

US FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS

Changes and Continuity at the Turn of the Century

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Abstract / This article reports the findings from a comprehensive survey of US foreign correspondents conducted in 2001. Some trends – such as Eurocentrism, relatively high degrees of education and the like – continue. New trends also appeared in the study. More foreign nationals work for US media than ever before. The Internet is having a profound impact on the way foreign correspondents go about their work. Both of these new findings, which have important implications for foreign news coverage, are discussed. Overall, nothing in this study suggested that the general neglect of traditional foreign newsgathering will be reversed in the near future.

Keywords / foreign correspondent / foreign news / international correspondent / international news / US media

Introduction

This is the age of globalization and virtually all aspects of Americans' lives are exposed to events overseas. The US economy is increasingly linked to economies abroad. Americans enjoy unprecedented opportunities to pursue foreign trade and investment, all the while feeling heightened vulnerability to economic downturns in other countries. Scientific research has revealed that the loss of biodiversity in tropical forests and global warming as a result of worldwide energy use have consequences for the US along with every other nation. More positively, Americans have greater cultural exposure abroad as they travel more easily to foreign countries on vacation and enjoy ethnic food and music at home.

Coupled with growing global interdependence are geopolitical changes that make foreign affairs more urgent for Americans. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the US has become the undisputed superpower. This has both increased its potential to be hated, and given it greater power to shape international events. How it protects its interests, how it wields its power around the world, is of vital importance to Americans.

The news media are crucial to American understanding of these problems, as journalist Anderson (1951: 11) ruefully observed shortly after the end of the Second World War, when the number of foreign correspondents¹ dropped sharply: 'What this means to the United States – in desperate need of eyes and

ears in all part of the globe – requires no dramatic explanation. The danger to this country is self-evident.’

A great deal of evidence has shown that Anderson’s concerns have gone unheeded. The ownership of media, like other businesses, has become globalized. But media scholars and industry analysts (e.g. Kurtz, 2002; Pogrebin, 1996) pointed out that the need to please Wall Street and editors’ strong presumption that readers are disinterested in foreign news have deterred the media from increasing costly foreign news coverage, focusing instead on light, lucrative entertainment closer to home. Hess (1996a) showed that the number of US correspondents abroad representing the elite media has declined steadily. Other studies (Riffe and Budianto, 2002; Riffe et al., 1994) indicate a shrinking newshole in the establishment media allocated to foreign news. In 1989, Michael Emery declared the international newshole an endangered species. Immediately after the September 11 terrorist attacks, Geneva Overholser (2001) commented that not only the intelligence of the US but also the reporting of intelligence in this nation was poor. In her view, the media failed as badly as the FBI and the CIA in informing American people about foreign affairs.

In the wake of September 11, US media devoted enormous resources as well as space to cover the terrorist attacks and the ensuing wars, with notable efforts to trace causes as well as simply chronicle events. But, as has happened in the past with big stories, attention flagged quickly and so, accordingly, did the public’s (Hamilton, 1976). Bumiller (2002) reported that only 16 percent of voters rated international issues, including the Bush administration’s efforts to solve the Middle East crises, as more important than domestic issues. In a related study (Morris and Associates, 2002), over half of all foreign news editors in the US – presumably the gatekeepers with the highest commitment to foreign news – thought foreign news should not increase.

With September 11 confirming the importance of foreign news coverage in anticipating and dealing effectively with foreign affairs, it is timely to assess the state of traditional foreign correspondence in the US. This study aims to detect the potential changes in demographics and journalistic practices in order to project where foreign coverage in the US media is headed. In doing so, the researchers hope to unveil the relevant issues and discuss the implications.

Literature Review

The importance of international news is well documented in the literature (van Ginneken, 1998). Bernard Cohen (1963: 21) noted in his classic work, ‘The press occupies the strategic center, from which it neutrally transmits the facts about foreign policy from one part of the political system to another.’ In recent years, with major crises being covered in real time, the power of the media has become more pronounced. For example, Amanpour (1996) speculated that CNN’s vivid, continuous coverage of Bosnia’s civil war might have altered US foreign policy toward the region. In addition to the impact on foreign policy, international news reporting can shape the public’s knowledge, perception and attitude toward foreign countries, as large-scale public opinion surveys indicate (Perry, 1990; Salwen and Matera, 1992).

