

International Journalists Question Media Treatment of Intelligent Design
International Journalists Forum on Intelligent Design
Denyse O’Leary and Mustafa Akyol
Event Summary – 10/20/2006

“There are two basic stories: the top-down and the bottom-up,” said Denyse O’Leary, Canadian free-lance journalist who was one of two presenters at last night’s (October 19) *International Journalists’ Forum on Intelligent Design*. “The ‘legacy media’ assume the latter, which is that mind emerges from matter.”

The event was held on the University of Minnesota campus in Murphy Hall, home of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

Ms. O’Leary was joined by Mustafa Akyol, a Turkish free-lance journalist who is read widely and who went on to explain that the bottom-up worldview is part of a larger modernistic worldview which sees itself as objective truth. Citing examples from a recent issue of the *Washington Post* and a book by Leonard Susskind, he explained that journalists assume the truth of the modernistic worldview.

“Intelligent design proponents are one kind of people, while scientists are scientists,” said Akyol, noting the inherent journalistic prejudice against scientific theories, like Intelligent Design, which are not versions of mainstream evolutionary theory.

O’Leary observed that journalists have a “story template” for issues like Intelligent Design, and these templates are always utilized, even when otherwise falsified.

Rather than expecting the old, legacy media (which has always attracted those with a non-traditional viewpoint, one typically out of step with religious tradition) to fairly report on Intelligent Design theory, she expects bloggers and other new media types to overtake reporting of science and other issues, because they often have more access to expert opinion.

She gave the example of last year’s showing of “The Privileged Planet” at the Smithsonian Institution. The *New York Times* picked up the story about this pro-Intelligent Design film from her blog, but twisted the significance of the film into an attack on evolution (which it is not). Their interpretation rested on the story template, not on their actually having watched the film (which she as a blogger had, in fact, done).

As for public education, O’Leary says that legacy media see it as a noble cause, where the teaching of materialistic doctrine, often in the guise of the teaching of evolution, is assumed to be legitimate.

O’Leary and Akyol both predict further growth in the popularity of and interest in Intelligent Design as a scientifically viable theory. O’Leary, in particular, noted that younger scientists tend to be the ones most willing to raise scholarly doubts about Darwin. Akyol, in response to an audience question, observed as a Muslim that where he

has spoken to Islamic clerics about the new theory, they have been extremely intrigued and interested.

The event was sponsored by Mars Hill Students and The MacLaurin Institute, and funded by the Metanexus Institute.