



Catalyst

International Communication Training Institute Edition



Vision for the Future

Only a few weeks ago nearly 30 Institute members and friends gathered in Alexandria, Egypt to ask the question 'What is the future of learning and development in the next five to ten years?' and 'How can the Institute contribute to that future?'

The four day event was led by Executive Director, Andrew Steele, and chair of the International Christian Media Commission (ICMC) board of directors, Dr Dave Adams. ICMC is the legal body that provides a home for the Institute and its activities.

The event reviewed the changes in learning and development in the period since the Institute's founding in the late 1990s and attempt to look to the coming decade and plan how to respond going forward.

The conference followed a process of looking at the world in which our learning and development work is located, asking how things had changed and looking forward to what needs to change as we act for the future (Rehm et al., 2002).

Institute Executive Director, Andrew Steele, said that the structure of the conference was designed to encourage a rhythm of worship and inquiry: "Each day we met at regular points to stop and reflect on God's goodness and his direction for the day. We also gave plenty of time for individual reflection which could be brought back to the whole group."



As well as opportunity to get to know one another or renew contacts, time was given to explore a research project that Andrew Steele had undertaken exploring the future of learning and development in countries of the South. Andrew presented the research and highlighted the challenges that had been highlighted including the need to act to rediscover what it means to do good-enough training. Is it enough to something rather than nothing or do we

need focus more on the real needs of partners we are working alongside?

Andrew also noted that we still have a long way to go in addressing the challenges faced on the power and cultural relationships in our

working relationships. He pointed to the importance of recognising that, despite our best intentions, many of the systems and structures handed on to colleagues are laden with essentially inappropriate power structures. The research also highlighted the value and strengths of communities of practice (Watson and White, 2009) in training alongside the importance of supporting colleagues who often find themselves isolated and alone in their organisations even though they have roles which can and sometimes do have significant impact.

Conference participants drew the week to a close applauding the breadth of the Institute's activities, recognising the impor-



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- ◆ Timing is Everything
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Catalyst provides news from ICTI members to encourage and inspire other trainers.

*The International Communication Training Institute is a division of the International Christian Media Commission
www.icti.org.uk*



Dave Adams chairs the International Christian Media Commission, the Institute's parent body.

Dave helped the 2020 Vision conference to think through the challenges we face in the coming years and offered this challenge at the end of the event.

I've been in and around Christian

which we are now serving. Both of these have changed fundamentally from when ICTI was born and when I first, as a twenty-one-year-old, went into radio ministry. It's a different world and I think that calls on us as media practitioners to change the way we think about what we do.

For much of that history, the Church, if it paid any attention to what we do at all, saw us in its outreach to the world. It saw the possibility of big radio stations and television networks as an opportunity to tell the world of Christ, while the Church got on looking after the children. And we did



matter that we are seeking to communicate.

But we sometimes forget that the media are also an instrument for education. And my challenge to myself, as much as to anyone else, is to ask whether we can we re-focus the attention we give to the media more on an educational role? In a world in which there is so much choice, so many channels for people to attend to, it's becoming increasingly likely that most people in the world will not even find us in the media. It's been difficult in the past when we were on one or two channels in a given language to attract an audience. Just being a bit more creative with what we do is not going to bring more people to listen to us.

My feeling is the Christian media should forget talking to the world and talk to the Church with a particular mission of education. Why do I say that? Because under the blessing of God the Church is now present in almost all the world, sometimes flourishing, sometimes struggling. But in many local churches the quality of discipleship is poor. That is because the pastors are not well trained. They themselves do not have the theological knowledge, the skills of opening the word of God to the people. As a result the Church is not as effective as it could be as a witness in its own community. The people who live in that community are potentially the most effective evangelists and apostles to that community. But they are not equipped to do it very often.

