COVERAGE OF THE PHILIPPINE TECHNOLOGY SECTOR:

STATUS, PROBLEMS, AND PROSPECTS OF THE

TECHNOLOGY BEAT IN THE PHILIPPINES

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To God Almighty

ABSTRACT

Gomez, A., & Palacios, N. (2012). Coverage of the Philippine Technology Sector: Status, Problems, and Prospects of the Technology Beat in the Philippines, Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis, University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication

This study assessed the current status of the technology beat in the Philippines as evidenced by its interaction with the Philippine technology sector. Stories on technology have become increasingly relevant especially in today's digital age, although in the local setting, the technology beat has yet to establish secure footing in Philippine journalism. Little has been done to quantify what the technology beat is, therefore the researchers felt there was still a need to look deeper into the beat and the factors that define it. The study employed a non-linear systemic model and was based on the Westley-Maclean Model of Communication. The study was concerned with the technology beat in terms of the local print and online media coverage of the different industries that make up the Philippine technology sector. In-depth interviews with technology reporters and editors, as well as representatives from different participant corporations in the local technology scene were interviewed over a period of two months. Both the technology corporations and the writers under the technology beat view the beat as thriving, while maintaining that there is still room for growth especially in terms of target audiences, writing techniques, and ethics.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The technology beat is a relatively new beat compared to other beats in Philippine journalism, with stories about science and technology only regularly making it into print after World War I (Bautista, 2003).

Stories on technology are increasingly relevant especially in today's digital age, where technological advancements have been steadily making waves in society and permeating everyday lives. Indeed, it can hardly be contested that technology's impact on society has created changes in all aspects of society.

Guevara and Roque (2010) write that technology's rampant growth is evident in the evolution of typewriters to laptops containing programs that enable users to do infinitely more than merely typing documents, of landlines to cell phones that are slowly turning into pocket computers, and of bulky machines found in arcades to home gaming consoles that require no wires and can surf the internet. They write, "Technology has been working double time and taking communication into new heights."

A plethora of blog posts and articles online can be found using the phrase, "not just for geeks anymore." Podcasts, video games, external hard drives and smart phones and tablets are just a few of the many things that fit this description particularly for the middle and upper classes.

A typical day for at least thousands of Filipinos involves checking their Facebook accounts and other social networking sites for updates even as early as the moment they wake up, checking their email accounts for correspondence regarding work or school,

texting or making calls throughout the day, and at some point perhaps playing games on their laptops or cell phones – games that are easily downloadable for free or for a low price on the internet.

This illustrates just how much technology has become a staple for today's generation, even simply on surface level.

Despite the technology beat's stories being quite pertinent, the beat is still not as widely-celebrated nor given as much prominence as stories on politics and business (Delgado & Ong, 2010).

In the local setting, the technology beat has yet to establish secure footing in Philippine journalism. Little has been done to quantify what the technology beat is. It is difficult to come across a clear-cut definition for what makes technology stories, in fact, Martin (2007) found that reporters in the Chicago Tribune saw science and technology articles as synonymous, something that she explains to be a fallacy.

While studies on other beats such as the videogame beat and science beat have been done, the researchers felt there was still a need to look deeper into the beat and the factors that define it.

The researchers explored the technological sector, specifically information technology, gaming, social media and gadgets to better understand the working relationship they have with the different publications.

B. Statement of the Problem and Objectives

The study was concerned with the technology beat in terms of the local print and online media coverage of the different industries that make up the Philippine technology

sector. It was assumed that an understanding of the relationship of the technology beat with the technology sector would yield important insights on the current state of technology journalism in the Philippines. In general, the study asked the question: What is the present state of the technology beat or technology journalism in the context of the Philippine technology sector?

General Objective

To assess the current status of the technology beat in the Philippines as evidenced by its interaction with the Philippine technology sector, so as to enumerate the problems and prospects for the beat.

Specific Objectives

1. To describe the current state of technology journalism as perceived by the Philippine technology sector (information technology, gaming, social media and gadgets).

2. To describe the current state of technology journalism as perceived by the local media.

3. To identify the news sources of local technology stories.

4. To explore the technical preparedness or technology knowledge of technology beat reporters.

5. To explore possible ethical dilemmas in the technology beat.

C. Significance of the Study

The technology beat, like the science beat, is a largely overlooked part of journalism. It often noticeably takes a backseat to other beats despite the importance of stories it covers.

Technology stories are those which usually contain information about new technologies or innovations, among others. It is important to note that topics covered by this beat are relevant to today's digital age, particularly stories on information technology, gaming, social media and gadgets.

The importance of science and technology and the awareness to it has been established time and time again. As complement "the media in general has the power to give science the prominence it deserves," therefore it "should make science and technology news more accessible to audience" (Santos, 2008).

This study attempted to probe the technology beat in its entirety, for while there have been numerous studies done on science journalism in the Philippines, less has been done with focus on the technology beat.

By delving into the nature of the relationship that exists between the technology corporations and the technology journalists in different publications, as well as by identifying problems faced and proposing recommendations for improvement and growth, this study could create greater awareness about the technology beat that could lead to developments in the field of technology journalism, and in society as a whole.

CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

It is worth noting while science and technology are often used interchangeably, or at the very least blend with each other and share similarities as far as the elements of the stories go, these two fields are not to be presumed synonymous.

G. Pascal Zachary (2011) wrote that in recent decades, technology journalism has spawned many important news and analysis stories, delving into the world of scientists, engineers, economists, inventors and entrepreneurs and bringing the information to the public.

While the technology beat is capable churning out arguably socially relevant stories, it seems it is hardly a widely-celebrated beat in journalism. Published work on the technology beat in the Philippines is a rarity compared to the other aspects of journalism, which is why the researchers seek to focus on the technological aspect to shed light on this particular beat in the Philippine context.

A. Separating technology from science journalism

Allison Martin (2007) noted in her paper entitled "Mapping the Technology Beat: Technology Reporting at the Chicago Tribune" that for many of the Tribune's reporters, science is synonymous to technology. Martin stressed, however, that this is a notion that would appall Science Technology and Society (STS) academics.

The best way to envision the two, according to Martin, is a strand of DNA where science and technology make up the two parts of the helix. You cannot have advancements in one field without having advancements in the other. However, while

science and technology have room for overlap, they are not one and the same. The two beats are covered in distinct ways with disparate goals. (Martin, 2007)

In major American newspapers, stories about technology are generally located in the business section of the newspaper whereas science stories are found in the general news section. (Martin, 2007)

The reporters interviewed by Martin classified science reporting as stories that tackle new discoveries, pure knowledge and "intrinsically interesting" findings. Stories on the application of that knowledge fell under technology journalism. These may relate to the field of economics, or to the needs of the local community of the readers. In newspaper terms, technology is "tangible, usable and directly related to administrative or economic concerns." (Martin, 2007)

Thus, Martin noted that technology journalism is more complex than the reporters recognize, as tech articles discuss a variety of themes beyond commercial application, which may include project funding, administration and research.

G. Pascal Zachary continued to describe the technology beat in greater detail in his article entitled "How to Cover Technology: An Introduction." In it, he wrote that technology journalism spans a few broad but distinct areas, and that most of these areas share a common origin in digital electronics.

According to Zachary (2011), technology journalism covers computing, software, consumer electronics and telecommunications; the Internet, "new" media and "social" media; parts of bio-medicine and biotechnology that rely heavily computational tools; some military technologies such as drones; and some parts of energy technology, especially batteries and solar cells.

B. The technology beat in the local setting

Bautista (2003) claims that both science and technology in journalism in the Philippines is fairly young compared to other countries. In Europe as well as in other developed countries, stories from these beats began as early as in the eighteenth century, whereas locally, science and technology stories rarely made it to print even after World War II.

The science as well as the technology beat has yet to secure even footing in contemporary Philippine journalism. The reasons for this are plentiful, as evidenced by several essays and previous studies conducted on broadsheets.

In recent years, science and technology reporting has been gaining recognition by way of awards given by organizations such as the Department of Science and Technology, the Philippine Press Institute and Philippine Geothermal Inc. and the Rotary Club of Manila.

While these honors are given to journalists each year, science reporting itself still faces elements that hamper its potential.

Stories from the science as well as the technology beat constantly need to compete with stories from other beats which are given a bigger priority. Unlike business and politics, science is not a priority of the press. (Delgado & Ong, 2010)

Several studies and articles have been done on science journalism, but little has been done in comparison for its sister field, technology journalism.

Delgado and Ong (2010), for example, found that the science news readers they interviewed expressed a favorable attitude toward science and scientists. According to their findings, the readers acknowledged the benefits that the public can obtain by being

reached by news on science and technology, and that they judged science articles in broadsheets as generally interesting, accurate, complete and easy to understand.

They noted, however, that science articles comprised only a small percentage of published articles in daily broadsheets in relation to all of the articles and sections. (Delgado & Ong, 2010)

In another study conducted on the Philippine Daily Inquirer and the Philippine Star, a frequency of science education and entertainment articles revealed that the number of entertainment articles published were greater than the science and education articles combined (Jadloc & Mangiduyos, 1995).

Jadloc and Mangiduyos classified the tech articles as part of science articles, as they considered topics such as astronomy, agriculture, environment, food technology, state of world science and technology, health (government's health programs, sickness or ailments, new drugs), and the scientific breakthroughs (computer technology, local computer technology, new technologies, information or communication technology, and biotechnology).

Science and technology stories constantly need to compete with stories from other beats which are given a bigger priority. Unlike business and politics, these stories are not a priority of the press. (Delgado & Ong, 2010)

Delgado and Ong (2010), after conducting their study on the science beat in broadsheets, found that most science news articles occupied only one-eighth of a page, and that these were rarely followed up or covered in the succeeding days.

Because broadsheets more or less have a fixed available space, stories about innovations often loses out to the "bigger" stories. Entwhistle (1995) wrote that because

there is no such thing as "reserved slots" in newspapers for such stories, the publications' editors judge which ones are worth publishing and which ones are not.

Yahoo! Philippines social media editor Joey Alarilla hypothesizes that the overall state of journalism is a big factor in this. Alarilla explained that while not as many newspapers have been forced to shut down completely in comparison with the United States, newspaper desks have been steadily shrinking along with the money to fund it. This influences the newspaper companies to allocate their resources to the "hard news," leaving the beats that have a niche market to the side. (Guevara & Olivier, 2010)

Guevara and Olivier (2010) wrote a dissertation on the video game beat, which like the technology beat is somewhat targeted toward a niche market and also suffers in the competition with "hard news." They maintained that as video games have been part of people's lives one way or another, its effects and are worth looking into.

For the gaming beat, Alarilla still thinks it is highly feasible – what is needed is proper training of student journalists. Alarilla said that one of the problems stems from the concept that gaming journalism is not taken seriously and is not yet defined. (Guevara and Olivier, 2010)

These statements can also apply to the technology beat.

C. Synthesis and research gap

The importance of science and technology journalism in the Philippines has been underemphasized because of several factors that impinge it. Other beats or sections in newspapers that are deemed more profitable for the news organizations have casted a

shadow on the already unheeded beat. At the grassroots, science and technology in the Philippine context has been criticized because of its backward nature.

There have been a number of studies conducted on one or two different aspects of science journalism in the Philippines. Most of the studies focused on the content of science and technology articles or on the effect of science journalism. There are also studies that examine science culture and its promotion through science journalism.

While science reporting has been and continues to be a widely-studied aspect of journalism, there seems to be a lack of quantification with focus on technology journalism. Studies that attempt to quantify technology journalism abroad are available, but the researchers have yet to come across an article describing technology journalism in the Philippine context.

There are a lot of questions to be answered in relation to the previous studies such as how Filipino reporters distinguish the boundary between science and technology, as well as what hindrances the beat faces which impede its ability to grow further as a field.

By focusing on and studying the aspects of the technology beat in depth, taking into account all the stakeholders (including the beat reporters, editors, as well as sources of technology stories) this study looked into the very nature of the beat and provided solutions to the problems it is facing, and suggested ideas for improvement.

CHAPTER III. STUDY FRAMEWORK

A. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Communication theorists have proposed new models of communication process in light of the General Systems Theory, replacing linear transmission models with systemic models. Von Bertalanffy (1968) proposed that a system is characterized by the interactions of its components and the nonlinearity of those interactions. In essence, systemic models of communication are characterized by feedback loops in which receivers could influence sources and mutual influence is possible (Baran and Davis, 2009).

The study assessed the current status of the technology beat in the Philippines as evidenced by its interaction with the Philippine technology sector. It employed a systemic model and was based on the Westley-Maclean Model of Communication. The use of a systemic model, which is nonlinear in nature and assumes that understanding one part of the model enables insight about another part, was justified by the objectives of the study which focused on probing the interaction of the local media (technology beat) with the different industries of the Philippine technology sector. Furthermore, Mcquail's Mass Communication Theory was adapted in order to expound on the *message* element of the main model.

1. *Westley-Maclean Model of Communication*

Bruce Westley and Malcolm Maclean developed their model of communication process in 1957. The model treats communication as a non-linear transmission of

information from the *Advocate* to the *Behavioral System* and vice versa, through the *Channel*. The model is also considered cyclical in nature because of the presence of a response called *Feedback*. As information is transmitted from one point to another, *Feedback* is elicited and transmitted back, and the communication process continues or repeats. Feedback is a central concept in the model as it assumes that there is interaction not just between the *Advocate* and the *Channel* or the *Channel* and the *Behavioral System*, but even between the *Advocate* and the *Behavioral System.*

The Westley-Maclean Model of Communication distinctly presents the stakeholders in technology journalism, namely, the technology sector comprised of corporations engaged in information technology, gaming, social media and gadgets that have something to say (advocate); the local print and online media, particularly the local technology beat, which functions as a means of communication to an audience (channel); and the readers of technology news (behavioral system).

Perception of the current state of technology journalism was deduced from the Philippine technology sector (advocate) and the local media (channel). All the while, keeping track of their relationship, which was carefully scrutinized so as to add essential information to a thorough description of the current state of technology journalism in the Philippines.

2. *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*

Denis McQuail (2005) proposed that mass media persists within the framework of an institution. A mass media institution refers to "the set of media organizations and activities, together with their own formal or informal rules of operation and sometimes

legal and policy requirements set by the society. These reflect the expectations of the public as a whole and of the other social institutions (such as politics, governments, law, religion and the economy)."

As an institution, media is "professional and bureaucratic in form" and has, to a certain extent, a goal that is economic. Its central activity involves "producing and distributing knowledge on behalf of those who want to communicate and in response to individual and collective demand."

McQuail's mass communication theory frames media as an institution that is affected by internal and external pressures from the media environment.

According to McQuail's Mass Communication Theory, the technology beat in local print and online media is shaped by pressures and constraints that affect the beat's performance as a whole. Technical preparedness and technology knowledge of technology beat reporters, as well as ethical dilemmas they face are influenced by internal and external factors (advertisers, political inclinations, culture, government, audience behavior, investors, owners, the Philippine technology sector and so on).

3. Integrated Framework

The entire study followed the Westley-Maclean Model of Communication. McQuail's Mass Communication Theory was also integrated into the main framework. It focused on the *Channel* element of the main model.

The Westley-Maclean model assumes three main tenets: the *Advocate*, the *Channel* and the *Behavioral System*, represented by the three boxes in Figure 1. The Advocate and the Channel are connected by double-headed arrows which depict the two-

way relationship between them, and the Channel in turn is connected to the Behavioral System by another double-headed arrow. The Advocate and the Behavioral System are also linked by arrows, one representing the feedback of the Behavioral System to the Advocate and another depicting the interaction in the reverse direction.

In this study, focus was only on the Advocate which represents the Philippine technology sector and the Channel which represents the local print and online media, particularly the local technology beat. The study drew out conclusions on the current status of the technology beat in the Philippines as evidenced by the interaction of these two elements.

The integrated McQuail's Mass Communication Theory is shown to be pointing an arrow towards the *Channel*. In McQuail's theory, a media institution or more specifically for the purposes of this study, the technology beat in local print and online media is influenced by the media environment. As the technology beat is shaped by different forces, so are the technical preparedness and technology knowledge of technology beat reporters, as well as the ethical dilemmas they face.

Figure 1. *Theoretical Framework*

Figure 2. *Conceptual Framework*

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 ┌──────────┐              ┌──────────┐
 │ Feedback │              │ Feedback │
 └──────────┘              └──────────┘

┌────────────────────┐   ┌────────────────────┐   ┌────────────────────┐
│ Philippine Technology│  │                    │  │                    │
│  Sector (information │◄─►│ Technology beat in │◄─►│  Readers of local  │
│  technology, gaming, │  │ local print and    │  │  technology news   │
│  social media and    │  │ online media       │  │                    │
│  gadgets)            │  │                    │  │                    │
└────────────────────┘   └────────────────────┘   └────────────────────┘

 ┌──────────┐              ┌──────────┐
 │ Feedback │              │ Feedback │
 └──────────┘              └──────────┘