Foreign correspondents have a dominant role in informing the public and, at times, the government about foreign events. In many cases they have special training, and often devote large parts of their careers moving from one overseas bureau to another or covering foreign affairs from Washington, DC. They have their own professional network, journalistic expertise and award system. This helps explain why international correspondents have established themselves as a separate group of elite news professionals worthy of focused scholarly attention (Cohen, 1967).

Earlier surveys of foreign correspondents such as Anderson (1951), Kruglak (1955) and Wilhelm (1963) and censuses conducted by Kliesch (1991) have analyzed the demographics of foreign correspondents. They have measured the size of the foreign press corps and whether it is increasing or (as has been the case in recent years) decreasing. A common finding has been the pronounced tendency toward Eurocentrism in the posting of reporters abroad.² Many of these studies have found that London is a major news hub for US foreign correspondents overseas, probably due to the advantages of shared language and communication infrastructure. Researchers also have looked at the nationality of correspondents, their educational backgrounds, foreign language skills, international experience, gender and the like. Maxwell (1956) reported that many of the 209 correspondents he surveyed had married non-American women. As if to underscore the elite status of foreign correspondents, Hess (1996b) tallied their celebrity parents and kinships.

One demographic of particular significance is the use of foreign nationals. Editors have long worried about their foreign correspondents becoming out of touch with their readers, viewers and listeners at home. This has been considered a problem even for American-born reporters and has been a major barrier in hiring foreign journalists who have little direct experience in the US. The heated UNESCO debates in the 1970s and the ensuing declaration of the New World Information Order (NWIO) substantiated that strikingly different views about international news exist between different parts of the world (Masmoudi, 1979). Peterson (1979) surveyed the news reporters of *The Times* of London and also reported that editors and correspondents shared overall news values, but that the cultural differences of the news reporters (those who are 'born and educated in Europe or North America' vs otherwise) could affect news selection. Many other empirical studies (Chang, 1998; Giffard and Rivenburgh, 2000) have concurred: news selection, processing and gatekeeping vary dramatically from culture to culture, country to country and region to region.

Studies exist on the political consequences of instantaneous communication worldwide (Webster, 1990). But no systematic study has looked at the impact of technology on the routines of foreign reporting, as has been done on domestic news operations – such as multi-tasking and work overload (Ursell, 2001). All that exists in the foreign arena are 'reporter notebook' type stories in which foreign correspondents describe how they must master new technologies to meet the increasingly challenging demands and expectations of converging media (Lanson and Fought, 1999).

Based on the aforementioned literature, we aim to address the following four research questions in this article:

RQ1: What is the current demographic profile of correspondents representing US media overseas? Is the current profile different from that of the past literature?

RQ2: What are the working requirements and the environment of today's foreign correspondents? For example, do they need to cover many nations in the region? How many hours a week do they usually have to put in?

RQ3: What are the impacts of the Internet on day-to-day work, news production and communication across national borders?

RQ4: What are the major differences, if any, of demographics, perspectives and emphases of news topics between American and foreign nationals representing US media abroad?

Methodology

A census of US foreign correspondents is extremely difficult to conduct. There is no agency in charge of compiling the list of foreign correspondents. Nor is there a single professional organization to which they all belong. News media often decline to provide contact information for their foreign correspondents, and in any event foreign postings change all the time. Moreover, news organizations often use stringers or part-time reporters, an even more elusive category of foreign correspondents.

