

MEDIA ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

Models, proposals and outlooks¹

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ABSTRACT This paper analyzes one of the basic actions of SOS-Imprensa, the mechanism to assure Media Accountability with the goal of proposing a synthesis of models for the Brazilian reality. The article aims to address the possibilities of creating and improving mechanisms to stimulate the democratic press process and to mark out and assure freedom of speech and personal rights with respect to the media. Based on the Press Social Responsibility Theory, the hypothesis is that the experiences analyzed (Communication Council, Press Council, Ombudsman and Readers Council) are alternatives for accountability, mediation and arbitration, seeking visibility, trust and public support in favor of fairer media.

KEY-WORDS Press, citizenship, social responsibility

1 ■ SOS-IMPRESA, WAYS OF MEDIATING PRESS USERS

The research and extension project “SOS-Imprensa” is a public utility service, a participative assistance, non-profit academic service and an interactive space designed to build better media, based on the principle that communications institutions must fulfill their function, which transcends their commercial interest. Media are part of a public sphere and as such they cannot be dissociated from the ideals of justice and public interest. Media are a two-way street, covering a social integration (Public-Press-Public), establishing more than a relation of consumption. Democracy is founded on the daily activity of a free, fair society. Citizenship is cooperative and as a consequence involves everyone’s contribution. Therefore, its meaning differs from that derived from omission.

SOS-Imprensa considers three types of appeals, which can be summed up by 1) “help, the press offends me”; 2) “help, I need the press”;

3) “help, the press has been threatened”. The first is related to press mistakes and abuses; in the second case, from an opposite viewpoint, the press represents a resource for citizen appeal and public interest; in the third, the press itself is at risk, with relation to freedom of speech or with relation to threats, aggression and murder, which constantly turn journalists into victims all around the world.

It is important to emphasize that the key words of the project’s content focus are the following: mistakes, press abuses and victims. Sometimes mistakes are accidental and unintentional. On the other hand, abuses are professional, anti-ethical and conscious transgressions when a bad professional has recourse, in the name of success, to conduct that offends professional decorum. There are, however, even worse types of conduct when journalistic activity implies serious legal transgressions typified as crimes and thereby victimizes individuals and entities, groups, minorities, firms, organizations, authorities and even society (when “collective moral damage” occurs).

SOS-Imprensa was created in 1996 as a research project and after 2002 it continued as an extension project which included many participants and collaborators: students, scientific initiation and extension scholarship holders, volunteer workers and also professors, among them two American visiting journalists/professors (international scholarship holders). Much of the material produced is still used as a reference for those willing to continue the research.

The creation of mechanisms to promote public participation is increasing. They guarantee democratic possibilities in communication institutions and, in this scenario, experiences such as SOS-Imprensa are essential. Dante Muttise, Imprensa magazine director, said that “society is the biggest victim. Powerless, it does not have a defense mechanism. The so-called corporate media, which historically have always expressed more the opinions of the State and the elites, is turning to society’s interest. That is democracy”².

SOS Imprensa acts according to some basic premises, among which is our belief that the media constitute a public space which is fundamental to democratic societies, especially when it shelters a genuine public sphere marked by various ideas, controversy, and above all, opportunities for giving and defending opinions to which everyone should be entitled. Within this context, Education, Journalism and Citizenship serve as pillars that support civil and public life. Citizens must not only be guided and supported, but above all citizenship must be continuously built. With the University of Brasília (UnB) course in Communitarian Communication

(at the Faculdade de Comunicação of UnB) as a basis, a university team has taken social mobilization³ and education to the media⁴ project in the poverty-stricken Varjão community in an attempt to show citizens their rights with regard to communication institutions so that in the future a more conscientious public will be able to use the media in a more democratic way, not only in a commercial way.

