The virtual SciCon conference series | Transcript

Anya Schiffrin: Saving Journalism: A Vision for the Post-Covid World (24 March 2021, 4 pm CET)

Moderation: Christina Sartori

[Christina Sartori] My name is Christina Sartori, I'm a science journalist and I will host this session. Our guest today is Professor Anya Schiffrin. She is a senior lecturer at Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs. There she is the director of the Technology, Media and Communications specialisation. And Anya Schiffrin is also editor of the forthcoming book *Media Capture. How Money, Digital Platforms and Governments Control the News*. This will be published by Columbia University Press this year.

So, first of all, I'd like to say welcome, Professor Schiffrin, nice to have you here. And before we start, I'd like to give you a small background for everybody regarding SciCon. The conference series SciCon, SciCon stands for Science Journalism in the Digital Age. It's organised by the *Wissenschafts-Pressekonferenz*, the German Association of Science Journalists, and the Academy of Science and Engineering, that's acatech, and it is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Thank you for that support.

And SciCon has, is looking at ways to change the, well, bad situation of journalism. News audiences might have risen dramatically in 2020 because of the pandemic, but shrinking revenues have crippled many newsrooms. We all know that it's really tough being a journalist, especially a science journalist at the moment. The economic effects of COVID-19 have helped to create what some are calling a media extinction event. And here's where SciCon starts. It discusses, oh sorry, it discusses in several sessions the future of science journalism from an international perspective. It's looking for ideas, perspectives, models, experiences. How can we ensure the future of science journalism? What approaches, what partnerships, what models, what business models can lead journalism into the future and how, which roles are played by foundation states, governments etc.

So in general, all the SciCon lessons, also this one here, are recorded and transcribed so that we will have a reservoir of knowledge at the end where you can watch and listen to, even if you missed this session.

You will find this and more about SciCon on the SciCon website. That's science-journalism.eu. And that's why I'm going to tell you that, please be aware that by participating in today's session, you accept that we will record and transcribe the session. And if you will ask questions, you will have the chance for this after the talk of Professor Schiffrin, then you will be recorded, too. So that just to let you know

and so that you can make this decision. You can write questions in the chat, we will have the talk first and then afterwards, ten, 15 minutes for questions.

So today we have the talk by Professor Schiffrin, which is called "Saving Journalism", hopeful title, "A Vision for the Post-COVID World". It focuses on proposals to address the financial problems devastating journalism in the COVID-19 era. It surveys new initiatives underway to address the present moment, assesses the likelihood of success and profiles the key players. But I think it's best to let the author herself describe all the ideas. And please, if you would like to start, Professor Schiffrin.

[Anja Schiffrin] Great. Well, thank you very much for inviting me. I'm so glad that you're thinking about this important problem. I think everybody around the world in the journalism community is thinking about this important problem.

In the past, I've covered this subject from different angles. So it may be that some of our other papers, like "Fighting for Survival" or "Publishing for Peanuts", may be helpful to you. And I can certainly point you to other research that has been done.

So, you know, there's all kinds of things like partnerships with universities, for example, which is helping create and sort of sustain smaller news outlets around the world. So you might want to look at that, especially for science, or you might want to look at an outlet like The Conversation, for example, which I wrote about for Columbia Journalism Review last year, because, as you know, this is an ongoing problem.

What I did on this report was precisely look at the last year and to just get a sense of what solutions were proposed in 2020 because of COVID. And I will share my slides with you and you have a PDF of that. Let me go into presentation mode here. Yes, there you go. Can everybody see the slides? This is working, Christina?

[Christina Sartori] Yes, it is. For me at least. Yeah.

