

U.S. freedom of press is restricted



Robert Overmann

Each year, Reporters Without Borders, an international non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO), ranks nations around the world by their relative respect for media freedom. According to en.rsf.org, Reporters Without Borders' website, "Many criteria are considered, ranging from legislation to violence against journalists."

One would think the United States ranks reasonably well among its Western democratic peers, thanks to the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which states "Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of ... the press." Wrong. The U.S. is ranked 32 by Reporters Without Borders. Adjacent to the U.S. are Suriname, number 31, and Lithuania, number 33. Topping the list is Finland at number one, the Netherlands at number two and Norway at number three.

The United States' pitiable position at 32 is no arbitrary designation. As recent justification for the U.S.'s ranking, Reporters Without Borders lists the disproportionately long 35 year prison term of U.S. Army Private Bradley Manning for releasing classified intelligence documents, the 105-year jail sentence of Vanity Fair journalist Barrett Brown for investigating U.S. intelligence practices and the Obama administration's abuse of the 1917 Espionage Act. Even these grave threats to U.S. freedom of information are dwarfed by the Justice Department's controversial seizing of Associated Press journalists' phone records this past May.

Perhaps most worrying, by my own observation, is the deliberate apathy of many Americans. Not only does it seem many Americans are uninformed about U.S. press restrictions, but it seems many of them don't view press freedom as especially important. According to a Sept. 2002 American Journalism Review article, freedom of the press consistently is the least popular First Amendment right — 42 percent of Americans say the press has too much freedom. According to the same source, "more than four in 10 said newspapers should not be allowed to freely criticize the U.S. military strategy and performance," and "more than four in 10 said they would limit the academic freedom of professors and bar criticism of government policies." At least 40 percent of Americans support limiting freedom of expression — that's scary.

Freedom of the press literally is the freedom to spread information to the masses. A nation that curbs freedom of the press is a nation without true liberty — citizens who are oblivious to the true goings-on of their world farther than a few miles away are citizens without power. To correct injustices, broaden civil liberties or challenge an oppressive government, citizens first must be aware of a situation. Freedom to distribute information to the masses is crucial to these aims.

The power of the press has been recognized by the world's greatest leaders.

Napoleon Bonaparte, Emperor of France from 1804 to 1815 said, "A journalist is a grumbler, a censurer, a giver of advice, a regent of sovereigns, a tutor of nations. Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets."

Mahatma Gandhi, pacifist and leader of India's independence movement, said "I am a journalist myself and shall appeal to fellow journalists to realize their responsibility, to carry on their work, with no idea other than that of upholding the truth."

Winston Churchill, former prime minister of Great Britain, claimed, "A free press is the unsleeping guardian of every other right that free men prize — it is the most dangerous foe of tyranny."

Dictators and leaders of democratic societies alike recognize the power of the press — a state that bars its citizenry from judging state actions in a free environment is a state afraid of its own people. If the U.S. is to truly remain "the land of the free," we must allow the press to fulfill its crucial role toward that ideal.

Robert Overmann is a senior English major from Cape Girardeau, Mo.

Contact

To submit corrections or to contact the editor, please email index.editor@gmail.com, call us at 660-785-4449 or submit a letter via our website tmn.truman.edu/theindex.

Letter to the Editor

Faculty at Truman State have dismal pay.

The latest figures on faculty salaries reported by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) illustrate the dismal ranking of the Truman faculty among their peers, a ranking with which we are all too familiar. Administrative salaries have increased substantially in recent years, but faculty and staff salaries remain among the lowest in the nation.

Nationwide, Truman faculty salaries average in the bottom 17 percent. Among public universities in Missouri, only Lincoln University — a university with open admissions — has lower salaries; the other state universities are in line with salaries in our geographic region.

The salary data is available at <http://www.aaup.org/report/heres-news-annual-report-economic-status-profession-2012-13>.

Truman State University strives for and often achieves excellence, an excellence which is reliant upon an outstanding, fully dedicated faculty. In the coming months our University will install a new methodology for the evaluation of Critical Thinking. It will be the responsibility of the faculty to conduct this work, and to realize the new goals set forth by our Administration.

We call on Administration to rectify the gross inequities of faculty compensation and the recent steep decline in faculty resources. If we are going to be asked to continue Truman's excellence, and to do the required work of preparing our institution for the future, it will be necessary that we be compensated in accordance with the expectations that are put upon us.

We call on our fellow faculty members to make their voices heard by the Administration, and by those in

Jefferson City responsible for funding higher education. We ask our colleagues to take full measure of their worth, and to refuse to be underestimated and undercompensated. A first step could be to become a member of the Truman Chapter of AAUP.

Affordability is a component of our mission, but so is superior academic achievement. Students, the Administration, and the State of Missouri must realize that a dedicated and well-motivated faculty is the central component of any institution of higher learning that wishes to keep its reputation of excellence.

The officers of Truman Chapter of AAUP
 President: Marc Rice
 Vice-President: Betty McLane-Iles
 Treasurer: Kathryn Brammall
 Secretary: Wolfgang Hoeschele

Cartoon

By Megan Archer



Knowledge is valuable



John Riti

Confucius once said, "Real knowledge is to know the extent of one's ignorance." If this Chinese philosopher's words ring true, then I guess I'm pretty knowledgeable, since I know for a fact how ignorant I am.