                    ┌──────────────────────┐
                    │ Technical preparedness│
                    │  and technology       │
                    │  knowledge of         │
                    │  technology beat      │
                    │  reporters, and ethical│
                    │  dilemmas they face   │
                    │  influenced by internal│
                    │  and external factors │
                    └──────────────────────┘
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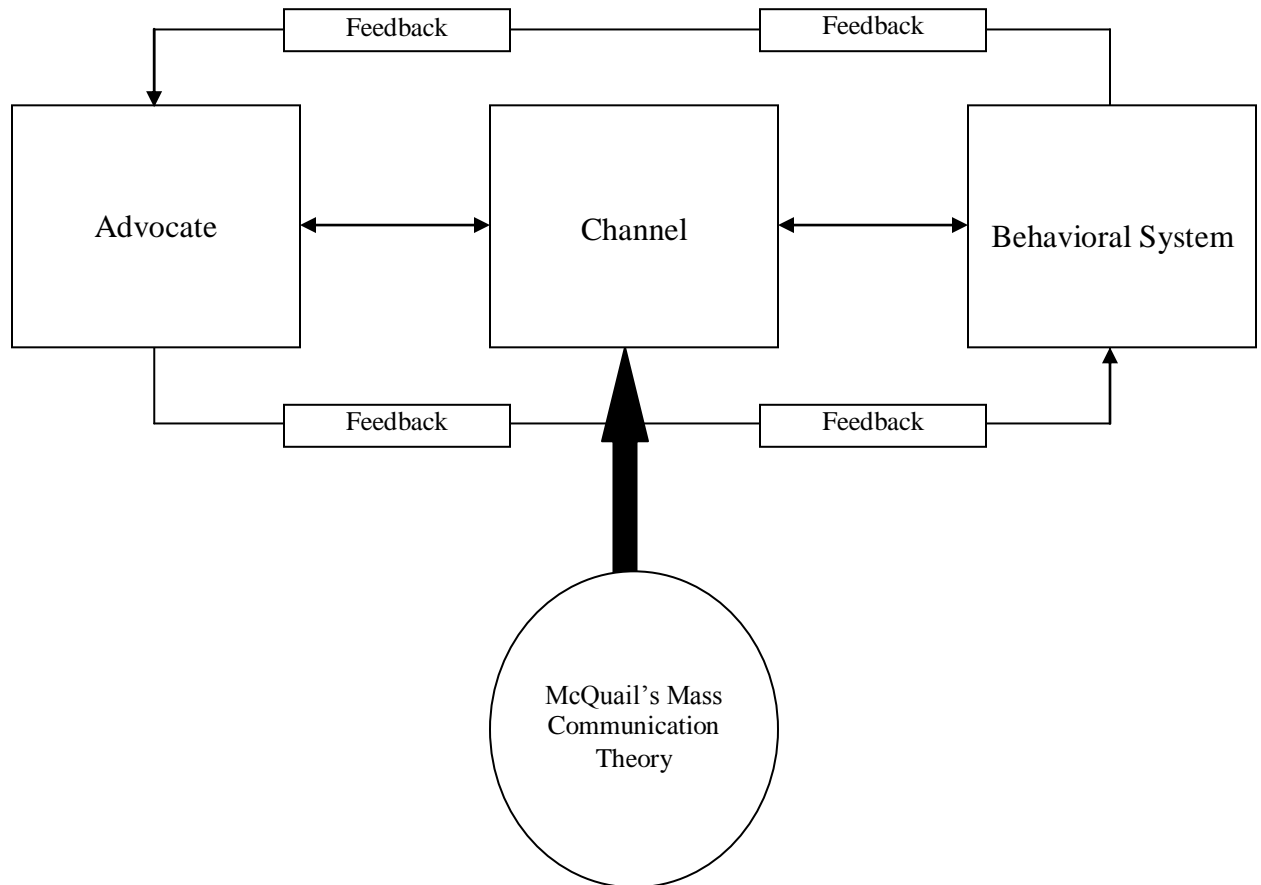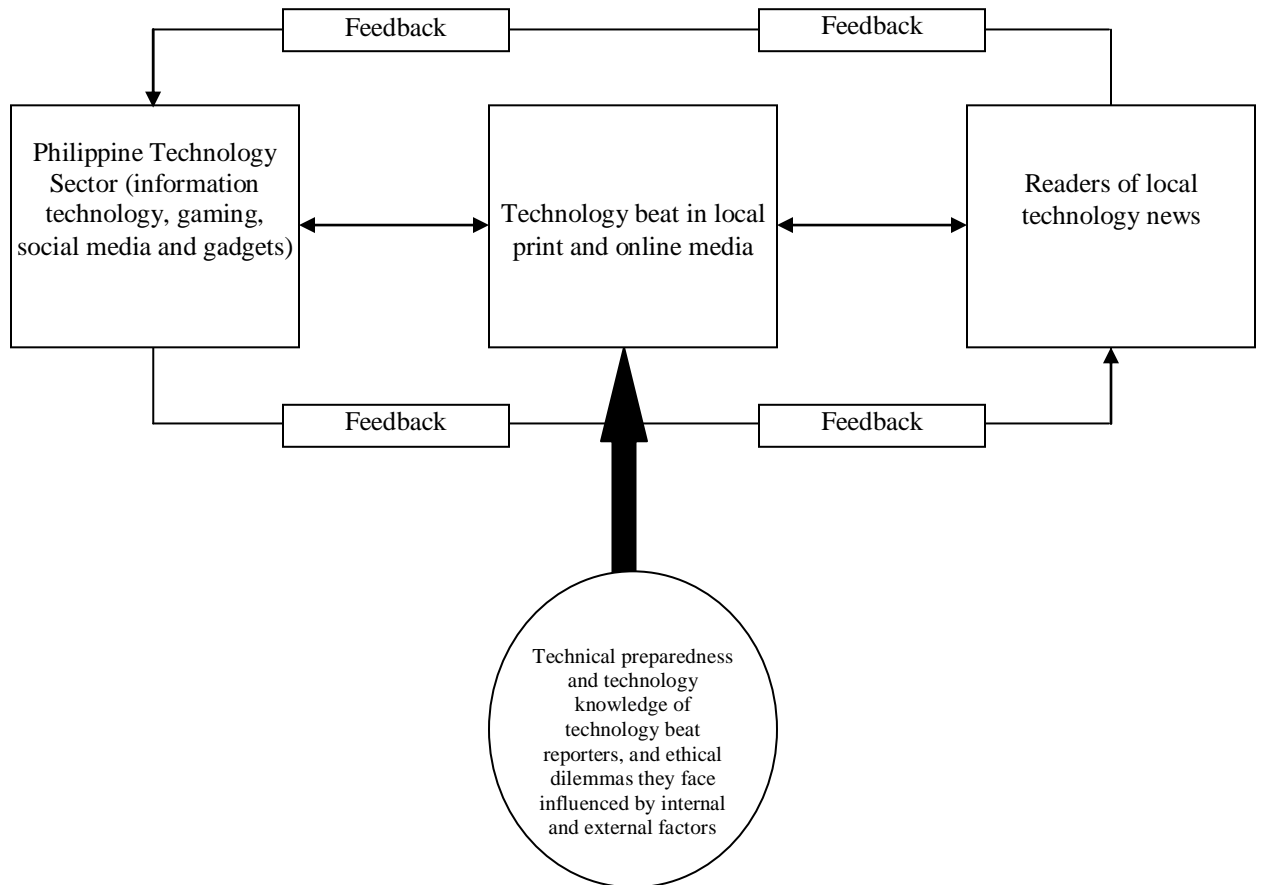## CHAPTER IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design and Methods

The research employed case study design to analyze the present status of the technology beat. Looking into corporations and publications which are representative of the technology sector made possible the understanding of the technology beat as it is grounded in Philippine print and online media reality today. The analyses of these cases were used as basis for drawing the conclusions of the study.

Because the study was specific only to technology beat, respondents were chosen via purposive sampling, such that only technology reporters and editors underwent inquiry. The technology beat is personified by its respective reporters and editors, such that by obtaining information regarding their surroundings and involvement lead to valid inferences that in turn yielded valid conclusions apropos of the beat.

Representatives from different participant corporations in the local technology scene were interviewed as well. It was necessary to study these corporations, particularly their relationship to local media, particularly the technology beat, because they are considered to be primary sources of local technology news.

In-depth interviews with each respondent were conducted to assess individual understanding of the present status of different aspects of the technology beat. The pool of data collected from different points of view lead to important insights on the concerns of this study – those are the media environment, the people involved, and the news they produce.

B. Variables and Measures

In exploring the technical preparedness or technology knowledge of beat reporters, and the ethical dilemmas they face, indicators such as educational background, specialization, training, and experience were considered. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain information addressing these variables.

The investigation of the process of technology news production included the exploration of the perception that sources of local technology stories hold for the technology beat, including their perception of the current status of technology journalism and their satisfaction with the local coverage or media attention. By determining these variables, the nature of the technology beat was exposed allowing an assessment of its current state. In-depth interviews were also employed to tackle these variables.

C. Research Instrument

Guide questions and significant points for the in-depth interviews conducted with technology reporters and editors are as follows.

- How long have you been in the technology beat?

- What other beats have you worked in prior to the tech beat?

- What forms of education or training would you say you have gone through to prepare yourself for writing tech stories?

- Where do you get the stories for this beat? Who are the sources you often rely on for information on these stories?

- How would you compare and contrast the technology beat with other beats in the newspaper?

- What are the elements that make a publishable tech story?

- Based on your own assessment, what are the problems faced by the tech beat and how could they be solved?

- What are ethical dilemmas you have encountered in this beat? Please give specific instances wherein you feel ethical standards were upheld or violated.

Guide questions and significant points for the in-depth interview with representatives of local technology corporations are as follows.

- What stories do you give to the media for publication?

- How often do you release material for the press?

- What is your perception of the state of technology journalism in relation to other beats in the news?

- Are you satisfied with the way technology journalists write their stories? Why or why not?

- Please cite ways you think the technology journalists could improve the beat.

- Please describe your interaction with the press whenever there is news coverage pertinent to your company.

D. Units of Analysis and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used since the study targeted a particular group of people, namely technology journalists from different print and online publications.

Lists of technology journalists from each of the three publications were collated. From each list, one journalist was randomly selected. A total of three journalists were set to undergo in-depth interviews.

Interviews with three journalists from each of the publications were conducted over a period of two months.

The Philippine Star has a *Gadgets* subsection under *Lifestyle Features*, as well as a *Science and Technology* subsection under *Business Features*. Since the *Science and Technology* subsection covers a diverse selection of topics including medicine, health, weather, and environment, compared to the *Gadgets* subsection which covers specifically technology-related topics, the respondent interviewed was a *Gadgets* subsection journalist. She is **Kathy Moran**. She is the editor of the *Gadgets* subsection.

The Manila Bulletin has a *Technology* subsection under *Lifestyle*, as well as an *Infotech* subsection under *Business*. Since the *Infotech* subsection mostly covers business-oriented news, compared to the *Technology* subsection that covers a variety of technology topics such as new media and gadgets, the respondent interviewed was a *Technology* subsection journalist. He is **Brian Yalung**. He is the current online head of the Manila Bulletin.

LoQal.ph is a website owned and operated by the multimedia company Filquest Media Concepts, Inc. It is an online publication which does not have a print counterpart. The respondent interviewed was a multimedia reporter. He is **Alex Villafania**. He writes technology-related stories for loQal.ph

Representative local corporations engaged in information technology, gaming, social media and gadgets were randomly selected.

Misys Philippines, Inc. was chosen to represent the local information technology corporations. Marc Cacho, the Client Support Consultant of Misys Philippines, was interviewed.

PlayWeb Games, Inc. was chosen to represent the local gaming corporations. It is the publisher and operator of all the game titles and services under the Level Up! Brand in the Philippines. Adonna Tan, the Marketing Services Manager of PlayWeb Games, was interviewed.

Nokia Philippines was chosen to represent the local gadgets corporations. Nikka Abes, the Corporate Communications Manager of Nokia Philippines, was interviewed.

Yahoo! Philippines was chosen to represent the local social media corporations. As a technology corporation, it operates a global online network of integrated services, and at the same time publishes and curates news (as a publication does), and allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content (as a social media organization does). Unlike the other technology corporations probed in this study, Yahoo! has a widely-used news function, as such the researchers asked its representative the set of questions meant for technology journalists. Erwin Oliva, the Country Editor of Yahoo! Philippines, was interviewed.

E. Data Gathering

Selected personnel from the media and technology sector were notified and given letters of request for interview via mail and through SMS. For the technology journalists, since most of them do not regularly report to work because they usually send their copies

via online correspondence, notifications and letters of request were also sent to their personal electronic mail addresses.

The researchers conducted interviews from February to March 2012. In-depth face-to-face interviews were undertaken, during which notes were taken down and digital voice recorders were used. Telephone and e-mail interviews were also conducted at the request of the interviewee.

F. Data Analysis

The study made use of qualitative method of analysis since data gathered was in the form of interviews. Data was processed using constant comparative technique.

After interviews were transcribed, key points from the text were marked. Similar concepts or recurring themes in the statements of the respondents were grouped into categories which were analyzed to determine patterns, consistencies and inconsistencies.

Whether or not a relationship between or among variables existed was also determined. For example, data on the technological preparedness or technology knowledge of a journalist, and data on his performance and ethical practices was juxtaposed to see whether a relationship between the two variables existed or not. If patterns revealed that a relationship existed, then inferences on how one variable affects or is affected by the other were made.

G. Scope and Limitations

The study probed the technology beat in local print and online media represented by Philippine Star, Manila Bulletin, and loQal.ph as they are prominent print and online publications in the Philippines, having wide circulation and readership.

The study also took into account representative local corporations engaged in information technology, gaming, social media and gadgets.

To achieve the objectives of the study, in-depth interviews with three randomly selected technology beat journalists or editors from the three aforementioned publications, and four representatives from four local technology corporations were conducted over two months.

The study did not cover the relationship of the media or technology journalists with their readers; neither was the readers' perception of the technology beat included. The study focused on the sources of local technology news, particularly corporations in the local technology sector; and the people involved in the process of news production, specifically technology beat reporters and editors, in assessing the status of the technology beat.

CHAPTER V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study assessed the current state of the technology journalism in the Philippines as evidenced by the interaction of local print and online media with the Philippine technology sector. Interviews with technology journalists and editors, and representatives of selected technology corporations were conducted to gather data for this study. Data gathered were analyzed using constant comparative technique. Insights concerning technology journalism from the interviews are presented in this chapter.

A. Technology journalists

1. How long have you been in the tech beat?

- Kathy Moran (PS) has been writing stories about gadgets and technology for about 15 years.

- Brian Yalung (MB) has been in information technology since 1997 since he finished a course in this field in De La Salle Benilde. He began writing in 2006 when he was offered a blogging stint by foreigners. It was in blogging that he made a name for himself, and in 2010, he was asked to handle the online versions of Manila Bulletin, Tempo, and Balita, as a technology journalist.

- Alex Villafania (loQal) has been in the technology beat for about twelve years, beginning in 2001. He worked as reporter at Metropolitan Computer Times, then at Inquirer Interactive, Inc., and finally at loQal.ph.

- Erwin Oliva (Y! Philippines) has been in the technology beat since 1998, when he wrote for Computer Times. After three years, he was invited to work at a startup website called INQ7.net (now known as Inquirer.net). He left Inquirer in 2008. He

now works at Yahoo! where he oversees the international network's news arm in the Philippines. Oliva continues to write for his numerous blogs, covering music, and technology, among others.

All of our respondents have been in information technology for over a decade – Kathy Moran having written technology stories for fifteen years, and Alex Villafania and Erwin Oliva for twelve and fourteen years, respectively. While Brian Yalung has only been in the technology beat for six years, his expertise in the field of information technology dates back to his undergraduate education wherein he studied IT.

   2.   *What other beats have you worked in prior to the tech beat?*

- Kathy Moran (PS) has written stories about motoring and pets before she became the technology editor at the Philippine Star.

- Brian Yalung (MB) said he started his journalism career in the technology beat.

- Alex Villafania (loQal) has worked as a regional correspondent for Manila Bulletin, covering areas including politics, business, and agriculture for Pangasinan.

- Erwin Oliva (Y! Philippines) said he covered business and politics, prior to working in the technology beat. He usually wrote stories on macro economics and the elections.

Prior to obtaining the position of technology editor at the Philippine Star, Moran wrote articles on pets and monitoring. Villafania and Oliva both covered the business and

politics beats before being assigned to the technology beat. Meanwhile when Brian Yalung entered the field of journalism, he was immediately tasked to the technology beat, given his background.

3. *What forms of education or training would you say you have gone through to prepare yourself for writing tech stories?*

- Kathy Moran (PS) has been very fond of tinkering with gadgets and getting to know how they work. She said that she likes to read on the latest developments on technology. She also mentioned how she finds the interviews she has had with experts in the field to be very helpful in her training for writing tech stories.

- Brian Yalung (MB) said, "I wouldn't say that I have undergone any kind of training." He credited his knowledge of the technology beat to experience, and to the indirect training he received from foreigners. "As far as I'm concerned, on my part, it's more on self-study," he said.

- Alex Villafania (loQal) said that aside from the basic journalism requirements, there's no real need for education addressing the skills of a technology reporter, because one can pick up such skills along the way. What is necessary, according to him, is basic information on technology, considering the beat's many aspects.

- Erwin Oliva (Y! Philippines) has a degree in journalism, although he said that he learned on the job. "No one, nothing will prepare you for what you're going to be doing in real life. Wala 'yan sa eskwelahan," he said. "What schools are preparing you for is how you think. How to deal with life," he explained. He also said that when he writes about technology, he writes about the human aspect.

Kathy Moran confessed that she enjoys tinkering with gadgets. Aside from reading up on the latest developments in the technology field, she credits her stock knowledge on technology in part to interviews with experts. Both Yalung and Oliva said they learned technology writing skills on the job. Oliva said, "No one, nothing will prepare you for what you're going to be doing in real life." This is echoed by Villafania's statement that there's no real need for a course on technology writing, as one can learn on the job.

Their responses suggested that it is not imperative for technology journalists to have undergone a special form of training before working in the beat.

4. *Where do you get the stories for this beat? Who are the sources you often rely on for information on these stories?*

- Kathy Moran (PS) has several sources for the technology stories she writes. She has often been invited to press conferences where she has been able to try out the latest gadgets and motor vehicles which she would write reviews about later. She also said, "I rely on the expert behind the gadget." When she reviewed a cell phone from Nokia, she talked to the people at Nokia about the device.

- Brian Yalung (MB) cited wire agencies like Associated Press and Xinhua among his usual sources for stories. He also cited pegs for stories that go around by word of mouth, as well as instances where they get invited to events and receive press releases from technology companies. Although gathering information on the international level is "really easy," he said that he is trying to focus on the local technology scene.

- Alex Villafania (loQal) said writers who are starting out can ask their editors to refer them to people to approach first – usually the PR practitioners handling the company. Once the writer gains footage in the industry, he can become more enterprising by asking questions outside of the press conference, going straight to the primary sources. Primary sources include the CEO's of companies, developers of software or hardware, or politicians drafting the laws related to technology. He also stressed the importance of building contacts, getting all names, numbers and emails possible.

- Erwin Oliva (Y! Philippines) Oliva said they get stories everywhere. "You have to be very creative. You have to build your sources. You have to follow news. You have to follow people around," he said. He also said that when he was in the technology beat, "press releases were of no value" to him, and he did not focus on technology itself and "wrote about technology for the sake of technology," instead he wrote about stories that people could relate to.

A common source for technology stories, according to Villafania, is PR. Moran cited press conferences as a typical source for gadget-related stories; meanwhile, Oliva said press releases were of no value to him. Aside from press releases and press conferences, Yalung also cited wire agencies such as Associated Press and Xinhua. Moran, Villafania and Oliva gave importance to going to the primary sources – such as the experts behind the gadget, the CEO's of corporations, or politicians drafting the laws. Villafania and Oliva also stressed the importance of building contacts.

The sources for technology sources are numerous – "everywhere," as Oliva put it. In a day and age where the element of technology is truly everywhere, this is not difficult to comprehend.

5. *How would you compare and contrast the technology beat with other beats in the newspaper?*

- Kathy Moran (PS) pointed out that one difference between the technology beat and the other beats is the speed by which gadgets are developed. Furthermore, she said the technology beat "can be a very *cold* beat because at many times what we deal with are pieces of equipment... not people."

- Brian Yalung (MB) said that he feels that the technology beat is a little neglected because in the end it is still a matter of serving everybody's interests. Although, taking into consideration the belief that we're in an age where everyone wants to have gadgets, he thinks that the technology beat is in the top three most-read beats of the news, next to sports and entertainment. Then again, he said that it still depends on the age level.

- Alex Villafania (loQal) said that he doesn't feel that the technology beat is neglected compared to other beats. "In fact, it's growing," he said. He said TV, radio, and newspapers have difficulty adapting to the technology beat because of various constraints like time and space plus the fact that the beat itself is difficult to learn. Moreover, he credited in part the growth of the technology beat in new media to the bloggers, although at the same time pointing out that bloggers cannot

be considered journalists as they are still developing their own journalism standards.

- Erwin Oliva (Y! Philippines) said that years ago in the technology beat, he and his fellow writers felt less important, as it was hard to land on the front page of the newspaper. Nonetheless, he explained that the aim of landing on the front page is no longer important today. What is important is for a journalist to learn how to connect technology to politics, society and the like, since "technology is all around, it's a lifestyle."

