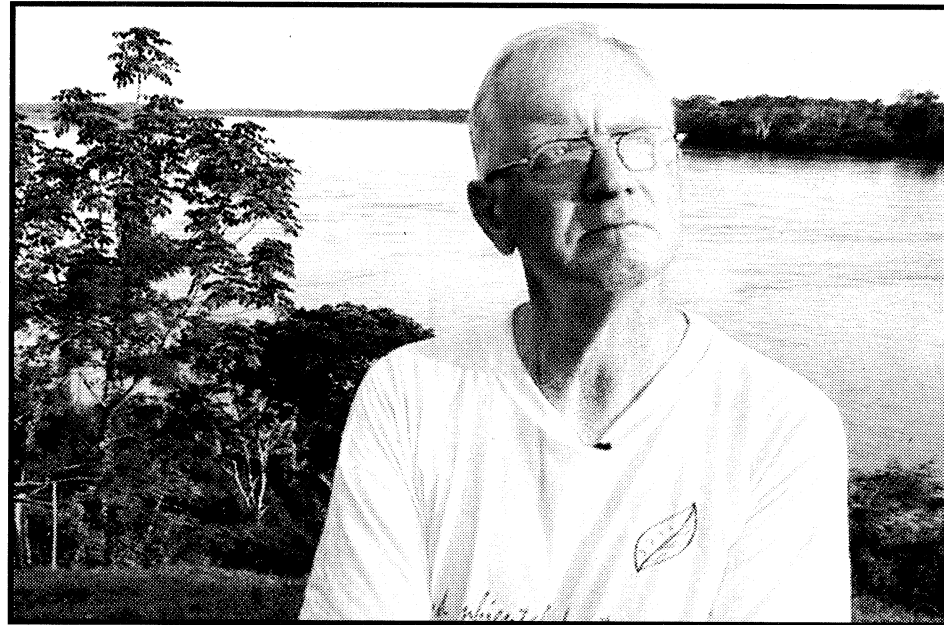


A sharp focus on journalistic ethics

The creator of Newsnight and documentary film-makers will be among the speakers at the annual Cleraun event in Dublin, writes Catherine O'Mahony



Brother Paul McAuley: Peruvian right of residency has been cancelled

Professional integrity in journalism and documentary film-making is the theme of the Cleraun Media Conference, where a large number of highly-ranked media professionals will discuss their work in print, television and radio.

The conference, organised by the Cleraun University Centre, is designed to be of particular interest to media students, and promises a realistic look at the world of journalism. It takes place from October 15 to 17 in Mount Merrion, Dublin.

Speakers will include former BBC producer/director Ian Kirk-Smith, who will talk about his film portrait of life on a Belfast loyalist estate,

called The Bonfire. Heavy-hitting former BBC journalist George Carey, the creator of Newsnight and former Panorama editor, will also talk about his experiences.

German director Marcus Vetter's award-winning documentary, *Das Herz von Jenin* (Jenin's Heart), will be shown at the conference. The film tracks the experiences of the father of a Palestinian boy shot by Israeli soldiers who decided to donate his son's organs to six Israeli children.

Clare Duignan, RTE's head of radio, will talk on October 17 about a definition of the term 'arts', and how radio broadens it, while Irish Times legal affairs editor Carol Coul-

ter will examine media coverage of recent criminal trials.

Marc de Jersey, once a BBC global news adviser who now works as a film maker with the Public Affairs Media group, will discuss the challenges of producing an independent documentary in the context of his own recent filming project in Peru.

His documentary, which was commissioned by a major global news network, has not been broadcast because of legal fears over its content.

The film focused on Brother Paul McAuley, a De La Salle brother who has championed the interests of indigenous Amazonian populations faced with the potential loss of large

chunks of their territory to development by multinational oil corporations. The Peruvian government has since cancelled Brother McAuley's right of residency.

De Jersey, who has worked on a large number of independent documentaries, said this was an unusually tough situation, but noted that the job of getting a project from pitch to broadcast could often be tricky. It was important, he said, for students in particular to recognise this aspect of a broadcasting career. "It can be a very complicated business," he said. "But there are still lots of opportunities out there in independent film-making, particularly in the online space.

"Generally, I would encourage students to do a degree they like first, then do a post-graduate course in film-making, and then try and get work from some kind of news organisation before moving into film-making. But there are more and more web-only news organisations that will take material from new film-making graduates. It doesn't have to be an hour-long documentary; it's normal now to produce a piece that's seven to 12 minutes long."

Would-be film makers and all journalists needed to be able to operate across several different kinds of media, he said; in his case, this usually meant television, online and print.

A self-described news junkie, De Jersey said there was still a keen public appetite for factual programming, as appetite for reality TV waned.

Now that Channel 4 has dropped its Big Brother series, for instance, he said there was a giant schedule gap that might well be filled by documentary footage. Also a large number of digital channels are keen to take factual programming.

"There has been a long period when we had far too much reality TV on air, but I think public interest is winning out on this one," he said. His next project is a film about child sex trafficking between Bangladesh and India. This, he hoped, would be "a lot less controversial" than his last film.

The conference costs €120, with a reduced rate of €45 for students.

See www.cleraunmedia.com for more details.