[Anja Schiffrin] Good. What happened was Konrad Adenauer Stiftung approached me in the summer and asked if I would like to write something about COVID and journalism. And I just thought, I don't want to write one more report about how badly things are going. I would really like to look at solutions. And also I teach, and when you work with young people you have to make sure you're not depressing them too much. I decided a few years ago, really just in all my teaching and work with younger generation to work on solutions. So it ended up being a really fun project because we were on Zoom and this... I ended up getting about five or six students volunteering to help with this report. And so it became a really great project for everybody and got people excited. So that was really nice. And the report came out in January and we're doing a series of webinars to promote it. So I will... Holger has all the information, so we'll, I'll talk a little bit more.

But we have four competition commissioners coming to talk about the Australian News Media Code, which is in the report. And we're doing something with Rhodes University to look at African perspectives. And we're also doing something tomorrow

on France and Canada and what can they teach the US. So you're very welcome to join all of those if this is a topic that interests you.

So this is the report, it's available online. There's also lots of blog posts online. If you don't feel like reading the whole thing. And you can see here's two of my students' names right there as well.

So what we did, as you know, academics love taxonomies. So the first thing we did was we took all the solutions that we were finding and we divided them into four categories. And it was Nishant Lalwani from the Luminate organisation who suggested it because he said he's seen so many ideas come across his desk and they really fall into four categories.

So the first thing that happened very quickly after the pandemic started was more private funding. So all over the world, different private entities started handing out emergency grants to journalists. And this was everything from Google News Initiative, Facebook, different foundations, different groups like the Women's Media Foundation or the Pulitzer Center. Lots and lots of people just handed out, the South African Journalists Union handed out small grants to just keep people kind of going.

And then the other thing was that a lot of governments started giving emergency grants as well, so Canada, Australia, many of the European countries and even Singapore handed out money as well to journalists. Now, we couldn't find any such grants in other parts of Asia or in Latin America. The grants that we found in Latin America really just came from Google and Facebook or from private foundations. We didn't see government giving out... maybe they did, but we didn't find it.

And then what happened was there were also a whole bunch of broader initiatives that came up. So Canada started a whole system, which we'll talk more about, for supporting media. Australia didn't just have the Bargaining Code, but they also... a group of philanthropists got together to buy the non-Murdoch newswire to save it from failure because they felt the newswires provide the first, rawest news and so lots of small local papers depend on the newswires. In the US, we're going to talk about a huge number of initiatives in the US, and for the first time in years, more interest in government support, which has always been a no-no in the United States.

Then we saw a couple of folks in Africa who said, "Listen, we need to really help African newspapers come to grips with digital and we have to fund some sort of digital transition." And there were two proposals. Mark Kapchanga in Kenya interviewed editors there and then Ntibinyane Ntibinyane from Botswana. So they both wrote proposals. And I know that Ntibinyane is trying to get foundation funding. I'm not sure where Mark is. I haven't heard from him in a few weeks.

And then the thing that I got very excited about was the Australian News Media Code. As you know, there's been sort of attempts for years to try to get Facebook and Google to pay and, you know, a very formalised way for the news that they use or distribute, and I think you'll know more about Germany, but my understanding is that France, Germany and Spain all tried to use copyright law and didn't really succeed, although I think France, Google has now said, this fall, that they will pay

copyright in France, from what I understand. And so we spent quite a bit of time. Kylie wrote the section on the Australian News Media Code, and I will fill you in on that as well.

So basically, to sum up, what Australia decided to do was require Google and Facebook to negotiate with the publishers for the price of news. And if they can't reach a negotiation price, they have to go into binding arbitration.

There were other aspects also of this bill, of this law, such as Google and Facebook having to give advance warning before they make changes to the distribution algorithm. As you know, when Facebook changed the algorithm in Bolivia, Cambodia and a few other countries a few years ago, their distribution suddenly collapsed overnight and they had no warning. So this bill also said you've got to let people know in advance. I'm not sure if it made it [into the] final version.