When asked to compare and contrast the technology beat with other beats in journalism, Moran said one thing the technology beat has going for it is the speed of which gadgets are developed. Moran also described the technology beat as being "cold," as it deals with gadgets more than it does people. This is in contrast to Oliva's style wherein he often tries to fit a human interest angle in his articles. The researchers asked the respondents whether or not they feel the technology beat is neglected in comparison to other beats. Yalung said he feels that the beat is a little neglected, but continued that as this is an age where everyone wants to have gadgets, the technology beat is in the top three most-read beats, especially in the younger in the younger age bracket. Villafania maintained the opposite – that the technology beat is in fact, growing. In addition to the technology sector saturating the Filipino market, Villafania credited part of the technology beat's growth to bloggers. Villafania is hesitant about calling these bloggers journalists, however, saying that they still lack the standards that journalism upholds. Meanwhile, Oliva said that in the previous decade, he and his fellow writers in the beat

felt neglected. However, Oliva said the pressure of landing the front page is no longer relevant, saying that technology is already a lifestyle.

Rather than the technology beat being neglected, the respondents viewed the beat as a thriving one – in the context of technology being a vital part of today's society.

6. What are the elements that make a publishable tech story?

- Kathy Moran (PS) said that for a story on technology to be published it should be relevant. It should be on the latest gadget or a device used by a prominent person. It should also be simple enough for the readers to understand. She said, "The main job of a good tech writer is to make the devices he or she writes about interesting and understandable to the average reader."

- Brian Yalung (MB) cited reader interest, consistency, and reliability of the story. He explained that sometimes there are writers who write to get interest even if the subject is fictitious. He said, "Aside from a good composition, the facts should be there."

- Alex Villafania (loQal) stressed that aside from the usual journalism standards such as brevity and accuracy, a good technology story has to be readable and understandable for the layman. He said technology journalists need to write their stories in a way that the target audience will understand what they mean, seeing as only a few will understand geeky technical terms.

- Erwin Oliva (Y! Philippines) said the way to go is to place stories in context. He said aside from the typical five W's and one H in journalism, you have one more question to ask: *so what?* He said mentioned that any story has an advantage and

sometimes it depends on making the story achieve the agenda that the publication wants. Furthermore, he said there is a need to "put a spin into technology writing," such that a story may not directly talk about technology, instead has a *technology angle* on news.

Moran said a good technology story needs to be relevant. Similarly, Oliva stressed the need for a "so what" element in the story. Yalung cited interest, consistency, and reliability of the story, and Villafania said first and foremost, a good tech story has to be readable and understandable. As in any beat, arguably the most basic thing a story should do is get the message across – as such, writers should strive to make stories that are relatable to their target audience. Villafania explained that if the target audience is a select few who understand the technical terms in a technology story, then the writer can get away with using those terms. However, if the target audience is "everyone," then consideration must be made as to how this audience will be able to understand and recognize the story's importance.

7. *Based on your own assessment, what are the problems faced by the tech beat and how could they be solved?*

- Kathy Moran (PS) said it is hard to keep track of all the latest gadgets because newer versions are being developed and released quickly. Sometimes it is also hard to write about a newer version because of very slight changes in the gadget. However, sources are always available. She also thinks that "tech writers in the beat are well-versed with the gadgets they cover," and that "there is much room

for growth among tech beat reporters because of how quickly technology changes."

- Brian Yalung (MB) Yalung believes that a primary concern is the lack of interest or hunger of prospective technology writers. He feels that there are a lot of Filipinos who would be excellent technology beat writers, but these people tend to choose to write for foreigners because the pay is better. He said that there are actually a lot of technology writers in the country; the problem is that "they are writing IN the Philippines but not FOR the Philippines." "Not all techies are writers and not all writers are techies." He said that one can truly benefit from an article or review when you connect these two elements – a writer and a techie.

- Alex Villafania (loQal) Villafania believes there is no problem for online publications with regard to readership and circulation, however this problem exists in TV and newspapers as these have limited airtime and space. He also believes that rather than a lack of availability of sources, there exists an abundance, since technology is now within everyone's reach. With regard to the number of people in the beat, he said that there are now more technology writers than in previous years. However, most of these writers write online and many are bloggers, not journalists. Such bloggers post both an advantage and a disadvantage because they add to the number of people writing technology stories, conversely, as the nature of blogging is different from journalism, they cannot be fully associated with the beat yet. He said that the technology beat has a lot of avenues for growth, but more in terms of quality, not quantity. He also mentioned that ethics in the technology beat is also a major concern.

- Erwin Oliva (Y! Philippines) said that the technology beat needs to evolve. "It couldn't be only about technology. It has to be connected to the people who use it," he said. He also said that technology pages in most newspapers and many technology magazines have died, and that these have moved to the internet because it is cheaper to run a website and it is easier to grow. As for sources, he said that internationally, there is no problem with the availability, but that locally there is, because the latest technologies are not launched in the country, such that writers don't feature the newest, most expensive gadgets, cars, and the like because there are no or very few buyers locally – one would rather write about a Mitsubishi Lancer than a Porsche, he said. With regard to technology writers, he said they tend to live in their own world, and as a result produce geekish stories that readers cannot relate to. Furthermore, he remarked that when the technology beat emerged, it was only journalists who wrote about technology, but as the times changed, "geeks want[ed] to become journalists," explaining the boom of bloggers. He pointed out, however, that bloggers just write about a speck of the universe that is technology reporting, and that their attachment to the subject matter tend to hamper their perspective. Most significantly, he believes there is no longer such thing as a beat, and in that, writers just have to write about what interest people. He said writers should focus not only on growth but on the deeper understanding for what they're writing. The people in the "technology beat should think outside of what they're doing. Meaning, there's still room to grow for them to connect to the readers," he said.

Moran said that it can be challenging to keep up with the speed of development of new gadgets – and that it can also be tedious to write an article on the new version when the change is very little. As for the availability of sources, all the respondents said there is no lack. Villafania especially, said that rather than a lack, there exists an abundance. Yalung commented however, that the sources in the international setting still outnumber the local greatly. Oliva echoed this, saying that the problem is that the latest technologies are launched abroad – not in the country, and also only Filipinos who fall in a certain income bracket could afford to buy these luxuries such as the latest Porsche, for example. Moran said technology writers are well-versed enough with their articles, however, Oliva said technology writers have a tendency to have their "own world" – which is a frame of mind they need to break out of. Yalung said there is a lack of interest or hunger in prospective technology writers. He explained that most people opt to write abroad given the chance, as the pay is much larger. Villafania countered this, saying that there are more technology writers than before, however, most of this new blood consists of bloggers. In addition to Villafania's statement that bloggers need to develop their own standards similar to the journalistic standards, Oliva added that bloggers tend to write only about a small portion of what is the technology beat, and that their personal attachment tends to hamper their perspective. As such, Villafania said there is a lot of room for growth in the technology beat in terms of quality rather than quantity. Villafania also said that in terms of readership and circulation, online technology journalism is enjoying a growth that is not experienced to the same degree by television and newspapers due to limited airtime and space. Oliva said the technology beat needs to evolve by seeing itself than more than

just a beat. He said it is cheaper to run a website, and this provides more avenues for growth for the beat. Villafania also brought up ethics as a major concern.

8. *What are ethical dilemmas you have encountered in this beat? Please give specific instances wherein you feel ethical standards were upheld or violated.*

- Kathy Moran (PS) said she has no answer to this question.

- Brian Yalung (MB) answered, "I haven't considered that although I could. As far as the writers are concerned, I'm sure there is but I just don't want to investigate it and get into the details." He said that it is okay to accept shirts or free passes because one cannot get wealthy from those, however "instances wherein writers will produce an article for fifteen thousand pesos a month… is walking on a fine line". He believes ethical dilemmas will always be there, although he himself cannot imagine himself accepting bribes. "I'm proud to say they cannot pin anything on me. I won't sacrifice my credibility, where I am, for that."

- Alex Villafania (loQal) said honesty is a big problem in the technology beat, as in any beat. He cited cases such as of reporters publishing news releases as is and simply adding a byline. He also cited instances where reporters ask for monetary favors in exchange for a good story, as well as reporters or bloggers not returning expensive gadgets that were lent for them for a gadget review. He added that there are even times when some reporters or bloggers barge in press conferences or events held by companies with their family in tow.

- Erwin Oliva (Y! Philippines) conceded that there are a lot of questionable ethical practices in the technology beat, in particular the receiving of expensive gadgets,

trips abroad, or other presents. When it comes to ethics, it boils down to a personal decision, he said, "Walang black and white when it comes to ethics. It's up to you to decide. If you think that it violates your own ethical standards, then say no… No matter how many ethical standards I can list down for you guys, if you're an unethical person, you won't even conform to those." In his case, he told that whenever he covers an event, he maintains objectivity and he makes it clear to the companies that invited him that he is there as a journalist and not as their guest.

Ethical dilemmas are widespread in any sector of journalism. While Moran had no answer for this question, Yalung, Villafania and Oliva all conceded that there are ethical issues in the technology beat. Yalung and Villafania both said they knew of instances wherein the reporter would ask for or receive monetary favors in exchange for a story, and Oliva and Villafania cited instances where expensive gadgets are not returned. Yalung said shirts and free passes are alright, as one cannot get wealthy from those. Oliva said there's no black and white when it comes to ethics, as this still depends on the person in question.

B. Technology Corporations

1. What stories do you give to the media for publication?

- Nikka Abes (Nokia) said they usually distribute press releases on new products and services that are about to be launched on the market.

- Marc Cacho (Misys) said that their company has a global communication, where nine international sites receive information from their headquarters in London, and an internal publication that focus on the Manila site. He explained that they focus on their internal publication and has not engaged in aggressive advertising in newspapers because it is not the direction of the company.

- Adonna Tan (PlayWeb) said they release materials to the press whenever something newsworthy happens within the company, such as the launch of a new game or a major patch, or in such instances as when there's a change in the company structure.

Nikka Abes and Adonna Tan said their companies usually give the media stories on new products and services. They also give out any story about their respective companies that they consider newsworthy such as changes in management and company structure. Meanwhile, Marc Cacho said their company, specifically the branch in the Philippines, does not usually advertise but focuses on its internal publication instead.

Stories that technology corporations give the local media for publication are commonly what they deem as newsworthy such as the launch of new products and services, and important happenings in their companies. These stories are usually in the form of press releases. It is also important to note that IT companies in the Philippines such as Misys seldom or even do not engage in advertising. Alex Villafania talked about this issue and explained that IT companies have a very specific target market that they reach via different strategies.

2. How often do you release material for the press?

- Nikka Abes (Nokia) said they release an average of two press materials per week. They send them to the technology beat, as well as to the lifestyle, entertainment, and business sections depending on the kind of story.

- Marc Cacho (Misys) said they release internal newsletters quarterly, while their international sites send information daily via email and the internet. Their global communication sends out press releases, but Misys Philippines does not release material for the local press.

- Adonna Tan (PlayWeb) said the frequency of their release of press materials depends on whether the company has anything worthwhile to say. She stressed the importance of having a news release that is worth the editors' time, not just something that will simply sit in the editors' in tray for a long period of time.

Unlike PlayWeb that releases press materials occasionally, Nika Abes said Nokia regularly releases press materials every week. Abes said these stories are sent to different sections and not necessarily to the technology section of publications. Meanwhile, Marc Cacho reiterated that just as they don't advertise, they also don't give out press releases.

The frequency of release of press materials varies depending on the technology corporation. Press releases from technology corporations are not routinely sent to appear in one section of the newspaper. Stories on technology may be seen in the technology, business, lifestyle, and entertainment sections of print and online publications.

3. What is your perception of the state of technology journalism in relation to other beats in the news?

- Nikka Abes (Nokia) said that it is currently an "exciting time" for technology journalism since gadgets are always changing and getting upgrades, although it "has to be supplemented with some form of social media or online reporting to keep up with the times."

- Marc Cacho (Misys) spoke selectively on the online aspect of technology journalism and described it as something that "paves the way for a lot of opportunities." He also mentioned that it is more environment-friendly since it does not utilize paper, and that communication is made faster because messages are relayed faster.

- Adonna Tan (PlayWeb) believes that the technology beat is a strong beat, however technology writers are generally not as celebrated as lifestyle editors or sports editors. She attributes the lesser popularity of the beat to certain people's apprehension of new technology. She also feels that the Philippines is behind in technology, therefore there is less hype about it in our country. She also explained that Filipinos usually only tend to read about the latest technologies like games and gadgets during a few occasions in a year like when they receive bonuses or their thirteenth month pay, because those are the only times when they are able to spend on such things.

Nika Abes is convinced that today is a stirring time for technology journalism. Adonna Tan agreed with this idea saying the technology beat is actually a strong beat, but

is not as celebrated or popular as the other beats because there is a lack of anticipation and an inherent trepidation caused by backwardness of technology in the country. On the other hand, Marc Cacho associated technology journalism with faster communication and environmental conviviality.

Technology corporations perceive the technology beat as a "strong" beat thriving in an "exciting time" where there are countless topics to write about. It must also be noted that the technology journalism inevitably requires print to be supported by social media or online media to keep up with the changing technological and environmental landscapes.

4. *Are you satisfied with the way technology journalists write their stories? Why or why not?*

- Nikka Abes (Nokia) specified that they are "sometimes satisfied" when technology journalists stick to the story they gave, but are rather "dissatisfied" when "they look at trends in the US and think the same applies to the Philippines." She stated as an example that Nokia as a brand in the Philippines is "still strong compared to the brand popularity in the US" because the industry in the country is different.

- Marc Cacho (Misys) said they are quite satisfied with how articles are written in their internal publication.

- Adonna Tan (PlayWeb) said they are generally satisfied with the reporters' coverage of their events. She mentioned and explained the pros and cons of some journalists' practice of merely printing the press releases as is. She said she does

not condemn this practice saying, "different strokes for different folks." She cited tight deadlines as a possible reason for this lack of editing.

Nikka Abes said they are satisfied with the way reporters write their stories if they go along with the press materials they distribute, while they are dissatisfied when reporters tend to generalize trends. Adonna Tan is inconstant with the idea of publishing press releases as they are. She explained that it is a good thing since whatever their company is trying to say is presented in an unmodified version, but it is also a bad thing since there is lack of editing. Nonetheless, she believes that it depends on the journalist or publication.

Technology corporations are mostly satisfied with the coverage of technology journalists today. They are satisfied whenever their message is conveyed accurately. Their general dissatisfaction stems from lenient handling of their stories, including insufficient proofreading, and generalization and application of international trends that are incompatible with local technology scene.

5. *Please cite ways you think the technology journalists could improve the beat.*

- Nikka Abes (Nokia) again referred to her previous answer wherein she noted that technology journalists should interpret trends based on the local context rather on inclinations abroad. Media, by presenting wrong interpretations, could create wrong perceptions and sway the readers' minds into inaccurate facts such as thinking that other brands are stronger than others, and the like.

- Marc Cacho (Misys) said that some technology writers' techniques need improvement. He mentioned that when a story is too technical, readers get bored. He said people want it plain and simple, and want to know how a technology is relevant to them and how they can make use of such technology. "Not too technical, not too tedious, but very understandable," he said.

- Adonna Tan (PlayWeb) said she feels the beat needs new blood. She recounted how she has been in PlayWeb for three years and in that time, has interacted with the same technology writers.

Both Nikka Abes and Marc Cacho cited the need for improvement in technology journalists' writing style. Abes said technology journalists should try to be more accurate when writing stories. Cacho said technology writers should strive to write in a straightforward and uncomplicated manner. On the other hand, Adonna Tan felt the need for more people in the technology beat.

Representatives of the technology sector reckon that there is a necessity for people in the technology beat to write in a way that would be less disputable and easier to understand. One respondent believe there is a lack of technology writers, however, this was refuted by Brian Yalung, Alex Villafania and Erwin Oliva. They said there are actually a lot of people who write on technology but these people are not essentially journalists, or do not necessarily write for local publications.

6. Please describe your interaction with the press whenever there is news coverage

pertinent to your company.

- Nikka Abes (Nokia) said she occasionally sends a thank you SMS to some editors/editors for publishing their stories.

- Marc Cacho (Misys) said they mostly interact via email. He said the interaction is usually written, given that people in their company are usually too busy to arrange face to face meetings.

- Adonna Tan (PlayWeb) said that they usually have two ways of interacting with the press – one, the company sends out news releases and calls for updates, and two, they organize an event or a meet-up for the reporters for personal interviews.

Interactions between the local technology corporations and local media are usually characterized by written communication via press releases, and by other means such as personal interviews and events held by technology companies.

CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION

1. The technology sector sees the beat as a strong one, noting that in the current society there is an abundance of stories to cover, a result of the advancement in global technology. Technology corporations are generally satisfied with how the technology reporters handle stories pertaining their companies. The corporations are pleased when the message they intended was conveyed accurately. However, their general dissatisfaction stems from lenient handling of their stories, including insufficient proofreading, and generalization and application of international trends that are incompatible with local technology scene.

2. While writers in the technology beat may have felt neglected in the past, the general sentiment now is that the technology beat is thriving. Similarly to the perception of the technology sector, writers credit the widespread interest in technology for the widening readership, especially in the younger age bracket.

   Taking that into consideration, the technology beat may be in the top three most widely read beats. This is especially true for online publications, as this growth is not enjoyed to the same extent by print and television due to airtime and space constraints. Bloggers and the new media have also played a large part in helping along the growth of the technology beat, adding to the number of people writing technology stories. There is debate about whether bloggers can truly be considered in the same ranks as technology journalists.

What is important for the technology beat now is the ability to evolve. A large number of technology sections in newspapers and technology magazines have died, in many instances opting instead to move online. This move provides the technology beat with more avenues for growth. Ethics is also a major concern in the technology beat.

3. Press releases and PR agencies are a staple source for technology stories. In addition to these, sources for technology stories can be found virtually everywhere. This is especially true in this day and age as the desire to own various gadgets is widespread in today's society. It must be noted, however, that the availability of sources in the local setting still pales in comparison to the international setting. This due in part to the international setting being more advanced with developments in technology, as well as only a certain sector of the income bracket being able to purchase the latest technology here in the Philippines.

4. None of the respondents had gone through any formal training in preparation for the technology beat, and the common sentiment is that there is no real need for it. Aside from the basic journalism standards, all that is necessary is background knowledge of technology – as this is imperative for reporters to be able to fully understand the technical terms and what they are writing about. There is a need for writers in the technology beat to curb their use of complex terms that may only be understandable to a select few, with the consideration of a wider target audience. This is one of the things that the growth of the beat may depend on, as gaining a wider audience is

beneficial for the beat to grow further. The boom of bloggers who write technology stories has resulted in an increase in the number of technology writers, however, these bloggers cannot yet be truly considered technology journalists as they have a long way to go in developing the standards that journalism abides by.

5. The ethical issues in the technology beat include instances where reporters request monetary favors in exchange for the assurance of good stories. This is a common issue is present in any beat in journalism. Another issue is the direct publishing of a press release without any rephrasing or editing, where the reporter simply adds a byline to what was handed out by the public relations company or the corporation itself. According to the responses, it is not uncommon for reporters or bloggers to keep the expensive gadgets they were lent for the purpose writing of a gadget review. There is no clear line that stipulates what is acceptable to keep and what is not – as the freebies can range from pens and shirts to expensive gifts and complimentary tickets abroad.

CHAPTER VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study was limited by various factors such as time and resources, that is why it is encouraged that future researchers who would endeavor to conduct studies that are in line with the topic or objectives of this study should strive to include a higher number of respondents coming from both sides – technology journalism and technology corporations.

