

Conclusions

History of student journalism

This thesis presents some historical events that contributed to the formation of student journalism today. However, more research is necessary to truly understand the origin and nature of student journalism in each country or region.

ISSJ project can help students and media researchers to collect data on student journalism at a local level. The first step to build a document is by gathering information on the origin of student news outlets.

Information on student news outlets can be published in the organization's website and be accessible to anyone. An international database of student journalism will be the basis of ISSJ.

Students can use this database as a guide to create or improve their own news outlets and learn from experiences of others.

The history of student journalism worldwide is a microcosm that can help students and researchers understand the nature of journalism and the situation of freedom of speech and press in several countries and regions.

Situation of student journalism worldwide

Although the research in this thesis evidenced the existence of student journalism in several countries, more research is also necessary to know the situation of student journalism in more countries, especially those where students have limited or no Internet access or that speak languages other than English, Spanish or French.

One of the activities of ISSJ could be doing statistics on the number of student news outlets worldwide and what types of student news outlets are more common per country or region. Knowing these data can help ISSJ board members design more effective action plans by putting emphasis on the countries where students need more support to create or develop their own media.

To accomplish this objective, ISSJ will need the support of student journalists, universities and nonprofit organizations. They will become the intermediaries that will help ISSJ reach students and student news outlets worldwide.

Organization by students for students

Without the support of universities and nonprofits, ISSJ will not be able to accomplish its objectives and ultimately its mission. Their resources, both human and technological, are necessary to promote the creation and protection of student journalism.

As indispensable as universities and nonprofits are to this project, it is the interest and support of students that will lead to the consolidation and development of ISSJ.

After analyzing the censorship cases presented in this thesis, it can be concluded that not all the universities will support the idea of freedom of press in campus. The ISSJ board will have to take this in consideration and establish criteria to know in what countries it is preferable to only reach students.

This thesis proposes that during the first stages of the organization the board of directors be formed by journalism educators or journalism alumni. However, the ideal scenario for ISSJ is to be managed by students for students with guidance and support of journalists, universities and nonprofit organizations. Eventually, students will decide the course of the organization.

The organizational strategy proposed in this thesis can serve as a guide for future board members. Regardless of the activities ISSJ board decides to engage, it must always make sure to respect and consider the opinions of student members.

The ultimate goal of this organization is to give students the chance not only to create their own media, disseminate ideas and propose new information methods, but also to defend their rights of speech and press, learn from the perspectives and experiences of students from other countries and become active world citizens.

At an early stage, the organization will be coordinated mainly by journalism educators, journalists and nonprofit experts. However, hopefully, once student media is prosperous in more countries, the organization would be managed almost entirely by students. The main goal of ISSJ is to create an international civil society of citizen students where they can exercise their citizenship duties and become better journalists.

The importance of student media

Several authors and journalism educators agree that student journalism is an essential training tool for future journalists. However, it is important to note that while student news outlets are journalism workshops, they deliver real facts and opinions that affect their community.

Despite the differences in size and impact, the editors and reporters of a student news outlet have the same responsibilities with their sources and audience than those working for corporate news media. Thus, student news outlets should also be recognized as a form of media and not only as a training vehicle.

Examples in this thesis show the importance of student news outlets in a university and local community and the impact their information can have at a national and even international level.

Several student news outlets throughout time have proven that they are able to deliver hard and exciting news and what they publish can change the course of their university or community. Therefore, student journalists deserve the same respect for their work and the same protection against censorship than other journalists.

No matter how damaging a fact error or a “lack of judgment” can result, examples of censorship cases presented in this thesis can lead to the conclusion that censoring the content of a student news outlet or punishing the journalists for it is not the solution for these mistakes.

People who find the content of a student news outlet inappropriate, offensive or damaging have the right to offer a counterpart or argument to that content, but shutting down one part of the argument or one perspective is something unacceptable in any university or country that praises freedom of speech and the pursuit of knowledge.

The most valuable aspect of student journalism is that it can offer an alternative perspective and agenda than other news media and can give students a sense of empowerment and social responsibility.

By creating their own news outlets, students stop being passive listeners in a classroom to active speakers that apply in their work the knowledge obtained from books and teachers but most importantly form their own experiences and mistakes.

Preparing journalists for the future

Student news outlets, as several journalism educators coincide, is an important tool for journalism and communication schools.

Although student news outlets are useful and effective training platforms, it is important to acknowledge that classroom education and student news outlets are complementary and not interchangeable.

Student journalists need guidance of information resources and teachers for their work in their news outlets and for their future profession.

Advisers and educators must find the balance between their role as mentors and the role of students as valuable contributors of journalism. A journalism educator that believes student journalism doesn't deserve to be promoted, protected and respected will never be able to explore the whole potential in their students.

The practice of journalism is in constant change. Technological and cultural advancements have forced the transformation and renewal of old paradigms and habits.

Student journalists can contribute to the improvement of journalism by proposing new methods and information vehicles always maintaining the values of accuracy and fairness.

Journalism and communication students that worked in a student news outlet are likely to become better journalists with a stronger sense of integrity and responsibility.

Student journalists deal with ethical dilemmas, information difficult to obtain and in some cases censorship. When they graduate and work in the news media field, it will be more difficult for them to adopt unethical habits of some newsrooms.

They will be less vulnerable to corruption and will know the importance of having accurate information and protecting sources. They will understand the impact their media can have on their community and the importance of defending their press and speech rights.

Aspects that journalists usually learn after they graduate, (and sometimes after years of working in a newsroom), student journalists would have learn them during their college years.

Detecting, preventing and fighting censorship

Student journalists have a complex role in their universities and society. They have to play two roles that are often in conflict: a student that is expected to be obedient to authorities and a

journalist that must watch and denounce any abuse of power. This dichotomy often made them believe they don't have press and speech rights or that authorities have the right to censor their media whenever they feel necessary.

One of the main objectives of ISSJ is to motivate students to know their rights and defend them. Student journalists worldwide must know that free press and speech is legally protected in several countries and that the Declaration of Human Rights permits them to speak their minds, disseminate and have access to information.

Most of the time student journalists feel underestimated or simply ignored. The image students have as being amateurs or naïve is often an obstacle for them to be recognized as journalists and a common justification used to censor their work.

ISSJ would not only persuade students to create their own media but will encourage journalists, journalism and media educators and universities to respect and embrace the work of student journalists.

After completing the research presented in this thesis, it can be argued that despite the cultural, language and geographical differences student journalists worldwide share similar ideals, ambitions and perspectives. The similarities between the causes, justifications and outcomes of student press censorship cases around the world are also undeniable.

Through ISSJ, student journalists would discover students from countries and regions far away from their own have also struggled with deadlines, sources, ethical dilemmas and specially attempts or acts of censorship.

An international society of student journalists will create a global network in which students will find in their peers the advice and support others have denied them. They will discover that others share their beliefs and they are neither crazy nor alone.

Censorship can have a double effect in student journalists. It can encourage them to fight against it or make them fearful or unsecure about themselves or simply apathetic.

An organization formed by students for students would remind them of the importance of their work and that no justification is strong enough for shutting down a news outlet or to obstruct the flow of information and dissemination of ideas.