Collaborating in the citizenship preparation process is a constant challenge for the SOS-Imprensa team. The project's experience and maturing process show that it is insufficient to provide a public service for addressing media users' problems if they still do not know their rights. That is the reason why the project intends to disseminate a culture of minimum understanding of the media and basic conduct that can be followed in the event of media mistakes, abuses and victims. This minimum culture takes into consideration the so-called "5 Rs": 1) Rectification, when mistakes are small, but need corrections; 2) Retraction, when the harmed person asks for retraction or it is an initiative of the author of the mistake. This is more than a simple "we made a mistake", but a recognized and well-known retraction and sometimes a clear apology; 3) Replica, when more than recognizing a mistake, the press grants consensually space to harmed people for explanations or for exercising their right to contradict; 4) Reply, when none of the first three Rs worked consensually and the solution is to seek justice by legal means. Therefore, it involves a reply written by the harmed person in the same space and images of the offense; 5) Reparation for moral and material damages, or both – when the right to reply was not enough because sometimes, besides righting an offense caused someone by slander, the victims prove their innocence and become entitled to reparation for the damages they suffered, whether with relation to decorum-reputation-innocence or with relation to material consequences.

2 – LIBERTARIAN THEORY OF THE PRESS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY THEORY OF THE PRESS (SRTP)

The press as it is practiced nowadays has evolved due to the society's desire for emancipation from the Absolutist State predominant in European reality. The disseminated idea is that press freedom would make the "revelation of truth" possible. John Milton in *Aeropagítica*, his speech advocating press freedom in the English Parliament on November 23, 1644, said that "the person who kills a man kills a reasoning creature, but the person who destroys a good book kills reason itself." (1999, p.15)

Liberal ideas were present in the action of the so-called “founding fathers” of the USA and it was this position that expressed the contemporary debates relating to the creation of the 1st Amendment to the American Constitution, which is the basis for the Libertarian Theory of the Press. The media’s function would be to watch over the State so that it would not deviate from its original purpose, creating conditions for the exchange of information, allowing for entertainment and promoting exchange with economic support capable of assuring financial independence.

The idea of autonomy with respect to the political or economic power of institutions has been questioned by academic researchers. Ben Bagdikian demonstrates how historically, especially after the first half of the XX century, ownership concentration has been witnessed along with the formation of news networks and media oligopolies that has affected editorial content. According to the author, from 1985 to 1991, the number of corporations which controlled the USA’s mass media dropped from 50 to 23, contributing to the creation of “a silence extended to news and comments in the main newspapers, magazines and radio and television newscasts” (1993, p.10). In Brazil, a survey by the Communication Research Institute of Porto Alegre, coordinated by Daniel Herz (WANDERLLI, 2002), revealed that the concentration of television and radio stations and newspapers in the hands of large groups has almost doubled in the last decade and, contrary to expectations, the use of the Internet has not helped to democratize communication institutions in the country, which has the worst scenario in the world. The survey also concluded that the main effect of the ownership concentration of media institutions is the conditioning of the public and of the latter’s ways of behaving.

Having liberal presuppositions as a basis, freedom of speech is considered to be the right to communicate and to be informed, but “it can not be conceived as ‘laissez faire’”⁵. Many of those who studied the communication institutions’ actions consider that, beyond liberal presuppositions, the Social Responsibility Theory of the Press (SRTP) is a possible basis for establishing an ethical journalism system since it emphasizes as a central principle that journalists are obliged to be responsible to their readers. The formulation of this theory was described by the Press Freedom Committee in the USA, better known as Hutchins Committee, constituted in 1942 with Henry Luce’s financial support and which invited Chicago University’s vice-chancellor to direct research that would reveal “the current situation and future outlook of press freedom”.

By proposing activities that could orientate and transform press performance, as well as the performance of what were, at the time, recently-created radio and television stations, Hutchins continued the research, leading a team of thirteen members. The first Committee publication was the *A Free and Responsible Press* report, released in 1947, which received criticism from most newspapers. The report proposed a new press agenda having a set of orientations as a basis. Beyond editorial freedom with respect to the powers that be, as understood by the Libertarian Theory, the press should “provide a true, complete and clever account of daily events in a context to give them meaning” and “as a railway cannot refuse to transport any passenger who has bought a ticket, neither can a newspaper refuse space to divulge actions and points of views of groups or people who have been criticized” (ABEL, 1984:55).