So one of the things that people don't understand about how the arbitration works is it's what we call "baseball" arbitration or "last offer" arbitration. Apologies if you know all about it. But basically they use it a lot in Australia for many kinds of negotiations. And the idea is you get... the two sides have to come really close. So it's not like, you know, when you... I used to cover teacher strikes in the US, the union would say if they wanted $80,000 a year, the school board would say they're willing to pay $40,000 a year and then they meet in the middle at 60. The way baseball arbitration works is everybody comes in with their best last offer and the mediator chooses one or the other. And so this forces people to be reasonable and it's used widely.

So this law, Google and Facebook, you probably saw, threatened to pull out all their news from these countries, from Australia. But after all, despite all the threats, it was passed with some revisions by Australian parliament very recently, I think last month. And Canada said they're going to copy it. UK is considering it, and France is obviously trying, again, to use copyright laws.

So on April 15th, we're going to have the German, the UK, the Australian and the South African competition commissioners come and speak about the law and whether they're going to copy it and how they're going to adapt it. So that might be super interesting for you. And the sort of philosophy from the competition ministry is that there are power imbalances between journalists and news outlets and Google and Facebook, and this has to be corrected.

Now, the reason this has been so controversial is everybody's really worried that Rupert Murdoch is going to get a ton of money and the smaller outlets won't. So a lot of the people in Australia that are against the law are against it for that reason. And, you know, one of the things I'm wondering and I'd like to ask the competition commissioners is could it be modified in some way to help the smaller outlets? You know, could you perhaps add two percent on and then give it to local news or something like that? So I know that in Australia they were thinking of other ways to help local outlets, including this saving the newswire.

The other thing that I just started thinking about this week is I think The Guardian Australia is going to start getting a lot of money. And it suddenly occurred to me,

my goodness, if around the world Google and Facebook start giving lots of revenue to all these news outlets, they will end up pretty much capturing these outlets. They will have a lot of control over them. So I think we have to think very hard about how you make sure... Google and Facebook resisted this, but they may decide it's a great way to basically effectively buy shares in outlets all over the world for very little money. So, so, you know, that's something I think that we're going to really need to think about as we think about this.

Yeah. So one of the critiques in the US against the Australian News Media Code is Free Press, which was founded by the scholar Robert McChesney. And Tim Karr has been very upset about this and has been saying, you know, taking an old media business model and wedding it to a disinformation engine isn't going to help anybody really. All this does is just enabling the old guard. And what Free Press has been saying for the last couple of years is there should be a tax on microtargeted advertising because that's a public bad, so let's tax it. Let's take that money and create a public interest media endowment and then use that to support local news.

So Victor Pickard and Tim Karr have been writing about this a lot. If you want more information, I did a book review of Victor Pickard's new book last summer at The Nation. So you can find that if you don't want to read the whole book. And they believe in other ideas, like, you know, a $50 tax credit for newspaper subscriptions and funding from state governments for local news. And they've actually, they got that into New Jersey law, but I don't think they ever actually allocated money for it.

So those are the kinds of alternatives that are coming from the left in the US. And, you know, they're all good ideas. So I'm trying to give you a little sense of sort of the conversations around the world and then you can sort of review and pursue what you're more interested in.

In the US, we have two new pieces of legislation. One is the Local Journalism Sustainability Act, which gives direct subsidies for news subscribers, local journalists and small business advertisers.

And then the Journalism Competition and Preservation Act would allow news publishers to work together to establish distribution and payment deals. And you remember that in America, under antitrust law, there has not been a safe harbour for the newspapers to negotiate together. And you may remember the fight with Hachette and Amazon. Do you remember? Where they said that if the book publishers got together to fight again... to negotiate with Amazon, that would violate antitrust provisions.

So what we have is the small newspapers are basically supporting the Kirkpatrick law. And then I think the big media groups are basically supporting the Competition and Preservation Act.

I would strongly recommend, if you want to know details about the debate in the US, Rick Edmonds from the Nieman Foundation – actually no, he's now with Poynter – has been covering this in detail for years. And I called him to get some background to prepare for this webinar. And he was very generous and happy to talk. So I bet if you wanted to talk to him, you could.

