I think that the CNN World Report is the coolest thing we do. I think it’s better than CNN itself. Ted Turner thought of CNN and that was a great idea. And then he thought of the World Report, and that was an even better idea. That’s my opinion. The criticism was, “You big fat white Western guys in the United States, you got your news networks, you’re out there telling the world what the world is, what’s going on. And here we are, the developing countries, we don’t have a lot of technology, we don’t have a lot of money. We never get a chance to portray ourselves in front of the world, so how do we ever get an even break?” Ted said, “OK, come on down. I’m going to invite you up to my electronic podium a couple times a day, couple times a week, and I’m going to put you on TV and you can say anything you want. I’m not going to edit it, I’m not going to have anything to do with the content, you decide what you want to put on TV and we’ll just introduce it. We’ll say, “Ladies and gentlemen, here’s the World Report. Here’s the stuff that people sent in. Look at this.” You get a report in from Pyongyang, people are up there sending in stories about the great rice harvest, you know, and they go completely against what you might be hearing someplace else, but, who knows? That’s their side of the story.

Stephen Cassidy
Senior International Assignment Editor, CNN

3

The World Report Factor

If Marshall McLuhan’s global village exists, its capital is the CNN headquarters in Atlanta.1

World Report was not just an act of do-goodism, but an innovation that the company badly needed. CNN was expanding internationally. It needed to build bridges to every country in the world to gain access to content and to market its products. It needed to change its own corporate and organizational culture to insure that its staff had the professional and social skills to operate in an international environment.

The practice of putting non-standard news sources onto CNN air began before World Report, according to Henry Schuster, senior executive producer for CNN and one of the original producers of CNN World Report. Because the company was working to create a global newsgathering operation on a shoestring budget, CNN sought out stories from broadcasters in places where it had no bureaus or readily available correspondents. During the Communist crackdown in Poland, CNN excerpted Polish TV newscasts, and during the Falklands War, material from Argentine television.

World Report is the institutionalization of the practice of putting nontraditional perspectives onto CNN air. That practice has rewarded CNN with some high-profile, if controversial, scoops, according to Turner;

We never would have been allowed to stay in Iraq during the Iraqi war if it hadn't been for World Report. We've gotten a lot of access as a result of our making a real effort to having people from other countries and other news organizations feel comfortable about us. We've got a lot of access to world leaders and so forth, and then, allowed to be behind the lines and allowed to stay in circumstances where other news organizations weren't allowed to. Partly that was the case that we'd been allowed because so many world leaders were watching us when there's a conflict anywhere in the world, or anything controversial, where people, where leaders need to get their point across. Like Saddam Hussein did. At least we gave him some access during that war. We gave the Iraqis access that they otherwise would not have gotten if CNN wasn't there, because basically we believe that everyone has a right to be heard.2

Schuster underscored the advantage World Report gave CNN in gaining access to Iraq, and the impact that airing Iraqi perspectives had in proving that CNN did, indeed, practice an open-door policy:

World Report helped us reach a lot of places and win a lot of colleagues—I won't say friends—in some diverse places. We had a relationship with folks at Iraqi television before the Persian Gulf War. We were very actively trying to get them to contribute to World Report. We were getting regular contributions from Iran; we wanted to get contributions from Iraq. They had been here [in Atlanta] during the early World Report contributor conferences. That gave us some degree of respect and entrée. Even now, when CNN is a lot larger, to some we may seem something of a monolith, these people know that they can still get their pieces on, get their side of the story told, get the story told the way they want it told.3

Tom Johnson, president and CEO of the CNN news group, has argued that this effort to embrace such a wide array of perspectives is unprecedented:

I know of no other news organization, no other company in the information business, that makes such an effort to reach out. Especially to reach out to those media people who continue to be influenced by their governments. We know they cannot freely talk about politics, but they are able to cover areas like sports or areas like culture or features. Isn't it better to have a partial look into these really highly diverse nations of the world and give them an opportunity to convey information about so much that is not political?4

According to Newsweek media critic Jonathan Alter,5 World Report accomplishes what Turner hoped it would

provide television viewers around the world with the opportunity to see other countries as they see themselves. CNN World Report gives the world's broadcasters a global forum from which to report the news as they see it, to the rest of the world. The World Report staff does not exercise editorial control over content and airs all contributions. Participating broadcasters gain worldwide exposure in CNN and CNN's shared audience of more than 170 million pay TV households. In exchange for submitting reports, contributors receive rights free of charge to rebroadcast material from CNN World Report as they wish.6

When Stuart Loory created World Report in 1987, he had hoped that contributors' work would be highly visible and integrated into CNN's conventional news programs;

I always thought the CNN World Report contributors were the beginning of CNN worldwide news service. My thought there was that in addition to the reports that all of these people were contributing, basically free of charge as far as CNN was concerned, from time to time [they could be asked by CNN to do special reports for which they would be paid.7

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2 Ted Turner (vice chairman, Time Warner Inc.), interview (December 1996). Peter Arnett, who remained in Baghdad for CNN during the Gulf War, discounted the importance of World Report per se, but he told the authors that Iraqi authorities allowed CNN to stay in Iraq because of the network's willingness to give Iraqi President Saddam Hussein access to CNN air. Peter Arnett, interview (January 1992).