The Hutchins Committee also proposed responsibility to part of the media when television broadcasting was just beginning, and the committee worried that the concentration of media institutions’ ownership in the hands of a smaller number of firms could result in a monopoly of ideas. Regarding this situation, John Hulteng considers that as the number of channels has diminished because of the reduction in the number of media institution owners, “social responsibility is the only acceptable theory as an orientation for the press” (GOODWIN, 1993:21).

The formulations proposed by the SRTP demonstrate a viewpoint which understands the press as an institution whose goal is to safeguard citizen’s rights and, beyond that, the way in which a topic is presented to public opinion directly influences its repercussions and magnitude in society. The SRTP debate based on the Hutchins Committee is current, especially in view of the complexity of large media conglomerates’ performance in comparison to the journalistic firms’ activities in the beginning.

3 – FREEDOM OF SPEECH VERSUS PERSONAL RIGHTS

With the right, duty and social responsibility to inform, how should the media behave in their daily actions with regard to the rights of the citizens? This is a doubt that permeates the public-media relation. What is the public interest’s limit with respect to the protection of intimacy and privacy prescribed by law? The problem is to define the media institutions’ action to prevent them from causing moral damage.

To many jurists, the freedom to inform is not unlimited. According to Maria da Conceição A. Cernicchivo, a lawyer specialized in moral

damage litigation, the ninth article of the 1988 Brazilian Constitution imposes limits when it says that the personal rights involving people's intimacy, private life, honor and image are inviolable, assuring the right to indemnity for material or moral damage in case of their violation⁶.

It is difficult to define what exactly is private, belonging to the privacy sphere, and what is private, happening in the public interest, because most of the time this definition is dubious and inaccurate. The discussion is not restricted to the Brazilian geographic limits. In order to respect individual rights, many measures could be taken considering that "it involves not only journalists and printers, but sophisticated communication firms with computer-skilled and communication technology-wise staff" said Nuno de Souza (AACCS, 1994:24).

The Portuguese jurist Cipriano Rodrigues Martins, in an interview given to the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, said that "public people (the politician or the movie star) are on a public stage and their privacy wall is considered lower (...). But even the more demanding ones on this subject understand that only what contributes to the formation of public opinion should be considered as information. Not gossip"⁷.

4 – MECHANISMS TO ASSURE PRESS SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

In the article *Imprensa, subjetividade e cidadania*⁸ I analyze the mechanisms of representation and society participation in media institutions, establishing degrees of media opening, which can be guidelines for analyzing the existing experiences:

Degree 0: (...) level in which the firm takes the position of the traditional Transmitter, without establishing any permanent feedback channel. Therefore, no mechanism for direct public contact was implemented.

Degree 1: the firm designates a professional of its staff and gives him the mission of public representation, which is achieved through immunity and mandate. This can be the ombudsman or a hearing channel (...) among other alternatives (...).

Degree 2: the firm recruits a public person from society (...) capable of being recognized as a public interest representative. This is, for example, the ombudsman who is not from the staff (...). After his mandate, he will not be exposed to resentments or undesired consequences that result from unanswered interests during his hearing activity.

Degree 3: in the name of pluralism, the firm has a readers' group representation, a mixed council, a representative group with people from different sectors of society, but still under the firm's control with regard to its nomination and power criteria. (...)

Degree 4: the firm accepts external evaluations by independent organizations created by associations: readers' association, readers' group, viewers' association, observers, media watchers, SOS, telephone calls, etc. Those mechanisms act as independent public services inside the firm.

Degree 5: the firm joins a Higher Authority, or a Superior Council, a public entity, but not under State control, with plural composition and representative of society. The firm contributes to its maintenance and respects its decisions no matter what judicial complaints are made.