To the best of our knowledge, Dr Ralph Kliesch of Ohio University maintains the single best list of foreign correspondents representing US media. Over three decades he has continuously compiled and updated his listing. The fundamental rule of thumb in constructing this list is snowballing: Dr Kliesch collects as much information from as many sources as possible. He collects data not only by contacting news organizations but also by scanning newspapers looking for new bylines, after which he attempts to find addresses for the reporters. His emphasis is not on weeding out outdated names, but on accumulating as many new names as possible. As a result, his list totaled 4825 names when we referred to it. While there is no doubt that the list was incomplete and included a very large number of reporters who have moved on to new spots or left the profession entirely, it was not only the best available but also a comprehensive base from which to work.³

Given our limited human and financial resources and time, it was prohibitive to verify every one on the list. Therefore, in December 2000 we sent invitation letters to all 4825 names. The letter provided a rationale for the study, and a website address and a password so that each working correspondent could access the survey directly through the web. This method was the most feasible given the expense and difficulty of providing return international postage or conducting telephone interviews. Because some nations may not have the access to the World Wide Web, we provided mail and email addresses on the letter so that respondents could request either an email or snail mail version of the survey. After one wave of postcard reminders and a lapse of four months from the initial mailing, we collected a total of 354 respondents, which is the basis of our analysis.

Without knowing how many addresses on Kliesch's list are valid,⁴ we

cannot report a reliable rate of return. But based on generally recognized tallies of the total number of correspondents representing US news media, 354 responses provide a more-than-adequate basis for analysis. We reached this conclusion by conducting several informal surveys to get a general sense of the total number of foreign correspondents. We contacted all newspapers with foreign correspondents listed in the *Editor and Publisher's Yearbook*, major broadcasters (ABC, NBC, CBS, Fox and CNN), and magazines. These media reported having 418 correspondents in total.⁵ The Overseas Press Club based in New York City reported having fewer than 700 members. A census survey conducted by *American Journalism Review* in June 2000 found 282 full-time foreign correspondents working for US newspapers.

The questionnaire included major demographic items used in previous studies such as gender, age, education, citizenship, income and race. Because we were also interested in learning about working conditions and issues related to correspondents' daily activity, we included questions about the type of media they work for, foreign language competence, work experience and weekly work times. We also asked about the importance of each individual news topic. Lastly, since the Internet has made transnational information flow exponentially easier, we inquired about its impact on correspondents' work.

Findings

Tables 1–6 provide our basic findings about the US foreign correspondents. Together with a summary of previous studies, these findings offer insights on trends in foreign correspondence.

The Increasing Use of Foreign Nationals

Except for Wilhelm's (1963) estimate, all studies indicate that the percentage of foreign correspondents in the US media who are American citizens is around 60–70 percent. For example, Kliesch (1991) used a forerunner of the database we used and found that 66 percent of the correspondents were American; Hess (1996b) found almost 77 percent of the foreign press corps were American. The lowest number was from Wilhelm's study, four decades ago, which found 42 percent were Americans. In our study, in contrast, only 31 percent of those who reported their nationality were American. Sixty-nine percent foreign nationals is by far the largest proportion ever.⁶ The finding is all the more striking because foreign nationals outnumber American correspondents in every news medium.

Age and Experience

Foreign correspondents generally are more experienced than their domestic counterparts, furthering confirming the elite nature of this group of journalists. The average age for foreign correspondents who are US citizens continues to hover in the mid-forties and the average length of work experience is about 21 years (see Table 2). They are significantly more senior than the average US

TABLE 1

Percentage of Correspondents Working for Each Medium

	American (<i>N</i> = 84)		Foreigner (<i>N</i> = 185)		Overall (<i>N</i> = 354)
	Column (%)	Row (%)	Column (%)	Row (%)	
Newspaper	33.3	37.3	25.4	62.7	28.6
Network TV	16.7	24.6	23.2	75.4	19.4
Radio	10.7	47.4	5.4	52.6	7.5
Internet	11.9	34.5	10.3	65.5	12.4
Cable TV	10.7	37.5	8.1	62.5	10.1
Magazine	38.1	27.4	45.9	72.6	42.5
Wire service	28.6	33.3	25.9	66.7	24.0

Note: The survey allowed respondents to check multiple media, resulting in totals larger than 100%.

journalist found by Weaver and Wilhoit (1996). The average for foreign nationals is only slightly lower.

