



Wednesday, July 27, 2011
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April 4, 2011 | Libraries



Colbert Wows 'Em

Alumnus Stephen Colbert puts on a show for new graduates

QUOTE

“I like competitive markets...If schools can't really prove their value, they lose some students to the for-profit sector.”

- President Morton Schapiro in The Guardian (UK)

EVENTS

Playing it Safe: Changing the Mindset Around Concussion Safety in Sports
July 27, 2011 8:00 AM

Summer Cinema: True Grit
July 27, 2011 9:00 PM

Lunch on the Lake: Concert and BBQ
July 28, 2011 12:00 PM

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From Brenda Starr to Wikileaks to Robot Reporter

Northwestern University Library exhibit asks, "Who is the Journalist?"

By Wendy Leopold

EVANSTON, Ill. --- A [Northwestern University Library](#) exhibition exploring the past, present and future of journalism includes an advertisement for the Chicago Daily News in the mid-1960s that boasts "Our Man in Havana is a Girl."

Part of the exhibition opening April 7, the ad promoted Georgie Anne Geyer, who went from a Brenda Starr comic strip fan to a celebrated foreign correspondent who conducted interviews with Fidel Castro, Muammar el-Qaddafi and other elusive world leaders at a time when women were a newsroom rarity.

Using books and rare library materials, artifacts from working journalists and videos of pop culture depictions of reporters, "[Who is the Journalist: The Past, Present and Future of News](#)" explores how the nation's first newspaper publisher, Brenda Starr, Ida B. Wells, Clark Kent, Bob Woodward, Carl Bernstein and others used their power to instruct, inspire and innovate.

Developed by former [Medill School of Journalism](#) Dean [Loren Ghiglione](#), the exhibit at the Main Library, 1970 Campus Drive on Northwestern's Evanston campus is free and open to the public. It runs from April 7 through Sept. 3.

"There is a sci-fi, dystopian vision of journalism's future that says robots will replace the human journalist," says Ghiglione. In contrast, the long-time journalism professor suggests that new storytelling tools and technologies instead may expand journalists' potential and make virtually everyone a kind of journalist. "The golden age of journalism may well be ahead of, not behind us," he says.

In curating the exhibition, Ghiglione repeatedly asked: who is a journalist? He ultimately decided that the journalist "often is a whole cast of contradictory characters in one: communicator and critic of propaganda, reporter and rumormonger, educator and entertainer."

Brenda Starr, for instance, debuted as a tough reporter in 1940, and served as a role model to a generation of girls. In addition to Geyer, Brenda Starr fans included Lois Wille and Mary Schmich, who later became prize-winning journalists. Schmich, who took over writing the strip when creator Dale Messick retired in 1985, contributed a costumed Brenda Starr doll to the exhibit.

The reporter's evolving identity in a world of websites, bloggers, and tweeters is explored in a series of video clips, assembled by Medill adjunct lecturer and Northwestern Web content producer Matt Paoletti and hosted by computer-generated avatars. The avatars were developed by Kris Hammond, director of the [Knight News Innovation Laboratory](#). The lab is a new joint project of Medill and the McCormick [School of Engineering and Applied Sciences](#).

In addition to alumna Geyer, Medill alumni lending artifacts to the exhibit include Pulitzer Prize winner Hank Klibanoff; People magazine founding editor Richard Stolley; foreign correspondents Richard Longworth and Kevin Sites; and sports journalists Christine Brennan and Michael Wilbon. The family of Chester Gould, a Northwestern alumnus who created the comic strip detective Dick Tracy, also contributed.

The University Library exhibit is open to the public daily from 8:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. from now through June 9. For exhibit information or to check on the exhibit's summer hours after June 9, call (847) 467-5918.

Wendy Leopold is the education editor. Contact her at w-leopold@northwestern.edu



Medill alumna Georgie Anne Geyer with Fidel Castro in 1966.

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Northwestern University NewsCenter 555 Clark Street Evanston, IL 60208-1230 Evanston: 847.491.5001 news@northwestern.edu