When I speak of my ignorance, I'm not necessarily saying I'm uneducated. I've always worked hard at school and been satisfied with my level of learning. I feel intellectually stimulated here, and I believe most Truman State students would say the same.

When I talk about myself being ignorant, I'm talking about my character flaw to be content with learning only what I'm taught. I don't seek knowledge as often as I should. I don't know how many things of this world work. Even more guilt-inducing is the fact that I'm so fortunate to live during an age when answers to so many questions are readily available. We are not doing enough with the information we're given.

I remember watching the opening ceremonies of the 2012 London Olympics. Amid the many athletes and celebrities paraded out during the ceremonies, Sir Tim Berners-Lee was

paid a lengthy tribute. I didn't know it at the time, but this English scientist is credited as the inventor of the World Wide Web. What was surprising was the NBC hosts of the program didn't seem to know who he was either, even jokingly encouraging viewers just to Google his name.

When Lord Voldemort parachuted into the stadium or the Spice Girls rolled in, no introduction or context was needed. Yet this inventor and pioneer of computer science that has impacted millions was a strange face who, unbeknownst to me, has influenced my everyday life. Why wasn't I even remotely aware of this man's existence? What else in the world am I left in the dark about?

I remember this moment because it's a perfect example of not-so-blissful ignorance. I realized while I'm an educated and full-functioning intellectual, I still know so little in a world bursting at the seams with information. It made me realize I shouldn't be content to accept things without wanting to know their history, their function or the extent of their impact. I don't mean to speak for everyone when I say this — perhaps you knew Berners-Lee and cheered when he walked out — but I believe most people can relate to the feeling of unawareness. We can't know everything of this world, but the quest for knowledge should be a daily mission for us.

The quest to always keep learning is a tricky one, though. The wealth of information out there means while it's possible to explore more, it's just as possible to get distracted and thrown

off course. Wikipedia is one of my most visited websites and often leads me on an endless trail of clicking through one page after another.

This is a habit I can improve on, though. Perhaps instead of absorbing Lana Del Rey's biography or reading about the different families in "Game of Thrones." I can read about how the Internet actually works, or why Egypt has been in the news so much lately, or what people are saying about global warming these days.

Even activities as simple as following thought-provoking media outlets via Twitter can be an easy way to broaden your horizons. One click on a page like NPR or The Atlantic provides easy access to great stories that will help you learn more. For our generation, so much is just a click away if we take initiative.

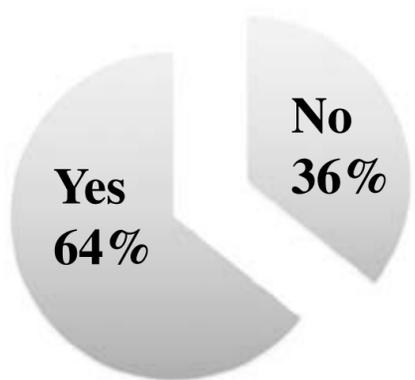
One might think I'm being naïve. We all have different definitions of what knowledge is, what constitutes learning, and what one should seek throughout life. Some might value experience instead of knowledge or vice versa. Regardless, if someone can take even a few moments out of their day to learn about, or simply ponder, the workings of this world, I think nothing but good can come of that. It's something I know I want to improve on.

And yes, I did have to Google that Confucius quote. Shout-out to Sir Tim Berners-Lee!

John Riti is a senior English major from St. Louis, Mo.

Web Poll

Have you visited the renovated dining hall in Centennial Hall?



Out of 14 votes.

Editorial Policy

The Index is published Thursdays during the school year by students at Truman State University, Kirksville, MO 63501. The first copy is free, and additional copies cost 50 cents each. The production offices are located in Barnett Hall. We can be reached by phone at 660-785-4449. The Index is a designated public forum, and content of the Index is the responsibility of the Index staff. The editor in chief consults with the staff and adviser but ultimately is responsible for all decisions. Opinions of Index columnists are not necessarily representative of the opinions of the staff or the newspaper. Our View editorials represent the view of the Editorial Board through a majority vote. The Editorial Board consists of the Editor-in-Chief, managing editor and opinions editor. The Index reserves the right to edit submitted material because of space limitations, repetitive subject matter, libelous content or any other reason the editor in chief deems appropriate. Submitted material includes advertisements and letters to the editor.

Letters Policy

The Index welcomes letters to the editor from the University community. Letters to the editor are due by noon the Monday before publication and become property of the Index. Submissions are subject to editing, must contain a well-developed theme and cannot exceed 500 words except at the discretion of the Editorial Board. Letters containing personal attacks will not be published. All letters to the editor must be typed, double-spaced, signed by at least one individual and include a phone number for verification. They must be submitted by e-mail to index.opinionseditor@gmail.com or on our website at <http://tmn.truman.edu/theindex>. Include the words "letter to the editor" in the subject line of the e-mail. The Index does not publish anonymous letters to the editor. No individual may submit more than one letter a week.

Advertising Policy

For up-to-date information on current rates or to inquire about the availability of classified ads in the Index, contact our advertising department at 785-4319. Our fax number is 785-7601, or you can e-mail us at tsu.indexads@gmail.com.