(...)

Degree 6: the firm might use the degrees mentioned above and in addition create public interaction mechanisms, such as an online service to receive guidelines, suggestions and to send reply messages.

(...)⁹

Nowadays the debate regarding the public sphere is related to the communication institutions' action, considering they should provide, as their duty, freedom of speech to citizens in the information and decision-making processes. Therefore, reflection and implementation of Media Accountability Systems (MAS) are needed. To Claude-Jean Bertrand, the "irreversible public space mediation in contemporary societies gave birth to the need for inventing mechanisms" for the purpose of "helping to respect professional ethics, keep the public trust, defend freedom from threats of the constituted powers and the consumer market"¹⁰. The mechanisms to promote Media Accountability are different from journalistic censorship and self-censorship, considering censorship as prohibition and self-censorship as omission (BERTRAND, 1997). Three possible ways are pointed out as mechanisms to promote ethics and media performance quality. The first involves the action of the "free" press; the second, State interference; and the third, the attempt to build shared spaces. The cooperative alternative is present in the formulations of Hugo Aznar, who proposed in his article *Medios de Comunicación y Esfera Pública* the need for building complementary measures including effective laws and society participation mechanisms (AZNAR, 2000).

Sometimes this debate regarding MAS possibilities is conditioned to free market ideas because "many media professionals would not like to worry about this great source of power: the readers" (BERTRAND, 1999:23), considering them not as a means to provide content improvement and safeguard independence, but as a direct threat to freedom. The explanation presented in many cases is that after the historical struggle for freedom, some professionals tend to consider it a supreme value

and “not a condition to serve the public (...). Also, they do not realize how limited this freedom is, especially because of its personal status - since control of their incomes and careers is in the hands of the (media institutions´) managements” (BERTRAND, 1997:23).

Among the so-called MAS, or Media Accountability Systems, the following may be listed: mistake correction columns, letters to the editors section, columns by ombudsmen/readers in the newspapers, journalism magazines, press observers and communication media ethics codes. In general, it is possible to assert that the creation of mechanisms and public participation in these arbitration and questioning spaces has been increasing in recent years. In the world, at least 60 newspapers, according to *Ombudsman News Organization (ONO)*, practice the ombudsman system in their editorial offices. The experience originally conceived in Sweden (in Swedish, *Ombuds* means public, and *man*, representative) each year is strengthened and is the theme of successive debates. Bertrand typifies the MAS experiences in three ways: external mechanisms, internal mechanisms and cooperative mechanisms.

Some types of MAS, such as sending messages to newspapers and magazines, became easier with the rise of the Internet. The computer worldwide web also consolidated the work of press critics, or using the American term, *media watchdogs*. In Brazil, Sérgio Buarque de Gusmão created in 1994 the *Instituto Gutenberg* (www.igutenberg.org) and in 1996 the *Observatório da Imprensa* (www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br) appeared. For Hugo Aznar (1999), receiving and answering public complaints is the main function of the ombudsmen. In general, when a complaint arrives or when the ombudsman, on his own initiative, investigates the case, he talks to the person who prepared the reporting and asks for explanations regarding the news. On an ideal plane, having the versions of both parties, the ombudsman makes a decision based on professional ethics codes, his organization´s writing manual or professional criteria. After analyzing the case, he gives visibility to the situation in his regularly published column, favoring a more responsible culture and more rigor and care exercised by the communication institution and its professionals.

