**Digital Communication and Mass Media in WHA –**

**How to Reach Target Audiences**

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Thank you all for being here. I have been so impressed with this conference and what you are attempting to achieve. I admire your president, Ronaldo Vanella, and all of you participating in the conference for your commitment to thinking carefully about the future of the Hemisphere. What an accomplished group of leaders you are. I feel honored and humbled to be part of this wonderful initiative.

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to be here. All of us across the Western Hemisphere face significant opportunities and challenges. Thank you for recognizing the importance of the press and the media in the political economic and cultural developments of our communities.

That is what I would like to talk about today. It is well established that communication plays a crucial role in the life of every nation. The press can empower the economic well being of a society, enrich its cultural and educational traditions, call attention to environmental sustainability issues, and promote a healthy exchange of political ideas among citizens and their governments.

At the same time, we all know that media are changing as new media develop across the Hemisphere. Some say digital media will replace mass media. I disagree. Evidence is emerging that new digital media will NOT displace mass media. Instead, they will enrich the media systems, adding a broader, more complex set of media channels. The evidence suggests that online media and mass media will be integrated into a new, more diverse media system with new opportunities and new challenges for business, culture, education, and politics.

In the next few minutes I want to do four things:

**First,** I want to talk about some key **trends** changing media today.

**Second,** I want to talk about the **opportunities** these changes offer. Business, culture, education and governance all have new opportunities for success as the media system changes.

**Third,** I want to acknowledge some of the challenges these changes raise for society and its institutions.

**Finally,** I want to persuade you that a careful examination of media should be central to the **strategic thinking** you will do I the next several days about the future of the Hmemisphere.

**So, first, lets talk about Trends that are changing the media.**

I want to look at **Five Crucial Trends** that are expanding media and communication choices in society.

**The First Trend is Change:** All of society--and all of the media--are undergoing a profound **change** today**.** You know this. You included this topic on your agenda for this important meeting. Change no longer happens and is finished. Change today is constant and ongoing. I am talking about both technological change in our means of communication and social and economic change that the technologies enable.

Media certainly are changing. According to the World Association of Newspapers’ 2010 annual report, daily newspaper circulations across the globe have declined. They have declined 5 percent in South America. They have declined 11 percent in the United States. In fact, according to Editor and Publisher yearbook 2010, all types of newspaper circulations declined in the United States last year. What’s more, local television, network television, radio, magazines, and even cable television audiences declined in the United States, too.

But the news is not all bad. Online audiences are actually growing. They were up 17 percent last year. The Pew Center reported that for the first time,more people in the United States turned to the Web for news than to any other media form. Internet use is rising across the Hemisphere, too—faster in some places, more slowly in other places. This is a worldwide phenomenon; and it will only grow stronger in the coming years.

And what does this Change mean?

Mass media are no longer the only arbiters (or gate-keepers) for news. Instead, mass media have been forced to branch out. They are embracing new media. They are trying to empower direct public dialogue by creating a stronger media mix of traditional and online products. This new media mix is no longer about one anchor speaking to many listeners. Today, media are places where many people meet to talk directly with each other in unfiltered conversations. The media are not just linear—they are interactive. They don’t just publish once a day—they are always available online, WYW, what you want, when you want it, the way you want it. They are about diversity of people, ideas, and interests. They are about communities of conversation. Traditional mass media are leading the change.

 The **Second** Big Trend is **Internationalization:** All of society--and all of media today are simultaneously **local** and **global.** I am sure most of you have seen Tom Friedman’s book *The World is Flat.* He talks about how digital media have flattened the world. Today all countries can be players in the world economic game. Today physical products and ideas are created everywhere in the world. Even local companies are international. This is possible because global media networks are open to everyone—old players and new players alike. World Polity Theory suggests that uniform business and government practices have spread across the globe through networks of communication available everywhere. and are, worldwide, steadily replicating themselves everywhere. And these networks shape our actions locally.

Theorists Brian McNair and Robert McChesney demonstrate that mass media today and new media are both local and international. Their networks change our sense of time and place. They give us all a sense that no place is distant and that time is always now on the Internet.

