

SRMUN Atlanta 2015
*Unifying Our Global Community through
Humanitarian Collaboration*
November 19-21, 2015
Atlanta, GA
presscorps@srmun.org



Esteemed Press Corps Applicants and Reports,

Welcome to the SRMUN Atlanta 2015 Conference and the SRMUN Press Corps. I am humbled and honored to serve as the Editor-in-Chief of the Press Corps and look forward to working with all of you to provide the latest stories to all SRMUN Atlanta 2015 delegates. Press Corps aims to bring a new and exciting experience to SRMUN delegates who prefer to work with MUN through the critical lens of journalism and media. I have the pleasure of serving with the Managing Editor, Kristina Drye, who brings extensive MUN and journalism experience to the Press Corps dais. The vision for the Press Corps is to provide a balance of informative journalism and satire to conference attendees in the form of researched, well-written articles, news stories, social media, and blog posts, ultimately aiming to inspire thoughtful dialogue.

SRMUN recognizes the importance the media, press, and journalism play in the world today. In an environment saturated not only with official news organizations like the New York Times, but also innumerable social networks and internet media, the role press plays is imperative to understanding the dynamics of the international stage. Participating in the Press Corps committee will require writing and editing skills as well as the ability to multi-task. Delegates interested in experiencing MUN through the lens of journalism are encouraged to apply for this committee. The SRMUN Press Corps is an application-based committee open to all delegates. To learn more about Press Corps and to apply, visit the SRMUN Press Corps website at <http://srmun.org/atlanta/presscorps/index.html>.

This background guide should help you understand how the committee will run, what you can expect to learn, and your responsibility as a SRMUN Press Corps reporter or editor. In our committee, we will simulate multiple “official” organizations ranging from newspapers to television networks. As a member of the Press Corps, you will be expected to report on the advances other committees at the conference are making from the perspective of the news organization you are representing.

Traditional position papers will not be assigned to this committee; instead, the pre-conference assignment will be to create a mock article of your choice regarding a topic assigned once you are selected for the committee. You will be free to choose the writing style and angle of the article, but the topic will be the same for everyone. Once you are selected for Press Corps, you will be given further instructions regarding this alternate assignment.

The application is now open and delegates will be notified late September/Early October if they have been accepted into the committee. Those selected to participate in this exciting new committee to SRMUN will need to submit the mock articles in by **30 October 2015 at 11:59 PM EST**.

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SRMUN Press Corps

"The advancement and diffusion of knowledge is the only guardian of true liberty." - James Madison¹

Introduction

There is no doubt that media has enabled a more rapid rate of globalization and that globalization has encouraged the proliferation of media. In fact, globalization has always been enabled by media: the creation of the printing press by Gutenberg in 1450 allowed for the wide dissemination of literature, something previously unavailable.² An increase in literacy rates as a result, in addition to rapid printing capabilities for newspapers and pamphlets, allowed for education of the masses. The decline of Latin and the rise of various regional languages in the era of Romantic Nationalism lent itself to a restructuring in the topography of global politics and intercultural dynamics.³ The invention of the Internet catalyzed even more avenues of media and global interaction on an unprecedented scale.

It is important to remember, however, not only the history of media and the role it has played, but also the power of media. Media has consistently been used as a tool of manipulation by those in power. In Serbia during the Balkan crisis in the 1990s, Milosevic controlled the only television station that Serbia was allowed to air, a television station that was meant to convince the Serbian population that Serbia's actions in Croatia and Bosnia were entirely justified.⁴ In Soviet Russia, the only newspaper, *Pravda*, was run by the state.⁵ Though *pravda* translates to "truth," the content of the publication was that which the Russian government wanted the population to believe was true.⁶ Media not only informs, but it can also be used as a tool for manipulation of the masses, an important dynamic to understand when facilitating a mock Press Corps.

The role of the Press Corps is to represent both the history of media and the potential media presents. Though we encourage the fullest journalistic integrity, we also expect that each media organization represented will be represented accurately- so if your organization contains bias or skew, you must represent that bias or skew accurately.

In our committee, we will simulate multiple "official" organizations ranging from newspapers to television networks. As a member of the Press Corps, you will be expected to report on the advances other committees at the conference are making *from the perspective of the news organization you are representing*. Thus, if you are representing Al Jazeera, you will report very differently on the dynamics between Israel and Palestine in the League of Arab States than if you were representing Fox News. This is not to say that any one organization is "right" or that any one organization is "wrong"; from your previous Model UN experience, you will understand that the fabric of international media is woven of many different perspectives, and should be represented accordingly. In preparing this committee, we have tried to choose a wide variety of organizations that accurately represent the diversity that exists in the real world. In addition to official news organizations, we have also selected a small number of special interest organizations. These include, but are not limited to, The Onion, which is clearly satirical; Humans of SRMUN, modeled after Humans of New York; and BuzzFeed. Though not media networks, in our world such independent media play a very large role.

Facebook recently added a tag for "satire" because satire websites like The Onion were proliferated to such a degree

¹ "25 Moment 25 Years: A History of the James Madison Institute," The James Madison Institute, <http://www.jamesmadison.org/press-room/25-years-25-moments-a-history-of-the-james-madison-institute.html> (Accessed June 1, 2015).