For both groups the average time as a journalist is increasing. It now reaches almost 19 years, which contrasts with Maxwell's finding in 1956 that 'two-thirds had had 11 or more years of such experience' (Maxwell, 1956: 348). Correspondents not only have many years of journalistic experience, most of them also stay in a position for substantial periods of time before moving to another post. The average time on their current job is 7.4 years; the median number is 4.

TABLE 2

Demographics

	American	Foreigner	Overall
Average age	46.9	42.8	44.4
Sex (female) (%)	33.7	22.3	26.4
Race (white) (%)	86.7	78.3	82.9
Education (college or above) (%)	96.4	72.0	82.4
Experience (years)	21.1	17.5	18.8
Years on the job	8.2	7.7	7.4
Income (US\$70,000 or above) (%)	64.50	30.40	42.90
Top locale	Mexico/US	UK	UK
Top three foreign languages	Spanish (28.6%)	French (16.8%)	French (17.3%)
	French (11.9%)	Spanish (11.9%)	Spanish (16.8%)
	German (9.5%)	German (7.0%)	German (7.2%)

Education Levels

Foreign correspondents remain well educated. Ninety-six percent of American foreign correspondents have a college degree or better. Including both American and foreign nationals, 82 percent of those responding to the survey have college degrees. This latter percentage is roughly the same as the percentage found in Weaver and Wilhoit's study, published in 1996, which looked only at American journalists. Maxwell in the 1950s found only 61 percent of foreign correspondents had college educations, indicating an increase of educational levels over the past half-century.

About one-third of the foreign correspondents surveyed have degrees in journalism, media or mass communication, a percentage slightly lower than the 40 percent figure for US journalists in general (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996: 29). The rest of those who have undergraduate or graduate degrees fall into the humanities, language and literature, social sciences or international relations/regional studies.

Almost half of the correspondents that responded were educated in the US for their highest degree. While it is not surprising that most American foreign correspondents were educated in the US, it is striking that so many foreign nationals were as well. Over 17 percent of foreign nationals received their highest degrees in a US institution.

As another sign of educational levels, our survey found that 81 percent of US foreign correspondents speak at least one foreign language. This is the same level as for foreign national correspondents representing US media. Hess (1996b) reported that 97.5 percent of correspondents speak a foreign language, suggesting a possible decline in language proficiency since then. It is also worth noting that European languages are the primary non-English languages that these foreign correspondents can speak (see Table 4).

Gender and Race

American media managers have shown increasing interest in recent years in improving the diversity of their workforce (Barton, 2002). This study shows mixed progress in the area of foreign correspondents. The percentage of American women foreign correspondents rose dramatically during the 1980s and, as our study confirms, has leveled off in the last decade. It is now at 26 percent, virtually the same as Kliesch's (1991) finding. The percentage of women among American foreign correspondents (34 percent) is considerably higher than among foreign nationals (22 percent). While more women are entering the ranks of journalists in the US, this trend is not reflected among foreign nationals working for US media.

With more foreign nationals being employed by US news media, however, racial diversity improves. To be sure, nearly 83 percent of foreign correspondents, including foreign nationals, consider themselves 'white/European'. Roughly one in five foreign correspondents are racial minorities. While this is not proportional to the world's population, it is far higher than the statistic Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) discovered, which reported that fewer than 9

percent of American journalists overall were African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American and Native American. It is also an improvement over the Hess (1996b) study of foreign correspondents, which found that fewer than one in 10 were non-white.

Foreign National vs American Correspondents

Foreign nationals earn far lower incomes (30.4 percent earn US\$70,000 or above, vs 64.5 percent for Americans). Obviously, one primary attraction for US news organizations to hire foreign nationals is that they cost less.⁷ Their median salary range is US\$40,001–50,000, almost half that of American correspondents (US\$80,001–90,000).