I believe that if we could think about our primary role as professional media practitioners, to be to equip the Church in its life, ministry

Can Media Trainers Resource the Church for Mission?

broadcasting for more than 50 years and I've seen it change and I've seen it stop changing and just carrying on doing what it's always done. And that troubles me. As I have met with you this week and have heard about the passion you have, the quality of ministry that you are engaged with, I have come to feel that this group of people could begin a turning point in the way that the Christian Church understands its relationships with the media and how to engage with them. I want to challenge us to seriously re-engage with the question of the relationship between the Church and the media.

Over the years, as radio and television and later other media developed, there was a sense in which to use these tools required professional development. So we trained and set up standards that we aspired to achieve, and it was important to do that. But we were professionalising the media in doing so. In this conference we have realised that the world has changed so much that we need to change as well.

Much of what has changed has been in two areas: in the technologies that are available to us to communicate with one another and in the culture in

that all over the world and sometimes with some success. But there was a big gap between our espoused purpose and our actual purpose, between what we said we would do and what we really have accomplished. The world has drifted further away from Christ while we have been trying to bring the world to Christ. And that has been the challenge. I think the changes in the technology, the changes in the culture, require of us a very different way of thinking about whom we are and what we do as media practitioners. What is our mission going forward?

I want to suggest, and this is only my personal reflection, that I think the professionalised Christian media, needs to turn away from its attention to the world back to the Church.

We sometimes, in talking about the media, talk about three roles. It entertains, and that is important. We need to attract people to what we do and we need to be creative. So, our production work needs to be seen as an artistic activity. That is important.

We also, of course, see our work as informative. The media are disseminating information, journalism, good quality interrogation of the subject



and its mission, it could transform the impact of every local Church around the world. That is a huge challenge and I want to suggest that it is done in partnership with the Church. That is that there is a way of developing a pedagogy in our media ministry to the Church that relies on it being applied within the local community so that what we provide in equipping, in helping to equip the Church to think more, to pray and to work for the kingdom will be more effective.

Christians in society are not bad at doing good. We tend to be compassionate, caring. There are outreaches and loving and gentle kind of involvement in the community. We run food programmes; we address questions of poverty reasonably well. Our behaviour is reasonably ok.

Go down another level to the relationship aspects and our relationships with our communities is weaker. We are not as engaged as we could be in civil society. We are not bringing a Christian voice to the things that really matter to everyone who lives in that community. And when you go down to the mindset level many of our churches and individual Christians do not have a reason for the hope that is within them. I think Peter tries to challenge us to say, 'What is the worldview that underpins the hope that you have in Christ?' That means challenging our thinking about every aspect of the world in which we live and work. What are the drivers to our culture? What are the drivers that are bringing people to become so dependent on the technologies that are now being made available to us?

But here is my second thought about that. If we turn our focus to the Church with a stronger commitment to equip it in its mission and ministry we will find that the Church has actually a lot of technology available

to itself. We will discover that we need to start thinking about every person as a producer. They have their mobile phones and they are interacting with their small audiences all the time of every day in the posts that they put on Facebook, in the comments they put to an Instagram post or on YouTube, in tweets that they put on Twitter. They are communicating with their networks through this technology. Are they equipped to do that? Are they doing it in a Christian way? Is their Christian faith being expressed in that quick instant comment they make to a Facebook posting?

So here we are, we have got churches full of young people and while the sermon is being preached they are on their mobile phones. Would it not be lovely if they were equipped to be able to reflect what they hear from the pulpit to their own networks in real time, letting the little networks of people they know hear about, listen to, engage with the reflections that they are having. That, I think, is a future call for media training. How do we as media trainers train every person to use the media? Not just a little professional group. That is a huge challenge.

So that is my reflection on what we have been doing. We have been talking about a lot of things we can do. How do we change the way we work, the systems in which we operate? Reconfigure the resources that we need so that we can help the professional Christian broadcasting or media community, re-focus its attention on equipping the Church. Except we will not reach the world in that incredibly competitive environment. But the Church will listen. The Church will hear us. We can find that audience and we can develop it.