3 Henry Schuster (senior executive producer, CNN), interview (August 1996).

4 Tom Johnson (CEO/president, CNN), interview (December 1996).


[These reports] would appear not in the World Report, but would appear in other CNN programs.7

Loory’s original vision has yet to be realized, for only rarely does a World Report news package get into the “run-of-network” pool from which every CNN producer can draw stories. But that should not be taken as a measure of the program’s impact on conventional CNN news programs. Its primary value to the network lies in the relationships with other broadcasters, according to Eli Flournoy, an assignment editor on the CNN International Desk and a former intern in the World Report unit. These contacts can, at times, lead directly to expanded coverage of international events that otherwise would get little play.

A dramatic example of this was CNN’s unprecedented coverage of the Hajj, the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, in 1996. CNN received permission from the Saudi government to downlink the live camera pictures of millions of Muslim pilgrims in Mecca praying in unison. On the phone with CNN to provide live commentary was Abdul Abu-Khudair, a reporter/anchor for Saudi TV’s Channel 2 and a contributor to World Report. CNN executives had debated whether Abu-Khudair should be put on CNN air, knowing he likely would not mention possible negative incidents such as expected demonstration from the Iranians. However, CNN news managers understood that Saudi television had a unique ability to cover this story, which is inextricably linked to the nation’s religion and culture. Saudi television had an ongoing relationship with CNN through World Report, and the feed service—which is similar to the Vatican’s television coverage of the Pope at mass—provided the only way CNN viewers could see the event.

CNN’s acceptance and airing of Saudi TV’s coverage illustrates how World Report relationships influenced the extent to which CNN was able to cover an aspect of international society. And similar stories abound, according to Flournoy. A search of the CNN video archives for file footage of North Korean President Kim Il-Sung produced no pictures to accompany the CNN reports about his death. Flournoy knew that North Korea had been an intermittent contributor to World Report. He found footage of Kim Il-Sung in the separately maintained World Report library and used it as the visual component of the story that was aired on CNN’s domestic and international networks. Kim Norgaard, a former World Report assignment editor now working on the CNN International Desk, had a similar experience:

There was a plane crash in some Norwegian islands up north which are mainly populated by Russians. But we had no video. I wondered if Norway had ever filed a World Report piece from there. So I ran up to World Report, found a tape and we had file pictures we could use to show people what the islands looked like.

The South China Morning Post in 1993 noted that China Central Television contributed a 90-second story to World Report on the welfare of three prominent Tiananmen activists, Wang Juntai, Chen Ziming, and Wang Dan, including heretofore unseen video of the three dissidents.8

World Report also has helped CNN provide news coverage of less remote locales as well. Researchers at Ohio University, under a grant from the Canadian government, examined media images of Canada in U.S. newspapers and magazines, as well as on the U.S. network television news programs. The findings, published in Media Images of Canada,9 demonstrate what many Canadians have suspected all along: their neighbors to the south rarely learn about Canada through the U.S. media:

One would not suspect from the coverage that Canada is the leading trading partner of the U.S. Recent major issues such as separatism and the environment simply have not gotten adequate coverage in the U.S. media. The study also points out that Japan gets far more coverage than Canada—four times as much in some media. This applies to trade and

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7 Stuart Loory (former executive producer, World Report), interview (October 1996).
economic coverage, and the average U.S. media user can only assume that trade with Japan must be far more important and far greater than our trade with Canada.\textsuperscript{10}

CNN provided database printouts of Canadian stories appearing on the network during 1990 and 1991, and made available video copies of CNN's \textit{PrimeTime} (8 P.M. Eastern time) newscast.\textsuperscript{11} Not surprisingly, the researchers discovered that the 24-hour news network's coverage of Canada far exceeded that of any U.S. broadcast network. What was surprising to both the researchers and CNN news managers was that the vast majority of the Canadian stories were collected by Canadian journalists and aired on the \textit{World Report} program. Without the \textit{World Report} stories contributed by Canadian journalists, CNN's coverage of Canada was barely average, with 25 reports collected and produced by CNN newsgatherers in 1990—only 16 of which appeared in its \textit{PrimeTime} newscast. But when \textit{World Report} contributions were included in the study, CNN's coverage of Canada jumped to a total of 366 news items aired, an average of about one story per day—far exceeding what the other broadcast media had to offer.