Despite concerns that foreign journalists view the news differently than Americans, both groups came up with strikingly similar evaluation scores when setting news priorities for politics, economics, culture, social problems, sports, religion, environment/energy and human rights (see Table 3). Using Spearman's rho to calculate their correlation results in a high coefficient of .951 ($p < .001$). Similarly, the top three languages – other than English – spoken by both groups are the same: Spanish, French and German (see Table 4).

Geographic Distribution

One of the most studied topics in the literature is the geographic distribution of foreign correspondents representing US media. A unanimous finding across four studies published in the past four decades is that the UK has been the base for the highest number of US correspondents. Our study finds that this remains to be the case, and that the media are generally oriented toward Europe more than other regions (see Table 5).

Nevertheless, there is one notable difference on the list. For the first time, a developing country – Mexico – is among the top three. Given the proximity of Mexico to the US and the wide range of issues between the two countries, it is perhaps more intriguing that Mexico previously has *not* been a top country than that it is so ranked now. Given the US government's attention shifting to

TABLE 3

Rating of News Topics (1 lowest–5 highest)

	American	Foreigner	Overall
Politics	4.1	4.1	4.1
Economics	4.1	3.8	3.9
Culture	3.0	2.7	2.8
Sports	2.3	2.4	2.3
Social problems	3.3	2.9	3.1
Environment/energy	3.2	2.8	2.9
Religion	2.9	2.6	2.6
Human rights	3.2	3.1	3.1

TABLE 4
Foreign Languages Spoken by Correspondents Working for US Media

First non-English language	French	Spanish	German	Russian	Mandarin	Italian	Japanese	Portuguese	
%	17.3	16.8	7.2	6.6	3.5	3.2	2.6	2.3	
<i>N</i>	60	58	25	23	12	11	9	8	
All non-English languages	French	Spanish	German	Russian	Portuguese	Italian	Arabic	Mandarin	Japanese
<i>N</i>	87	84	38	30	23	20	18	12	10

this southern neighbor, it seems that the deployment of foreign correspondents echoes what the literature (e.g. Lee et al., 2001; Riffe, 1995) discovered: foreign news coverage follows US foreign policy. Another interesting finding is that over 3 percent of foreign correspondents are actually based in the US, a phenomenon that may reflect that reporters ‘parachute’ into other countries to do breaking stories.

Technology

This study also looked at the impact of the Internet on foreign correspondence. Some 12 percent of those surveyed said that they reported at least in part over the Internet medium, a percentage that surpasses those who work for radio and cable television. Even some of those who did not respond to our survey via the Internet indicated that the medium has had an impact on their work routines. Some 79 percent of the correspondents reported that the Internet made it easier to get background information; 58 percent said that the Internet helped them get sources; and 59 percent said the Internet helped them monitor competitors’ coverage. But if the Internet helps, it also creates additional pressures: 34 percent said that thanks to the Internet they have to file more often, and 37 percent stated that they need to update their stories more frequently.

Other Work Routines

In wanting to look at roles and routines, our survey sought to find out if foreign correspondents are traveling as much as in the past. The answer seems to be ‘no’ compared to Maxwell’s (1956: 348) finding, i.e. ‘more than half traveled from five to 20 weeks a year’ and ‘about 15% were traveling more than 20 weeks annually’. According to our study, the average time spent outside their base nation is about six weeks a year (see Table 6). Perhaps this need to stay at home is a combined effect of corporate attempts to reduce the cost of

TABLE 5

Top Ten Postings

Base nation	UK	Germany	Mexico	US	France	Russia	China	Japan	Italy	Israel
%	8.7	3.5	3.5	3.2	2.9	2.3	2.3	2.3	2	1.7
<i>N</i>	30	12	12	11	10	8	8	8	7	6

TABLE 6

Foreign Correspondents’ Work Routines

	American (average)	Foreigner (average)	Overall (average)
Work hours per week	50.9	46.3	47.94
Weeks spent outside base	6.8	5.8	5.96

newsgathering, the increased use of local foreign nationals and the arrival of the Internet, which means journalists are expected to file reports more often.