 Spanish theorist Manuel Castells shows that this instant connection of people, businesses and governments has changed the way power flows in the world. Because we can quickly reach audiences dispersed across the globe, power lies in media symbols and the meaning people everywhere use to make decisions.

Unfortunately terrorists and disrupters can use the international media networks, too. Borders are more porous and open to worldwide influences. The internationalization of media create important security challenges. They raise questions of sovereignty.

 **The Third major Trend is Urbanization:** All over the globe, people are moving to cities. Doug Saunders describes it in *Arrival City.* Mike Davis describes it in *Planet of Slums.* They describe it from opposite points of view. One discusses positive opportunities. The other discusses the dangers and problems of urbanization.

Worldwide migration has created Megacities around the world. In the year 1800, only 3 percent of the world’s population lived in cities. Today, more than half the world’s population does. Today, 468 cities have populations of more than 1 million and 21 megacities have populations of more than 10 million.

This urban environment is the heart of the change sweeping the mediated communication. It offers opportunities and it creates challenges.

Matthew Fuller vividly describes intense interactions of media in urban environments. He calls them “media ecologies.” The interaction of mass media images with online itensity and wireless immediacy create symbolic play that feeds of each other to change how we understand what’s happening around us. The French philosopher Jean Baudrillard has called this new sense of meaning “hyperreality.” The urban media hot house ecologies generate new forms of semiotics—new meaning in city life.

**The Fourth, Trend is Networks:** The “look” of these new broader media industries has the look of “**networks**.” Today, that look is popularly called “the social network.” But it is much more sweeping and more profound than Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Manuel Castells describes it as an International Informational Network. He calls it a network of networks.

The new media connect businesses, politicians, NGOs, musicians, movie fans and dozens of other groups into networks connected by new media. Theorists like Brian McNair in his book Cultural *Chaos,* argue that this opens new ways for economic and political dialog and new ways to empower disenfranchised communities. Online, “hyperlocal” Web sites like Philadelphia Neighborhoods and RVA in the United States are experimenting with giving voice to individual neighborhoods and disenfranchised groups. The hyperlocal movement in Europe, Rob Burnett’s “lowcast media” in resistance communities, and Clemencia Rodriquez’s “guerrilla media” in Latin America are all local networks tied to the worldwide network.

**The Fifth Trend changing media is Liquidity.** Social networks that use online media are not stable. They are not fixed. They are constantly changing and evolving. Civil society competes with changing, “liquid” network structures that live and evolve in the virtual world and in international urban media ecologies.

Theorist Zygmunt Bauman calls this liquid modernity. He describes the unstable, constantly changing social relationships made possible by the plentiful media connections. These are intense symbolic social structures. He suggests that they have weakened many of the traditional social and civic structures supporting individuals. He says individuals have been forced to constantly negotiating new social relationships to find the support they need. He calls this new social environment “liquid” because it requires individuals to constantly change their social relationships.

These are the important trends changing media today. They have produced a “**liquid network**” concept and structure for media industries. This structure is more diverse than traditional mass media systems. The network structure reflects a new way of interacting in internationalized urban environments and within the online virtual world itself.

 So, my **first point** is that emerging trends in media and society are changing the 21st century media systems. Those changes offer unparalleled opportunities for all of us. But they demand careful strategic thought and planning.

**The Second Thing I’d like to do is to look at Five of the Opportunities these systems offer.**

The **First Opportunity is a media world of Plenty rather than Scarcity.** This system offer lots of media channels open to everyone. Online media don’t cost much compared to a press or a broadcast studio. Wired magazine editor Chris Anderson has pointed out that mass media systems were expensive to build, expensive to run and expensive to staff. There weren’t many of them, especially to people with little money. The costs had to be recovered from advertisers, readers and workers.

Online media are cheap. Once the broadband cabling is done, the costs for access for individuals are low. Almost anyone can get access. The costs to produce messages are low. Almost anyone can put content on the Web. Anderson argues that information costs are rapidly dropping to Zero—Free. He says information on the Internet should be free. You make your money on products, not on information.