The ombudsman also has a second function: he is a communication channel with the public. A controversy related to the ombudsman´s performance has to do with criticism of him coming from inside the media institution itself. If, on one hand, the ombudsman is near those who transmit the information, on the other hand, there are some disadvantages: the costs of maintaining the experience and constant

doubts about the ombudsman's impartiality and fair performance. In any case, the presence of an ombudsman generally improves the institution's image, contributes to avoiding greater conflicts and is able to stimulate the creation of other MAS experiences. Another field of action which tries to assure the social responsibility of the press and which could be applicable to Brazil's radio and television stations is the creation of Readers' Councils. In September 2000 the Brasília-based *Correio Braziliense* (CB) created a space for the reader, attempting to help the newspaper "perform its greater function as free press: to serve the public"¹¹, as the journalist TT Catalão wrote in his article "The active voice of those who read". The activities performed by the CB were based on the nationally-known experience of *O Povo* (in Fortaleza, State of Ceará). *O Povo* has a council to evaluate the entire newspaper and a readers' opinion page. The Fortaleza daily maintains a model adopted by CB, following the international inspiration provided by the Mexican newspaper *La Reforma*. The solutions presented are different but do not happen at the same time. Everyone tries to contribute to the development of a more unbiased and fair media. As credibility is one of the greater goals of communication institutions, participation, correction and mistake prevention by users are part of newspapers' internal campaigns. "Ethics sells" – that is, sales may also be affected when symbolically invested with trust and credibility. Principles such as veracity, honesty, accuracy of information, respect for intimacy and the correction of mistakes are present in the great majority of journalistic ethics codes around the world. Obviously, the consolidation of rules alone does not make the media institutions perform their activities respecting ethical principles. In any event, the creation of professional ethics codes establishes a path to be followed and subsidizes the action of instruments that promote and safeguard the established principles, ideally with the cooperation of businessmen, professionals and the public.

5 – PRESS COUNCILS

Ideally, the Press Councils do not act as inhibiting or restraining instruments. In many cases the media institutions are most interested in joining and funding the Councils and carrying out their decisions, for the Councils end up by serving as agencies which promote understanding between the parties, avoiding legal proceedings which are more expensive. Certain Councils function almost as civil courts, receiving complaints and issuing reports and sentences. Sometimes one of the requests is precisely

that the offended party agrees not to seek redress in court, making room for negotiation or accepting the punishment that may be inflicted by the Council. Models adopted in international experiences involving the promotion of social responsibility by the media may be used provided the Brazilian limitations concerning scope, place and funding are taken into consideration. The Press Councils apparently are effective instruments for intermediation of the Public-Press-Public relationship, monitoring and providing reparation in cases of press mistakes. Hutteng has an opinion similar to that of Claude-Jean Bertrand who, considering the limitations of MAS actions, believes that “some critics seem to have considered these actions as panaceas, and therefore they were let down by the results. But just because the actions do not solve all media problems, this does not mean that they are not effective, because they could help a lot to improve the media if they could count on support and funding, or if they were simply better known” (BERTRAND, 1999:55).

The existence of Press Councils cannot be the only mechanism for reparation of damage because their performance does not make reparation for all moral damages caused by anti-ethical behavior or resolve matters involving the ending of media institutions’ ownership concentration, but the existence of this sphere for intermediation can restrain possible offenders and it helps to make reparation for and conclude media users’ complaints. Also, there is the need to complement the MAS with legal action and advancement of rights. The chart below shows actions by the Quebec Press Council and indicates the advantages linked to these activities.

Chart 1: Comparison between the courts and ideal press councils

	Courts	Press Councils
Rules for Complaints	Restricted	Broad
Media Case Jurisdiction	Narrow	Broad
Procedural Rules	Rigid	Normally Extended
Lawyers’ Direct Involvement	Almost Always	Rare
Complainers’ Costs	Normally High	Low
Nature of Possible Punishments	Fines/Arrests	Publicity

Source: PRITCHARD, D. *The Role of Press Councils in a System of Media Accountability: The Case of Quebec* in Canadian Journal of Communication, vol. 16, 1991

