prepared by Astronomy Club of BUET. Table with columns: EVENT, TIME (BST), MOON'S AZIMUTH, MOON'S ALTITUDE. Rows include Moonrise, Moon enters penumbra, Moon enters umbra, Moon enters totality, Middle of eclipse, Moon leaves totality.

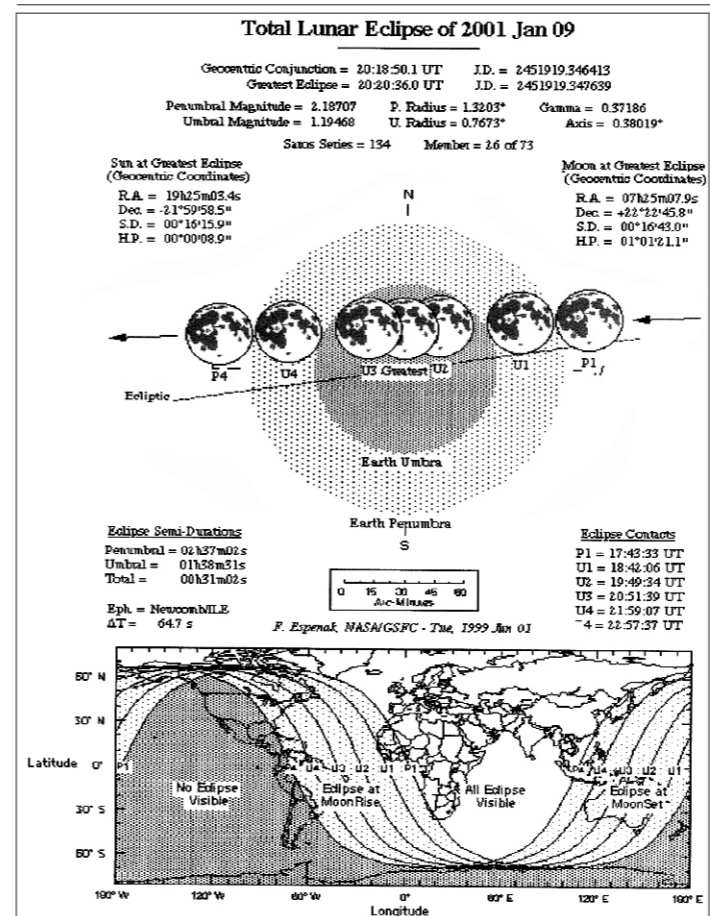
About this eclipse: The lunar eclipse occurs at the time of full moon when Sun-Earth-Moon lies in a straight line. At this time the shadow of the Earth falls over the Moon and reduces its brightness. For a total lunar eclipse the Moon must be within the Umbra of the shadow.

The totality of January 9, 2001 eclipse will last for 62 minutes and will be observable from Eastern Hemisphere [Europe, Africa and Asia]. The Moon will not pass through the centre of the shadow axis but north of it. At the time of mid eclipse the southern limb of Moon will pass 6.1 arcminutes north of Moon.

Estimating Brightness of the eclipse: The relative brightness of the lunar eclipse is determined visually by using a simple scale established by Danjun. This scale is based on both the brightness and the colour of the eclipse. This scale is based on both the brightness and the color of the eclipse. This estimate should be made at the time of mid eclipse [about 02h20.5m for Dhaka].

What to do: If you want to observe this eclipse you should go

The Danjun scale is given below:



- Number Appearance of the Moon
0 Very dark eclipse, the Moon is very difficult to see.
1 Dark eclipse, with grayish to brown colour.
2 Dark red or rusty colour, details are difficult to see in the disk.
3 Brick red, the umbra often has a brighter, yellowish border.
4 Bright orange or coppery eclipse, with bright bluish border.

planets. During this eclipse the winter Milky Way and constellations will be well placed for viewing. Castor and Pollux lie 8-10 degrees north of the eclipsed Moon, while the Beehive cluster (M44) in Cancer is 17° to the east. Jupiter, Saturn and the Pleiades from an attractive trio in Taurus, about fifty degrees west of the Moon.

Recording times of contact of the Umbra with Lunar craters: Crater timings are used to determine the enlargement of the umbra due to the effects of refraction of the upper atmosphere of the Earth, investigating the geometry of the Umbra, especially its oblateness, and to determine the change in the height of the atmosphere throughout each eclipse. The values of % umbral enlargement and umbral oblateness are used to form an improved lunar eclipse ephemeris for application to cannons of lunar eclipse.

Observation camp: Members of Astronomy Club of BUET will observe the eclipse and will perform scientific experiments. Besides Bangladesh Astronomical Association will arrange a public observation camp at Kalabagan playground.

Photographing the eclipse: To Here we give some predicted times of Immersion and Emersion of some selected craters.

Table with columns: BST of Immersion, Crater name, BST of Emersion, Crater name. Rows include Grimaldi, Billy, Kepler, Tycho, Plato, Menelaus.

anticipate the Moon's size on film, divide the focal length of the camera lens or telescope (in, say, milli-

The writer is Moderator, Astronomy Club of BUET.



All health information to keep you up to date

Aged first

Fever may be a serious symptom after 65

If you're over 65 and develop a fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, see a doctor immediately, especially if you have diabetes or a lung disorder. You're likely to have a serious illness which may require hospitalization, such as pneumonia, a urinary tract infection, or sepsis (a bacterial infection which can lead to blood poisoning, a life-threatening condition).

When an older person does have a fever (a sure sign the body is fighting off infection), doctors know that something serious is going on. If you feel a little fuzzy-headed or hotter than usual, take your temperature. If it's 100° or higher, don't worry about whether you should feed a fever of starve it. Just see your doctor immediately.

Self-help

How to use eye ointments properly

- Wash hands thoroughly before applying ointment.
Sit with your head tilted backward.
With a finger, pull the lower lid of your eye down and look towards the ceiling.
Squeeze the ointment from the tube along the inside margin of the lower eyelid.
Do not touch the eye or eyelid with the tip of the ointment tube.
Blink several times. Close the eye (do not rub the eye)

Tomorrow : Commonly asked questions.

Garfield® by Jim Davis