Future studies may also aim to describe the perception of readers of the technology beat by investigating the relationship of the media or technology journalists with their readers through surveys and interviews. Furthermore, upcoming researchers on technology journalism may stake expanding the coverage of this study by including television and radio.

Many of the respondents in this study acknowledged the presence of bloggers in the local and international technology scene as "technology writers" but not "technology journalists." A related study or an entirely different study may be undertaken based on this topic, perhaps on how bloggers positively affect or impend the growth of technology journalism in the country which could, possibly, directly or indirectly influence its current status in a given time.

APPENDIX A

Letters sent to the interviewees

Department of Journalism
College of Mass Communication
University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City

February 1, 2012

Corporate Communications / PR Department
Playweb Games, Inc.
11/F Pacific Star Bldg.
Makati Ave. cor. Sen. Gil Puyat Ave.
Makati City, Philippines 1200

Sir/Madam:

Good day! We are Nikki Careen Palacios and Alea Portia Gomez, journalism seniors from the University of the Philippines, Diliman. We are currently writing our undergraduate thesis, which aims to explore the **relationship between the technology beat in publications and the corporations in the technology sector**. In line with this, we would like to request an interview with a representative from your company, if possible someone from the corporate communications / PR department, as our study seeks to answer questions on the characterization of the **source-media relationship**.

In light of this, we would like to schedule a short personal interview or a phone interview this February, at a time and venue convenient to you, preferably between your receipt of this letter and February 13, 2012.

Your time and insight will provide valuable information for our thesis. We hope for your kind consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Nikki Careen Palacios
0916-7812561
nikki.palacios@yahoo.com

Alea Portia Gomez
0927-3651537
galileogomez_alea@yahoo.com

Department of Journalism
College of Mass Communication
University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City

February 21, 2012

Brian Joseph Patrick N. Yalung
MB Online Head
The Manila Bulletin
Muralla corner Recoletos
Intramuros, Manila 1002

Dear Sir:

Good day! We are Nikki Careen Palacios and Alea Portia Gomez, journalism seniors from the University of the Philippines, Diliman. We are currently writing our undergraduate thesis, which aims to explore the **relationship between the technology beat in publications and the corporations in the technology sector**. Our study seeks to characterize the **source-media relationship**.

In light of this, we would like to schedule a short personal interview or a phone interview this February, at a time and venue convenient to you, preferably between your receipt of this letter and February 28, 2012.

Your time and insight will provide valuable information for our thesis. We hope for your kind consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Nikki Careen Palacios
0916-7812561
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Alea Portia Gomez
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Department of Journalism
College of Mass Communication
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February 21, 2012

Editorial Staff
Yahoo! Southeast Asia - Philippines
20/F Unit B Accralaw Tower
2nd Avenue cor. 30th Street
Crescent Park West, Bonifacio Global City
Taguig City, Metro Manila 1634, Philippines

Sir/Madam:

Good day! We are Nikki Careen Palacios and Alea Portia Gomez, journalism seniors from the University of the Philippines, Diliman. We are currently writing our undergraduate thesis, which aims to explore the **relationship between the technology beat in publications and the corporations in the technology sector**. Our study seeks to characterize the **source-media relationship**.

In light of this, we would like to schedule a short personal interview or a phone interview with a tech journalist or editor this February, at a time and venue convenient to you, preferably between your receipt of this letter and February 27, 2012.

Your time and insight will provide valuable information for our thesis. We hope for your kind consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Nikki Careen Palacios
0916-7812561
nikki.palacios@yahoo.com

Alea Portia Gomez
0927-3651537
galileogomez_alea@yahoo.com

Department of Journalism
College of Mass Communication
University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City

February 1, 2012

Editorial Staff
The Philippine Star
13th Corner Railroad St.
Port Area, Manila 1016

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In light of this, we would like to schedule a short personal interview with a tech journalist or editor (if possible someone from your *Gadgets* subsection under *Lifestyle Features*) this February, at a time and venue convenient to you, preferably between your receipt of this letter and February 13, 2012.

Your time and insight will provide valuable information for our thesis. We hope for your kind consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Nikki Careen Palacios
0916-7812561
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Alea Portia Gomez
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Department of Journalism
College of Mass Communication
University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City

February 1, 2012

Corporate Communications / PR Department
Misys Philippines, Inc.
10/F Philam Tower
8767 Paseo de Roxas Avenue
Makati City 1200, Philippines

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Good day! We are Nikki Careen Palacios and Alea Portia Gomez, journalism seniors from the University of the Philippines, Diliman. We are currently writing our undergraduate thesis, which aims to explore the **relationship between the technology beat in publications and the corporations in the technology sector**. In line with this, we would like to request an interview with a representative from your company, if possible someone from the corporate communications / PR department, as our study seeks to answer questions on the characterization of the **source-media relationship**.

In light of this, we would like to schedule a short personal interview or a phone interview this February, at a time and venue convenient to you, preferably between your receipt of this letter and February 13, 2012.

Your time and insight will provide valuable information for our thesis. We hope for your kind consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Nikki Careen Palacios
0916-7812561
nikki.palacios@yahoo.com

Alea Portia Gomez
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Department of Journalism
College of Mass Communication
University of the Philippines
Diliman, Quezon City

February 27, 2012

Corporate Communications / Nokia Media Relations
Nokia Philippines
Philam Life Tower
8767 Paseo de Roxas Avenue
Makati City, Philippines

Sir/Madam:

Good day! We are Nikki Careen Palacios and Alea Portia Gomez, journalism seniors from the University of the Philippines, Diliman. We are currently writing our undergraduate thesis, which aims to explore the **relationship between the technology beat in publications and the corporations in the technology sector**. In line with this, we would like to request an interview with a representative from your company, if possible someone from the corporate communications / media relations department, as our study seeks to answer questions on the characterization of the **source-media relationship**.

In light of this, we would like to schedule a short personal interview or a phone interview this week, at a time and venue convenient to you, preferably between your receipt of this letter and March 6, 2012.

Your time and insight will provide valuable information for our thesis. We hope for your kind consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Nikki Careen Palacios
0916-7812561
nikki.palacios@yahoo.com

Alea Portia Gomez
0927-3651537
galileogomez_alea@yahoo.com

Interview request sent via SMS on March 15, 2012

REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW

Good morning Mr. Alex Villafania. We are Alea Gomez and Nikki Palacios, journalism seniors from UP Diliman. You were referred to us by Prof. Erwin Oliva from Yahoo! Philippines. We're currently working on our thesis and would like to request for an interview. We're looking into the current state of technology journalism in the Philippines. Can we schedule a personal interview? If not, perhaps through email or phone?

You may contact us through this number (0927-3651537) or via email (galileogomez.alea@gmail.com).

APPENDIX B

Transcribed interviews

Adonna Tan
Marketing Services Manager
Playweb Games, Inc.
- **Personal interview conducted on February 14, 2012**

Interviewer: Noong nag-search ako, I looked for Level Up!, tapos bigla kong nakita Playweb. Pero, ang Playweb po, 2011 na establish?

Adonna Tan: Playweb is actually the company that publishes all the games for Level Up! So Level Up! is actually a brand. It used to be a company in itself. Pero because of certain changes in the corporation, in the company, there's still Level Up! International. Level Up! International publishes games in North America, in Brazil, in I think, India, they still have operations there. So that's the, technically, it's the mother company of PlayWeb Games. Pero PlayWeb Games is the publishing company in the Philippines. Pero we're still using Level Up because it's the trade name. So kumbaga parang the difference is, yung pangalan ng company mo is Level Up, pero ang brand mo – ay I mean, yung pangalan ng company mo is Playweb, pero your brand is Level Up. So it's still essentially the same, it's just some technical stuff.

Interviewer: Pero internationally, it's Level Up! pa rin?

Adonna Tan: Ah, no. Well for me, I work at PlayWeb Games. So what we're handling would be yung portfolio nila. So in the Philippines, ano siya, Playweb, tapos, brand sila. Ganoon.

Interviewer: Pero how did this, yung arrangement, nangyari? Last year lang po ba?

Adonna Tan: No, 2010.

Interviewer: Kasi when I researched playweb, naka ano doon, 2011 established. So more or less…

Adonna Tan: More or less. End of the year 2010.

Interviewer: Alright, so yung first question namin is, **what stories do you usually give to the media for publication?**

Adonna Tan: Uh usually if we have kunyari, we're going to launch a new game, or there's a major patch, or for example, like the one you asked earlier, if there's a change in the company structure, a change in company. So we do that, we communicate with them. So we send them news releases for their review, and they can send it out. Kumbaga it's not parang, you have to print this. Pero we make sure that it's newsworthy enough for them to actually publish it.

Interviewer: **How often does this happen?**

Adonna Tan: It depends on whether we have anything worthwhile to say. Um, some brands kasi or some companies, they come up with any kind of news release, but at least

for my team, for us, we make sure that it's really worth talking about. Because otherwise, you're just wasting time, diba? If you send the editor something that he will just put on his, in tray for the rest of his life. It's not worth your time, so.

Interviewer: Ano po ba yung mga publications that you usually reach out to?

We have friends in GMA, Manila Times, TV5, those kinds. Kasi they also have a digital version, so we reach out to different kinds of media. Tri media.

Interviewer: Ano po yung perception niyo of the technology beat?

Adonna Tan: What do you mean exactly?

Interviwer: **Yung perception niyo po of the technology beat in relation to other beats.** What do you think of it? Is it a strong beat?

Adonna Tan: It is, pero I think compared to, say, a lifestyle editor or a sports editor, they're not as celebrated, the tech writers. There are very few that you can actually name at the top of your head if you're not a journalism student, di ba? Even you guys, you probably wouldn't be able to name ten of them.

Interviewer: Five lang.

Adonna Tan: Those five, you actually really researched about. So, what I'm saying is that, unlike other beats, it's not as popular. Maybe in a way, technology is kind of alien pa rin to certain people. Parang, people are kind of scared of technology. When they see a new phone, they don't want to buy it because it's confusing. Those kinds of things. Personally that's how I see it. There's still room for – there's no Recca Trinidad in ano eh, hindi sila ganoon ka, hindi siya Sari Yap level. They're not really regarded as very important. Pero, I'm not saying that they're not good at what they're doing, it's just, more people read – kumbaga the more people read a certain section, mas na e-establish ang pagiging writer mo kapag marami ang nagbabasa sa iyo.

Interviewer: Gusto ko lang po i-share... yung study po kasi namin di ba technology journalism? Actually it's also really quite new, kasi parang nag break off lang sila from science and technology beat. And then we researched a thesis last year or two years ago, they was this attempt for a gaming beat na. So parang sabi ko, so ganoon na pala ka laki ang gaming beat sa Philippines. Hindi raw feasible, sabi ng study niya. What do you think about that? Bakit kaya? Sa importance level ba, or…

Adonna Tan: No naman. Kasi actually there was, they attempted to do a – pero this is digital naman, so online. In Inquirer, it's Hackenslash, I don't know if you remember that website. It's already dead now. Si Alex Villafania is a friend of mine. He was the last person to leave Hackenslash. When he left Hackenslash, well, Hackenslash died. Pero the ones who used to write for Hackenslash were Joey Alarilla who used to work here, and then Ed Geronia, I think worked there also. They are all in Yahoo already, doing social media. Pero, they're doing social media for Yahoo. So they're still writing news, pero it's online. So I think, what are we talking about ba in this ano, is it the traditional news writing or is it digital journalism?

Interviewer: Encompassing po.

Adonna Tan: Ayun, so there. I'm not sure why exactly it's not ano. Offhand, I'm thinking maybe there's not enough beats to say. There isn't a lot of people who, I mean, you know your classmates. Do they, you guys are smart, but the usual students, they don't really like to read. People who tend to read are already twenty-five and above, because the world becomes more important to them. But then you're young pa. You don't have problems of your own. And you don't really like reading newspapers. Totoo naman eh. So di ba, yung market na mahilig sa games, hindi naman yung mga 35 and above na nag babasa or nag-aabalang pumuntang Inquirer.net diba?

Interviewer: **Are you satisfied with the way technology journalists handle the stories that you give them?**

Adonna Tan: Okay naman siya. I mean, usually kasi, the thing now is that whenever you do PR, you send out a news release. Before, when studying Comm Arts, the professor said that when sending a news release, the editor will change it. But at the end of the day, as it turns out when I started working, they don't really change it much when they print it out. Basically, siguro it's because they have a lot of things to write, so I don't know. So far naman, sometimes kasi I send out a news release, sometimes I don't. What I do is, I invite them to the event, so that they can cover it themselves. Writers like Alex Villafania and Ed Uy, they actually write it. They go to there, they just pick up from the news release. It depends eh; it depends on who you're dealing with.

Interviewer: Do you think it's a bad thing or a good thing that they just print the press release?

Adonna Tan: Of course, on a marketing perspective, good thing siya for us. Because we get to communicate the idea or the message exactly how we want it to be said. But if you're a purist, if you're a writer, kasi ako I also used to write myself when I was a student, kung ako, "pinasulat 'to sakin, kailangan ako ang magsusulat, dahil yung byline ako." So I mean, it's an accepted practice, but it depends. Different strokes for different folks, diba? I mean ikaw, for example, binigyan ka ng news release, so do you want to write about it or will you just publish it?

Interviewer: Actually, I work part-time for Cosmo, I write sometimes, so if I get news releases, I just get the important details. Kasi iba din po yung tone ng Cosmo, so I have to twist it to make it sound Cosmo-fied. I think depende din po sa publication.

Adonna Tan: Oo, so 'yun. But if it's um, that's the difference. Kasi, if you're just working in a magazine, and someone sends you a news release, you have time to change it, kasi you know, your deadline is not as tight as let's say, if you're working in Inquirer, or in Star. Because usually, their deadline is Thursday or Friday, they have to have the story up for Sunday. So if you're a columnist, you have to come up with something by this week. So if you're super busy, kasi hindi naman isa lang yung story niya for the whole week diba, he has a lot of stories everyday. So I think that's one of the reasons why they just publish it as it is.

Interviewer: Next question po. **Can you cite ways by which you think technology journalism could be improved?**

Adonna Tan: Dumami sila. Dumami yung magsulat at magbasa sa kanila. Kasi for me, it's important that people are actually reading the things that you're writing. I've been in Level Up! for three years. I've been dealing with technology writers for three years and I've actually seen the same people. Kumbaga, hindi dumadami yung mga sumusulat. And it's not as glamorous as lifestyle. So there's still a lot of room to grow for the industry. And because, unlike in the US where iPad is just iPad, here, wow, you're so sosyal, may iPad ka. Yun yung difference kasi, sa technology kasi, we're kind of behind. Our country is behind. So it's not like, it's not like in the US where you log in and you actually check IGN.com to see what is the newest game because you can actually afford it. Here kasi, usually the ones who get to afford these games are medyo upper middle class and most of the people who read, most of the people who are supposedly the target audience of these writers aren't really that, I mean, they get to buy new phones, what, when it's December, when they get their thirteenth month pay? Diba, it's not like in the US na, wow, may iPad ano na, something, itapon ko na 'to. Papalitan ko na siya. It's not like that. Partly also because it's a high involvement product. If you're reviewing let's say, a cellphone, a high-end cellphone. High involvement siya, hindi siya yung parang, toyo or something. Hindi siya FMCG. Hindi lahat ng tao chine-check or fino-follow, kumbaga, ikaw, nagreresearch ka lang kung may pera kang pambili diba? I mean, let's say, would you everyday check what the writer is saying? If you are going to buy let's say a high end SLR camera, would you go check him? There's really a lot of ano, it's also because there is very limited audience and there's very limited interest.

Interviewer: We touched on this na po with the press releases, pero **could you please describe your interaction with the press whenever there is news coverage?**

Adonna Tan: Usually there's two ways of doing it. One is, if there's just some message that you need to go out, to go public with, you usually just send them a news release and update them, call them up, tell them hey, something's happening in the company, this is what is happening, we just want to update you. If you find it newsworthy enough, I hope you can help me spread the news. But if for example, for us kunwari there's a big developer, a Korean developer who's coming to the Philippines to do off the record stuff, ano siya, usually we organize an event, organize a meet-up for them so they can interview them. So there's two ways of doing it usually. You have face time with them, or you just send them out a news release. They're not as high maintenance as lifestyle editors or news editors kasi in the real world, usually, what PR people do is they make ligaw. It sounds evil. I mean, usually, when you're growing up, you tell yourself, "Hey! I want to be a journalist someday. I want to be like Jessica Soho or something. Gusto kong maging kagaya ni Cheche Lazaro. You know, I'm gonna do hard hitting news and I'm gonna win this award and all that stuff." And then when you're older, you'll realize na "Hey, teka lang, kailangan ko pala magpadala ng cake dun sa editor para ilabas niya yung news ko." So then, they're not as high maintenance. Kasi usually what I do is I just usually give them a call. Kung baga... I don't know, maybe, it's also my relationship with them because we've become friends after working for some time already... at sila-sila rin naman yung nasa beat. Kung may events, sila-sila rin nagkikita, sila-sila rin

magkakakilala, tapos sila-sila rin nag-shashare ng information. "Hoy, alam mo ba na ganito nangyari? O, talaga? Sige, tatawagan ko siya so I could write about it."

It's not like... I've worked in real estate company before. Usually, the ones that we talk to are news writers and lifestyle editors. The PR editor actually goes out of her way to buy things for them, and you know... Pag-Christmas, di ba masaya? So something like that. So medyo liniligawan sila. Unlike, my relationship with them. We usually just go out, have a drink, but hindi naman madalas. Once in a blue moon pag nagkikita lang kami, 'Uy anong ginagawa mo? Let's have a drink,' something na ganoon. But we don't really talk about 'Uy ilabas mo naman yung press release ko. Hindi siya ganoon. It's a different world altogether.

Interviewer: InterAno po yung mga events that PlaWeb holds?

Adonna Tan: Are you familiar with Level Up! Life? It's our annual event, it's attended by over twenty thousand gamers every year. We do it at World Trade Center, it's the biggest event that we have. There are tournaments. Yung mga championships ng mga tournaments, we have them there. And then once they win we send them to different places like Korea and Japan to represent the country. Kalaban nila mga Koreans and Americans. 'Yan, ganoon siya. That's one of the events na we invite the press people to go to. Kasi kumbaga it's newsworthy, there's an element of an international competition.

Interviewer: Do you think it's sufficient po, yung coverage nila sa inyo?

Okay naman, kumbaga parang, it's also ano eh. It sounds kind of conniving but it also depends on your relationship din kasi with the writers. If you treat them right, if you treat them with respect, diba? If you have something newsworthy to say, they will come out with it. If you mistreat them, or kunwari there's an event, pinabayaan mo sila, siyempre you wouldn't really expect them to, you know, be all friendly with you. Kasi tao 'yan eh. You have to treat them properly. If they ask you something, if they need to get a quote from you, you have to help them. You have to accommodate them. I'm pretty much happy naman with how our relationship is going. Although I really feel that they're growing old and they need new blood writing these things. Kasi hindi sila nadadagdagan. Some of the people that I've met who are writing for the tech beat, were kind of young, younger than the editors who I'm usually in contact with. Parang after a while, they move on to a different beat. Like a friend of mine used to write technology, now she's doing travel, which is a more glamorous beat. So, 'yun siya, hindi sila nadadagdagan.

Interviewer: Any last words on your general perception of the technology journalism in the Philippines right now?

