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STUDENT, FACULTY PROJECT RECEIVES AWARD AT AFRICAN MEDIA AWARDS COMPETITION

A project developed by USF St. Petersburg Journalism and Media Studies graduate student Salem Solomon and Dr. Casey Frechette, assistant professor of Digital Journalism & Design, recently won second place in the data visualization category at the African Digital Media Awards in Johannesburg, South Africa. The ceremony was part of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers' first Digital Media Africa Conference.

The project, titled "How Long Have Africa's Presidents Held Office," highlights how long African presidents have held power. While Africa has some of the world’s longest-serving presidents, it also has experienced rapid change.

"Too often, international coverage of Africa feeds stereotypes. But I think we were able to create something of real value to readers within and beyond the continent," said Solomon, who works as web producer and journalist at Voice of America, adding that she was honored to see their work recognized along African publications. "It’s gratifying to see something we created from scratch honored on a global stage. We spent a lot of time coming up with the concept and figuring out how to make it work. Lots of brainstorming sessions went into this, and then lots of coding and designing and fact-checking. It was truly a collaborative process, and it means a lot to see it get this recognition."

Awards were given in 10 categories, with the honor for best news site split between Media24 in South Africa and Nation Media Group in Kenya. Times Media Ltd. in South Africa received the best data visualization award for their TMG Election App.

The visualization was published on the Special Reports website of Voice of America. Since its launch in November 2015, the project has garnered about 5,000 views per month and is the only work developed outside of Africa that was nominated for an award.

"The Digital Team and the African Division language services at VOA worked hard to get the project published and promoted," said Solomon. "Translators at VOA made it possible to deliver the project to French and Kiswahili-speaking audiences. It was really a team effort."
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