News reports contributed to \textit{World Report} occasionally make their way into other CNN programs—usually either in the form of stock video that is unavailable from other video services, or as part of other feature programs, such as CNN \textit{Newsroom}, aimed at students and teachers. But this potential never has been fully realized, partly by design. \textit{World Report} packages should be seen as distinct from other CNN reporting. That is why they are aired on a special program with clarifying lead-ins that tell viewers that these are perspectives, according to Will King, in charge of CNN's International Desk.

The distinction is partly a function of \textit{World Report}'s place within the institutional structure of CNN; it is not a part of CNN International per se but rather of CNN's Features department. Yet \textit{World Report} is a daily part of CNN's programming schedule—to

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{11} When the study was done, the Vanderbilt Network News Archives included only ABC, CBS, and NBC newscasts. CNN newscasts now are available through the archive.

a greater extent than on CNN's U.S. service. The Sunday program takes up three hours of CNN International's weekend feed, and four hours of the domestic weekend programming.\textsuperscript{12} In each of these programming slots, \textit{World Report} material is contained within the parameters of the \textit{World Report} program. In King's view, having \textit{World Report}'s contributors become regular CNN or CNNI newsgathering agents would violate the true intent of \textit{World Report}. Practical problems have occurred when \textit{World Report} contributors and CNN reporters sought the same interview to put on CNN air. An example was recalled former \textit{World Report} executive producer Nancy Peckenham;

Egypt TV would tell the president they are requesting an interview for CNN and, true, it was on CNN, but that was Egyptian TV. So when [CNN reporters] came in to make a request for the president, they would say, "Oh you have already talked to so and so." It gave confusion in the field sometimes when understandably people working for CNN would be confused by the difference between \textit{World Report} and CNN reports.\textsuperscript{13}

Despite the potential for confusion, King has seen \textit{World Report} contributors as important assets for the International Desk at CNN, mainly because they can help assignment editors become aware of—and get to access to—important stories;

\textit{World Report} contacts are beneficial to us in breaking news. These are people who know us. Have an allegiance to us. Typically they are willing to provide guidance to a breaking story. A lead to follow up on. To do a phone report for us.\textsuperscript{14}

He cited the example of a border dispute in Cyprus in which several people were killed. \textit{World Report} contributors from both north and south Cyprus did an important job of telling viewers about the situation from their unique point of view, King said. Tom Johnson

\textsuperscript{12} On CNNI, one of the two shows is a two-hour program; the other show repeats the first hour of the two-hour program. On CNN's U.S. service, the two-hour show is televised twice, for a total of four hours.

\textsuperscript{13} Nancy Peckenham (former executive producer, \textit{World Report}), interview (November 1996).

\textsuperscript{14} Will King (managing editor, CNN International Desk), interview (December 1996).
frequently cites ways the Turner organization has benefitted from these arrangements. Through *World Report*, CNN was able to give these local news stations the means to tell their side of the story to a larger audience, to the benefit of that station and CNN.

*World Report* has enabled CNN to establish trust throughout the world. It has enabled CNN to build relationships with broadcasters in all the many countries which we serve and it has clearly enabled the broadcasters of the world to have their reports seen by a global audience uncensored, so that their voices, their cultures, their economies, the special news of their individual cities and areas can be better understood by people around the planet.\(^\text{15}\)

The result of these relationships is the expansion of CNN's "family," according to Johnson.

By that I mean, while not every one of the [contributing] stations...perhaps operates by the exact same standards of independence that can be practiced in countries with greater press freedoms, it has enabled CNN to broaden its reach.\(^\text{16}\)

**International Professional Program**

*World Report* contributors, including those from both sides of the longstanding Cyprus conflict, have spent time at CNN Center in Atlanta, meeting with the CNN staff firsthand, either through the contributors' conferences or via the company's International Professional Program, which four times each year offers *World Report* contributors the opportunity to participate in an intensive six weeks of training. Since the IPP started in 1989, more than 200 journalists, media producers and managers from more than 100 news organizations have participated, interacting with the highest levels of CNN management and being assigned to work with CNN departments of their choice.

