

## Hari Sreenivasan Comments

When President Obama visited the troops in Iraq recently- there was an image that spoke to me- It was of the President in the background, but between the camera and the commander-in-chief, there were the outstretched arms of service members all holding digital cameras and recording devices of some sort. In the following minutes, some of those images and videos are on Twitter, or Facebook, or any number of social media sites, or those videos are sent home to loved ones next time that device or its contents touches the Internet. This is the public generating media at its most raw and simplest form; these are citizens bearing witness to an event and sharing that story with someone else. There was probably a phone call or an email that went along to describe how it felt to be standing near the President, so you could rightly call these people multimedia reporters or even citizen journalists if you like, but the fact is we are telling our own stories now without waiting for a television network to squeeze in a sound byte or distill an entire day's events down to 20 seconds in the evening news.

It is in this always fast and sometimes impatient environment that the PBS NEWSHOUR is refashioning itself to reach its existing audience, who are becoming increasingly tech savvy, as well as a new audience who are tired of the coarseness of the national discourse and are hungry for solid unbiased journalism anywhere and anytime on any device.

We add context in a way commercial media has less time and less profit motive for. During the State of the Union address the Newshour built a tool which [annotated](#) the speech in almost real time, using dozens of experts to provide analysis and insight into the text of the address. We also added video to certain sections to give readers even more context by pointing them to our previous coverage of certain issues. Since then we have live blogged things like the [health care summit](#), or even the Senate [hearings](#) featuring Goldman Sachs this past week. We add value to our users beyond what they can find in a news wire summary.

In an era where commercial media are slashing domestic bureaus and staff, we are scaling up - an example would be the local journalism initiative recently launched by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Our national program is reaching out to these local journalism centers around the country.

We launched another initiative this week called [Newshour Connect](#) and I'm happy to report that we made that happen with a budget of zero dollars thanks to the internet. We discussed immigration reform in the context of the new Arizona law that had passed, with a public media reporter from Tucson, and one from San Diego - we spoke over a Voice Over IP speakerphone, while cameras recorded the video and audio of each of our answers. Afterwards, the stations were able to ftp back their video and I was able to stitch the conversation back together.

To give you another example of how and why broadband is changing the PBS Newshour, Jim Lehrer is [on the road](#) right now on a book tour for his 20th novel, and meeting PBS stations along the way, well just this past week, he filed his first-ever interview via

Skype. He was by himself in a hotel room in Kansas, and was on his Wi-Fi connection and now he's hooked. He even signs some of his emails – “geeky Jim”.

Noncommercial national journalism is where I wanted to be. I have dear friends from both ABC and CBS where I've worked, but the difference at the PBS Newshour is that our focus is far more on the delivery of necessary information versus the most tantalizing or titillating sort. We still take pleasure in the facts versus drama and primary sources versus spin.

My job is not to tell you whether the glass is half full or half empty, it's just to tell you that we're looking at an 8 ounce glass which has 4 ounces of water in it.

As access to broadband increases, the public will only generate more media but as they're surrounded by increasing amounts of content, we think they'll increasingly turn to public media as a reasoned voice to cut through the noise.