Christians in the churches who do watch Christian media often live in two different worlds. They suffer the local Church and they enjoy the television evangelists. That is wrong.

What if a professional Christian voice was offered in such a way that to complete the learning they have to be working on that content in their local communities and asking 'What does it mean to me?' 'How do I interpret my experience in the light of the teaching that I am receiving?' And then equip the Church to be able to pass that on to their own community.

That is my reaction to our time together. I ask you to just think about it and ask whether that is part of the mission of ICTI? We are trainers. We have huge influence on the Church in terms of the response it can have. What do we want to do about it?

The video recording of this conference talk is available online at <https://www.icti.org.uk/course/view.php?id=37>



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tance of facilitation work of the Institute and calling for the establishment of a task-group to take future planning forward with a particular emphasis on the development of regional champions.

Particular emphasis was given to capturing the conference journey through various media outputs which can be found on the Institute website. Content available includes research reports, conversations between participants, vox pop opinions and video recordings. www.icti.org.uk/course/view.php?id=37

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Watson, A. and White, T. (2009) *Implementing a Work-Based Programme for Organisational Change*. in Young, D. and Garnett, J. (eds.) 'Work-based Learning Futures III'. held 2009 at Derby. University Vocational Awards Council, 69–76

Timing is Everything

John Maust reflects on God's amazing timing despite our plans.

"You will be aware of the deadly bomb attacks in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday," Pastor Palitha Jayasooriya wrote to trainers Babu Verghese and George Koshy before our writer workshop there in July.

"The nation is still struggling to recover from the devastation," he added, "but the Church remains strong. We are going ahead with arrangements as scheduled."

No one envisioned terrorist bombings when we began planning with Pastor Palitha. But since our training took place on the heels of the tragedy, some 28 participants came with heightened urgency to craft words of hope in Christ for shaken Sri Lankans. The timing of the workshop undoubtedly influenced its impact.

"It was a jumbo blessing for you to take us through a very inspiring and thought-provoking seminar," Winant Juriansz wrote to our trainers. "You lit a spark, that's for sure."

In many ways, scheduling is the wild card in training. We pray for God's leading.

In April 1997 in Sierra Leone, our trainers had a sense of foreboding

about the country's future. They challenged the Christian publishers and writers there to stand firm for the Lord no matter what the circumstances. Within a month, a group of disgruntled military officers staged a coup unleashing a wave of death and terror.

In 2010 MAI felt a prompted to provide training in a closed country of Asia. At the time, we had no close contacts with its Christian publishers and writers. An exploratory trip by our Asian Trustees resulted in new



partnerships and a series of fruitful training events nearly every year since.

We thank God for prompting us when He did. Today, it would be impossible to develop a similar outreach, given the government's recent crackdown on religious activity.

As God continues to open new doors for our training, please pray not only for where we go, but when.

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Francophone Christians gather for publishing course

More than 70 Christian magazine publishing professionals from nine French-speaking countries in Africa came to Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, last month for an intensive seven-day Introduction to Magazine Publishing course offered by Magazine Training International (MTI).

The training event was held in collaboration with the Centre de Publications Evangéliques, a Christian publisher in Abidjan.

The Introduction to Magazine Publishing course covered the basics of magazine publishing, starting a magazine, and digital publishing. It was taught by a team of six trainers from the USA and Kenya, all experienced magazine editors, designers, or publishers.

Participants responded to the course with enthusiasm, attending the optional evening sessions and staying late into the night for consulting sessions. "They were eager to learn," said Carla Foote, an editing trainer and MTI board member. "On the first day, when we had a question and answer time after a couple of presentations, many hands went up. They had questions about everything and wanted to understand the whole process of magazine publishing."

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Response Form

• **I want to join ICTI or renew my annual membership**

- Personal Membership £22
- Organisation Membership £220
- I will pay online by Visa/MasterCard/PayPal

- I enclose a bank cheque in pounds sterling
- Please send me an invoice

Name:

Address:

Email:

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