"[The IPP] was another brainchild of Ted's," according to Lou Curles, director of international protocol for TBS/CNN. Curles—fondly referred to as "Mama Lou" by many of the program's participants—joined CNN during *World Report*’s first year (1987) and has organized most of the IPP sessions over the years:

We started that first session in October, 1989, starting a twelve-week program, which we later reduced to six weeks. We now do four sessions a year and have managed about 25 of these since that time... We have tried to select someone from each corner of the earth and to have someone represent each country at least once a year. The IPP participants must have at least three years of experience. It is not an internship program. It is for seasoned journalists who are *World Report* contributors to come here to improve their skills.\(^\text{17}\)

IPP sessions take up 24 weeks out of each year—meaning that for nearly one out of every two weeks during the year CNN is engaged in providing training for contributors. Participants spend time discussing journalism with CNN news executives from every part of the company, including senior managers. Such interactions can make a powerful impact, according to one IPP participant, Simone Duarte from TV Globo:

Tom Johnson sat at a table with us and said: "Tell me what you think of CNN," and he really listened. And I think the owner of Globo, I never have been with him. In this way I was very impressed that Ted Turner was sitting with me, or Tom Johnson. Not because it was Ted Turner and Jane Fonda or Tom Johnson, but because they are listening to me.\(^\text{18}\)

IPP participants also can work shifts on the assignment desk, or contribute to CNN’s product in their own unique way during their stay in Atlanta. One such instance was recalled by *World Report* producer Susan Winé:

Nigeria’s MST sent us a story about body carvings, and the writer at the time, Karen Leggett, who was this NPR reporter freelancing for us, was, like, “Nigerian body carvings?” And I said, “Oh, you need more information for the anchor intro? It just so happens that I know a Nigerian with body carvings who's sitting at the desk right around the corner. Her name is Biola [Odunewu]. Let me introduce you.” And so Karen

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\(^{15}\) Johnson, interview (December 1996).

\(^{16}\) Ibid.

\(^{17}\) Lou Curles (director of international protocol, TBS/CNN), interview (December 1996).

\(^{18}\) Simone Duarte (foreign editor, TV Globo), interview (October 1996).
Leggett and Biola from Nigeria were able to sit down and talk about the importance of body carvings.\textsuperscript{19}

Such exchanges create powerful bonds at the institutional and personal level, according to CNN president and chief executive officer Tom Johnson;

There are many graduates of the training programs that CNN has run since 1989 ... [who] are today in the management and the leadership of television stations throughout the world. There are even some of the World Report contributors who [now] are part of the CNN staff.\textsuperscript{20}

For newsgathering, Johnson noted that World Report has expanded the eyes and ears of CNN in places where we otherwise could not have reached with our own reporters. And I think maybe the most important part is that it has enriched our programming by giving contributors and IPP staffs, as part of this whole family, the opportunity to convey to us what they are all about, to convey to our editors, producers, and staff their individual stories in a way that we will have a better understanding [of where they come from] than we would have had had we sent Western-educated personnel into these areas and asked them to do research.\textsuperscript{21}

The ties that bind CNN to the IPP participants grow strong over the six-week period they spend together in Atlanta, according to Curles;

In my layman's language, I like to say that it has made a global family. As with any family, you stay together, you talk together. Be it to help your station or to help CNN. As you have heard [people say] many times, when we need information from somewhere, it is very easy to pick up the phone and call a World Report contributor or a former participant in the IPP.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} Susan Winé (producer, World Report), interview (September 1996).

\textsuperscript{20} Johnson, interview (December 1996).

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{22} Curles, interview (December 1996).

\textsuperscript{23} Loory, interview (October 1996). Loory: "The thing that I had in mind in doing those conferences ... was the New York Herald Tribune Forum, which I attended in my youth."
Russia's Communist Party Gennady Zuganov via satellite; Prime Minister of Israel Shimon Peres via satellite; former Mali head of state Amandou Toumani Toure; former U.S. President Jimmy Carter; American social and political figure Reverend Jesse Jackson; Co-Chairman of the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games Andrew Young); and other expert speakers and panelists (In Search of Excellence author Tom Peters; Ohio University Cold War historian John Gaddis; CNN's Beijing bureau chief Andrea Koppel; its Jerusalem bureau chief, Walter Rogers; international correspondent Christiane Amanpour; Charlayne Hunter-Gault; talk show host Larry King; and anchors Jonathan Mann, Bernard Shaw, and Judy Woodruff).