Of course, in the US, as you know, everybody has this sort of fantasy that government doesn't get involved with journalism, shouldn't get involved with journalism. And it has been very worried about getting government involved with paying for journalism. And then you have people like Pickard, McChesney, my colleague Richard John, who have done all this historical research on postal subsidies and they come back and say, "Listen, for the last, you know, in the 18th century, the government was subsidising postal service for magazines and newspapers. So stop complaining and saying that we never took government money."

Christina, your hand was up. Did you have a question?

Then some of the other... is this interesting, what's going on in the US, can you nod if you want me to keep going? OK, great. So another thing that's happening is Senator Brian Schatz has said we should really have a commission on looking and understanding what's going on and PEN America, which has done their own books, and yeah, we must have a commission and lots of people like me don't think we need another commission. We already know the problem. Let's just do something about the problem.

Steve Waldman has, is just bundling, bursting with ideas. So he's coming to speak to us tomorrow at 11:00 a.m. New York time. And I think you should come. The man has so many good ideas all the time. So, one of them is, he started this thing called Report from America, which is sending journalists out to red states and under-covered areas to tell stories about local communities. He's also proposed something called the Replanting Fund, which would take, we have a lot of local newspapers that have been bought by hedge funds. And the idea is to take it away, buy it cheaply because they've been leveraged with debt and then turn them into nonprofits and anchor them in the community.

This kind of thing Victor Pickard wants, like maybe the local university or bundle it with a radio station or turn over to communities and sort of really revitalise community journalism.

Steve also believes in a lot of things like tax breaks, tax vouchers, [policy?] and a whole bunch of other... He just this week proposed something called I think News Match, Holger asked me about this, where communities could decide how to allocate federal funds to support journalism. So Steve is a journalist, not an economist. And so one of the reasons we're having the panel tomorrow is to bring Julia Cagé, who's from Sciences Po, who is an economist, to actually talk with him and help him understand some of these options. And Ed Greenspan, spon, from Canada, because, you know, Americans are so arrogant, we never look at anybody else. But all over the world, people have been solving this problem for years. So it's really important for us to try to get some of those experts from Europe, you know, to come and help the Americans, I think.

So these are all, so these are some of the debates around this. And again, Rick Edmonds has reviewed all of them in a piece he wrote last fall. And then there's also a faction that would like to see federal government advertising to local news outlets.

And I know that was something Holger talked to, asked me about. We can talk about that more. I think I have a little bit more, another slide on this later.

So here's what Canada did in 2019. So they announced C$600 million over five years. There's a labour tax credit to help cover labour. Nonprofits can apply for charitable status, right, which is another idea in the US, like let's let these groups turn into nonprofits. There are tax credits for digital news subscriptions. And then the debate in Canada has been, how do you know who's really a journalism organisation or not, you know, what are the definitions? So that's been a big discussion. And some of the smaller outlets are worried about that. You know, it could end up that a lot of people, a lot of one-man bands will just say, "Hey, I'm a journalist," and get a little money. But, you know, if they're producing quality content, that may not be a terrible thing. I think some of you may know about my book that looked at journalism in the 19th century, investigative journalism in the 19th century. And there were a lot of guys, men really, usually, with newsletters, and they just did campaigns, like look at E. D. Morel and the fight against King Leopold in the Congo. A lot of people just started a newsletter for ten years, had a campaign and now that's sort of like what a lot of journalism is today as well.

I mean, I have a bias towards the big public service broadcasters and the big outlets like The New York Times. But I think, you know, we have to recognise there's a lot of small people doing that stuff, sorry this looks funny.

So here's some more things that are happening in Canada. Canadian media have been saying that print jobs are at risk, which is true everywhere, as Christina Sartori pointed out. A proposal from a conservative senator to amend the Copyright Act. So that sounds a little bit like what Australia is doing. I don't know enough about it. And then, yeah, the heritage minister is saying they're going to copy what Australia is doing, so this is some of the updates in Canada.