Adonna Tan: Like I mentioned earlier, there's really room for it to grow further. Kumbaga, it hasn't reached to that level yet where people actually wait for the writers to come up with something. It's not like in sports where first thing in the morning, you don't even check the headline. You turn over the newspaper and you check the sports section at the back. It hasn't reached that position. And it's also because yung kumbaga eventually siguro, when the Philippines becomes more tech savvy, doon mag gro-grow yung readership niya. Kasi unless maging high tech tayo, nobody would be that interested. I

mean, ikaw ba gusto mong magbasa ng bagong Samsung Galaxy something kung wala kang pangbayad? Madedepress ka lang... There's still room for growth...

Pero actually ngayon, yung technology journalism is moving away from the printed medium. They're more on – these writers are actually making their own websites. It's how – even Game Magazine, if you're familiar with that magazine, it used to be a printed magazine. Now it's online, and then they just come out with a manipis na supplement. So, manipis nalang siya. It's not like before na talagang, you know, glossy, thick magazine. So there's really, kumbaga parang, nag e-evolve din siya. It's not ano eh. Kumbaga, hindi siya ganoon ka profitable kapag ginawa mo siyang print...

Hindi pa siya profitable. Kasi, the magazines online, the magazines that used to be printed materials are now going online because your cost is only very low. Diba, you just pay for the server, and then you pay for the domain name which is what, like five hundred pesos a year? So then everything else, advertising, goes directly to the operational costs na.

Interviewer: On that note din pala, very often, nakaranas ako ng mga press con na yung mga bloggers nag a-attend. They review din, or they talk about the games?

Adonna Tan: Yeah, they talk about the event, ganyan. We also give them a news release. Some of them, they put it directly, and some of them – kasi blogging is more personal. It's not like, it's not really, parang, delivering the news straight-out. It's more of, 'Oh, my experience here, it's so much fun, I won this, I won such and such. We ate this crap.' So ganoon siya. But also ha, blogging is not ano – there was this news that came out that blogging is not journalism. There was a – someone was sued because she said something, and she's a blogger, she was saying it's freedom of speech because she's part of the fourth estate. And then, as it turns out, the judge said na, no, you're not part of the ano, you're like the tenth estate or something. Basta hindi siya, kumbaga hindi ka journalist, kasi you have to be technically trained to be able to call yourself a journalist, to be able to claim that you're a journalist.

Interviewer: Parang, you can't claim these rights because you're not a journalist.

Adonna Tan: Oo, ganyan. Kasi diba if you're a journalist, if you're a trained journalist or writer, you have immunity in certain things if you're already working in the press. In as much as you are – if you're a political writer, in as much as you are in danger, you also have certain immunities. So kumbaga, since hindi naman siya technically trained na writer, she's just maintaining her personal blog, she can be sued for saying bad things about certain individuals or some companies.

Alexander "Alex Villafania
Multimedia Reporter
loQal.ph under Filquest Media Concepts, Inc
- **Personal interview conducted on March 20, 2012**

Interviewer: First question po. **How long have you been in the technology beat?**

Alex Villafania: Since 2001. So, up until now I still cover the technology beat, so that means around twelve years. Twelve years.

Interviewer: **What other beats have you worked in prior to the technology beat po?**

Alex Villafania: Prior? Nag regional na din ako, Pangasinan, pero ano lang, correspondent lang for Manila Bulletin. That was in, if I'm not mistaken, late 1999 to early 2000. Ayun. So, ang beats ko doon, iba iba. Depende kung anong stories yung available for Pangasinan. Ayun, it could be um, politics, uh, business, mga SME businesses, mga ganoon. Tapos, agriculture. Ayun.

Interviewer: So **ano po yung mga forms of education or training na you could say you've gone through to prepare yourself for writing mga tech stories?**

Alex Villafania: In terms of education, hindi mo naman actually kailangan. Um, of course there's the basic question of basic journalism requirements, although those are – there are skills that you'd, you can learn along the way, if you intend to be a journalist, first and foremost. If you do want to become a tech journalist, there's no really a requirement for um, a course or an education na for you to become a tech reporter. What you do need is some basic information on technology. It could be anything – knowledge about software, hardware, the technology business industry, maraming aspects 'yon eh. You just need to review, first, how to become a journalist, and then to review the industry you want to cover. There have been a lot of stories in the past that you can review, that you can use as basis for your, for you to become a tech journalist.

Interviewer: Okay. Ano po pala yung undergraduate course niyo?

Alex Villafania: Anglo-American literature, UP Diliman, 1995 to 1999. So, as you can see, I wasn't really an ano. First and foremost, I wasn't a journalist. I wasn't a journalism graduate, and I wasn't covering the tech beat, or rather I didn't have any prior knowledge about the technology beat industry at that time. Although what I did have was some information about the technology industry. Parang personal knowledge ko lang 'yon.

Interviewer: Okay. So, **where do you get stories for the beat po, usually?**

Alex Villafania: Um, if you're starting out, siguro you have to work with other reporters who are already covering the technology beat. So if you are starting out, you can ask your editors for some, yung current editors mo – for information on who to approach first. Usually it's the PR. Usually. Kasi sila yung may mga handles sa technology companies eh. Most technology companies now have their own public relations companies. So if

your editor knows some of them, he or she can just give you their names, and then at the same time, once you already work with them, touching base with them – you can ano, you can get noticed. Eventually, through your stories from the earlier press companies that you talk to, and then you get invited. So you get invited. And then, once you become ano, once you become um, known na, once you learn the ropes of how to become a journalist, pwede kayong maging enterprising. You can interview other people. You can start becoming enterprising, you can ask questions outside the press conference. Kunwari, there's an issue on electronic garbage. Hindi niyo na kakausapin yung PR. Diretso na kayo sa gumagawa ng e-garbage company, or yung companies that focus on e-garbage. Kung wala kayong kilala, use the web to get information on who to talk to.

Interviewer: Sir, just for background, what were you writing about sa technology beat? Ngayong nasa beat na kayo, what did you write about, what are you writing about now?

Alex Villafania: Ah okay, the type of stories I write on the tech beat. Tama ka doon. Good thing you asked that, kasi, in the technology beat, there are a lot of topics that you can focus on. There's software, there's hardware, there's – doon pa lang, there's so many, iba iba pa yung laman noon ha. And then you have the technology industry as a, in the contact center industry, outsourcing industry, ganoon. So, 'yun, yun yung mga tinututukan ako. Actually lahat sila halos. As long as it's related to the technology – information communication technology, itatackle ko 'yon. It could be business, e-commerce, hardware reviews, software reviews, even. Development, like yung mga students in UP or Ateneo or La Salle that are doing research on software and hardware. Start-up companies that are coming up with an online business, like Cash Cash Pinoy, mga ganoon, or Yahoo Philippines, even. I can interview them. So basically lahat sila.

Interviewer: Pero you no longer write for gaming? About gaming?

Alex Villafania: Gaming, I still do, pero limited na kasi, right now gaming as an industry is a different animal altogether. It's not something that you can put in sa technology pa lang eh. It can also be in the entertainment business. Yes, they use software and then hardware together pero, in the same manner na there are movies. Movies are also developed for creative use in technology. So nasa entertainment din sila. Gaming can be in the entertainment business, so ang hirap siyang i-cover, at least in my case now, kasi hindi na 'yun yung tutok talaga eh.

Interviewer: You were – nag interview din po kami sa Playweb, and you were mentioned. A lot.

Alex Villafania: Yeah, ganoon ako katanda. O sige, just to clarify, kami nina Erwin (Oliva) yung magkasama noon, Inquirer.net nung time na kami yung magkakasama, merong gaming section called Hackenslash. I'm sure the guys from Playweb mentioned that. Ayun, so everyday meron kaming news on gaming.

Interviewer: **Who are the sources that you often rely on for information po sa mga stories?**

Alex Villafania: Usually and often, and it's always a rule of thumb, na if you can get to the primary source, do so. Primary source being the people who you interview – the

CEO's of companies, the developers of the software or of the hardware, the – in the case of politics kapag merong ICT law na dinedevelop, the congressmen or the senators who are doing the law. So, throughout your coverages, you have to learn how to develop your contacts. Get their names, get their numbers, get their emails if you can, kasi after that, you would eventually use them if you were to focus on a story that's outside, you know, normal day to day mo, uh, grind mo. If you think that there's a good story, you can always go through your list of sources. So, ayun. Always go for the primary sources.

Interviewer: Yung next question namin po is, **how would you compare the technology beat with other beats in the newspaper?**

Alex Villafania: In newspapers ha.

Interviewer: Opo, in newspapers. In print. Encompassing nalang.

Alex Villafania: Alright. Encompassing?

Interviewer: Media encompassing.

Alex Villafania: Media encompassing. Okay. Kasi when you say newspaper, iba rin yung level of competition and, ano to, um, cooperation with the online and the print eh. In fact, there's also a tech reporter for radio. So, I forgot kung nasan na siya ngayon.

Interviewer: More on **print and online** po siguro.

Alex Villfania: Print. O sige. So your question is, compare and contrast the technology beat in the newspaper and online. Sa online kasi, the advantage is, you can write the story immediately as it happens. The moment that you get the story, the moment that you are interviewing someone, you can already write your story. Case in point, I use a Blackberry. During the time na nasa Inquirer.net kami, we were among, we were actually the first reporters to ano. Si Erwin, actually was the first reporter to break stories, just using a Blackberry. So ganoon yung speed. Unlike sa newspaper that you have to wait until the next day for a story to come out. For some people, it's too late. Kasi kumbaga, that's yesterday's news. Ngayon with online, you can actually get information on your mobile phones. That's how fast it can be here. Online is faster, newspaper's slow. But it doesn't necessarily mean that slow is bad. Sa online kasi, there's a tendency for some reporters who are in a hurry to break a story, to make mistakes. And it's hard not to make a mistake. You will always find some problem with the story that you're breaking. Kasi it might be wrong, the information that you got might be wrong, although you did your due diligence to say na ito yung nakuha ko from your source. What if the source is wrong? So you didn't do your due diligence in fact. Sa newspaper, they have the luxury of time to develop the story. Kapag may, let's say ala una nang hapon they got the story, they try to get both sides of the story na they have to talk to several people, na doon nila makikita if there are discrepancies in the story. If there's someone who's making a mistake or if there's someone who's making a lie, making a lie or telling the truth. So you cannot develop that kind of comprehensive story, a really long comprehensive story, if you were to write in a newspaper. Sa online, time is also a luxury of course. Kasi you can write your story anytime. But if you're writing just one story, you're just taking one side. You're not taking two, four sides. Ang mangyayari, you have to update the story.

Everytime you get a new person to interview, saka mo lang i-u-update yung story. Which is both an advantage as well. But again, you can't be assured na the story would stand kasi baka may mistake kayo. Ayun.

Interviewer: Follow up question po on that. In comparison to the other beats po, do you think it is, the technology beat is a neglected beat?

Alex Villafania: Technology? Hindi naman. O sige, sa beat pala, sorry, hindi ko pa nakumpleto yung sagot ko. Sa mga beats kasi, I can't say naman na it's a, what was the term you used? Na neglected? It's not neglected. In fact, it's actually growing. But not in the same manner as traditional news companies. Kasi, TV companies, newspaper companies, even radio companies, have difficulty adapting to the tech beat eh. Kasi honestly it's difficult to learn. Marami kang kailangan pag aralan na terms. Things that you might not hear from one, let's say doon sa hardware. Terminologies palang doon, isang libro na. Iba pa yung software, iba pa yung terminologies doon. So you have to learn that eh. So hindi siya, napag iiwanan sa traditional media. Pero yung new media, online, there are bloggers who are covering ano, the technology industry, sila na rin yung nagtatake ng responsibility to report about technology. But it doesn't mean naman na newspapers and TV companies are not reporting about technology. Um, mahaba-habang usapan din yan, pero I don't, I can't say na it's neglected, but I think it's a bit slow in the adaption in terms of – from the traditional media. Sa online media, sa new media, mabilis. Sa ibang beats naman, hindi siya – ang hirap i-compare din sa ibang beats. Kasi other beats are just as difficult to cover if you're not familiar with it. Um, case in point sa motoring. If there's another company na medyo mahirap i-cover, it's motoring, kasi you have to learn the terminologies of an engine. Plus, you can't say na one car is the same as the other, just by looking at them. So, meron pa yang mga terms na underpowered, na ano to, the RPN start at the low gears, not at the high gears, etcetera etcetera. So, merong specific type talaga ng mga media companies na tumututok sa ganyang mga beat. Motoring, tech, finance, banking, business, shipping, even. So, lahat sila merong kanya-kanyang mga silos for information, and audience. So hindi siya neglected, hindi ko rin siya makumpara sa iba kung sino mas maganda. Kasi again, iba ang readership ng mga yon.

Interviewer: Sir, sa beats po kasi, parang, may mga prior interviews na rin po kami at sinasabi nila na parang, bakit ka pa maglalaan ng maraming space for tech imbes na maglagay ka nalang ng advertisment. Do you think tech should stay online?

Alex Villafania: Okay. There's a reason din why the newspapers are thinking – I'm sure newspaper ang nagsabi niyan. And TV.

Interviewer: Opo.

Alex Villafania: Kaya nga tinatanong ko sa inyo kanina kung in a context of a newspaper yung comparison or other beats eh. Kasi, ang newspapers, they have a problem with space. Sa TV, they have a problem with time. Technology, ang technology kasi, ang hirap i-report in two minutes, in a two minute story. If you try to watch other news organization like CNN, even Fox News, um, even New York Times kapag meron na rin silang videos, um, hindi lang two minutes yung technology news nila eh. It could reach

up to five minutes eh. Kasi ang daming aspects ng isang technology story na kailangan pag-usapan. If it's a phone review or a gadget review, it could be a little ano, it could be between three to five minutes, kasi alangan naman sabihin mo the TV is nice, that's it, di ba? Ano ba yung technology nung TV na maganda? It has LEDs, it uses energy efficient ano, um, engines, it has wifi capabilities, and you have to expound on that. So yung mga TV companies dito, TV stations dito have that problem with that two to three minute video eh, hanggang doon lang yung limit nila eh. Sa newspaper, kapag sinasabi nilang advertisement kasi, technology companies – *hindi sila madalas mag advertise kasi eh*. Only a few companies advertise, there's Intel, there's HP. There's Apple, there's Samsung.

Interviewer: Bakit po?

Alex Vilafania: Uh. You sure you wanna go through that? Mahaba 'yan. But kasi, just for the record, hindi lahat ng technology companies are focusing on everyone. If you notice sa technology advertisements, they're focused on everyone eh. People who don't have laptops, people who don't have mobile phones, people who don't have internet capabilities on their phones. You have Globe and Smart selling ano kasi eh, data services eh. And they're targeting everyone. So, in the same manner as ano, as, parang, companies like Proctor and Gamble. If I'm a company that's not selling to everyone, I can't advertise in a newspaper. Kasi, I'm not targeting my audience eh. I'm only targeting a specific audience. Sa magazine na lang ako mag aadvertise. And that editor, who that person is who said na bakit hindi nalang sila nag advertise, kasi – sorry, sasabihin ko na lang napaka closed minded niya. Maraming magandang stories out of IT. Gadget reviews, stories about uh, just recently kakasulat ko lang – estudyanteng nagsulat ng ano, ay nanalo nang competition on software development uh, two days ago. Three days ago rather. Ayun. Those are stories that are compelling kasi they are encouraging people to become, you know, entrepreneurs or developers. Ayun, so I don't think it's just about the hardware advertisements, but rather on the more compelling side of IT that could help people in their daily lives.

Interviewer: Yun nga po, kasi we've also interviewed an IT company, na sinabi nila they're not really into advertising. They don't really talk to the press.

Alex Villafania: Exactly. Some companies are like that, and you can't force them not to. Kasi, hindi lahat ng tao market nila eh. Hindi sila tubig, hindi sila hotdogs.

Interviewer: They didn't explain din kasi why. Ayun po.

Alex Villafania: Naalala ko lang, we were wondering what "motoring" was, because it was also mentioned in another – tas sabi ko, cars? Tama ba? About cars siya?

Interviewer: Oo. Motoring. Transportation and motoring are under the same beat. So lahat nang mga nakikita niyo sa kalsada. Anything that's on the road, even things that are flying are also considered as transportation. Motoring is specific to cars and motorcycles.

Interviewer: Okay. Next question po is, **what are the elements that make a publishable tech story?**

Alex Villafania: Ayan, medyo madali yan. For one thing, it has to be understandable. Madaling sabihin pero mahirap gawin. Um, can you explain to me what a D-RAM is? Can you explain to me the difference between an L2 cache and an L3 cache? And do you know where and L2 and L3 cache are? It's in a processor. Can you describe to me the difference between a CPU and a GPU? So if you were to write those in a story and target it to everyone, walang magbabasa. But if you were to write it in such a way na it's targeted to a very specific market, let's say, ako tech guy ako. Si Edil, tech guy. Edil is one of the our kasama dito sa opisina. Marunong siya sa technology, and if I were to write the things that I was telling you – CPU, GPU, maiintindihan niya kaagad eh. It's okay, kasi siya lang yung target ko. People who are like him are my specific audience. But if I were in a newspaper and I'm targeting everyone, I have to explain what a GPU is, what a CPU is, and what are their differences, which makes a story a lot longer. Still, it's not a problem kasi it helps you develop that writing style to make that article, that story, understandable. But if you really can't get away with the fact na hindi lahat ng tao iintindihin yan, in fact they don't even care about the technology behind it, they just want to see the laptop work – if it's fast for them, okay lang. I don't care if it's a very ultra fast CPU or an ultra fast graphics card. Gusto ko lang siyang gumana. Then write it in a way na ganoon ang pagkakabasa nila. Say for example this netbook. The netbook is small, it has a bright LCD screen, which you could understand, di ba? Keyboards are big enough for people with large fingers, even for its size, and it has wifi, it has bluetooth, ganyan ganyan ganyan. Things that are already basic for the regular consumer. Okay, so yun yung understandable. You try to look at what's understandable to your audience. Always look at your audience, see if they could understand something like this. But if I were to go technical, let's say balik tayo kay Edil, the GPU ah, the CPU of the Asus Eee PC is an Intel Atom N2800 running at 1.6 Gigahertz. You think you could understand that? Hindi na eh. But a person like Edil could, and that's because he's my target audience. So again, one element of a good tech story is it has to be readable. It has to explain what the technologies are, that are being presented in the story. Ayun. Yun lang, basically that's it. Aside from the ano ha, aside from the basics of journalism na kailangan talaga short sentences, um, grammar, spelling, and accurate. Yon.

Interviewer: And also they should be, paano ba 'to. Important din na they come out on time, di ba?

Alex Villafania: On time. Yeah. But sa technology industry, hindi naman necessary talaga eh. That's another argument eh, na hindi na kailangan on time ngayon. Um, maghaba-habang usapan 'yon, but in this day and age where people would consume information on their time not from our time, even if we were to break our story now, eh you're not interested, our audience is not yet interested in reading it. Mamaya pa nila babasahin, then it's okay. The concept of breaking news is still there, pero hindi lahat ng tao mahilig sa breaking news. Thus, we do that in LoQal. Anyway, yeah.