Digital media have given us many, cheap ways to reach audiences and for those audiences to talk back to us.

**The Second Opportunity is Targeting** because information and access are free, it is easy and cheap to target just those you want to reach.

Traditional mass media systems were expensive. They were scarce. They had to build mass audiences to cover costs. They helped businesses, governments and societies build consensus and agreement by informing mass audiences about what should be acceptable, true, and best for a nation.

But they were not very good at reaching small, local groups with special interests or at reaching minority populations and empowering them to speak.

The new media system does that kind of thing best. Advertisers, advocates, and strategic planners have discovered that they can assemble lists of online contact information about specialized groups. They can build it. They can buy it. The new media systems permit them to go directly to those groups with information that would not be welcomed by a more general population. The new system permits direct contact and direct response in a way that was impossible with mass media.

This new, direct dialog between targeted campaigns and targeted audiences requires some new thinking by companies used to controlling their image. One prominent strategic planner in Asia has called the new approach “performing the brand” rather than “controlling the brand.

**The Third Opportunity is Assembling Dispersed Knowledge:** Cass Sunstein, in his little book *Infotopia,* has pointed out that new media systems can assemble the best thinking about almost any issue cheaply. He says they are good at “assembling knowledge from dispersed sources.” Using digital media, sites such as Wikipedia can ask individuals everywhere to contribute their knowledge about virtually any subject and depend on everyone else to ensure that contributions are accurate.

U.S. mass media now regularly call online for individual “citizen journalists” to contribute information about what is happening in communities. Advocacy organizations and private companies now regularly ask their members and customers to weigh in on campaigns, products, and policies. And individuals turn to online reviews written by other individuals to decide what to buy and where to eat.

**The Fourth Opportunity is Empowering Dialogue:** The changes in media systems, both within countries and across international boarders mean new opportunities for governance. Clay Shirky, Cass Sunstein, Henry Jenkins, and many others suggest that digital forms of media make it easy for people to organize themselves online. Of course, this can be positive, as in political campaigns. It can be trivial as in Flash Mobs. It can be dangerous, as in the recent London riots.

Still, these new media forms offer transformational opportunities for governments and politicians to reach out directly to highly targeted audiences at low cost, bypassing the gatekeeping function and higher costs of traditional media that characterized the 20th century mass audiences.

For political players, this approach has created a number of new opportunities for direct fundraising from a committed base; opportunities to motivate the political base to action without offending the majority; opportunities to assess group opinions and hear directly the concerns groups have about policy and political positions.

For cultural players, these new media forms offer new ways to reach narrow audiences with cultural products that would not succeed with a general audience. Many films are now released directly for online distribution to narrowly targeted audiences.

And, most of all, for ordinary citizens, these media offer the chance to find a few like-minded individuals with very narrow interests in order to organize and create an impact on business, politics and culture.

The **Fifth Opportunity is Scalable Interactive Digital Media Networks:** Mass audiences have not gone away. Major sporting, political and cultural events still assemble mass audiences. Advertisers, advocates and politicians with enough money still use mass media to reach large populations.

But today, mass media can connect with hyperlocal, online media the create Scalable Media Networks. At one end of the scale, these networks support local empowerment. At the other end the scale, mass media systems can generate large audiences around common social interests.

News aggregators were the first to try to create these bridges. Today, experiments are going on all over the Hemisphere to create a viable business model that offers this scalability. The AOL experiment, Patch, is one example. Citywide Websites drawing on content from hyperlocal sites is another. Experiments at New York City University’s hyperlocal news site that feeds into the New York Times is another.

These new media systems offer advertisers, entrepreneurs, and politicians the best of both worlds. They appeal directly to smaller target audiences but also offer ways to reach mass audiences. They offer a chance for advocates to engage in direct conversations and to listen to individuals but still reach out widely.