South Africa: I just went to a really interesting webinar last week with Harry Dugmore, who has just put out a new report, which I strongly recommend, called "Thinking Globally, Acting Locally". And what's so interesting about Harry is he's now teaching in Australia, so he's kind of a great bridge between what's happening in Australia and what could happen in South Africa and looking at the different policies. And so one debate is zero-rating, which is just taking away, I think, tax on a lot of outlets. You would know more about that than me because I don't really know about it. But what Dugmore is saying is things like when you take away the VAT from a newspaper, making it a little cheaper doesn't necessarily help circulation, that that's not, that the price of the newspaper is not necessarily what's stopping people in southern Africa from looking at news. So what he's more worried about is the cost of data. He thinks that needs to fall in order for people to get access to good to quality news.

And so I think if you're interested in South Africa, this would be something to look at. And then definitely our April 15th, when we have the – oh I see there's stuff in the chat, I can take a look – when we have our event on April 15th, you'll be able to talk to or hear from the South African competition minister.

But I would say a lot of the conversations that we're having in the US, that you're having in Germany, that Australia is having, they're definitely happening, having in South Africa, too. I think the union was very worried about job loss and outlets closing. And, of course, they've had terrible capture in Gupta, so they're thinking very much about how to save their media and what should the next steps be.

Now, I just want to remind everybody about the International Fund for Public Interest Media. Does this ring a bell? Because I feel like a lot of people don't really know about it. Anyone heard of it? Nod if yes. OK, so what happened here was a few years ago – oh and by the way, I should mention that Steve Waldman is getting funding from the Democracy Fund, which is part of Omidyar, and Luminate is funding *this* project and that was part of Omidyar, too, so that's who the big philanthropists are in this space. Open Society Foundation – I'm on their board – has been doing a lot to support smaller outlets, or ICIJ, but hasn't been funding these sort of large policy, you know, more structural, systemic fixes. They've been going sort of... a lot of donors, I think historically supported, you know, a couple of global muckrakers in each country, some of the brave individuals. But these are more aimed at systemic fixes. And so Omidyar Network has really been the biggest funder for that.

So this idea was Mark Nelson from the Center of International Media Assistance, which is, I don't know what its German equivalent would be, maybe like Deutsche Welle Akademie or something, it's yeah, but it's funded... when you guys used to have GTZ doing a lot of your media work, so they get a lot of money from USAID and they do a lot of work on media development in the Global South. And then you've got James Deane from BBC Media Action and they pretty much came up with this idea, with Maha Taki, that we should have like a huge billion dollar fund, a bit like the Global AIDS Fund, and it would give money to journalism and journalism institutions in the Global South. And so they put together a proposal, they got some funding from Luminate and I think that they were really hoping that when Chrystia Freeland became the foreign minister of Canada and there were some friendly noises from the UK, I think they were hoping that the UK and Canada would agree to earmark a whole lot of their foreign aid over to this fund to support media.

You know, their view is there's billions of dollars going to foreign aid each year. Why not give some of it to media? So I thought it was a really great idea and I've been trying to help them a little bit because I feel like the world is so desperate right now in journalism, like we really need to go for big, bold solutions. I don't, I'm not, you know, it's fine to raise $20 million to help some bloggers in Latin America, like, great, I love that. But actually, let's try to raise billions, you know, so and really do structural, systemic [indistinct].

So anyway, so far, they have not gotten a lot of money, but they've set up a secretariat and they hired Sheetal Vyas, she started like three weeks ago, or two months ago probably now, as the executive director. And they hired I can't remember who, like McKinsey or somebody, to do a big feasibility study that would look at everything, you know, how would you give out the money? What would the operations be like? Who are the different stakeholders? And they've already gotten an advisory board. So they're ticking along and waiting for, like a big, big donor. So that's something for you to have on your radar.