Interviewer: Eighth question, based on your own assessment, **ano po yung mga problems ng tech beat and how would they be solvable?** *(His first answers fell under ethical issues encountered in the tech beat)*

Alex Villafania: Solvable. I noticed there was a – yung original list ninyo, may I see that one? Yeah um, yung mga receiving monetary – yan kasama yan. Uh, o sige. Honesty is

still a big problem sa tech beat. Like in any other industry – beat, any beat, honesty is still a problem. Why? Kasi, some reporters don't actually do their stories, sadly. And there are people in the journalism community and the blogging community who have, who post articles straight from a press release online, and put their bylines. They don't even – kahit man lang rewrite. Or add more information that they got from other, previous stories. Hindi nila ginagawa. So honesty is another problem. 'Yon. On the topic of honesty palang, haba ulit nang usapan niyan kasi, some reporters in the tech beat, just – dito lang sa tech beat, even claim na it's common practice. And it's not common – it's not supposed to be a practice, it's not a practice worthy of true journalism. Ayon. But there's also another argument. It's either you're a new media practitioner or you're a traditional practitioner, traditional media. New media practitioners would always claim na new media kami, we can do whatever we want. Fine, sige, do it your way. Be as dishonest as you can be. But you are propagating the idea of ano eh, of masking the truth eh. Technology industry to, don't take it as if it's just a fun beat eh. It's not, it's not always a fun beat to cover. As I've mentioned to you earlier, maraming kang aspetong pag aaralan. If you're being dishonest with your articles, what would happen if people believe you? It could ruin lives, it could ruin people, it could ruin someone. Case in point, there was this, yung latest incident, I don't know if you've noticed or if you've read this – yung labor problems sa China ng Apple? Yung sa factory na nagkakaroon daw sila ng – parang daw silang sweatshops, things like that. And then there was this guy claiming to be a journalist, who said na eto, these people were using this chemical to wash the motherboards of the iPhone 4, eh they're not using protective gear. And then people believed him. Pero there was a reporter, also from China, a foreigner, an American who was visiting China, who said na it doesn't add up. So pinuntahan niya yung planta, and then he found out na hindi totoo yung sinasabi nang American na 'yon. There was some truth that there was a labor problem in China, but it wasn't to that extent. So ninety percent of what this guy, this liar, said, was a total lie. Like I said, honesty is a problem, and people tend to believe what they see on the web, sadly. So, that's just one problem. See ang haba nung sa honesty palang. On the monetary side, yes, some people, some reporters have this gall to ask companies for favors. Just like in any industry, I can even say pati sa motoring may ganyan din. Sa banking, may ganyan din. Go to Congress, go to Senate, some reporters are also asking people for, in exchange for a good story, give me something. So sa technology industry, ganoon din. In exchange for a good review, give me something.

Interviewer: Sir, para sa inyo, ano ang okay? Ano ang within the bounds of ethical, of what is ethical?

Alex Villafania: That's a huge question to answer, but lemme answer it in a way na I do. Sige, let's say if I were to review a product. I am reviewing one, this one, that's a very expensive device. I'm given two weeks to review that. In two weeks, I'm returning that. All in its pristine, ano to, pristine condition. Madadamage in a bit, but yeah, that's expected kasi that's an equipment outside eh. But I'm still returning it. Some reporters don't. Some bloggers don't. They demand that it's given to them. So yon, those are the boundaries that we have for, for what's ethical. If it was given to you in good condition and in good manner, they entrusted it to you, you return it to them with the trust na you did not use it for something beyond its capabilities. So that's one thing about ethics.

Interviewer: We have a bullet list here, sir, about the problems in terms of, **yung problems sa tech beat.**

Alex Villafania: Ah okay. Readership, circulation… Ah, okay, mabilis lang 'to. Readership and circulation, I don't think it's a problem for online, but it is for newspapers and TV. As I mentioned earlier, there's a problem with time, and there's a problem with space. Time for TV and space for newspapers. Ayon, so that's one problem. Availability of sources, I don't think it's a problem. In fact, there are a lot more sources now than – for us sa tech ha, there are a lot more sources now than we did several years ago, and eto, these guys can attest to that... Kasi before, it's harder to get a story, because there are only a few IT companies. So you only had a few sources that you can talk to. Now, because technology is within everyone's reach, mas madali nang gumawa nang storya. There are a lot of people to talk to. Even the ordinary user can be asked as a source. Um, not just one ha, multiple. How do you find the latest galaxy tab, how do you find the latest Sony camera? So doon palang mamemeasure mo na how people react to a specific service, specific product. Okay, so next bullet is number of tech reporters in media and how well versed they are with writing tech stories. Diusme.

Interviewer: On that po kasi, yung person that we interviewed sa Playweb, si Ma'am Adonna Tan…

Alex Villafania: Si Adonna, oo.

Interviewer: Yeah, yung sinasabi niya po kasi, ang konti po talaga nung tao sa tech beat kumbaga, according to her. That's according to her na parang, kayo kayo nalang daw lagi.

Alex Villafania: She's right about one thing, but at the same time – she's both right and wrong. Wrong kasi, there are a lot of writers now sa tech, largely because, half of the new people who write tech now, are online. And these are not journalists. These are bloggers. These are tech bloggers. And you cannot associate journalism with what they do. It's not as if we're closing the door for them. It's because the nature of blogging is different from the nature of journalism. We have editors who double check our stories, and we are responsible for the stories that we write. These guys, if they get flak for something that they wrote, which they did not edit, which they did not properly fact check, they can take down immediately. And they can say, okay, I'm sorry, tapos na. Tinanggal ko na yung istorya. Di ba? They don't – they cannot stand by their own stories. We have to support our own stories. We have to admit mistakes, if there are any. So the number of tech writers, medyo konti. Journalists ha. Pero marami na nagsusulat na tech writers. Ayun. Quality? I would say the tech journalists are still okay. Some grammatical problems and some factual problems. But overall it's okay, unlike the group that doesn't edit their – that don't edit their stories. Okay. **Avenue for growth**. Um, may I ask what this means?

Interviewer: Um, how it would be able to ano pa po, to grow, to grow as a beat.

Alex Villafania: As a beat, ah okay. There's still lots of avenues for growth. But the growth is not in terms of quantity, but rather on quality. Quantity as I've mentioned earlier, marami ngang nagsusulat. Quality in terms of how they write, how these guys are

writing. Case in – if I may muna, diba Yahoo nga yung boss niyo. Yahoo gave us some information that among the most read stories are tech stories. Yung mga trending stories nila are technology stories, after entertainment. Alright, so marami talagang nagbabasa ng tech. Kasi, kaya maraming nagsusulat, kasi maraming nagbabasa. Pero the quality is still the bigger question. So the growth is more on how people should learn how to write better. Rather than knowing the technology. Kasi the technology could be taken from a press release. Kasi the company gave us the, who showed that the product, has all the specs on the press release. All they have to do is interpret that ano, specification. Write it in, o this one is better, that one is better, this one is less quality because it has lesser specs, ganyan. Ayun. So, quality is still a bigger reason. Okay, other challenges the tech beat faces that may come in mind? Maraming patay gutom na tech journalists. No yeah, I'm serious about that. They only attend just for the food in the press conference and the giveaways. Which is not nice kasi you're invited to look at the story, look at the product, and see if it's worth writing for you. You don't go there just for free lunch, and you don't bring your family when you're covering.

Interviewer: There are people who do that? I did not know this.

Alex Villafania: Yes there are. Some people do that. I can't say lang na journalists don't, ha. But there are a few that have been a few. Pero that was because may prior knowledge yung company that was inviting, na kunwari ako, sasabihin ko na darating po ako may kasama akong plus one or plus three. Is it okay? Tapos sige sige, sure, sure, sure, ganoon. Unlike some who just barge in with their wife and kids in tow. And there have been instances, I was there.

Interviewer: Alright, sige sir... Alright, so, last question. We can close this, so can we just ask **your perception of tech journalism as a whole in the Philippines as you see it right now?**

Alex Villafania: Ah okay sige, ah parang summary na lang? Okay. Tech journalism is growing. Both in terms of the manpower and the people who write it and in terms of quality. There are still problems that the tech beat still faces. But only because there's a new group of media people who are changing the way how journalism works. And these are the bloggers. Um, in the same manner that the journalism industry had to grow for hundreds of years, for at least two hundred years, to develop their own journalism standards, bloggers have to develop their own journalism standards. If they are to are to become the next wave of journalism, they have to practice their own standards. It doesn't necessarily have to be journalism. Sa tech, it applies that whatever journalism, whatever the basics of journalism there is, it applies to tech. And there's still – on another part, there's still a lot of good stories to be written. There are new technologies coming up, there are types of people, businessmen who are using technology for their, you know, for their business. So those are the types of stories that you can focus on as a tech journalist. Not just on the hardware, not just on the software, but people. That's something that I think would have to be developed over time. It's not going to happen soon, but I think as bloggers start to learn from their mistakes, as well as journalists, they would start knowing that the real story would come not from the technology industry itself, but on the people who use the technology. That's it.

Brian Joseph Patrick Yalung
Online Head / Internet Manager
The Mania Bulletin
- **Personal interview conducted on February 27, 2012**

Interviewer: We'll start with the first question. **How long have you been working in the technology beat?**

Brian Yalung: Technology beat, not specifically here in Bulletin. I've been in IT for… When was that? Since 1997, but not specifically about writing. It's really yung IT, the whole system about IT that involves programming, research analysis, designing, sometimes hardware troubleshooting, everything about IT.

Interviewer: So **when did you start writing?**

Brian Yalung: I started writing ever since in high school, that was way back in '84, I was very fond with writing but not in a commercial level. The big break came in 2006 when some friends asked me if I wanted to write for a foreigner. It was called __ writing. Back then, (it was called) ___ writing and then the Americans (asked me) if I wanted to blog. It was in blogging that I developed my name, even before blogging boomed here, if you searched *siguro* in the internet, you'll find several interviews *na* with Bandila, the one with ANC. Because of that, it just so happened that the grandsons of Don Emilio were friends of mine. Then two years ago, that was 2010, I was surprised to get a call from them asking me if I could take on their online version which was surprising because I don't have a journalism background. That's it. Since 2010, I have been handling all of their online – there's Manila Bulletin, Tempo and Balita.

Interviewer: So when you started in journalism, talagang tech beat na?

Brian Yalung: Oo, tech beat na.

Interviewer: So **what forms of education or training would you say you have gone through to prepare yourself for writing tech stories?**

Brian Yalung: More on experience, eh. I wouldn't say that I have undergone any kind of training, noh. It's more on, siguro, the indirect training that I have received from the foreigners. Kumbaga, I studied everything online. They were also teaching me back then before I took it as a hobby. Now it's a profession. As far as I'm concerned, on my part, it's more on self-study and ginawa ko.

Interviewer: Ah. Changing of times.

Brian Yalung: Oo, changing of times and talagang gusto ko siya. I mean, something I love so for me, even if it takes up practically 24/7 of my time, because I really have no rest talaga. If I think of something, I want to write it na eh. I've tried thinking of something then I'll try it tomorrow, it vanishes… nawawala.

Interviewer: Sir, what's your undergrad pala? IT?

Brian Yalung: Yeah, in De La Salle Benilde.

Interviewer: So you know all these tech stuff na talaga from the start?

Brian Yalung: Yeah, pero mostly naman it's online eh. There are things that you learn in college but the important thing is not only what you get from college.

Interviewer: Sir, our next question is **where did you get your stories for the beat?** Sinu-sino po yung mga sources niyo?

Brian Yalung: The usual, the wires, sa AP (Associated Press), Xinhua, iba-iba siya eh. Then yung mga iba, yung mga umiikot. Minsan umiikot, getting invited. Minsan, word of mouth like those who are inviting us to events like press releases. Parang it's a chain na rin. Mostly, I'm trying to focus on local eh kasi international is really easy. Kumbaga, if you pick news from, sabi ko sa wires, it's not really original news. But people are just going to read original news.

Interviewer: What about yung mga corporations like Samsung, do you get stories from them?

Brian Yalung: Well, actually sometimes, it depends on the marketing, They invite us to events and they have their press releases, pero para mas maganda they invite us to join them and I guess you know what happens after that. They are expecting you to write about them.

Interviewer: So **how would you compare and contrast the technology beat from the other beats in the newspaper?**

Brian Yalung: In what aspect?

Interviewer: In terms of readership or the importance given to it, the prominence of the beat. Sa tingin niyo po ba, it's neglected?

Brian Yalung: A bit. Medyo, kasi may kanya-kanya naman tayong gusting basahin. Like for me, ako, I would rather read technology and sports over politics. Kumbaga, actually that's my niche. For every person, we're unique diba. We all have our interests so it's just a matter of trying to serve the interest of everybody. We cannot measure that. But if you're going to ask me right now, ang interest talaga ng mga tao ay, number one, it's entertainment. It's what I found out. It's still entertainment, sports, then politics. Again, depende, kasi lifestyle, not all people, hindi sila ganun ka-frequent (mag-basa). I can't say if it's neglected or not. It depends pa rin. It's too hard to measure.

Interviewer: So kung top 1 po yung entertainment sa nabanggit niyo, anong number na ang tech beat?

Brian Yalung: Tech beat. I think it's in the top 3 kasi we're in the age wherein everybody wants to have a gadget, everybody wants to have a tablet. But it depends on the age level. Kumbaga, sa inyo, I'm sure, a lot of you (read). Kunyari, lumabas yung iPhone5, "Oh! I

want that!" or if not, "I want to see what it's about. I want to see what the features are. Is it good?" or the reviews di ba? It depends on age because I the talk that I will go to tomorrow, people with ages 55 and up wouldn't care. I mean, I'm technically in that (age bracket) na, I wouldn't care. As long as I can call or text. I don't care if it doesn't have a camera. It depends on advancement eh. So sa mga generation niyo now, like my daughter, gusto niya may iPhone siya. It depends kung saan ka exposed eh.

Interviewer: Okay, so yung next question po naming is **what are the elements that make a publishable tech story?**

Brian Yalung: Mahirap yan ah. Well, siyempre, reader interest, consistency, reliability of the story that you are making kasi sometimes, there are writers who would write to get the interest kahit fictitious siya. Now, aside from a good composition, the facts should be there. As much as possible, yung mga quotes, you quoted from someone. It depends if you're talking about a person. If it's something na you're not pulling their leg. Yung talagang totoo siya.

Interviewer: So yung next po. **Based on your own assessment, what are the problems that you face in the tech beat and how are they solved? In terms of circulation, availability of sources, number of tech reporters in the media and avenue for growth.**

Brian Yalung: In media, as far as I'm concerned, for me, it's very scarce. Like... he's been appearing in Umagang Kay Ganda, si Arthur Samaniego. He is our editor for the tech news. Kunyari may bagong gadgets, or new technologies, Bulletin, we're the first daw. Sakin kasi, I look on the States-side not locally kasi we know naman that internationally, they're more advanced than us, although the technology and the gadgets are not here. Dito ang kulang I guess is the interest, the hunger. Siguro, some would prefer to write for foreigners because of the money, because they will get paid in dollars. There are writers/bloggersthat are trying but I feel that there are a lot of Filipino people who are excellent tech beat writers. Unfortunately, they would prefer to write abroad because they get paid better. Yung iba, minsan the pay you in dollars. I have experienced that already so I feel na people are more concerned about their monetary gains which is understandable because of the hard times. For example, why would I write for a local newspaper company and they would pay me around seven hundred bucks when I could write for an independent American who would pay me as much as 10 dollars for just three hundred words?

The 700 pesos that I was talking about is already a 1500 pesos worth article. Yun ang difference niya

Interviewer: You mentioned kanina na there is a lack of hunger and interest in writing the stories, bakit po kaya? Do you think it's because we do not have access to technology?

Brian Yalung: Kasi lack of interest in a sense na... Ganito na lang, not all techies are writers and not all writers are techies. Until you connect the two things. How a writer and a techie can benefit from your article or review. For me, it's connecting the dots. Pero once you find out, once you discover the things you can do, it's a bit too late. Yung

bloggers, it's only now that people have realized that they can write, and at the same time earn, from the comforts of their home. Like me, I have been here in 2006 pa. Before, when I was trying to get writing gigs, before coming here, it was very easy. I could earn as much as 100,000. Blogging lang! And you could stay at home. But now ang dami na. Sobrang dami na na they're really selecting. Ang kalaban mo dun, hindi pa mga Pilipino. Ang kalaban mo dun mga Indians, mga Americans, lumaki na. Parang lumabas ngayon, naitsapwera na yung mga Filipinos. So ako, swerte na ako. Tapos na ako eh. Pero I still blog pa rin. People ask me how to earn from writing, sabi ko, medyo mahirap na ngayon because the quantity is different so bale yun yung kulang tayo. We are slow to identify the things that we can be good at.

Interview: Do the tech stories necessarily have to stay online?

If you would ask me, I would publish everything on paper. Kaya lang that's the difference between online and a paper. A paper has limitations. I mean, we have hundreds of stories coming in but not everything gets published. I mean, ako, I write stories and hindi sila napupublish. The problem is limitation of space in the paper. How does a paper survive? A paper needs ads. So syempre, anong uunahin mo, storya mo o yung advertisers mo? The broadsheet, may limitation 'to. Compared to online, talagang wala. Sige, lagay ka lang ng lagay. Pag nagslow down yung server mo, buy additional space. It's easy. Dito hindi eh. Ano? Liliitan mo yung text? Sino pa magbabasa niyan?

Interviewer: **Have you ever encountered mga ethical dilemmas that you feel that ethical standards were being violated? Like receiving favours, monetary or otherwise in exchange for stories?**

Brian Yalung: As far as I'm concerned, I haven't considered that although I could. As far as the writers are concerned, I'm sure there is but I just don't want to investigate it and get into the details. On my end naman kasi, that will always be there eh. Kumbaga, if you're doing them a favour. Like in sports, yan, grabe yan. When I transacted with the PBA before I came here, there are people they term as retainers or people who write for you to build up reputation. Sakin naman, parang di ko mafeel eh. I cannot imagine myself receiving bribes. I cannot see myself accepting it. Surely, for example, you are given a shirt or free passes, that's okay. Hindi ka naman yayaman dun di ba. For example, I'll write this article but you'll give me 15,000 a month di ba. Mga ganun. That's true. It happens. But the problem is, you're walking on a thin line and if the company finds out, you're out because it's unethical. But as far as pinning down those people... I cannot speak for the company you know. Basta I know there are. Pero basta ako, I'm proud to say, they cannot pin anything on me. Kasi I won't sacrifice my credibility, where I am for that.

Interviewer: Follow up question po. Isa po kasi sa core issues ng study naming ay yung **media-source relationships**. Okay naman po ba yung mga sources natin na nagbibigay ng opportunities for you to cover?

Brian Yalung: There's a benefit on their side. Kumbaga, kung may nagsabi sakin na namatay si Noynoy, it doesn't go straight online or to the papers. Kumbaga, it undergoes

a tedious process. You have to verify eh. They are reliable sources. Some come from the government, some come from associations.

Interviewer: How about from technology corporations? From gadgets companies?

Brian Yalung: It comes from them, from the companies themselves. You talk to them. We are avoiding libellous things. As much as possible, we refrain from controversial issues without facts. So far, sa tech namin, wala naman kaming na-encounter na problems. Up to now, I haven't heard anything. Most of the time, sa entertainment and national pero sports and tech, wala. Wala masyadong controversies diyan.

Interviewer: Sir, I just want an update sana on a previous study. What are the usual stories under tech?

Brain Yalung: Actually we try to include everything but for now, more on gadgets. Apple, number one yan. Android. Ano pa ba?

Interviewer: Do they let you use the gadgets?

