

Adapting to a new model of journalism

Helen Thomas, Bob Schieffer accept Murrow Award at Washington State University

By Yesenia Amaro, Daily News staff writer

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Bob Schieffer said life would be different without newspapers.

"We can't have a democracy without freedom of the press," said the chief Washington correspondent for CBS News. "It's hard to imagine what this country would be like without newspapers."

Schieffer and former United Press International White House Bureau Chief Helen Thomas were in Pullman on Tuesday to receive 2009 Edward R. Murrow Lifetime Achievement Awards in broadcast journalism and journalism, respectively, during the 35th annual Murrow Symposium at Washington State University.

The national news icons addressed a large audience at Beasley Coliseum after receiving their awards Tuesday night, and both met with reporters Tuesday morning.

Thomas said there's still hope for the country's newspapers, many of which are reeling from the recession and trying to adapt to new technologies and fend off competition from online news outlets.

Schieffer agreed, adding that newspapers need to find a new business model.

"The next step for newspapers to recover is for the economy to get better," he said.

He said there will always be journalism, "but no one can really know" what kind of journalism that will be. Thomas warned that journalistic standards might be getting lost with the advancement of technology.

"Anybody with a laptop thinks they are a journalist," she said.

Both Thomas and Schieffer said newspapers play a valuable role in the lives of Americans.

"The value and joy of the newspaper is that we find three or four stories that maybe we weren't looking for," Schieffer said.

He said people are always able to go back and re-read a paragraph they might not have understood.

Thomas said newspapers are a good source of information.

"You learn so much more" from a newspaper than any other media outlet, she said.

Schieffer said it's difficult to know if information that surfaces on the Internet is accurate.

He said newspapers can be held responsible if they make a big mistake or commit libel, but on the Internet it's hard to sue anybody.

"Even the smallest newspaper has somebody on their staff that knows where the news came from," he said.

The pair urged reporters to follow the journalistic standards of accuracy and integrity.

Schieffer also advised young reporters not to get discouraged by the current industry crisis.

"Don't be discouraged; we need you," he said. "The need for more trained journalists is more critical now."

He said young journalists should not give up if they are not able to find employment. They just need to keep looking.

"The job is not going to come look for them at their dorm," he said. "They should continue to look for a job until they find one."

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