

Professor Karen O'Brien's opening remarks at the Sir Harry Evans Global Summit in Investigative Journalism 2023

“We are enormously proud of our Durham University alumnus, Sir Harry Evans.

“Harry studied at the Castle between 1949 and 1952, edited the student newspaper Palatinate, and occasionally found himself talking in pubs to local miners.

“In his autobiography, *My Paperchase*, he gives a vivid account of the magic and quirkiness of his alma mater, and also recounts how he found journalistic inspiration in the North East.

“He edited the regional newspaper *The Northern Echo*, knowingly following in the footsteps of North Easterner and father of British investigative journalism, W.T. Stead.

“Stead deployed the *Echo* to expose the hypocrisy and brutality of the Victorian prostitution of women and girls.

“Harry's *Echo* campaigned for cervical smear tests for women, he did not shy away from taboo or difficult subjects.

“My university today is similarly committed to the research and teaching of difficult, urgent issues ranging from gender-based violence to contemporary Russian politics.

“We are therefore so delighted to play a part in this Global Summit to affirm the special partnership between investigative journalism and universities, and to celebrate our shared commitment to evidence gathering and free inquiry.

“For if our great journalists are truth tellers, universities are surely truth keepers.

“Not only are we educators of students and safe guardians of the archive.

“Not only do we maintain expertise in languages, security studies and areas whose public use may only one day become clear in a crisis.

“And not only do we remind legacy conscious tyrants and war criminals how the first journalistic draft of history will become the lasting record of all time and how, as Tacitus wrote, truth is confirmed by inspection and delay.

“More than this in our global era of digital noise, we give assurance to journalists in the field that there are observatories on truth, spaces where fake news and fake histories are contested and where the insights of journalists can be verified.

“We sustain and connect insights over the long time, and we also evaluate and celebrate how journalists are themselves the makers of history.

“This was the case in 1971 with the atrocities in East Bengal, now Bangladesh, that Harry was bold enough to name as genocide and which universities here and across the world continue to document more than 50 years on.

“The values that Sir Harry Evans embodied continue to inspire students and staff and are as urgently relevant as ever.”