

**PCNY presents**

**THE NEW YORK BUREAU: NEWSPAPERS**

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**ALEXANDRA MARKS' bio**

Alexandra Marks is a print and broadcast journalist with more than 20 years experience in national and international news reporting.

She is currently a senior national correspondent for The Christian Science Monitor, covering a variety of topics from aviation safety to national politics.

Prior to returning to the Monitor in 1997, Marks was a correspondent for NBC News, where she covered the 1996 presidential election. Before being recruited by the network, Marks covered the media and telecommunications policy for the Monitor. She has worked for The Christian Science Monitor in various capacities since 1991. She was a correspondent, producer and anchor for Monitor News, the organization's national evening newscast. She covered domestic policy, specializing in health care reform. She served as the Latin American correspondent for Monitor Radio, the organization's public radio arm. Based in Argentina, she covered the political and economic implications of the continent's emerging democracies.

Marks left the Monitor in 1993 to work as press secretary for Senator John Kerry.

Marks began her career in Burlington, Vermont. She worked for the Vanguard Press and the Burlington Free Press before being recruited to work at the local ABC affiliate. After a year, she moved to WCAX, the state's largest television station. There she worked as an investigative reporter focusing on the health care crisis and medical billing practices. She also covered city hall and produced and anchored the 11:00 p.m. newscast. After leaving Vermont, she moved to Boston, where she worked for WGBH's 10:00 News before joining the Monitor staff.

Marks earned a Masters in Public Administration from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government in 1991. She graduated from The Colorado College magna cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, with distinction in English in 1981. She speaks Spanish.

**REMARKS:** Thank you all very much for inviting me here.

A lot of people know *The Monitor*, they've heard of it or they read it in college, that's sort of what it's known for. There are a lot of young people in particular who don't know *The Monitor* and I often get a call, "Is this a Christian magazine?" *The Monitor* was founded in 1908 by the woman who founded Christian Science, which is indeed religious, but she founded it because she felt that there needed to be a place where people could go and read objectively, fairly and in a balanced way what was actually happening in the world. So we are a pretty much straightforward news organization, although we are owned by a church, there is a firewall between us and the church organization. I joke that our circulation is small but influential. I think our circulation is maybe only 90-100,000 now, but it tends to be policy makers, diplomats, we also have a very large readership on the web. I think we were recently voted one of the most blogged-about newspapers ever. So we tend to be known most for our international coverage, we do have quite a few domestic bureaus here in New York, Boston where the paper is based is a large bureau, Chicago, LA, Atlanta, Texas, Washington, but we're most known for our international coverage and we do have people – I think we pulled our person out of Japan

but we do have someone in China, couple of people in the Middle East, of course somebody in Europe and Africa and I'm sure I'm forgetting some but we also have the international breadth.

We tend to be different. I also joke, with great affection, that we're yesterday's news tomorrow. That is because we have morning deadlines because we are distributed through the mail - it's also a subscription-based newspaper. You can find it usually at international newsstands, but most of it comes in the mail. So our deadline is, like, noon.

We tend to do more step-back analysis and trend pieces, which I think you'll see most of the industry moving in that direction because if something happens at 10:00 in the morning and it's been on the news and it's been blogged about on the internet and this-and-that, by the time it arrives in your newspaper the next morning you already know what happened and you want context. The bureau in New York used to be four people but *The Monitor*, like many other news organizations is sort of suffering economically these days, we now have two people. Myself, I cover a wide variety of issues. I used to be predominantly a political reporter and now I, like Lisa, I joke that I do drugs, thugs and cultural trends. I write about the healthcare industry, I write about, as Isabel Surface from Odyssey House knows, I am very interested in drug treatment and what's going on with youth and drug abuse. Unfortunately, ten years ago our aviation reporter left and I volunteered to do it for a few weeks and to this day I still cover it. I still write about aviation safety and issues having to do with travel and some of the challenges. Actually, right now it's a very interesting beat because the whole aviation industry is undergoing an amazing transformation - flying is not the same and it's never going to be the same. My other colleague is Ron Scherer, he is a national economics reporter and he tends to focus on housing, oil, whatever the big-picture economic issues are of the moment. Currently he's down in New Orleans writing about the economic challenges as a result of the various hurricanes.

I love getting pitched but I'm not fond of phone calls. Like Lisa, we have disconnected our fax. We were going through a ream of paper a week and we just never had time to go through it so please never fax us. I'm not even going to tell you what it is, take us off your fax list, please. Email is wonderful. We do get inundated and sometimes things do get missed, but our emails are very simple Ron is [Ron@csmonitor.com](mailto:Ron@csmonitor.com) and I am [Alex@csmonitor.com](mailto:Alex@csmonitor.com), very easy to access. We tend to like to do pieces that are... we wouldn't do a piece about a new product that was coming out but we would, maybe, do a piece about a transformation in a particular industry. I can just say for me, I don't know how many of you deal with the travel or aviation but I'm fascinated by how these big legacy carriers are now trying to morph into low-cost carriers so they're coming up with all of these interesting ideas and products to try to coerce people back onto the old legacy carriers. So that's the kind of thing that we're interested in, larger step-back pieces but also *The Monitor*, because we are small, all of our pieces can be based in New York but we really do look for them to have a larger, national significance. We also try to make everything relevant to ordinary people.

Thank you.

**PH** – Two people in the bureau, huh? That's a lot of work! What's the flow of PR pitches across your desktop on a given day?

**AM** – It can be nonstop. I’m always getting email. I sometimes get 500 emails a day. But I have to say I agree with Lisa, if somebody calls me the first question is, please, “Are you on deadline?” and particularly because our deadlines are unusual. You might think it’s great to call in the morning and launch into your pitch but I’m often on deadline and I can be, I apologize in advance, because if you really have 15 minutes to write a story... We get an enormous amount of pitches and the other thing is many of them go directly into the trash, I’m really sorry. If somebody wants to pitch *The Monitor* it would be best to read us for a little while, see the nature of our stories, be aware of our particular style and our particular way of approaching issues and *then* pitch us either through an email or, yes, I guess a phone call, but for me in an afternoon. Phone calls in the afternoon are better whereas for Lisa phone calls in the morning are better.

**PH** – Great, thank you. You can also visit their website if you want to get a flavor for the editorial focus of the newspaper.

**AM** – Yes, and I have to say that our website, circulation is maybe 100,000 times more than the newspaper because people don’t like paying for print anymore. Can I just ask a question, how many of you read a newspaper everyday?

**PH** – See, newspapers aren’t outmoded with this crowd.

**AM** – I’m impressed. I’m highly impressed!