The average number of working hours per week is about 48. This also is an apparent decrease from Maxwell's (1956) study. He found that 'a tenth said they worked 71 or more hours a week. Nearly three-tenths said they worked 56 to 70 hours weekly, and another three-tenths, 46–55' (Maxwell, 1956: 348). Unfortunately, no other studies investigated this issue so as to enable the present researchers to show the trend.

Morale

The responses to open-ended questions asking about US news priorities, and what they should be, showed marked frustration with foreign news coverage and overall low morale. About one in three expressed disappointment over the current quality and quantity of international news content in the US media. They attributed these problems to lack of resources, inadequate editorial support and attention, insufficient reader interest and the trend toward sensationalized treatment. 'General tendency', said one typical respondent, 'is to look for topics that appear exotic, cute and entertaining for a Westernized audience.' Complaints about the lack of reader, viewer and listener interest are historically common among foreign correspondents. But intense criticism about the pressure for entertaining news is worth noting and finds a parallel in contemporary domestic newsrooms where reporters lament trends toward soft news at the expense of hard news.

News Topics

In another open-ended question, we offered correspondents the opportunity to list topics that have been neglected by their colleagues or international news editors. About 30 journalists said, without any prompting, that Africa needs more attention. Respondents from all regions pointed to inadequate reporting on environmental issues, poverty and development, social and religious tensions and culture. For the most part, these comments suggested greater interest in stories that point to significant trends abroad, rather than toward breaking news.

Discussion

The data invite speculation on trends in the coverage of news abroad. They also suggest lines of inquiry that deserve additional investigation. To begin with, there is the matter of news media using foreign nationals more often. American editors have traditionally worried about international reporters 'going native' (Darnton, 1990). When celebrated journalist Paul Scott Mower accepted an overseas reporting assignment for the *Chicago Daily News* in the early 20th century, a senior colleague warned him that, 'A fellow goes to Europe to stay a few months and he stays for years. He may be a pretty fair newspaperman when he leaves. He comes back at last, wearing spats and carrying a cane, too

good for reporting, no good as an executive, no place for him anywhere, his career wrecked' (Heald, 1988: 27). To guard against this, editors have rotated foreign correspondents frequently so they will not become too attached to any one country, and often bring them home to reacquaint them with their own land. We may be at a point where this old dictum is increasingly irrelevant or impossible. With so many foreign nationals reporting for American media, we may be entering the era of the *foreign* foreign correspondent.

Ted Turner has taken great pride in employing non-US reporters at CNN and outlawed the term 'foreign news' to underscore the global nature of his news operation (Auletta, 2001). One argument for the greater use of foreign nationals is that these reporters will bring a deeper understanding of the nuances of foreign countries to their stories. Another is that they will add to the diversity of perspectives. But it is far from certain that this will be the case in practice.

First, as noted, only 31 percent of foreign correspondents are Americans, but 83 percent considered themselves white/European. Second, the greater use of foreign nationals has decreased the share of women among those reporting abroad for US media. Third, our study found that in evaluating news topics, non-American reporters have the same priorities as American reporters.

This latter finding, however, does not speak for itself. The similarity of evaluations on news topics can be explained in several ways: that foreign correspondents adopt and/or internalize American's perspectives; that a universal news value system has somehow emerged; that journalists are becoming part of a global elite that attend the same universities, read the same books, speak the same language and share similar political agendas. An alternative explanation to this may be that the difference of views on news is more subtle and concealed – that is, that the disagreement is more about the angle, context, sourcing and language of the news stories. Our rough demarcation of news categories might not succeed in catching those finer points. More should be done to understand various perspectives of reporters and the consequences.

Even if non-American correspondents have the same news priorities, this does not necessarily mean that they will report in a way that engages American readers, listeners and viewers. These *foreign* foreign correspondents may be inclined to write more for specialists than the general audience. Also, how well do foreign nationals communicate with US editors, who decide if their material is printed or broadcast? Relationships with editors are especially crucial. More investigation needs to be conducted on how US editors value foreign national reporters. Editors have a greater incentive to run reports by their own high-priced staff reporters because such a large investment is made in their work. The reverse may be the case with foreign nationals, who command lower pay and perquisites.