But the contributors conferences are not comprised solely of high-minded seminars and soul-stirring speeches. At the request of conference attendees at previous conferences, as well as of the contributors who are informally consulted during the planning stage, conference organizers have begun including hands-on workshops led by CNN professionals.24 Even more evident at the conference in recent years is the presence at the conference of the Turner International Sales staff, which began holding its annual planning meetings in Atlanta to coincide with the spring contributors conferences. As one contributor described it:

You get introduced to TBS news service for example. [The Turner company] goes beyond CNN. Then you get to know one of the CNN reporters you have seen on TV and you shake hands with him and you get in touch with him [so] that would make you more open to have CNN in your service.25

An unstated theme of the conference, as with previous World Report contributors conferences, was CNN's pervasive role as the

world's media "host" for global affairs, a role noted by the Houston Chronicle's TV critic, Ann Hodges, following the 1994 conference, which included an appearance by U.S. President Bill Clinton on the Global Forum program that CNN hosted from the Carter Center in Atlanta:

It's a measure of the global clout of Turner's first international news service that not only Clinton is here, but [also] Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and FPO Chairman Yasser Arafat also appeared together via satellite for a similar town meeting. Today, town meeting stars will be President F. W. de Klerk and President-elect Nelson Mandela, together on satellite from South Africa.26

Madeleine Albright, then U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and one of the speakers at the 1994 Contributors Conference, compared it to "a town hall of the global village":

I haven't seen this many people from foreign countries in one room since the last U.N. general assembly. A convention for news junkies from around the world. By week's end, I expect all our problems to be solved.27

Given the lineup of speakers willing to attend, the gathering is a publicity windfall for CNN. And it is compelling evidence that CNN's internationalization agenda helps build relationships, puts names and faces with telephone voices and contributed stories, and insures that international affiliates and World Report contributors see CNN as accessible.28 For CNN's vice president, Chris Cramer, who joined the network in 1996 after a long career with the BBC, the conference revealed an underlying truth:

Part of the World Report, which is the unspoken part of it, is the extent to which it enhances our profile internationally, and gathers and develops for us around the [world] tens of thousands of journalists who have great affection for CNN, and my god, have we reaped the benefits of that over the years, as you will observe [at the conferences]. I've only been

24 CNN Voice and Dialect Consultant Judith Sullivan and CNN International Anchor Sonia Ruskell conducted a voice workshop; CNN Executive Producer David Bernknopf offered "tips on how to improve scripts and overcome overwriting." CNN Photographer Roger Herr demonstrated video techniques "to capture more powerful images and record more compelling sound." (Conference brochure, 1996).
27 Ibid.
28 Wine, interview (September, 1996).
to one and I couldn't believe the level of good will . . . the
level of excitement among very senior journalistic managers
who had actually come to Atlanta for World Report. I found
that really quite emotional. And I'm not talking about young
reporters who reported for Ralph [Wengen]. I mean very sen-
ior broadcast executives who found themselves in this kind
of building. It was an extraordinary experience. A rather
expensive revival meeting.29

Leading the revival meeting every year is Ted Turner himself,
who devotes considerable attention to the conference and its
attendees. Turner attends panel sessions and many of the conference
social events, is available to anyone who wants to talk to him or
have a photograph taken, and always offers the contributors his
own brand of public speaking that entertains while admonishing
his audience to do a better job of saving the earth:

We're in the position to save the planet and save the human
race. We're all communicators for peace, saving the envi-
ronment and rights for women. We can release the military
[funding] to deal with family planning [and the] environ-
ment.30

Media star and wife Jane Fonda also attends conference events and
even serves as occasional panel moderator. World Report contri-
butors' access to Turner and top CNN executives during the annual
contributors conference probably is more than most CNN employ-
ees have during the year. The effect can be humbling, according to
Fernando Jauregui, the World Report contributor from CMT-TV
Venezuela.

When you see such a high-level manager staying with you in
one of the poorest segments of CNN, you know that despite
how much money they manage or do not manage, they
value the segment, because they are giving a whole week of
their time. That's a guy that might make a fortune with one
decision in one hour, but he stays most of the time with you
for five days. That's why I think that not only helps to

introduce CNN products, but also makes you understand or
value the work you are doing for the World Report, because
they value it.31

And the payoff for CNN is real, according to Turner.

What goes around comes around. If you put out evil, evil's
going to come back to you. The Bible says, what you sow is
what you're going to reap. And the World Report and the IPP
program—that was my idea too—[helped us] because there
was a great resistance to us out there in the world. [They
were saying] "What's going on here? We don't want satellite
television coming from the United States." People didn't
know me. They didn't know what we were up to. They sus-
ppected the worst, that this was going to be some kind of im-
perialism.32

Equally important, according to Johnson, is the impact the con-
ferences can have on CNN personnel.