Even in places where MAS experiences exist and MAS performance is consolidated, there are cases in which the courts are still the place for possible moral damage complaints. In other Press Council experiences, such as in Minnesota and Australia, the plaintiff undertakes a commitment to limit his complaint to the Council, not taking the complaint to the judicial area. On the other hand, in Sweden, the citizen can take his complaint to the Press Council and to court simultaneously. In England, the PCC (Press Complaints Commission) only intermediates complaints after insufficient initial contact between the complainer and the accused media. With this attitude, the Councils aim at more than just a punishment; they advance the defense of the journalistic profession and the construction of procedures based on professional ethical principles. The monitoring of the media institutions by a Council composed of representatives of society, firms and communication institution professionals makes the debate and decision more practical and flexible in comparison to the legal structure. Accordingly, the PCC presentation report has industry self-regulating rules with stronger moral force than those imposed by the State. Compared to legislative limitations, self-regulation is easily and immediately accessible, fast and flexible in its operation and independent from the government and courts¹².

Among the various MAS mechanisms, a well-structured Press Council seems to be the mechanism which offers more possibilities for efficient action to preserve the media institution from State interference and protect the public from deficient service since it is a permanent, independent entity comprised of businessmen who own information media, journalists who have the skill to inform and citizens who have the right to be correctly informed. Without any coercive right, the Council depends entirely on the cooperation of these three groups, thus allowing it to function entirely as an entity for arbitration, for resolution and intermediation of complaints and for reparation of errors and faults. It can also promote discussions regarding the role of the media, stimulating the citizens' participation and constant debates, seminars and courses.

In the period 1977–1980, the UNESCO implemented the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems (later known by the name of its chairman, Sean MacBride), composed of intellectuals from 16 countries, who intended to study “the totality of the communication problems within modern society”. On that occasion, professional conduct rules were established, including: professional ethics codes, press and social communication councils and reply and rectification rights. According to the MacBride Commission final report, at that time there

were 50 Press/Communication Councils in the world, which even with different activities and orientation had a point in common: the role as an “(...) honor court that plays the self-regulating role (...)”. After collecting information, the MacBride Commission approved the Councils’ actions and suggested that the “generalized action of such entities would contribute to the progressive reduction of information distortion and would stimulate democratic participation, two essential conditions for the future of communication”¹³.

To this extent, it is hard to define uniformly the Press Council, except in a negative way. In 1996, the number of such experiences had decreased to 22, which was not very many when compared to the existence, according to UN, of 168 nations. The Press Councils have varying formations of the public, journalists and businessmen, but even with diverse compositions and general attributions, they had a common function. For Claude-Jean Bertrand:

tous les conseils visent à préserver la liberté de la presse contre les menaces directes et indirectes qu’un gouvernement fait peser sur elle. Ils s’efforcent tous aider la presse à assurer sa responsabilité sociale et d’obtenir ainsi le soutien de l’opinion publique dans son combat pour l’indépendance (1999:70).

6 – CONCLUSIONS: MEASURES RELATING TO THE BRAZILIAN REALITY

This article intended to report existing mechanisms, providing parameters, outlooks and possible incentives for civil society representatives to fulfill the inspection role and to participate more effectively in the Public-Media relation. In Brazil, there is no alternative similar to the Press Council action model. In general, the Brazilian citizen has to appeal to legal means when he does not obtain reparation and space for reply when making direct contact with newspapers and television stations. The National Journalist Federation (Fenaj) announced last year its interest in creating a Brazilian Press Council, or at least encouraging the creation of local councils with representative entities of communication businessman (ANJ, ABERT and ABRAJORI). In any event, the discussion regarding mechanisms assuring social responsibility in Brazil has increased in recent years due to the new television audience phenomenon and also because of the discussion concerning a new press law proposal. In their totality, the experiences presented are mediation alternatives of guided arbitration, media ethical self-discipline, and

journalistic self-regulation, based mostly on punishment and moral judgments, and not necessarily on fines and suspensions, seeking visibility, trust and public support in favor of a fairer press.

