

G-MEDIA UPDATE

GEORGIAN MEDIA ENHANCE DEMOCRACY, INFORMED CITIZENRY AND ACCOUNTABILITY AUGUST 2012

MEC – A REAL-LIFE LAB FOR GEORGIAN JOURNALISM STUDENTS

Tucked into a historical neighborhood of old Tbilisi is a place where young journalists can acquire skills they'll need to meet the challenges of the future. The Multimedia Education Center (MEC) provides state of the art technical facilities and a venue for multi-platform content production for masters level journalism education. Designed to encourage student productions and packed with modern digital equipment, It was built by IREX through the Georgia Media Enhance Democracy, Information and Accountability (G-MEDIA) program funded by USAID.



Ana Davitashvili, student of the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management (CSJMM), is in the first class of students, who will complete their MA program at the new teaching center. She says the converged newsroom environment encouraged her to produce multimedia stories. "While thinking about the ways how to tell the story, I always tried to choose a specific platform; print, video or photo. Now I know that the best way is a multimedia. The center gives us the opportunity to work in multiple media platforms through using the latest visual media tools," said Ana, now able to build a portfolio of work that will help her find a job after graduation. The MEC has enabled faculty to provide real-world experience to journalism students. In

a TV news class, students are designated as anchors, producers and reporters, based on their skills and interests. They must pitch coverage ideas to their teachers, present stories with the aid of a teleprompter and meet strict deadlines. The experience allows them to make more informed career choices and gain confidence in their work. Student Giorgi Sikharulidze says "After news days I wish to work as the news reporter, I am confident that we can easily transfer our new skills to jobs in professional media."

Tamar Chikviladze believes the TV course was also a great lesson in teamwork. "We were very supportive of each other. We knew that one's failure is a disappointment to the entire team and of course we share

the success the same way." Tamar says the resources of the MEC have made it possible for her to develop new skills, in using visual elements to tell stories and produce content. The MEC also addressed the challenges facing teachers, primarily a lack of adequate facilities. What little equipment was available for TV, radio and documentary education was outdated. Now dozens of Apple laptop computers, video cameras, audio recorders, tripods, lights, microphones and other equipment are available for students to check-out and produce class-related content. The MEC will also support new student media (a re-launch of Radio GIPA and a new website) at the CSJMM by providing students with the equipment they will need to produce news,

G-MEDIA OBJECTIVES:

OBJECTIVE 1:

Improve Quality and Diversity of Media Content and Broaden Channels of Delivery

OBJECTIVE 2:

Improve Professional Journalism, its Standards and Self-regulation

OBJECTIVE 3:

Improve the Regulatory Environment and Protect the Journalists' Rights

OBJECTIVE 4:

Improve Media Management and Business

public affairs and information programs and documentaries. Tiko Nachkebia has taught a TV course at GIPA since 2007 but work in the MEC is a new experience. "MEC gives the capability to imitate live broadcasting, which is the essential and culminating step of the TV course. This space provides a very comfortable environment for students and through using latest tools they can produce stories for different platforms in parallel".

Faculty member **Nino Orjonikidze** says the unique MEC design and equipment provide an opportunity to simulate a real newsroom. "The learning environment is very close to real working atmosphere that makes studying process so much applied and enjoyable. MEC makes it possible to pass the whole cy-



cle of news production, starting from generating the idea and finalizing with online broadcasting," she said.

G-MEDIA consultant Robb Montgomery, who designed the center to support the teaching of multi-platform media and practical journalism skills wrote from

his home in Berlin, "I am so happy it is turning out to be the kind of place where the next generation of journalists will cut their teeth." The key beneficiaries of the center are CSJMM and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty students (more than 100 students of CSJMM and up to 30 students of

RFE/RL), who will gain hands-on experience in the high-tech facility. The MEC also offers a training venue for professional journalists and for amateur enthusiasts interested in learning photography, social media development or other forms of digital content production.



Multimedia Education Center

The Multimedia Education Center (MEC) is a state-of-the-art training and learning facility, established by the IREX-implemented and USAID-funded G-MEDIA (Georgian Media Enhance Democracy, Informed Citizenry and Accountability) program. The MEC is designed to support improvement in Georgia's professional journalism community by focusing on innovative uses of technology in teaching and learning about journalism. The MEC training center and

media studio are designed to meet the rapidly changing needs in journalism education and news gathering. This unique facility is equal parts laboratory, studio and forum, and offers an immersive learning environment for journalism students. The MEC is made up of a S.M.A.R.T Media Lab, classrooms, a discussion club and a café. S.M.A.R.T. is an acronym for the values assigned to serve users who will occupy the facility: Scalable, Multi-purpose,

Asymmetrical, Resourceful and Trusted. The S.M.A.R.T. Media Lab features state-of-the-art thinking about electronic classrooms, studio design, open space architecture, and mobile-oriented media labs. The MEC's unique structure allows educators to take students out of classrooms and into a studio environment which challenges many traditional solutions about how to organize classrooms, computer labs, studio and editing space, meeting rooms, technology, security, sound control, lighting and other aspects of a multimedia newsroom. The entire space functions as a large multi-platform stage where every square meter provides a studio-grade environment available for interviewing,

editing, producing and hosting multi-platform content. One unique feature of the MEC is that the gear, furniture and even the walls can be easily moved to change the design and layout of the space. The classrooms at the MEC are all digital-ready: All rooms feature high-bandwidth wireless service and digital projectors. The S.M.A.R.T. Media Lab can also be used as a live event space for lectures, movie screenings, conferences, workshops or political debates. The lab's design also provides broadcast-quality live streaming of video from these events. The lab's prime camera for livestreaming is a top-level Sony XDCAM of the same quality used by CNN, BBC and other professional studios.