You asked a little bit about some other things, Holger. And of course, we all think about the Nordics all the time because it seems like they're the people that got it right. So I was reading about Denmark a little bit. And, you know, what I was finding out was that basically they believe that there won't be... the whole idea is diversity of views and you're just not going to get diversity in such a small market. So the government has to help. And from what I was reading, pretty much every form of media receives some sort of subsidy in Norway.

And then France, obviously, there's loads of subsidies and they prop up all kinds of things. I think at one point, France even had a law that news kiosks had to have at least 30 different magazines to have a licence to be a kiosk. I know. I love that stuff, of course. I know people always complain, "Well, you know, it's so terrible, in France they're propping up all these things. Nobody's innovating. They're stifling innovation." But like, actually, for me, that's not so bad. What is the alternative?

Now, I know that in Norway a few years ago, a friend of mine, actually a friend of my father's, was asked to write this white paper about how they should reform their system of media support because they do a lot, like, you know, like Denmark, to promote diversity. Unfortunately, the annoying thing about all the Norwegian statements and publications is they're all in Norwegian. Nothing gets translated into English. So I got some, like, links for government websites and I haven't had time to put on the Google Translate, but I know they were talking about things a few years ago, like price supports for newspapers. I don't think that went through. So I'm not sure if they'd actually updated their media system. But maybe, you know, maybe some of you speak Norwegian or have better contacts in Norway than I do, I just know a couple of people there.

Now government advertising is a super interesting topic. And about seven or eight years ago, I think this is my last slide, the government of Bhutan asked me to write a report for them because as part of their transition to democracy they had decided they would give ads to local newspapers in Bhutan. And the problem was, immediately they got something like 15 daily newspapers in Thimphu that didn't really circulate outside of Thimphu, and they were really wondering what to do. So with my students, we did this really detailed look at government advertising, who screwed it up, how to do it well, and there were so many interesting examples. I think in the 1990s, Australia and Argentina both did a horrible job and really used, nakedly used government advertising to just sort of buy support from, you know, from journalists. And of course, it turned out that places like Canada developed, I think India, developed really good policies to make sure that government advertising didn't have influence. And the... probably Germany has the same kinds of rules. I don't know if the US does, but things like making sure there's an intermediary actually doing the allocation, you know, that it's not the government office directly doing it, making sure that the advertising isn't done too close to the elections and making a big distinction between advertising that says things like, "You can go get your COVID vaccine next week in, you know, whatever the hos... the public hospital" versus, "Isn't the mayor wonderful? These are all the right things he's been doing". And, you know, basically a campaign ad disguised as government advertising.

So that's been a question all over the place. There's a bit of economics, literature, capture by advertising. And there's been some good examples of, you know, how to make sure that you can do government advertising without [these].

[Christina Sartori] The possibilities you showed like tax breaks or making the big tech companies pay like in Australia or governments helping journalism. Is there one way you would tell, you would say that this is the best. So is there one ideal solution or?

[Anja Schiffrin] Yeah, I mean, I think a lot of things have to happen, right? I mean, I think that the, you know, Google and Facebook have to kick in more money. And what they've been doing is giving grants to outlets that they choose. And that's not enough. And unfortunately, I think they've really gotten too much influence. You know, they fund so much research now. They fund so many conferences. It's that everybody now has gotten some money from them and has been influenced by them. So I would like to see, what I would really like to see is maybe not so much the direct negotiations that are happening in places like Australia, but, you know, paying their taxes and then creating some sort of endowment and then allocating that. So I love all these endowment ideas.

[Christina Sartori] So you would think that it might not be ideal to follow the Australian way? It was very hot...it was a lot discussed here in the media because it was a very tough confrontation. So do you think we should start differently?