It is evident that the reparation measures listed above are sometimes insufficient compared to the total number of cases involving media mistakes, such as cases of moral damage. In addition to these mechanisms, it is necessary to complement the MAS with mechanisms for initiating judicial intervention. However, when society has learned its rights, it can be part of the process, justifying the social bond between the press and the readers/listeners/viewers. The transformation possibilities are directly related to the creation of mechanisms and to the public attitude. The insignificant space for complete participation in the media institutions' inspection activities, particularly in radio and television (which are public concessions), allows the concessionaires to benefit from merely attaining commercial goals, sometimes ignoring constitutional and human dignity principles. TV network programs, especially, have stimulated several debates regarding the ethical level in programs with the two largest audience phenomena at the end of the 1990s, *Ratinho Livre* and *Márcia* (SBT, and later, Bandeirantes TV), demonstrating the current stage of television.

In any case, society itself has already demonstrated the need to organize in order to guarantee the quality of program content. In a survey by Datafolha in São Paulo in November 1997, 75% of the interviewees agreed with some kind of control of television programs. Aware of her voters' demands, Congresswoman Marta Suplicy (PT Party, São Paulo) created a television accountability project. Marta created a non-governmental organization called TVer, formed by more than 20 people including psychoanalysts, educators, doctors and dentists. Nowadays, the group has stimulated debate regarding the civil society's action possibilities and State regulation based on other countries' experiences in order to propose the adoption of control mechanisms in Brazil.

Even though they have existed since 1916, the year that a first experience was created in Sweden, the Press Council experiences, even when they are considered model actions, not yet practical but under construction, needing to be developed daily, structured and studied; the Media Accountability Systems are insufficiently known. Besides, in Brazil, many measures need to be taken if media communication institutions are to effectively fulfill a role of public ethical and plural service, besides the creation of forums for intermediation and analysis of press and audiovisual media complaints.

The rights to information and freedom of speech are central presuppositions for guaranteeing democracy, but a collective limit on these rights is the duty to respect universal principles, the common activities of daily users who frequently do not have economic resources or State protection. Abuses and disrespect of laws which maintain a sovereign order that guarantees citizenship (with competent entities and sometimes the existence of press itself) must be denounced. Sometimes the press can be useful for detection of injustices and social mistakes, but many times we must be aware of the abuses committed by the communication institutions with relation to consolidated individual and collective rights. Initiatives such as the Research and Communitarian Project SOS-Imprensa, can stimulate journalism students to engage in journalistic process improvement and bring these discussions closer to Brazilian society.

NOTES

- 1 Paper to be presented at the thematic panel: "Media criticism and the academic role in the process of improving journalistic procedures".
- 2 This and the following quotations were translated from the Portuguese original.
- 3 Defined by Bernardo Toro as "an act to attract wills to a purpose with shared interpretations and meanings" MONTORO (1996, 26).
- 4 Using the media fascination people feel in order to formulate a critical debate about communication institutions' activities described by Professor José Manuel Moran in MORAN, J. M. *Leitura dos Meios de Comunicação*. São Paulo: Pancast, 1993.
- 5 MARCHANTE, V.I.N. (1998, p.5).
- 6 In Memorial de Recurso Especial set out to the Superior Tribunal de Justiça before the Special Appeal number 103.836/SP p.65.0.
- 7 In Folha de São Paulo, 3/11/97, p.3.
- 8 Presented in the VII Encontro Anual da Associação de Programas de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação, carried out in PUC-SP in 1998.

- 9 SILVA, L.M. *Imprensa, subjetividade e cidadania*. S. Paulo: Text presented to the VII Compôs, PUC-SP, 1998.
- 10 The MAS concept was developed by VERTRAND, Claude-Jean. *La Déontologie des médias*, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, Que Sais-Je, 1997.
- 11 CB, August 15th 2002 p.14.
- 12 In PCC, informative number # 6, England, 1995.
- 13 In *Um mundo e muitas vozes: comunicação e informação na nossa época*, Rio de Janeiro, Ed. da FGV, 1983.

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