

African journalists present 50-year retrospective

By [Lavinia Mahlangu](#)

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As the African Union Heads of State and Government Summit kicked off in Ghana's capital on Sunday, 1 July, the continent's journalists presented a demonstration of their profession in the form of a recently launched book.

Accra – The African Editors Forum (TAEF), Highway Africa and the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) earlier this year published *50 Years of Journalism: African Media Since Ghana's Independence*.

Copies of the book were presented to the 1,500 delegates of the World Editors Forum and the World Association of Newspapers congress in Cape Town recently.

It celebrates leading figures of African journalism over the past five decades, as well as its fallen heroes such as the late Mozambican investigative journalist Carlos Cardoso.

“The title of the book follows the fact that this year marks 50 years of Ghana's independence and gave us a chance to look back at journalism in Africa over that time,” *City Press* Editor and chair of the TAEF, Mathatha Tsheddu told reporters Sunday.

This year Ghana celebrates 50 years of independence from the British, making it Africa's oldest democracy.

“This book was completed in three months in order for it to be ready for WAN and the WEF by June 3. It was not easy to compile the book as it includes many valuable contributions from journalists and editors from all across Africa.”

The book, edited by Elizabeth Barratt, Executive Editor of the *Star* newspaper and Secretary General of TAEF and respected, veteran journalist Guy Berger, explores the key periods of African media history while highlighting lessons learned from the past and perspectives on the future of African media.

Mr Berger is head of the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, a regular contributor to the *Mail and Guardian* and is active in the South African National Editors Forum (SANEF) and Highway Africa.

The book presents the lives and experiences of what it calls “characters and cases” in the continent's news media and groups them in their respective regions.

These also include case studies into the language groups of the mainstream African press, namely Anglophone,

Francophone and Lusophone countries.

The book is currently available in English and French, but the publishers hope to make it available in more of the continent's languages.

In order to share the experience of the continent's writing greats with its future crop of journalists, copies of the book have been posted to 90 schools of journalism as identified in a Unesco study.

Contributors include Professor Fackson Banda of Zambia, Cheriff Sy of Burkina Faso, and Michael Kudlak of the International Press Institute (IPI).

The book is available in electronic form at www.theafricaneditorsforum.org.

Later this week a historic debate between a number of Presidents and Editors of Africa will take place at the fringes of the AU Summit.

The presidents who have been invited to take part are from South Africa, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Algeria, Nigeria and Liberia.

The editors are Mathatha Tsedu of South Africa, Gaitho Macharia from Kenya, Cyrille Kileba from DRC, Rob Jamieson from Malawi and Souleymane Diallo from Guinea Conakry.

At the end of the debate, which the TAEF hopes will become an annual feature of the summit with different leaders each year, the African Presidents will each receive a copy of the book.

For a previous article on the African Union Heads of State and Government Summit, see:

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