

THE BRONX  
**J**ournal

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### Editorial

“THE DOMINANCE OF ENGLISH on the internet is set to decline,” states an analysis in the February 7, 2001 Review of Information and Communications Technology of The London Financial Times. Who would have believed this just a couple of years ago! English was considered to be the *lingua franca*, which would literally wipe out cultural diversity and multilingualism. While English still dominates the web pages, according to surveys done by IDC, a Boston-based Information and Technology research group, internet users prefer their “native” language, especially for leisure activities, like shopping, and they are more likely to make purchases on the web if they are using their own language. When you add that data to a study by Steve McClure of IDC which predicts that web usage and e-commerce in Europe and Asia will grow three to five times faster than in the U.S. over the next few years, you realize it makes sense for national and international organizations, as well as governments, to break the “English Only” barrier and face the challenge of multilingualism before the Europeans, already well on their way, achieve full dominance in this field. Some companies are indeed integrating translation memory and work tools to provide multilingual content management; they are working with new codes to deal with the multiple non-Roman language scripts of languages like Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Hebrew, Greek and Russian. These companies do not want to be left behind in the 20th century; they want to join an era where - as the study indicates - “scientific documents, political and legal papers, newspapers and the like are continually being added in languages other than English at a tremendous rate.”



Jim Carney is the Executive Director of Bronxnet

The recent manhunt for ten escaped Texas inmates riveted the nation, spread fear throughout the population and raised questions about the level of security at some of our nation’s high security penitentiaries. For several weeks, alleged sightings, newspaper headlines warning of the futures possible whereabouts and speculation of how they escaped and who was to blame, dominated the media. The final resolution also raised a recurring problem for journalists: When do the media cross the line and become part of the story?

As the last two fugitives barricaded themselves in a Colorado hotel room, tense negotiations between law enforcement officers and the escaped criminals commenced. The escapees demanded as a condition of their surrender, an opportunity to air their

grievances to the general public through the media. They were granted a five-minute interview on a local news radio station. During the discussion, the alleged mastermind of the escape railed against conditions in the Texas prison. He did not discuss the grisly murder of an Irving, Texas policeman that the escaped convicts committed shortly after their escape. The interview and the local station’s willingness to provide the airtime triggered a wave of criticism from some - and praise from others - in journalistic circles. The interview effectively changed the role of the news department at the station and the media as a whole, from one of impartial observer to one of participant. The news director at the radio was alternately vilified (for crass attempts to raise ratings) and praised (for facilitating a peaceful end to a deadly manhunt). The role of the media was further elevated in the

manhunt as the Fox TV series “America’s Most Wanted” was widely credited with locating the escapees through a viewer tip.

The controversy over the role of the media in covering crime is nothing new. Over the last twenty years, the Broadcast media - and television news in particular - has made stars of personalities like Geraldo Rivera who has made no apologies for undertaking controversial “reality” programming. Questions were raised when ABC News’ Giselle Fernandez passed two hours on a luxury speedboat with a drug kingpin in order to tell his story, prior to his surrender. Protection of news sources by journalists has long rankled the ire of law enforcement.

A related discussion encircles the question of whether or not cameras should be permitted in our nation’s courtrooms. How do you balance the right of the public to wit-

ness a trial with the danger of compromising the process?

As is the case in most questions of great import, there is no absolute answer. In the case of the escaped Texas convicts, no real harm was done to public safety by allowing five minutes of airtime to a source of minimal credibility. (It is unlikely that there were many receptive listeners to the grievances of the escapees.) Conversely, if news media outlets become extensions of criminal activities as tools of the criminal, not only are the independence and credibility of the journalist compromised, but the safety of the public is endangered. The credo of the medical field dictates “first - do no harm.”

Any aspiring journalist would be well served to borrow the credo when treading the knife-edge between telling a story and becoming part of the story.

### Letters to the Editor

#### On Educational Programs

I saw the BronxTalk tape and thought it was very well done. Your questions were excellent and allowed us to bring out many points about Monroe College.

I also thank you for arranging to have the piece aired over the holiday weekend. I was pleased to see how many of our students had seen it, and they all had only positive things to say.

Stephen J. Jerome,  
President Monroe College

#### Bronx Alternative Special Education

On behalf of the B.A.S.E. Program an the Board of Directors, I want to express our sincerest appreciation to Gary Axelbank for the wonderful and professional job he did in being the MC at our award dinner.

Mr. Axelbank added a very special touch to the evening and we are very grateful for the time and effort he gave us.

John S. Moore

#### Workshops on Cancer

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to present my recent findings on Familial Dysautonomia on BronxTalk AM with Gary Axelbank. You all were very effective at making me feel comfortable and at ease and I must admit that I actually had an enjoyable time.

Berish Y. Rubin, Ph.D.  
Chairman Department of  
Biological Sciences, Fordham  
University

We would like to thank you for having us on your show, BronxTalk, on January 17, 2001. We appreciate the opportunity to promote our free hands-on workshops on accessing cancer information on the Internet. We are excited because we believe that spreading the word about our workshops can help the community make good health decisions and behaviors.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Milagros Valdivia.

#### Program for Seniors

On behalf of the Parkchester Enhancement Program, PEP for Seniors, we would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity to make your television audience aware of our innovative services for seniors.

Bob Manley and I were happy to learn that you have a significant audience of Parkchester residents. We are looking forward to continuing our relationship with BonxTalk.

Mary Ann McGriell O’Connell  
Program Director PEP for Seniors

Bob Manley  
Director of Marketing  
CCM, Beth Abraham Family of  
Health Services.

Letters to the Editor must include your name, address, and telephone number so we can verify your comments. The letters may be edited to conform to space limitations. Readers may also send comments via e-mail to: tbj@lehman.cuny.edu



### Commentary

## “First – Do No Harm”