

BBC wins big by betting on chat app to deliver Ebola tips

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The BBC was honored for its use of a new platform to distribute lifesaving Ebola information

The BBC won a prestigious Online News Association award for public service journalism Saturday for its use of the chat application WhatsApp to distribute information about Ebola in stricken areas during the 2014 outbreak.

The group was honored for its use of a new platform to distribute

lifesaving information, such as how the disease was spread and where to get help, in English and French, in format that would reach readers wherever they were.

"It's a big honor to bring home this award," said BBC digital editor Steve Herrmann upon accepting the prize.

"It is a bigger honor to be part of a life-saving service."

In developing the chat app service, the BBC had decided to use graphics, texts and audio clips to get their message across, avoiding such heavy files as video clips that would burn through a user's data.

The association also awarded its first honor named for freelance journalist James Foley, who was beheaded by the Islamic State in the first of their widely distributed videos showing the execution of Western hostages.

The award went to Cengiz Yar, a photographer who works in conflict zones, Syria in particular.

"The Syrian war and the struggle of the Syrian people is what James gave his life for," Yar said.

"This award is a reminder that we have an obligation to leave the world a better place than we found it. Being the messenger, being someone people trust to tell their story, is more than job, it is a calling."

Social news startup Reported.ly, which is associated with First Look Media, won an award for their breaking coverage of the shootings at the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo.

The shootings took place just two days after the launch of Reported.ly,

testing the small team from the very start.

"We didn't even know each other very well," said Andy Carvin of his staff of six, which is spread around the world.

"A challenge makes a team, and we're better for it."

In other categories, The Baltimore Sun won two awards for its coverage of the police killing of Freddie Gray and the riots that rocked the city after his death.

The Washington Post won the [award](#) for overall excellence in digital storytelling and Canada's The Globe and Mail got a prize for its coverage of the shooting on Parliament Hill.

The Online News Association is the world's largest membership organization for digital media.

Their awards, established in 2000, seek to honor the unique work of digital and online journalist who use new tools to tell timeless stories with text, graphics, video and pictures.

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