I think our staff came away [from the World Report confer-
ce] with a better understanding of some of the issues in
that very complicated Balkan area once we brought to the
conference representatives of the Serbs, representatives of the
Croats, so that we could meet them firsthand. I think it was
important having President Clinton and Christiane Aman-
pour debate the issue. With Christiane in Sarajevo and Presi-
dent Clinton here in Atlanta, and having Madeleine Albright
addressing the group, I think all of us came away with a
better understanding of the complexities, the difficulties of
the issues that face all sides, that face the peace negotiators.33

29 Chris Cramer (vice president, CNN International), interview (September 1996).
30 Turner's comments at the 1994 Contributors Conference in Atlanta, quoted in
Ann Hodges, "It's Unanimous: CNN a Major Player; Broadcasters from Around
31 Jauregui, interview (November 1996).
32 Turner, interview (December 1996).
33 Johnson, interview (December 1996). During the Global Forum program with
U.S. President Bill Clinton, Amanpour, who appeared live by satellite from Sarai-
jevo, suggested in pointed questions to Clinton that his administration's policy on
 Bosnia had been inconsistent. Amanpour: "Do you not think that the constant
flip-flop of your administration on the issue of Bosnia sets a very dangerous
precedent and would lead people . . . to take you less seriously than you would
like to be taken?" Clinton: "No, but speeches like that may make them take me
less seriously than I'd like to be taken. There have been no constant flip-flops,
Madam." "Global Forum with President Clinton," The Carter Center's Day Chapel,
Atlanta (3 May 1994).
The influence of World Report extends beyond simple, if important, “awareness” issues. CNN Senior Producer Henry Schuster contends that CNN and CNN International have steadily adopted an approach to news writing that he and his former colleagues on the World Report staff pioneered—that is, avoiding automatic judgments that an American-centric news staff would tend to make. He said viewers can recognize that attention to detail and cultural sensitivity when they listen to the writing on CNN or notice the program content on CNN International.

In a sense, we were trying to blaze that trail. When I came to [World Report], you would hear people write: “Sri Lanka, a country the size of Rhode Island...” For the audience we were aiming at there was just no frame of reference to know where Rhode Island was. We viewed our audience as international. We had a U.S. audience. We realized that a great deal of our U.S. audience, at least from the mail that we were getting, was ethically based. By that, I mean you had people watching who had a connection to Serbia, or they were Indian or Pakistani. These people were watching, so we wanted a newscast where the writing was free of U.S.-based metaphors, things which would have been incomprehensible to an international audience. For example, we started using the metric system. We had to refer to things in kilograms primarily. If someone made reference in their piece to an amount of currency, we would make reference to that currency and the U.S. dollar. We developed our own writing style—Sibi Darrow (now an international correspondent), Lori Waffenschmidt (now producer of weekend features) and myself. I wouldn’t call it a value-free writing style. I don’t think that is ever possible. But we did make a conscious effort to not let the news reflect our biases.34

While such influences are more obvious to past and present World Report staffers than to others at CNN, World Report Executive Producer Ralph Wenge said he now is confident that “at least [senior management pays] attention to what we’re doing now, because they realize we play a relevant role.”35 And certainly, high profile managers such as Tom Johnson, Eason Jordan, and Chris

Cramer readily acknowledge the increasing relevance to CNN of World Report. As the program adapts to the CNN environment in which it operates, it gradually has taken on some of the more western characteristics of conventional CNN news, making it more likely to appeal to the conventional television news crowd working behind the scenes at CNN. Wenge, who pushed for going live even prior to being named executive producer in 1995 (following a long association with the program as one of its main anchors), argued that taking the program to a live format would keep it from being preempted whenever a major news story broke.

CNN World Report is different, but it is a news program, and we’ve become more hard news. We still take the features, we still take the light stories, we still talk about the cultures of the different countries, but it is also a hard news vehicle from [the contributors’] perspectives. Not from the perspectives of the correspondents that CNN sends around the world. But from the journalists who actually live in those regions of the world where the stories are taking place. And I think, yes, it gives it a much more strategic location in the whole network. The rest of the network does tend to look at us a lot more differently now. They take us more seriously, and that’s something I’ve been striving for ever since I’ve started this, [and] I think we are gaining more respect. Now we have other parts of the company saying, “Gee, can we use a certain story? Can we use one of your contributors to enhance the story we’re covering, because we don’t have a bureau there?” It’s part of the growing process of the whole program.36

Ironically, while the influence of CNN’s live news format is increasingly evident on World Report, the evolution of World Report into something more CNN-like will likely, in the end, assure that its influence on the network will deepen. What may not have been well understood, even by Ted Turner, was how World Report would help internationalize company personnel, both in terms of recruiting new employees and in terms of retooling the existing staff. World Report provided the network with a needed global outlook by challenging conventional (i.e., “American”) ways of doing news and forcing a reorientation of the network’s own culture, thereby sharpening the cross-cultural competencies of

34 Schuster, interview (August 1996).
35 Ralph Wenge (executive producer, World Report), interview (September 1996).
36 Ibid.
Turner’s staff. Thus, what was thought to be an overly-generous concession to on-air diversity at CNN and a contribution to a two-way flow of news internationally—which in fact it was—has also helped CNN reposition itself to more effectively operate in a global market.