[Anja Schiffrin] I mean, I think the problem is yeah, no, I think they have to pay. But I think it might be better for journalism if they don't pay the outlets directly, like it goes into a fund that's then allocated. You know, I really kind of, I don't mind how... I think the main thing is to get the money from the tech companies without spoiling journalism. So whether it's copyright or whether it's a tax on microtargeting or whether it's paying for the news that they use, like, I don't mind how we get the money, but we need the money. And we have to make sure that they don't just buy off all the outlets. Right. By giving it to them directly. So I think that's one thing that has to happen. And then I do think also there should be funding for local news.

And but what I was going to say is some countries are really set up to disperse funds and some aren't, right? So you have countries like Denmark and Norway that kind of know how to do this or Canada. And then in the US, I don't think, we don't have a government agency that would make decisions about getting, distributing funding. So I think it's going to have to vary in different countries around the world based on what their infrastructure is. So that's one thing. And then I do think that it's incredibly important, if you have a public broadcaster, you've got to support your public broadcaster. You know, everybody likes to criticise the BBC. But honestly, what is the alternative? So I think we have high quality institutions like The New York Times or the BBC or, you know, Deutsche Welle, like you've got to help them. It's really stupid to think that the market is going to solve this and let those people just go out and compete. Don't... it's like the Joni Mitchell song, right? They pay paradise and put up a parking lot, until it's gone like you, don't you think? You know, you think the BBC's bad, wait till it goes away. So I just, you know, I'd like to... so I think that, you know, I think that's really important. And then I do think all of those things like providing subscriptions or vouchers or tax checkoffs, I'm not an

expert, but, you know, this is something I'm trying to educate myself more on in as well. And I see more questions in the chat.

[Christina Sartori] Yeah. Do you want to answer the second one or do you want me to read it? It's regarding the university partnerships between universities and journalism as a potential model. And how do you see this editing help regarding the well, the free work of a journalist, the independence? Is there a contradiction?

[Anja Schiffrin] I think so. So The Conversation. And so what I'm thinking of when I think about university partnerships is I'm thinking about all the places in the world where like the local newspaper died, but there's a journalism school and those journalism students need practice writing stories and they can cover the community. So at Columbia University, you know, we have students writing about New York City. At Michigan, they have students writing about Michigan. And I think that can be really great, you know, because in many cases you're not getting news except for if you have a hyper-local site and those hyper-local sites need help and so students can really help. And the professors are fantastic because they're, the students leave after a couple of years and the professors stay so they can provide sort of institutional memory. So that, that's one aspect.

Also, when you have small outlets, sometimes the university, you know, they have office space or they can help with Internet. So in my report "Publishing for Peanuts", we have a list like in Latin America, there's a whole lot of places where the journalism outlets, the small local ones, have sort of nestled inside of a university. So when it goes well, it goes well. When it goes badly, it goes badly. You know, you have some investigative journalists sitting in some very traditional university that doesn't want it, that's a problem. But sometimes, you know, we're looking in the US at things like can the universities and the local radio, can the local library, can the local university sort of provide a home or resources? You know, there's a new Japanese investigative site and they were sort of incubated within a university.

So that's one model. Now, The Conversation is interesting because a lot of startups sort of thought, "OK, we're going to get started and then the newspaper will syndicate or reprint what we publish." And then, like in the Pacific Northwest of the US, when the newspapers started to die in Washington State or Oregon, the journalist who started the Investigate North West website, which, by the way, is a guy called Robert Maclure, so he's the great-great-great grandson of the famous Maclure muckraker, he had nowhere to sell his stories. So The Conversation started the other way round, which is get the universities to pay.

[Christina Sartori] But do you think it's better to go both ways, like getting funding by the government, getting funding by foundation or by the big tech companies or whatever, getting money to support journalism, or do newspapers or digital newspapers or whatever have to find a structure to survive them, themselves? What would you think? Is both possible?

[Anja Schiffrin] So I think that the latter is un... I think if we want quality, we're going to have to help. You know, right? If we believe that quality information is a

public good, then it's kind of fantasy land to think it can stand on its own two feet. I never really bought that. You know, when the Internet started and everyone said we just have to find a new model, I never really bought that. I'm a great believer in funding and subsidies, I think it's essential.

