CORI

country of origin research and information

Roundtable; New Media and COI
22 April 2010, 3-5pm

Commonwealth Club, 25 Northumberland Avenue, WC2N 5AP

The Roundtable

NGO's, media organisations and activists are increasingly using new media formats such as podcasts, webcasts, blogs and multi-authored content to document and disseminate information about human rights violations and country conditions, in addition to traditional reporting within written 'published' reports and articles. In our search for information on conditions in countries of origin COI researchers may increasingly come across content which is audio-visual or which doesn't conform to the standard methodologies and formalities of written reports or articles. How do we treat material within non-traditional formats?

Is current guidance on professional standards of source assessment (e.g. Common EU Guidelines for Processing COI, IARLJ) adequate to govern the treatment of new media formats?

This Roundtable has been convened to consider the potential impact of new media on COI research and to develop principles of good practice around the treatment of emerging mediums.

New media

Our working definition of 'new media' (or multimedia) so far includes blogs, podcasts, webcasts and multi-authored online content.

Agenda

The Roundtable agenda will consider;

- Range of new media sources which may contain COI
- Whether or not it is ever appropriate to use information contained in new media sources
- Issues of source assessment, credibility and presenting information
- Professional standards in the treatment of sources using new media formats

Blogs

- How do we treat these?
- What are the difficulties of this type of source? Source assessment; bias, establishing identity/expertise/biases of author etc.
- How do we treat news items based entirely on blogs?
- Whereas we might not use blog material directly due to bias's and inability to appropriately assess the source, how do we treat the information if affectively 'laundered' by a third party. e.g. Some Guardian articles on countries about which there is little information on current events are relying entirely on blogs from individuals in that country.
  Does this actually differ much from standard reporting where an anonymous source gives an interview and their opinions are quoted?
- What if the blog is by a renowned academic/activist etc? e.g Alex de Waal expert on Sudan has a blog, run through the website of organisation 'Justice Africa' http://www.justiceafrica.org/. http://blogs.ssrc.org/sudan/2010/02/05/evaluating-the-cpa/
- What is it which determines/can bolster a blogs credibility? Author, reference within mainstream news source?

- Can we produce professional standards governing the use of blogs in specific or limited circumstances if meeting certain criteria or are they a medium we simply rule out?
- Is there a greater need for context setting? Presenting wider political context of sources, e.g. Recent Iranian accusations that US and UK are planting stories and deliberately using the internet to stir discontent.

Audio/video casts

- Current use of documentaries/radio broadcasts/podcasts?
- How do we treat these?
- What are the difficulties of this type of source? Source assessment; establishing research methods, author, editorial control, dating the documentary, purpose of documentary etc., in written report would have a preface/methodology to help us assess
- Transcription rules?
- How do we present the information?
- Referencing?

Example:
Human Rights Watch, Right to Relief: Palliative Care in India
http://www.hrw.org/en/video/2009/10/23/right-relief-palliative-care-india

Multi-authored material

Wikipedia, History commons etc.

- How do we treat these?
- What are the difficulties of this type of source? Source assessment; establish author identity, bias, expertise etc.
- Can they be used appropriately to trace original source material?
- Can we produce professional standards governing the use of multi authored content in specific or limited circumstances if meeting certain criteria or are they a medium we simply rule out?

Example:
History Commons
http://www.historycommons.org/