Reshaping the IJ curriculum:

Goals and means of the ARIJ/SBI Initiative

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I.   The initial project (2012)

Hunter and Sengers (SBI) create a university IJ curriculum for the Arab region at ARIJ request. Two key goals:

- Partner with regional universities to launch new programs.
- Train professors to educate students in IJ.

Sponsors: IMS (Denmark), SIDA (Sweden), OSF (London), ARIJ

First results: New courses introduced in Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq….

First lesson: Don't fight academics!

II.   Key concepts and resources of the initiative

1. Address strategic issues

a. Capacity is an historic problem of investigative journalism: Not enough reporters and editors are competent. On the job training and elective IJ classes have not solved this issue. Centres like ARIJ and OCCRP, which create capacity through training reporters, have discovered elite talents, but student demand remains unmet.

b. IJ is presented as a risky career option that involves danger and hostility. It is also a high-value skill that creates multiple employment options, as an entrepreneur, journalist, researcher. IJ is thus part of the answer to the J-school recruitment and student employment crises.

2. Address the teaching gap

Two common types:

- Practitioners with limited knowledge base
- Scholars with limited practice

Consequence for students:

- Anecdotal content OR
- "Too much theory"

- Projects are key knowledge vehicle: deep but narrow

3. Address the context gap

Historic, economic and social aspects of the work are left aside.

- Historic: inspiration + method
- Economic: Independence and reliability as a business asset
- Social: Coalitions > crusades

4. Leverage key success factors

Focus on planning as well as field skills.

- Pre-project work:
  a. Planning the investigation: Hypothesis, timeline, source map
  b. Valuing the investigation: Importance/difficulty; value created; resources required; stakeholders/markets; value captured.
  c. Selling the investigation: Oral presentation and challenge

- During the project:
  d. Organising the investigation: Creation of a Masterfile
  e. Leverage the experience:
    - Identify, analyse, present and archive models (template)
    - Identify analyse, present and archive open sources (template)
    - Ethical decision-making
    - Research and interview skills
    - Verification skills
    - Storytelling skills
    - Publish the story!

5. Support with free current resources

- Model Curricula for Journalism Education (Chua in UNESCO 2007)
- Story-Based Inquiry (Hunter UNESCO 2011)
- The Global Investigative Journalism Casebook (Hunter UNESCO 2012).
- The Data Journalism Handbook (EJC 2012)
- The Verification Handbook (Silverman 2013)
- ARIJ online story DB (ongoing)

6. Create local assets

a. Regional story archive (parallel to IRE, ARIJ)
b. Regional open source database created through class assignments.
c. Canon of IJ models and precursors through class assignments.
d. Contributions from scholars. Incentive for studying IJ and related subjects.

- Saba Bebawi on Arab IJ history
- Anya Schifrin on extraction industries
- Ch. Bazar on Mongolia media history

III.   Future steps, near and far

- Determine a global business model that compensates regional drivers like ARIJ.

- Meet with universities and regional centers to train instructors (not the same as training reporters!)

- Link IJ with business schools, to create classes in modelling businesses, entrepreneurialism, business intelligence and media management.

- Create executive classes for editors, publishers and NGOs, to create job market for graduates.

- Make IJ a global social practice (cf. Aucoin 2007).