

Moyers offers advice to college journalists

By BRIAN CARLSON
Assignment Reporter

Journalists can and must tell the day's important stories in a way that is interesting and meaningful, documentarian and author Bill Moyers said Monday.

But, said Moyers, speaking to journalism students in Avery Hall, industry trends are making it more difficult for journalists to produce the kinds of substantial, in-depth stories that have marked his own career.

Moyers, best known for his award-winning public-television documentaries, said the media too often discard the serious and complex in favor of the soft and sentimental.

"It's always easy and satisfying to please the public," he said. "It's very difficult, but crucial, to inform them."

Critics have praised Moyers for his ability to draw his audience's attention to some of today's most intractable problems.

Moyers has produced more than 200 programming hours, winning more than 30 Emmy Awards and other accolades. "The Public Mind," "Amazing Grace," "What Can We Do About Violence?" and the series "A World of Ideas" are some of the specials he has produced.

He was also the senior news analyst for the "CBS Evening News" and chief correspondent for the documentary series "CBS Reports."

Through his career, Moyers said, he has been able to feed his own desire to learn.

"What I love about this business

is that it keeps me a perpetual student," he said.

But Moyers said it is becoming more difficult for serious journalists to find an outlet for their work.

Because media owners are concerned with profits and public interest surveys, Moyers said, their ideas of what should be reported are often in conflict with those of reporters.

As a result, news coverage has shifted away from a comprehensive look at the day's most important issues to an emphasis on feature stories, he said.

Asked by a student if the shift was justified because the media are trying to give the public what it wants, Moyers said journalists have a responsibility to decide what makes news.

After picking out the day's most important developments, journalists should think critically about the news, and tell the public what they should know to be informed citizens, he said.

Moyers also responded to a student who asked whether journalists' work should place a "mirror to the world."

Journalists should do more than just "pan over" society and present a superficial view, he said. Moyers said journalists should tell stories that are thought-provoking and entertaining.

"The job of the journalist is not to get to the generalization," he said, "but to the heart, plot and narrative of the story that you think is most important."

Moyers was in Lincoln to speak at a benefit for Nebraska Educational Public Television on Monday night.

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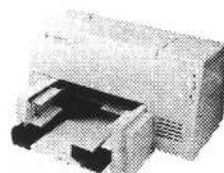


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