Scott Herron, a *World Report* producer, originally joined CNN after a long career in newspapers—including the largest newspaper in Hungary—because of the network’s international outlook:

> Whenever I would be traveling abroad and would come back I would always be shocked by network news, by how parochial it is, how almost stridently right-wing. Once I get settled in it doesn’t sound that way. But when I come back to the country my immediate thought is how [nationalistic it is].

After working as a writer for CNN International for five years, Herron was lured to the *World Report* in part because of *World Report’s* fundamentally different approach to news.

In the years since joining CNN in 1991, Herron has noted the effect on the people *World Report* brings under the network’s umbrella:

> If you just look at this building, it’s filled with people from all over the world. We just had an intern, a Russian. She had some sort of fellowship, and she came down here to intern. She just got hired as a VJ [video journalist]. Another guy from Curacao just got hired as a VJ. So those people are all coming into our organization. Eventually those people are going to be producers and editors, and it’s going to change the culturalization of the show. Now, obviously they’ve come into this culture; it’s a two-way street. That’s how educational programs enter into foreign policy, because you want them to start thinking your way. But as those people are absorbed into the workplace here, they will make a difference in the workplace itself.38

*World Report* colleagues are perhaps the best examples of this phenomenon, according to Herron. Octavia Nasr has served both as a World Report assignment editor and as anchor: “Here’s someone who speaks French, Arabic and English. She’s Lebanese.” World Report assignment editor Andrew Henstock is Scottish with a Ph.D. in French, while assignment editor Claudia Chang speaks Chinese and comes from German-Chinese ancestry. Debra Daugherty, an assignment editor and anchor, lived in Brazil and Panama and speaks Portuguese and Spanish. According to Daugherty, “many of us come to the network as regionalists. At World Report, we evolve into internationalists.”39

*World Report’s* effect on CNN personnel extends beyond the World Report unit, however, according to Schuster:

> Imagine Ralitsa [Vassileva] who comes from Bulgaria anchoring not only *World Report* but a weekly newscast from CNN International. TV is often about anchors themselves. That puts a very different face on the international newscast. With a mix of staff, global and local hires in the late ’80s and early ’90s, people like Maria Ressa, Ashish Ray, we were doing some in Korea as well. Ted felt, for the same reasons he had about *World Report*, that they were plugged into the country, that they would report without the biases of an outsider.40

Members of the Atlanta-based *World Report* staff who have moved on to other parts of the news company no doubt take with them both a familiarity with the program and a greater understanding of its basic mission. As Norgaard noted, his *World Report* experience brings another dimension to his work on CNN’s International Desk:

> It is always helpful now that I am on the International Desk to know there are people in these countries whom I can call at the TV station, names of those who can help with breaking news or whom I can interview on the phone. It all depends on how open their media laws are. Some (contributors) would like to be helpful for background but don’t want to be on the air. But they will point me in the right direction.41

38 Ibid.
40 Schuster, interview (August 1996).
41 Kim Norgaard (assignment editor, CNN International Desk), interview (October 1996).
Some notable former staff members who moved into other positions within CNN include executive producers Stuart Loory (to become a CNN vice president specializing in international projects), Donna Mastrangelo (to become executive producer for CNN International and later to join the network's Millennium project) and Nancy Peckham (to become executive producer for CNN's New York bureau), as well as a host of former producers (e.g., Henry Schuster, Lori Waffenschmidt, and Janet Kolodzy), assignment editors, writers, and tape editors who have gone on to other CNN positions.

The World Report Paradox

Claudia Chang, who joined CNN World Report as an assignment editor in January 1996, has as her primary responsibility Asian contributors. One of the countries in her "beat" is the People's Republic of China, where World Report is helping CNN gain access to developing world markets, according to Chang:

More and more contributors are from stations being established in regional China, away from the CCTV bureaus. Shanghai, one of the financial capitals in China, now has five or six local stations. Some of these are developing client relationships with Turner International. They are also broadcasting parts of CNN or CNN International on their stations. Most of these stations have English news programs, in addition to their regular Chinese broadcasts. When I first moved to China, I thought these English language programs were for the benefit of Westerners or foreigners living in China. Then I learned after a time that they are for Chinese people to practice their English.

As more and more of the regional stations participate in the IPP program, they come back with a widened idea of what kind of television people around the world are exposed to. Many of the contributors I work with were initially surprised about the concept of World Report. It just seemed fantastic to them that there is no censoring going on, no editorial control.