² Marwan M. Kraidy, "Globalization of Culture Through the Media," University of Pennsylvania Annenberg School for Communication, 2002 (Accessed June 1, 2015).

³ Ibid.

⁴ "The Breakup of Yugoslavia, 1990-1992," U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian, October 31, 2013, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1989-1992/breakup-yugoslavia> (accessed June 15, 2015).

⁵ "Pravda Soviet Newspaper," Encyclopaedia Britannica, May 30, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Pravda> (Accessed July 2, 2015).

⁶ Ibid.

that many mistook the stories for reality.⁷ Humans of New York was recently asked by the United Nations to travel across the world for a segment that became known as Humans of the World; though relatively inexpensive for the UN to sponsor, the effect that this had upon the audience of Humans of New York (the Facebook page alone has almost thirteen million “likes” as of the writing of this guide) was incalculably valuable.⁸ BuzzFeed inundates our media with quizzes, crowd-sourced media, and videos that saturate our society with immediate and novel content.

In addition to the existence of these organizations, social media propagates everything created, with very little oversight. Marketing is centered around Twitter, a platform where anything can be shared to anyone within minutes. Indeed, the Arab Spring’s apogee in Tahrir Square in 2011 was enabled primarily by Twitter because the state did not yet have control of that medium and it uniquely allowed for international solidarity with the plight of the Egyptians and all of those in the Arab world.⁹ Nothing like it had been witnessed before, but it set the standard for all social activism afterwards. Just as movements for democratic social change have been enabled through social media, negative movements have also been enabled.¹⁰ The Islamic State advertises its gruesome beheadings on social media as well as its demands, in addition to recruiting new members.¹¹ Though Twitter has recently begun to deactivate accounts that have justifiably suspicious activity on them, mechanisms for controlling media are almost nonexistent because the argument for freedom of speech remains robust.¹²

In this committee, we want to simulate this very complicated topography of today’s media as accurately as possible. In addition to reporting on SRMUN through the lens of your respective press organization, your completed articles, reports, and other content will be posted on SRMUN’s Twitter page, as well as posted on the SRMUN Press Corps website that is designed specifically for that purpose. The dais, like any other committee, will edit your drafts but there will be no minimum or maximum volume of content required of any delegate, and you will be evaluated on quality rather than quantity.

Reporting and Media Forms

Though today’s media is a mix of print and digital information, SRMUN is dedicated to being environmentally friendly and thus is a green news conference. All material you create, regardless of the entity you are representing, will be digital. We will employ Twitter, Facebook, the website, and other digital media platforms, in addition to USB drives and Google Docs.

A good news story is “good” because of many things. The material is articulate, succinct, represents all sides, and has a neutral tone with very little bias. While we expect all of these things from you, also recognize that you are representing various entities as they exist in real life, meaning that some of them will be more or less biased (FOX News or The Onion versus BBC or NY Times), and some will be on different intellectual levels (Buzzfeed versus The Economist). Just as with traditional Model UN settings, where you understand what “good” policy is but you also remain true to the policies of your country, we expect that you understand what “good” reporting is while maintaining the integrity of your media outlet.

In this committee, you will have the freedom to produce various forms of media, and how or what you choose is entirely up to you- be creative! You can produce traditional news articles, editorials, op-eds, interviews, blog pieces, photography/visual social media, and traditional social media. We will take time to explain how these channels

⁷ Amit Chowdhry, "Facebook Is Testing A 'Satire' Tag Since Users Think The Onion Articles Are True," *Forbes*, August 18, 2014, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/amitchowdhry/2014/08/18/facebook-is-testing-a-satire-tag-since-users-think-the-onion-articles-are-true/> (Accessed July 18, 2015).

⁸ Jonah Bromwich, "Humans of New York Goes Global," *The New York Times*, August 18, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/19/arts/design/humans-of-new-york-goes-global.html?_r=0 (Accessed July 18, 2015).

⁹ Carol Huang, "Facebook and Twitter Key to Arab Spring Uprisings," *The National*, June 6, 2011, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/uae-news/facebook-and-twitter-key-to-arab-spring-uprisings-report> (Accessed July 18, 2015).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "Spread of ISIS Beheading Video Halted by Tech Companies," *Fox News*, September 3, 2014, <http://www.foxnews.com/tech/2014/09/03/spread-isis-beheading-video-halted-by-tech-companies/> (Accessed July 19, 2015).

¹² Ibid.

function the first night of the conference itself, but it is wise to become familiar with these different forms, how your entity uses these platforms, and how they are typically produced. For example: there is a difference between an op-ed and an editorial, and it is important to know the difference; an op-ed is an opinion piece typically written by an accredited author or representative of an entity, but is unaffiliated with the editorial board of the newspaper. And editorial, however, is an opinion piece produced by the editorial board of the newspaper or respective print media. Understanding these differences will be key to success in the Press Corps committee.

Interviews will function similarly. In your observations of the conference, look for potential interviews. Perhaps you want to interview China on their environmental policy; perhaps you want to take a step back and interview a first-timer to SRMUN about their experience, or a staff member about their motivation to be involved in SRMUN even though they've graduated and are also pursuing careers. Interviews can be done in countless ways and no "rules" will give you the perfect interview, but it is important to remember to research the subject and the topic before you begin; always be respectful; and always report the interview as truthfully as you can without subsequent editing done without the subject's knowledge.