

Newspapers changing to attract younger readers

PARIS, FRANCE / DARMSTADT, GERMANY: While the conventional wisdom holds that newspapers and young people don't mix, newspaper companies and media associations from around the world are finding new ways to attract younger readers, using video, social media, research, education and a "total youth think" attitude.



A Young Reader Strategy Briefing, organised by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) in Paris, brought together young reader, newspapers in education and media literacy experts from France, Ireland, South Africa, Norway, Brazil, Poland, the United States, the Netherlands and Korea who are finding ways to make newspapers - traditional and digital - more relevant for younger audiences.

"If young readers abandon newspapers and newspapers abandon young readers, democratic society will be diminished. It's a serious issue that must be addressed," said Aralynn McMane, executive director for Young Reader Development at WAN-IFRA.

"No other medium, digital or traditional, is supplying the range of quality, credible information that newspapers are supplying, and this information remains essential for civic participation, no matter what platform delivers it," she said. "It is arguably the digital platforms that have the most potential for future generations of readers, but this development carries with it a responsibility to ensure that the young people are media literate, and have the skills to differentiate between what is credible information online and what is not."

More on WAN-IFRA's young reader development activities can be found at <http://www.wan-ifra.org/microsites/young-readers>.

Participants at the Young Reader Strategy Briefing heard:

- In Poland, the quality daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* sent 25 reporters back to their old schools to see what has changed in the two decades that has witnessed such great transformation in the rest of the country's society. A series of articles and blog postings, "The End of the Chalk Age," chronicled alarming technological challenges in schools and led the paper to initiate a massive nationwide "School 2.0" project to help teachers enter the digital age.
- In South Africa, high school students are being encouraged to engage in actively making their own news, via the video cameras on their cellphones. Vuselela Media, Rhodes University and the European Journalism Centre are offering tutorials to help students publish their work on a pan-African mobile content-sharing network.
- Students in The Netherlands are collecting news from their regional newspapers to mix with their own content to create an online news "collage" through a digital news project from the Dutch "Nieuws in de klas" (News in the Class) organisation.
- In an effort to reverse declining literacy rates in Ireland, 47 newspapers, working with the Department of Education, have put forward a newspapers in education strategy aimed at helping young people develop an understanding and interest in news while improving their reading skills. The concept, offered by National Newspapers of Ireland, helps students create their own newspapers, and features a "Press Pass" week in which studies are devoted to media literacy topics.
- In Korea, newspapers in education initiatives are coordinated through the government-funded Korean Press Foundation, a research institution which annually trains more than 4000 teachers in using newspapers in the classroom and develops textbooks, Newspapers in Education portal sites and training for parents. One of its major

initiatives aims to train teachers to educate parents about the importance of helping children develop a news reading habit.

- In Germany, the national newspaper association BDZV offered its member newspapers public service advertisements promoting World Press Freedom Day that had been created by design students who were invited to explore the importance of press freedom.
- In the United States, the Newspaper Association of America Foundation will increase its emphasis on middle schools students (aged about 10 to 13 years) in the wake of considerable research that shows a continuing tendency for children to form lifelong reading habits at this life stage.

WAN-IFRA helps newspapers, parents and teachers work together to engage the young to create a literate, civic-minded new generation of readers all over the world.

More on these activities can be found at <http://www.wan-ifra.org/microsites/young-readers>.

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