Brian Yalung: Actually, there are people who, I mean I would also contribute to the tech. Para makahawak naman ng bagong gadget kaya lang you have to… kumabaga dapat secluded ka. Eh ako, nasa editorial ako. So kumbaga, last month, sabi nila, sige itry mo tong ipod touch. Eh sabi ko, pano ko naman ittry yan eh hindi ko alam edi pinatay ako ng editorial sa ingay. Pano yan? We actually try it and we also have a team of bloggers who write on that aside from the in-house, meron na silang kanya kanya. But the problem with that is timing ng pagsusubmit, minsan, parang hindi on time. That's why I offer my services (from time to time). Buti na lang hindi, kasi busy nga ako with Sports kasi Sports naman ngayon is pulling me to write articles.

Interviewer: So what do you mean not on time?

Brian Yalung: If you're a blogger, a freelance writer, you are not, in any way compelled to submit everytime. Parang it's like, no work, no pay. So you're still there. Kumbaga, "kailangan mo ako eh." Pag hindi ako nagsubmit, edi wag mo ako bayaran. That's their attitude. Kumbaga, wala ka nang hawak sakanila.

Interviewer: Last question na po. **What's your take on the general status of the tech beat in the Philippines?**

Brian Yalung: Actually, we already have a lot of writers. The problem is, they would prefer to write for abroad. Me, if you ask me, I would like to write tech articles abroad if I had the chance. But how to entice the local, parang ganun? I don't think you should entice. I think you should find a way how to let them (be interested), yung mga ano, locally.

It's a common habit of the Filipino. Anong uunahin? Pili mo? O pangangailangan mo? Yun yung naiisip kong problem. But when it comes to the writers, sobrang dami na sa Pilipinas kaya lang they're not writing here for the Philippines. No, they are writing in

the Philippines but not FOR the Philippines. You would be surprised, if you check the blogs, a lot of them are written by Filipinos.

Erwin Lemuel Oliva
Country Editor
Yahoo! Philippines
- **Personal interview conducted on March 17, 2012**

Erwin Oliva: Nag-start yung tech beat sa Philippines noong mga mid nineties. Yung time when, noong kwan to eh, time ni Ramos pa 'to. Si Ramos kasi at that time, he wanted to champion yung technology – Philippines as the technology hub, blah blah blah. Tapos, noong time rin noon, 1995 up to 1998, pumutok ang internet, remember?

Interviewer: Yeah. Ilang taon na ako noon, seven?

Erwin Oliva: Seven palang kayo, kami nandoon na. So, nagsimula yung technology beat from – there were two rival companies noon, one was called Metropolitan Computer Times, which was a trade publication focused on the industry, covering the industry. Yung industry noon may telecom, may computers, may IBM's pa 'yan of the day. Meron pang mga companies noon na hindi na nag eexist ngayon na kinocover pa namin. Noong pumasok ako nung technology beat, 1998 pa 'yon eh.

Interviewer: Seven years old.

Erwin Oliva: Nakarecord ba 'yan? Hindi kayo nagno-notes, dapat nagno-notes kayo.

Interviewer: Sige Sir, go lang... Dalawa naman eh, may back up naman.

Erwin Oliva: So 'yon. One of the first publications was *Computer Times*. Tapos may lumabas after a few years, *Computer World*. Dalawa sila na nagcocompete noon. May other companies na nagtayo like IT Update, pero yung number one and two noon was those two publications. So, out of that group, yung two companies na 'yon were focused on the industry. Later on, even the newspapers started putting out IT-related stories. When you say information technology kasi, napakalawak niyan. Hindi lang siya technology, hindi lang siya gadgets. Maraming topics 'yan na includes policies in government, it includes decisions ng corporation, industry movements. Pag maraming nagreresign noon, kami ang laging unang nakakabreak ng storya. Oo, sa Inquirer noon. So nagstart ako noon sa Computer Times, 1998. It came from a medical magazine, nagshift ako sa technology din. Ang kinocover ko noon, government at saka…

…So Computer Times was talagang hardcore technology, meaning I wrote about products ng technology companies, I covered the industry, pero when I was there, I sort of thought – kasi noon uso yung ano eh, may tinatawag silang H1B visa, for technology, may special visa noon ang government. Yung US government pala, gives them to technology guys, engineers, to attract them to the US. So that was a big issue before. I wrote a special report na, okay lang. Tapos pumutok yung Y2K. Remember that? Noong bata pa kayo. Yung Y2K bug.

Interviewer: Ay oo.

Erwin Oliva: Naalala niyo 'yon? Ayan. So, from 1990-2000, yan na yung major story, na hindi naman nangyari. Parang sabi kasi nila noon na pagpatak ng 2000, all the machines in the world would stop. Kasi parang, from 1999, pag ikot niya yan, 0000. May mga count – internal clocks kasi yung mga machines before, pero hindi naman nangyari. Kasi at that time, computers weren't designed to last more than ten decades, more than a century. So that was the issue before. It was like, people covering, telling us na, 'Oy we have a solution to ease your problem. Para hindi magkaroon ng bank run, whatever, blah blah blah.' So when 2000 happened, nothing happened. Pero at that time, wala na si Ramos noon eh, it was si… Sinong presidente noon?

Interviewer: Erap.

Erwin Oliva: Mmhmm. Good. So si Erap, may ginawa siyang ano noon, parang Y2K Czar. Siya yung taga-solve ng problema, at kilala niyo kung sino 'yon. Yung may ari ng AMA. Tingnan mo? Kaya lahat kami noon parang, huh? Anong alam mo sa Y2K, business eh. So lahat ng mga appointments ni Erap noon kine-question namin. So, during that time, ang stories ng technology noon was basically Y2K, mga ganoon. Then, I was part of an organization called *Cyberpress or IT Journalists' Association of the Philippines*. Yun yung long name noon. In short, Cyberpress. So, we had like many members from different publications noon. So, I became president for three years, hesitantly. I didn't want to become president pero dahil wala nang iba, linagay nila ako doon. And then ano ba nangyari noon. After 2000, kinick-out namin si Erap. Yung mga stories naman noon, tungkol sa mga revolution ng mobile, ng SMS. At the time noon nagpi-peak na yung revolution ng SMS to the point na kinakabit nila sa People's Revolution. May lumabas na story noon na, EDSA 2 wouldn't have happened kung wala yung SMS. Saka yung LRT, MRT noon. Kaya namobilize yung buong Pilipinas noon, dahil sa SMS. Nag text text text lahat ng tao na gather tayo sa EDSA. Ayun, nabuo. Yun ang naging storya all over from time to time, sa New York Times, sa Washington. Yung ang tema ng kwento na, ang Pilipinas, isa sa mga example na parang ginamit and technology to hold a revolution. Ngayon, repeat ng history, Facebook naman yung nagiging kwan.

Interviewer: Yung KONY?

Erwin Oliva: Oo. So Facebook was used by the Egyptians, remember? Etong Egypt na 'to. Diba nagstart ang revolution nila dahil sa Facebook? Everything emanated there. Eventually, noong nakita nila yung example ng Egypt, the other Middle Eastern countries followed suit. Kaya ngayon ang gulo gulo ng Middle East. They're trying to topple their own President or whatever. Anyway, nag digress na ako. So, ang tech beat noon, we really started from a very technical writing na tech na style, tapos eventually the newspapers picked it up and they wanted to build their own technology section. So ang unang naglabas ng tech section if I am right, Manila Times, followed by Today. Hindi pa sila nagmerge sa Manila Standard noon. Tapos Inquirer, kinuha yung editor ng Today, and yun ang naging boss ko. Si Leo Magno. So Inquirer, Today, uh, Philstar noon may technology section sila na halong telecomm. Tapos Business World may, IT Matters din ang tawag nila. Pero, their IT matters started out online. Kasi sila yung unang online company, online publication na naglabas na specific lang sa tech. Internet lang nila yon linalagay. Tapos sumunod din yung Inquirer, doon na kami pumasok noon, mga mga

nineteen – ah no, 2000, 2001. I was hired by Inquirer.net noon. 2000. Hindi pa yon, Inquirer.net yung tawag noon, it was INQ7.net. So, I was hired precisely because I wrote about technology noon.

Interviewer: At that time Sir, president ka pa rin nung Cyberpress?

Erwin Oliva: Nakalimutan ko na yun, pero, I'll get back to you, kung ano yun. Tinanggal ko kasi sa resume 'yon, ayokong maalala yon. Mga memories ko doon. Away away basta may ganoon. In any org, mag aaway din kayo dahil sa pera. Pag walang pera, ganda eh. Ganda ng samahan eh. Parang mag asawa lang yan or boyfriend. Pag pera na pinag usapan, simula na ang girian.

Interviewer: Off the record ba namin yon?

Erwin Oliva: Ha? Okay lang!

Interviewer: Okay lang? Nag-ooffer noh, na i-off the record. Anyway, yeah sige.

Erwin Oliva: Lahat naman ng orgs, may problema. Pero buhay pa yung org. Pero hindi na ako member. Umalis na rin ako doon.

Interviewer: Okay. Naalala ko lang, sino ba yung nagpalaganap ng text craze in the Philippines? Are you aware?

Erwin Oliva: Texting craze? Wala.

Interviewer: Hindi kasi pinag aralan namin sa advertising, sabi ng prof ko, it was Globe daw.

Erwin Oliva: Globe. Ah okay, kung sinong nagpalaganap. Ganito 'yon, ang kwento niyan, si Globe, nag offer sila ng parang free na texting service. Free pa siya, wala pa siyang, wala pa siyang bayad. Tapos yung advertising nila noon, natutuwa ako noon kasi it was showing someone on a date, and then nag tetextan sila. So apparently yung ka date niya was deaf-mute. So they were using text messaging to communicate.

Interviewer: You remember!

Erwin Oliva: Of course, those were the – I don't forget that. Yun yung nag, sort of naglaunch nung texting craze. So since free siya, people started using it and abusing it. Narealize ni Globe, shucks, nagkamali tayo, dapat we started out with a paid service. Smart, when they came in with the texting service, may bayad. So sabi ng Globe, kailangan magpabayad na tayo. Parang, we're missing the opportunities. Nung nagshift sila sa pabayad, nagreklamo lahat ng tao. Away yan noon, sa NTC naalala ko. Parang sinasabi ng mga tao – sila Tonio Cruz pa 'yan, na text powers, parang you're trying to trample on our rights to free communication, blah blah blah. Mga kaliwa lagi ginagawang issue 'yon eh. Pero eventually walang choice. Eventually naging tanggap ng tao na magbabayad sila for every text message.

Interviewer: Magkano yung bayad when it started?

Erwin Oliva: Di ko na maalala eh.

Inteviewer: 75 cents lang.

Erwin Oliva: Pero alam ko bumaba na nung bumaba yung presyo. To the point na halos libre na. Ngayon sino pa bang nagtetext? Wala na.

Interviewer: Meron ako, Grade 2 ako nagtetext na ako eh.

Erwin Oliva: So, at that time, SMS even surpassed yung revenues, in terms of revenues source, yung SMS versus calls. Hindi na tumatawag yung mga tao. I remember the time na people would text more than call. Kahit sumagot na 'Okay.' Okay na nga lang, 'K' itetext pa. May time pa noon na, wag mo nalang ako tawagan, text mo nalang ako. Text mo yung mga questions mo sakin. Nagkaroon ako noon ng text interview. Imagine mo 'yon. Natatawa kayo noh?

Interviewer: Parang ang sakit sa ano...

Erwin Oliva: Oo, eh walang way eh. Kailangan ko lang kumuha ng quotes, quick quotes. Sir, kahit tatlong statements, tatlong sentences lang. Ayun, tinext niya sakin. So from there, Globe talaga nagspark ng texting phenomena in the Philippines. Yun, it's a phenomenon. We started it. And we became the text capital of the world, pero no longer na. No, I think, hindi na ngayon.

Interviewer: Hindi na?

Erwin Oliva: Hindi na tayo nagtetext eh, nasa Facebook na tayong lahat eh.

Interviewer: Ah okay, so Facebook capital na tayo.

Erwin Oliva: Muntik na. Nasa third place tayo, second to Indonesia.

Interviewer: What? Who's number one?

Erwin Oliva: US pa rin. Pero in the whole Asia, tayo yung – Indonesia and Philippines.

Interviewer: Okay, getting back on track. So, first question. **How long have you been in the technology beat?**

Erwin Oliva: Years. Sabi ko nga sayo nagstart ako 1998. I left Inquirer… kailan ba ako umalis? 2008. So ten years sa beat. Ten years sa technology beat.

Interviewer: **What other beats have you worked in prior to the tech beat?**

Erwin Oliva: I covered business, I covered politics din. I went around din, but not too much on politics. Sa politics, more on election. Sa business more on the macro. Not the micro, kasi yung micro masyado nang geeky eh, sakin. Ang business reporting, mahirap talaga. You have to understand numbers, to understand yung mga financial statements. I never covered stock exchange, I hate stock exchange. What I covered doon mga kwan, Department of Trade Industry. Bureau of Investments, ganoon lang. Konting NSO.

Interviewer: Sir what's your undergrad pala?

Erwin Oliva: Ako? I wasn't an undergrad. Journ ako, journ. UP Baguio.

Interviewer: Merong journ sa UP Baguio?

Erwin Oliva: Naman. Kami yung unang batch na under kay Rolly Fernandez ng PDI. Pero, ang tagal ng journ noon. Double major nga kami eh. Journ and Broad. Pero pareho lang yung tinuturong subjects. Sabi nga namin, ano yung different sa broad?

Interviewer: Kaya ako hindi nag UP Baguio, kahit mas malapit, kasi walang Journ. Wala nang journ.

Erwin Oliva: Meron. Kung meron sa amin noon, dapat sayo meron.

Interviewer: Wala na, baka binago. Layo nang agwat eh. Anyway.

Erwin Oliva: Painumin mo pa ako isang yoghurt shake. Game, next question.

Interviewer: **What forms of education or training would you say you have gone through to prepare yourself for writing tech stories?**

Erwin Oliva: Wala. I learned on the job. There's no – even what I'm teaching these kids, ay these kids tuloy – these guys. No one, nothing will prepare you for what you're going to be doing in real life. Even the people you deal with in real life. Wala yan sa eskwelahan. What schools are preparing you for is how you think. How to deal with life. Kaya maganda sa UP kasi dito, hindi ka nila tuturuan na maging kahon mag isip. Kabilang eskwelahan, alam ko kung paano sila. Kasi nag aral ako doon eh, sobrang, dapat ganito lang. Pag lumampas ka diyan, mali ka. Dito ka lang.

Interviewer: Sir do you still write?

Erwin Oliva: Of course, I write. My blogs, my own blogs...

Interviewer: So, next question. **Where do you get the stories for this beat?**

Erwin Oliva: For the beat? We get it everywhere. From people you know. Kasi kami noon, when I was working for Inquirer, we were required to have three stories a day. You have to be very creative. You have to build your sources. You have to follow news. You have to follow people around. So when I was doing technology beat, I didn't focus on the technology itself, kasi writing technology for the sake of technology, not good eh. Parang, eh pakialam ko diyan sa bagong iPad 3, eh wala akong pera. So I wrote about stories that people could relate to. Like when we went to Bontoc National High School, ginawa ko doon, sinasabi ko paano kayo nag iinternet? Hanap hanap ako ng internet café, may dalawa. Tapos, anong ginagawa? Pinanood ko sila the whole afternoon. Nagalalaro lang pala ng games ang mga bata. Sabi ko, o bakit kayo nandito? Sabi nila cut kami ng klase.

Interviewer: Sir pero inter 'yon, hindi intra? Internet?

Erwin Oliva: Meron silang kwan noon, satellite. Tapos the first company who put up an internet café there, an internet connection sa school was Microsoft. Sila nagdala nung malaking satellite. Dahil doon sa Microsoft, investment, nagkaroon ng internet yung Bondoc area noon. Ganda nga ng kwentong yon. Kasi yun yung ginamit ko na story to apply for Ateneo. In other words, when I wrote about technology, I wrote about the human aspect. Hindi lang yung gadget review. Madali lang gawin 'yon eh.

Interviewer: Next question po. **Who are the sources you often rely on for information on these stories? Like sinu-sino?**

Erwin Oliva: Kasi depende, you don't rely on just one source. If you're a reporter, as a journalist, you have to rely on many sources. You have your usual suspects, but your usual suspects will always give you the same bullshit. And ilang beses mo sila tanung-tanongin, kung gobyerno yan, hindi nila maisasagot. Unless may deeper connection ka to the source.

Interviewer: Sino po yung mga usual suspects?

Erwin Oliva: Mga official ng gobyerno. Dati kasi may kwan eh, meron pang Commission on Information Communications Technology, CICT. Pero ngayon ginawa na nilang under DOST. So dati, sila yung isa sa mga primary sources. For technology stories na government related. Pero for mga corporations or industries, each industry, they have their own PR agencies. So PRs will keep pushing stories to you. Sometimes you have to say, tigilan niyo na muna, wag niyong isaspam yung email ko, walang kwenta naman yung press release na yan eh. Ginaganoon talaga. Bigyan mo kami ng storya na matino naman, diba? So, pwede ko bang interviewhin yung nasa press release? Di pwede... Kung makuha mo yon, eh di well and good. Pero ang maganda sa buhay niyo ngayon, andaming ways to connect to a person – facebook, twitter. Siguraduhin niyo lang na siya yung taong nasa likod noon. Telepono pa rin is the most effective means. Of course, face to face. Ang sikreto ko doon sa technology or sa ibang beat is, relationship din. When you become a reporter, you establish your own sources by becoming friends with them. But of course yung friendship na yon medyo Friendship to the point na hindi mo siya ilalaglag, hind mo naman siya sobrang i-coddle to the point na, nagkakamali na siya, hindi mo siya icocorrect. Si Jun Lozada naging source ko. One of my source hindi ko nireveal until pumutok yung NBN. Alam ko na yung kwentong NBN noon, bago pa siya hinabol ng gobyerno. Ang problema ko noon, sinasabi niya na sakin yung mga nangyayari noon, pero wala siyang papel na hawak. Hindi ko maisulat. Kaya, hanggat lumabas yung papel, tapos nagkaroon na ng senate hearing, doon ko na nabuo yung kwento ko. Yun yung naging masters project ko noon. Paano nangyari yon. Saan nagkamali, anong nangyari, ano yung mga speculations, ano ba talaga yung totoo. Pero walang nagsasabi nang totoo sa mundong ito. Nanay mo lang siguro at tatay mo. Totoo yan anak. Totoong totoo. Maganda ka, anak. Ang pogi mo talaga. Ang cute, cute, cute mo...

Interviewer: Alright, so next question. **How would you compare and contrast the technology beat with other beats in the newspaper?** In terms of mga readership, prominence, importance…

Erwin Oliva: Well, before kasi, we felt when we were still there, we felt that we weren't given importance. So it's always hard to land on the front page kunwari sa mga news papers. That was before, but now, I don't think it's really that important. Technology is all around eh, it's a lifestyle. Doesn't matter. What makes news ngayon, si Steve Jobs. Movement ng facebook. Technology yan eh, pero yun nga, as long as you don't look at technology as technology, you will get more attention. Kabit mo sa politika, kabit mo sa society.

Interviewer: **What are the elements that make a publishable tech story?**

Erwin Oliva: Yun, yung sinabi ko. Lagi mong lagyan ng context. Saka, diba sinabi ko sa klase niyo yon? Ano yung importante ngayon sa storya?