**But These Systems Create Challenges, Too.**

I’ll just mention three:

**The First Challenge is Fragmentation of Society.** Many writers suggest that the new network systems might be fragmenting society. They fear that the broad consensus required for public policy and social action might be difficult. Some even argue that the fragmented political dialogue in the United States today can be attributed in part to the fragmentation of media sources in digital media systems. Cass Sunstein has made this argument. He suggested that the specialized Internet media have created an “echo chamber.” Users seek only information they agree with. They avoid opinions that challenge their beliefs.

Policy makers and businesses are forced to give up control and engage in dialogue. They become part of what Jürgen Habermas calls the “public sphere.” But the conversations are sometimes rather narrow.

Castells says the new networks require institutions and governments to constantly “tend” to the “flow” of conversations redefining meaning on the network all the time. Most major politicians and companies in the United States now maintain teams to constantly monitor online networks and engage in the conversations that go on online all the time.

**The Second Challenge is Security.** Castells points out that all the weaknesses of humanity are at work, unfiltered, on the Web. The greed, criminality, and disruptors are all there. We have all been offered millions of dollars from Websites in Russia, Eastern Europe, or Africa.

And, of course, you are all aware of the actions of Wikileaks, Anonymous, and increasingly, state-sponsored online spying and disruptions. These represent the most fundamental challenges for national security and even for personal security.

But less obviously these online media offer challenges to national boarders. They even create new ways to challenge national policy and national sovereignty. In some countries, displaced populations have organized outside the boarders of countries to challenge national policy and try to force changes in policy within those countries.

**The Third Challenge is Media Standards.** Authors Bill Kovach and Tom Rosentiel have written extensively about the impact of online media on journalist standards. Those of us in journalism education have spent our lives training journalists and advocating rigorous standards for journalism. Today, we face the reality that much of what people read, view, and absorb as fact comes from untrained communicators empowered by the new media systems that have spread around the world. For all the advantages and empowerment those media offer, many of us worry about how we maintain standards of truth in a system open to all. This is, ultimately, a challenge for all of us who care about rational thought in the discussions and debates that occupy the citizens of the countries of the Western Hemisphere.

**Strategic Thinking**

Digital online and wireless media are facts of life. Many writers have suggested that they played a crucial role during the recent Arab Spring movements in the Middle East and that they have helped transform cultural standards.

Digital media have spread across the Americas, too. Fortunately, we have a healthy media ecology in most nations of the Hemisphere with a balance of traditional media and spreading digital media technologies.

Now is the time for careful reflection on how the integrate these new media forms with the existing media to maximize the benefits of the opportunities they offer. At the same time, it is important to consider the challenges they offer so that our social, cultural, political, and economic institutions can maximize their benefits and minimize the uncertainty they sometimes create.

I hope you, the thoughtful leaders of this hemisphere, will include media in your strategic planning. It is crucial integrate these new media systems in Now. Strategic thinking about the future of the hemisphere today, should account for the opportunities and challenges of both traditional and new media forms. Their advantages are great. They offer opportunities that can be transformational for the Hemisphere. But they require planning.

Most of the traditional media are trying to find new business models to integrate the strengths of the traditional systems with the advantages of the new media systems.

They want a media system that can be flexible and targeted in reaching specialized and fluid audiences of individuals, but that can still assemble and sustain the mass audience needed to build common ground within society

We know how to do mass communication. We are quickly learning to build “hyperlocal” and virtual communities across the new media systems.

The strategic challenge here is to use the resources of the mass media system to connect the hyperlocal with the mass media and bind them into a “scalable, interactive, digital network.” Experiments are under way to do that, but the results are not in yet. The key is finding a scalable payment system—from micropayments and paywalls to free content and open access. They will be the foundation for media that will serve the needs of all our societies.

They will also be the key to sustaining healthy, stable national and international systems that also support the flexibility for targeted local audiences and liquid, individualistic, innovative virtual and international communities.

The strategic implications for our Hemisphere are staggering. I urge you to include strategic explorations of this opportunity and challenge among the highest priorities of your strategic thinking.

Thank you for your interest in these changes in media. I look forward to your own insights and experiences with media.