The second issue rich for speculation relates to the Internet. New technologies have had an impact on foreign news coverage throughout the 20th century. As it became easier for reporters to report on deadline, rather than rely on slow overseas mail, foreign correspondents had to report more frequently. Long, in-depth reports gave way to brief, current reports, a process that is continuing. As one of our respondents noted, spot reporting is useful to

news consumers at home, and the Internet means that people can be constantly up-to-date. It is also true, however, that easy, reliable communication with editors back home discourages bureau chiefs in foreign capitals from straying from their offices: we know of no instance where a correspondent was reprimanded for not being in the countryside to report a skirmish, and plenty of examples of reporters being criticized for missing a similar story in the capital city.

The rise of the Internet may accentuate this trend even more. Plugged into their laptop, journalists are more intensely aware what their competitors are writing and are expected to file more regularly. As a result, they may be less likely to take chances on less obvious stories that break new ground. As another respondent observed, 'I think the increasing dependence on the Internet for information will cause journalists to spend more of their time behind a computer screen instead of getting out of the office to properly report stories.' The ramifications of these Internet side-effects merit further examination.

One possible positive trend is that the Internet may facilitate the rise of the independent, freelance correspondents who are free to go wherever they wish (Sullivan, 1999). Media increasingly use non-professional sources of information or footage disseminated over the Internet (Sonenshine, 1997). In addition, much interesting and non-duplicated reporting overseas takes place through environmental Internet hosts not controlled by conventional news media. The risk, of course, is that these new foreign correspondents may not have special training and professional news editing skills, or embrace conventional news ethics.

Nothing in this study suggests that the general neglect of foreign news-gathering by traditional media will be reversed any time in the near future. Greater reliance on foreign nationals offers a cheaper way to get news because foreign nationals command lower salaries. There is no evidence that profit-oriented media plan to use these savings to hire more reporters to cover more regions or increase space for international coverage.

As has already become apparent, heightened international news after September 11 was only transient. If media conglomerates continue to scale down foreign news operations and reduce the time and space given to foreign affairs, then we have strong reason to be concerned. Policy-making depends heavily on public opinion. Uninformed citizens can hardly be expected to generate sound opinion. Episodic coverage of foreign affairs will not alert Americans to the growing reality that foreign affairs are, in truth, local affairs.

Our study highlights just how important foreign correspondents are to good foreign policy. Answering the survey question what stories should receive more attention, one correspondent wisely pointed out that 'the dictatorship imposed by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan' has been long neglected by US news media. This was months before September 11. Foreign correspondents do not always get the story right. But without them, people are far less likely to be prepared to anticipate global trends that shape everyone's life.

Notes

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1. 'Foreign correspondent' in this article refers to those who cover international affairs and events regardless of their nationality. It is a conventional term used in the US media.
2. Arguing that there were few reporters based in Africa, Asia or South America, Kruglak only selected European-based correspondents in his study.
3. Kliesch also used earlier versions of this list in his journal articles.
4. During our data collection period, more than 200 mails and postcards were returned to us; some people notified us that the person we tried to reach had either died or retired.
5. The results of our interviews with the news media during September–October of 2002 are available upon request.
6. The finding that only about 31 percent of the present workforce are American citizens struck us greatly and led us to pursue a double-check in the field. Thomas Kent, AP's deputy managing editor, echoed our estimate by pointing out that only about one-quarter of their overseas reporters are American (email interview with Thomas Kent, 18 March 2002).
7. The overall pay for American foreign correspondents is far higher than for the average stay-at-home journalists. The median for newspaper reporters in Weaver and Wilhoit's study is just over US\$35,000 (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996: 92). But as one wire service respondent suggested, pay for American foreign correspondents may not be equal to that for domestic reporters who have high levels of talent and experience.

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