Interviewer: How will it affect the audience?

Erwin Oliva: No. Nakalimutan mo na yung class natin eh. Diba you have your typical five W's and one H? You have one more question to ask. It's the context, it's the "*so what?*" That's the ideal situation, but depende, if you're writing for Inquirer, what makes good copy for a tech is yun nga, ikabit mo sa, kung anong gustong agenda ng Inquirer. Political. For a non techie editor, that would attract them. But if you're writing for the likes of Mashable, or Huffington Post, any technology story could be front page. Like when Google decides to close down its operations, that's going to be front page story. Or when New York Times collapses its online arm, and says na it can no longer operate our online function, that's a tech story, but it's still an industry story. Yung Rappler, kunwari. Ano bang ginagawa ng Rappler? Pero in other words, hindi yung copy ang what matters, it's what it says to you as an editor. Kasi editors decide based on kwan. Well, for TV it's more on ratings. Iba naman ang TV report. Usually kung may crime, parang isang bata pinatay doon sa internet café. Sa pag ge-gaming, namatay. Yon, ninakawan. Ang anggulo mo technology, pero crime. Dahil sa pag ge-gaming, namatay ang isang bata. Sa Korea, ang daming balita na pumutok noon, nahook masyado sa gaming. So it was really technology related and yet it made headlines all over the world. So it's a crime, kinabit mo ang tragic death. Tapos meron naman yung kumalat na, ngayon uso naman yung viral videos spreading through YouTube or Facebook. The guy who shot the person yung critical, diba he was caught on camera? Na nacoveran? So through Facebook, technology plus this crime committed – so that's how you would put a spin into technology writing. That doesn't talk about technology.

Interviewer: Based on your own assessment, **what are the problems faced by the tech beat and how would they be solvable?**

Erwin Oliva: You have to evolve. As I said, it couldn't be only about technology. It has to be connected to the people who use it. Like, why are sites like Mashable, Lifehacker.com, ano ba yung favorite tech website niyo?

Interviewer: Dami. Kung anu-ano lang.

Erwin Oliva: Hindi, anong binabasa niyong tech? New York Times? Inquirer?

Interviewer: Inquirer minsan, pero I go for specifics minsan. More on gadgets.

Erwin Oliva: What attracts you to read technology? What makes you click on that story?

Interviewer: Kung may human interest. Like sa Yahoo, kung may interesting something.

Erwin Oliva: In other words, yun yung sagot sa tanong niyo. Kasi kung masyadong geekish yung story mo, wala talagang makakaintindi sayo, ikaw lang. Eh may tendency maging ganoon yung mga tech reporters, so they sort of live in their own world. They cannot sort of get out of the mold or the formula na techie kami, hindi niyo kami maintindihan. Eventually nagiging niche lang talaga

Interviewer: Okay. Specifically, do you think low ba ang readership kunwari sa tech stories, sa tech beat?

Erwin Oliva: Depende kung saang website. Sa konteksto yung eh. Saan low? Low ba sa overall?

Interviewer: Um, Philippine setting. Kung sa print, konti lang kasi yung napapadpad sa print diba?

Erwin Oliva: Sa akin, kwan eh, depende yan eh. Sa akin nandiyan pa rin siya. It doesn't – it's still relevant, as long as it's relevant to you, you'll read it. Hindi mo masasabi na low readership – siguro sa diyaryo mababa. Kasi masyadong gadgets at feeling mo masyadong commercial na. Maraming patalastas. Alam mo, kunwari review review, pero alam mo namang peke diba? I think sa papers nagdecline ang readership for tech pages. And I think even the tech pages are gone eh. For some. But for magazines, there are magazines but a lot of them have died. Yan ang mga tech magazines na dedicated doon sa tech. So they're all moving to the internet. Why? Because it's cheaper to run a website. Mashable was a website that runs as a blog. Blogs lang to tas nag grow sila nang nag grow, and naka focus lang sila sa tech.

Interviewer: Do you think there are problems in the availability of sources?

Erwin Oliva: Well, locally meron. International, wala.

Interviewer: Let's talk about local.

Erwin Oliva: Local, it's up to you to be very creative, but, I mean – hindi naman nilolaunch ang iPad 3 dito kunwari diba? So mag rerely ka sa international. So ang makukuha mo na local story na medyo high tech, hindi ganoon ka high tech. Katulad noon. I mean, magsusulat ako nang napa high tech na kuwari, magcacar review ako. Lagay natin sa technology na gagawa ako ng car review ng isang Porsche. Sinong bibili noon, diba, sa Pilipinas? Gagawa nalang ako ng review ng kwan, Mitsubishi Lancer na 2005, kasi alam ko nandito sa local news. So ang limitation niya is really about what you can do as a writer. Kumabaga sa Pilipinas, konteksto mo dapat nahahawakan ng mga tao. Katulad noon, Facebook ngayon ang uso. Ngayon, magsulat ka tungkol sa, ano ba yung obscure technology? Yung nagsasalitang sapatos, kunwari. Kunwari, walang ganoon sa Pilipinas.

Interviewer: Next, let's talk about the people in the beat. Meron po bang scarcity of tech reporters?

Erwin Oliva: Sa akin tingin ko, lahat gustong maging technology reporter. Even the bloggers.

Interviewer: So they are not tech reporters? The bloggers, you don't consider them?

Erwin Oliva: Kasi, when the tech beat emerged, it was journalists writing about technology. But right now, nabaliktad. Geeks want to become journalists. Ang dami niyan. The way they view the world is very geekish. They cannot sometimes connect it to the whole picture. They're just writing a little speck in the whole universe of tech in general. They have their own readers, pero yung perspective nila iba. In most cases diba if you write something that's close to you, minsan hindi mo nakikita yung other angles eh. Pag may emotional attachment, wag kang – kasi kung boyfriend mo yan, hindi mo nakikita na tabingi yung ngipin niya. Basta mahal mo siya eh, ganoon lang 'yon eh.

Interviewer: Sir, connected yon sa isang question which is, are you satisfied with the way tech journalists write their stories? Is this a no?

Erwin Oliva: I read a lot of tech stories until now but they're not local anymore. Because I'm more interested in what's happening outside than locally. So kung tinanong mo ako siguro ten years ago, iba ang isasagot ko sayo.

Interviewer: So definitely this is an avenue for growth?

Erwin Oliva: Sa akin?

Interviewer: Yes?

Erwin Oliva: Nag gro-grow naman ang tiyan ko. Hindi sakin, kwan eh, para sa akin there's no such thing as beat nga eh, it has to be anything that interests people. If you want to focus on that, you can do it in a way na you can make it fun and not too geekish. Like sa New York Times, meron silang guy doon who writes about gadgets, si David Pogue. He really creates videos of technology that's so funny. Na akala mo hindi siya nag vivideo, nagte-tech review. Katulad ng isang example, nilaunch yung iPad 2 yata? So parang setting na ginawa ng kwento, nasa isang classroom sila, yung mga estudyante. Parang, show and tell. Pero bawat isang editor may dalang – this is a flower. This was picked by my mother. Tapos nung turn niya, this is an iPad. It can show flowers – mga ganoon, na hindi mo akalain na, onga noh. There's precisely an avenue for growth. Lahat naman ng gagawin mo dito… it doesn't take a rocket scientist or a UP student to understand growth. In everything you do, you want to grow. Kung hindi ka mag gro-grow eh di kawawa ka naman. Kailangan – hindi lang growth, even the deeper understanding for what you write. Kasi grow ka nang grow, wala ka namang natututunan. Grow nang grow yung ulo mo.

Interviewer: Other challenges that may come to mind? Meron pa ba Sir? Aside from growing and understanding?

Erwin Oliva: The technology beat should think outside of what they're doing. Meaning, there's still room to grow for them to connect to the readers. Parang music lang yan eh, why are musicians struggling these days to connect with their fans, kasi they're very busy working on their own music, they don't understand that the industry itself with the internet has evolved so fast, it has changed the way we do music. Katulad niyan. Si Adele. I discovered her on the internet. I can create a technology story on that. Yung ganoon. In short, pag tech reporter ka, dapat wag kang mag isip na tech reporter ka. Tingin ka. Walk and smell the flowers.

Interviewer: Last question, about ethics. Kasi ethical issues are everywhere.

Erwin Oliva: Maraming ethics. Ethical issues about tech journalism.

Interviewer: Okay, so **what are ethical dilemmas you have encountered in this beat? Like, specific instances wherein you feel ethical standards were upheld or violated?**

Erwin Oliva: Maraming ethical questions sa tech. Actually when we had a class sa Ateneo, tech gives a lot of giveaways. Anong gagawin mo doon? Very expensive giveaways. Even raffle out laptops. They give away laptops, cellphones, expensive gadgets. As a journalist, do you accept that? Even bloggers. Sometimes they even giveaway trips. Or another question, they pay for your trip to go to their event. See? We have junkets. I mean, it doesn't happen only in technology, it happens in business, and all.

So, ang sagot ko diyan, I wish nothing but the best for you. Walang black and white when it comes to ethics. It's up to you to decide. If you think that it violates your own ethical standards, then say no. But if you can take it, but know until where, but you have to set your own standards. No matter how many ethical standards I can list down for you guys, if you're an unethical person, you won't even conform to that. Masakit kasi, the bloggers right now, they get the same benefits and perks as journalists. But they don't carry the same responsibilities that we journalists are trained for. That's one of the ethical issues right now. That's – how do you treat, how do you differentiate? There are companies like I think Business World or GMA. There's a limit to how much value that you can accept. Kung raffle yan, sa akin walang problema. It's a raffle. Pero if they're giving it because they want you to write a story, then outright bribe na 'yon. Pero there are instances like, you write a good story they're happy about. Then later on they give you a gift. Magandang kung anu-ano man 'yan. Hindi ako nagamamalinis ha, pero marami yan. Maraming – in my years of covering the technology beat, I'm often asked, who pays for it, the trip abroad? Yung company na nag invite. Ang sagot ko naman doon, I cannot afford to go there. But if I cover their event, I still maintain my objectivity na if I find something wrong, I will write about it. And I make that clear doon sa companies na nag invite sa amin. I'm here as a journalist, not as your guest. Pero of course they will always try to sway you to write good reviews. But that's your choice. That's ethics.

Interviewer: Okay, wrap up na po. A general perception of tech journalism in the Philippines as you see it today.

As I see it today. They should not think about beats anymore. They should not – dapat tinatawag na tech beat. They should think about stories, not beats.

Interview with Kathy Moran
Editor of *Gadgets* subsection under *Lifestyle Features*
The Philippine Star
- **Email interview conducted on February 17, 2012**

1. How long have you been in the technology beat?

Kathy Moran: I have been writing stories about gadgets and technology for about 15 years.

2. What other beats have you worked in prior to the tech beat?

Kathy Moran: I also write stories about motoring, pets and other topics as may be assigned to me.

3. What forms of education or training would you say you have gone through to prepare yourself for writing tech stories?

Kathy Moran: I am very fond of tinkering with gadgets. Whether that be breaking them apart or getting to the bottom of how they work. I also like to read up on the latest developments on technology. Of course, the interviews that I have had with experts in the field have been very helpful.

4. Where do you get the stories for this beat?

Kathy Moran: There are several sources for the stories that I write for the gadgets page of the lifestyle section, or the telecom page of the business section. Sometimes I am asked to write reviews for gadgets like cell phones, computers, iPads and the like. I have also been asked to do reviews for motor vehicles. There are several press conferences which we are invited to where the latest gadgets are launched. At these events I am able to get a first go at the gadgets.

5. Who are the sources you often rely on for information on these stories?

Kathy Moran: I rely on the expert behind the gadget. So that if I am reviewing, for example a cell phone made by Nokia then I try to make sure that I get to talk to the people at Nokia about the device.

6. How would you compare and contrast the technology beat with other beats in the newspaper?

Kathy Moran: I guess if there is one difference between the technology beat and the other beats, I will say that it is the speed by which the gadgets are developed. There is no other beat in the newspaper that has as many new developments as the gadgets section. Also, it

can be a very "cold" beat because at many times what we deal with are pieces of equipment... not people.

7. What are the elements that make a publishable tech story?

Kathy Moran: To make a story on technology see print it must be relevant. The device must be one of the latest, or if it is an old one, then it is one that is used by a prominent person (like the President, for example). A tech story has to be simple enough for the readers to understand. The main job of a good tech writer is to make the devices he or she writes about interesting and understandable to the average reader.

8. Based on your own assessment, what are the problems faced by the tech beat and how could they be solved? In terms of the following:
- Readership/circulation
- Availability of sources
- Number of tech reporters in media (and how well versed they are with writing tech stories)
- Avenue for growth
- Other challenges the tech beat faces that may come to mind

Kathy Moran: I think that the problem that might arise are that there are gadgets being developed so quickly that it may be hard to keep track of all the latest gadgets. Also, sometimes the changes in the gadgets are so slight that it would seem that writing about a new gadget is no different from writing about one that came out just before it.

Sources for interview are always available. That is not a problem.

I think that the tech writers in the beat are well-versed with the gadgets they cover. If they weren't it would not be part of the beat.

There is much room for growth among tech beat reporters because of how quickly technology changes.

9. What are ethical dilemmas you have encountered in this beat? Please give specific instances wherein you feel ethical standards were upheld or violated. (It may be receiving favors, monetary or otherwise, in exchange for a story; other situations you have observed among your reporters that you feel may have bordered on the unethical.)

Kathy Moran: I have no answer to this question.

Marc Cacho
Client Support Consultant
Misys Philippines, Inc.
- **Phone interview conducted on March 12, 2012**

Interviewer: Hello?

Marc Cacho: Hello.

Interviewer: Good afternoon po.

Marc Cacho: Yes, hi, good afternoon.

Interviewer: Are you still free po for the phone interview?

Marc Cacho: Uh, yeah, sure. Yeah, we can do it here now.

Interviewer: Okay, hang on. Both of us are here po by the way.

Marc Cacho: Oh okay sure, no problem.

Interviewer: Also, is it okay if we record? Naka loudspeaker po kayo tapos irerecord nalang po namin?

Marc Cacho: Sure, yeah. I don't mind.

Interviewer: My partner sent you a copy of the questions po noh?

Marc Cacho: Um, unfortunately I'm out of the office, I'm the hospital. But I do remember we have an interview, so yeah, we can do this. Just tell me what you wanted to ask and we'll proceed with the questions.

Interviewer: Ah okay, kasi po our thesis is about how the technology corporations as sources relate to the tech beat, tech reporters. So it's about the tech beat po, and we'll be asking you questions about the corporation side.

Marc Cacho: Okay.

Interviewer: So, our first question is, **what stories does your company usually give to the media for publication?**

Marc Cacho: Okay, normally, what we have in MYSIS, first – we do have two kinds of communications. One is for the global communication. We have nine sites, globally, where we have our general information coming from London. Then afterwards for Manila, we have internal publications, wherein we focus mostly on what the Manila site is doing for the entire company. If you're going to ask me if we have a site, um, we're doing publications or articles outside, we haven't really ventured on that part. We haven't really done aggressive advertising towards publications in the newspaper, 'cause it's not the direction of the company at this time. But usually, our corporate newsletter will

discuss what's happening in the development side of information technology. We'd feature people who did an excellent job within the organization. We also feature tourist destinations where our employees can go on to, we also put in our newsletter our engagements, how we nourish everything so people who are volunteering can tell what's happening in the company.

Interviewer: **How often do you release material for the press?**

Marc Cacho: Um, our newsletter is released quarterly, and actually, we try to keep more news in the newsletter but it's more of a magazine, 'cause a lot of things are happening in three months. But as for the global communication, every day we receive news from them via internet and via email.

Interviewer: **What is your perception on the state of technology journalism in relation to other beats in the news?**

Marc Cacho: Well in relation to technological publications, one, it paves the way for a lot of opportunities. One on the environmental side, well of course, it saves a lot of paper. Two, it's faster for us to relay the message, to send a message to our fellow employees, and of course, get their reactions, because it's easier for them to respond. And it helps um, it makes communication a lot easier, it makes communication a lot faster in many ways. In order for us to see the responsiveness of our internal clients, we also try to make them engage by putting some games, or anything that can be used so that we can always check the rate of readership of our employees.

Interviewer: Alright, so **are you satisfied with the way tech journalists write their stories?**

Marc Cacho: Yes, yes, we are satisfied. But the thing is, most of our writers in the company are volunteers. Meaning these are employees who have skills and talents toward writing.

Interviewer: **Could you please cite ways by which you think the technology journalists could improve the tech beat?**

The technique, one, I think journalists who are writers these days should always be at breast with what's happening, or with the styles of writing that they should do. If it's really corporate, yes, the article should appear duly appear "business." But you have to have at least a style that has a certain level of effect to young employees, because right now when you talk about IT companies, let's say more than eighty percent are people between, let's say, twenty three to twenty eight. These people have a different – they read magazines that have a different attack. At least, if you're doing corporate, level yourself on putting them, in that way, exciting them but not to sound too serious. Then, most often than not, we have observed that when people try to be technical, people get bored. People get bored with what they read. They want it plain and simple and they like also at the same time, they make use of the technology. Or how things are given importance. But not very technical, not too tedious, but very understandable.

Interviewer: Okay. So, we touched on this already but **could you please describe your interaction with the press whenever there is news coverage pertinent to your company?**

Marc Cacho: When it comes to interaction, we only see various kinds of via emails. So there's not much of a face to face reaction if you're going to ask me. It's mostly, it's usually written, given the fact that most people are very busy. You send them – you ask for response, you give them questions, and at times, it would take them a couple of hours or even days until they give you their attention.

Interviewer: Okay. So mostly online interaction?

Marc Cacho: Yes, yes... Will that be all? Do you have other questions for me?

Interviewer: Okay na po, thank you so much for your time.

Marc Cacho: Okay, you're welcome.

Interviewer: Thank you.

Nikka Abes
Corporate Communications Manager
Nokia Philippines
- **Email Interview conducted on March 1, 2012**

Nikka Abes: See my answers below. Just to be clear, these are for the purpose of your thesis only and therefore will not be used or shared with anybody else.

1. What stories do you give to the media for publication?

Nikka Abes: We give media material on new products/services coming out in the market.

2. How often do you release material for the press?

Nikka Abes: On average about 2 releases a week but not necessarily always to the IT/ Telco beat. We also send to lifestyle, entertainment, business section depending on the kind of story.

3. What is your perception of the state of technology journalism in relation to other beats in the news?

Nikka Abes: It's always an exciting time for tech media since gadgets are constantly changing and getting upgrades. Technology journalism on print has to be supplemented with some form of social media or online reporting (i.e., online site for the newspaper, blog site or Facebook) to keep up with the times.

4. Are you satisfied with the way technology journalists write their stories? Why or why not?

Nikka Abes: Sometimes satisfied when they stick to the story, but dissatisfied when they look at trends in the US and think the same applies to the Philippines. For a company like Nokia, in the Philippines the brand is still strong compared to the brand popularity in the US. Our industry here is different from what they have there. Because of the wrong perception, Media can sway readers into thinking other brands are stronger than others when the truth is far from that.

5. Please cite ways you think the technology journalists could improve the beat.

Nikka Abes: See #4

6. Please describe your interaction with the press whenever there is news coverage pertinent to your company.

Nikka Abes: Occasionally I send a thank you SMS to some editors/writers for publishing our stories.

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