So, yeah, the problem with The Conversation, though, what I was going to say is that, because it's funded by the universities, they choose, they end up choosing articles from the universities that help pay. So they get the first crack. So that's a little bit... So that's one thing. Yes. Sorry, I'm just looking at...

[Christina Sartori] The last question, maybe you could, I think we only have time for one more, it's do you think there's enough coordination between journalism support initiatives around the world? So we are cooperating more?

[Anja Schiffrin] Yeah. So first of all, to be frank, obviously I believe the state has to get involved in this. Absolutely no question. Thank you, Beatrice Dernbach, for pointing about press freedom. Then... it's a nightmare in the US, what has happened. And I hope that with Biden now we're going to see a totally different atmosphere and that will have a global impact because obviously the way Trump attacked journalism meant that Modi and Bolsonaro and everyone else felt they could do it, too. There's also been what's called a coded crackdown and then the final response. No, I don't think there's enough coordination. I think it's a real problem. And I think part of what James Deane and Nishant and Mark Nelson have been trying to do is get people under this big umbrella. And then also, I hope you know, Mira Milosevic at the Global Forum for Media Development in Brussels, they also organise, they have an email list and regular meetings so that different groups can actually talk to each other. But obviously, one of the big problems is lack of coordination, especially like the US foundations. Everybody likes to do their own thing, cultivate their own turf and not collaborate enough. And we need collaboration. Yeah. So great. Other questions?

[Christina Sartori] Do you think that it's important for us as journalists to start a debate in the public, in the society, especially if we are asking for government funding or tax breaks or anything like this? And how should we do this? How should we start this? Do you have any ideas?

[Anja Schiffrin] Well, I think one of the things that people have been doing all over the place, and UNESCO is working on this a lot, is, you know, explaining why it's so important to have quality information. And I think in the US, when Trump got elected in 2016, see, like this is what happens. We have a country where half the know, half the people watch Fox and they believe all this garbage. And so I think everybody suddenly said, "Oh, my God, you know, we now have half the Republican men refusing to get vaccinated because they watch all this crap on TV all the time and they see all this garbage on Facebook." So I think all of us now feel like, "We told you so. We told you quality information was important." It really, really is. And you better help pay for it. Totally.

I mean, it's an emergency out there, right, we've seen what the toxic stuff does. I personally, I would like to learn from you. I mean, I would like to know what you all think about NetzDG, for example. Yeah. I think that it would be amazing if the UN

could get involved. I don't know that they will. I think, like, look at who's running UNESCO. Look at those countries that are involved there. These are not your free speech advocates. But I love, I think that there has been, on the disinformation, there's been a lot of new ideas just the last nine months from places like the Transatlantic Working Group or Reporters Without Borders about sort of, you know, supranational international coordination. I think that's a great idea. But if... go ahead.

[Christina Sartori] No, I'm just, I'm sorry, I think we are running late, we are running out of time because you have to switch [indistinct] time and I want to have to... I want to thank you for your talk, for this broad overview, for answering all the questions in this brief time. Thank you very much. Thanks to all the participants.

And I'd like to, you mentioned at the beginning in your talk, to mention a webinar tomorrow, which is called "Supporting Journalism. What we Can Learn from Other Countries" at the same time, like today, you will find the link in the chat and, yeah, well, I also have to say that in April there will be the next SciCon session and then May 12th there will be the SciCon workshop. So thank you very much again, Professor Schiffrin. And we are looking forward to your report reading it. No, to your book. I'm sorry.

[Anja Schiffrin] Thank you. And please send me information about Germany, if you've got anything in English, and [indistinct] introduce you to any of the people I mentioned in my lecture, I'm happy to do that.

[Christina Sartori] Thank you, thanks for the offer.

[Anja Schiffrin] Pleasure.

[Christina Sartori] Thank you. Thank you. Goodbye.

[Anja Schiffrin] Thank you.