They say, "Oh, so you don't censor anything?" More and more people are learning about World Report in China. CCTV takes two hours of World Report every week and turns it around and broadcasts it out on the local stations. CCTV is now like many of our contributors who re-flood World Report on their own station. Right now, there are about 15 million people who live in Beijing alone. As more and more people move to the city and as more and more improve their standard of economic living, the TV is one of the first things people are going to buy. The number who have direct access to CNN in their homes is small. Some see it in hotels. But the closer you get to Hong Kong, the more able Chinese citizens are in gaining access to CNN directly from the satellite.

But while the potential economic windfall from relationships created through World Report is very attractive to CNN, Johnson argued that the primary motive for creating World Report and the IPP training program is noncommercial:

I know some people search for the commercial motive here, but this is done primarily as a public service of Ted Turner and Turner Broadcasting. It was not designed to build affiliates. It was not designed to produce new subscribers. It was not designed to produce increased advertising. . . . We really are careful not to try to commercialize it. I think if we were to, it would lose much of its value. If I say it has helped us to improve our content, helped us to improve our understanding, that is all true. But we don't use World Report as some covert way to attract more business to CNN. . . . It was really designed as a public service to enable communications to flow between all these nations.

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43 Claudia Chang (assignment editor, World Report), interview (August, 1996).
44 Johnson, interview (December 1996). When the staff of the International Desk interacts with journalists from these 100 stations, they consider it a network-affiliate interaction. When the World Report staff in Atlanta interacts with those same journalists, they consider it to be a World Report-contractor interaction. This explains, at least in part, why the International Desk and the World Report staff do not always give equal credit to the contributions of World Report within the context of the network's overall programming/news gathering efforts.
Nevertheless, the practical benefits to the network of having CNN-friendly journalists in an organization such as China Central Television are obvious even to Johnson.

As I look at the composition of the International Desk and our international people, we have set up feeds directly from CCTV into CNN where it would be a World Report or IPP person that is assisting us with a press conference. It is people out there who know us, respect us, trust us and if they have a choice in assisting CNN or one of the other networks, where they don’t have this type of relationship, I think we get an added advantage from that.45

That these contacts represent every imaginable type of news organization in the world has helped the network achieve an international outlook, according to Norgaard, an international assignment editor;

It adds a lot more voices to those we have on the International Desk. It is nice in that it makes us look less like a purely Western media organization.46

The newsgathering benefits of World Report were obvious to CNN— and others—almost from the beginning. Just three years after Stuart Loory created World Report, one media critic already was calling the program "a linchpin of Turner’s renegade vision and strategy for the decade":

By allowing nations to say virtually whatever they want, Turner has become the manager of a journalistic array of disparate products and quality, and thus has forged ties that give CNN advantages in a competitive media marketplace.47

World Report already has won for CNN—and its parent company TBS—enormous international favor during its first decade, earning it distinct economic, practical, and competitive advantages as well as good will.

45 Ibid.
46 Norgaard, interview (October 1996).

Ten Years Later

Despite evidence that World Report increasingly flirts with conventionality, the fundamental premise of the program seems intact at the ten-year mark: CNN televises virtually all contributed material—without censoring or editing the report—provided it is less than two and a half minutes. And whatever concerns World Report may raise for the news purists at the network, the program has the backing of Ted Turner and key news executives, if for no other reason than it opens doors that might otherwise be closed to an American news organization. The bottom line, according to CNN Vice President Eason Jordan, is that World Report’s contribution to CNN is partly what makes the network different from other broadcast news organizations:

If you are going to think in a traditional sense, the easiest thing to do is not to do it at all. Clearly, there were some risks associated with (World Report), but Ted being the visionary that he is, saw beyond the traditional thinking, saw this could be a huge advantage for CNN in many ways that would offset any concern traditionalists might have about whether it is appropriate to air this type of material on CNN. [World Report] is always done and will be done in a way that will make it absolutely clear to viewers that the content in the World Report program and the content from World Report contributors that would air as part of CNN is simply sharing the perspective of a broadcaster. As long as you present everything properly and set up the pieces properly there is absolutely no reason to be concerned about journalistic credibility. Now, if you muddy the waters and for some reason don’t do that, of course there is greater cause for concern. Without a doubt this program has been a huge success for CNN.48

CNN’s international news managers see World Report as far more than an idle experiment or intellectual exercise. The program offers CNN a vital forum within which to exchange ideas with journalists who otherwise “would have been yelling imperialism and colonialism not so long ago,” as Richard Shaffer, who studies

48 Eason Jordan (senior vice president, CNN), interview (August 1996).
international media, has noted. These journalists now are part of CNN, bringing in news from around the world and transforming the news mix on the network.