# Journalism Education

## The Journal of the Association for Journalism Education

# Journalism Education

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# Contributors

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PUBLICATIONS: Baines D. (2012) Hyper-local news: A glue to hold rural communities together? *Local Economy*. Vol 27 (2) (pp. 152-166); Baines D. (2010) Hyper-local: glocalised rural news. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*. Vol 30 Issue 9/10 (pp. 581 - 592); Baines D & Kennedy C. (2010) AN EDUCATION FOR INDEPENDENCE: Should entrepreneurial skills be an essential part of the journalist's toolbox? *Journalism Practice*, Vol 4 Issue 1, (pp. 97-113)

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## Tor Clark

Tor Clark is Principal Lecturer in Journalism, BA Journalism programme leader and a Teacher Fellow at De Montfort University in Leicester. His main interests are political journalism, the UK regional media, the history of journalism, learning, teaching and the student experience. He was a previously a journalist in the regional press working on free, daily and weekly newspapers, two of which he edited. He is now a regular contributor to BBC Radio Leicester on political and journalistic issues and has also written for Total Politics magazine.

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Neil Farrington is a senior lecturer in sports journalism at the University of Sunderland. He worked for 16 years as a multi-award nominated sports journalist in Newcastle upon Tyne, and was sports editor of the Sunday Sun before becoming sports news editor of the newly amalgamated NCJ Media sports desk in 2008. He has a BA in English Literature from the University of Hull. He is co-author of Race, Racism and Sports Journalism published in 2012 by Routledge and of the article 'Changing the Game? The impacts of Twitter on relationships between football clubs, supporters and the sports media', forthcoming in Soccer and Society.

## Chris Frost

Chris Frost is Professor and Head of Journalism, and director of the Centre for Responsible Journalism at Liverpool John Moores University in the UK and has been a journalist, editor and journalism educator for more than 40 years. He is chair of the National Union of Journalist's Ethics Council, an NUJ National Executive Council member and a National Council member of the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom. He also sits on the NUJ's Professional Training Committee. He is a former President of the National Union of Journalists, a former member of the Press Council and a former National Chair of the Association for Journalism Education.

He has written several books on Journalism: *Journalism Ethics and Regulation* (now in third edition); *Designing for Newspapers and Magazines* (now in a second edition); *Reporting for Journalists* (now in its second edition); and *Media Ethics and Self-Regulation* as well as numerous other papers and book chapters.

# Lee Hall

Lee Hall is a Senior Lecturer in Magazine Journalism at the University of Sunderland. He worked for five years at Future Publishing where he edited national newsstand videogames magazines. He continues to work as a freelance journalist and has written for a range of titles including *FourFourTwo, BBC Focus* and *Edge.* He was digital editor of the *Sunderland Echo* for three years. He has a BA in English Literature from the University of Liverpool and an MA in Magazine Journalism from the University of Sunderland.

His publications include: Price, J., Farrington, N. & Hall, L. (forthcoming) '*Changing the Game? The impacts of Twitter on relationships between football clubs, supporters and the sports media'*, Soccer and Society

# Steve Harrison

Steve Harrison joined the Liverpool John Moores University Journalism department in September 2008, having spent most of his working life as a journalist with the *Liverpool Daily Post and Echo.* An Oxford graduate in English, Steve began his career at the *Winsford Guardian* in 1983 before moving to the *Post and Echo* in 1986, where he was variously a reporter, sub editor and online editor. His last role there was Assistant Editor (Digital), responsible for running around 30 news websites. Steve has an interest in social media and newsroom numeracy, and recently completed a BSc in Mathematics with the Open University.

# Tony Harcup

Tony Harcup is a senior lecturer at Sheffield University. He began working in journalism in the late 1970s as a staff and freelance journalist for media ranging from small local weekly publications to national newspapers and magazines, both alternative and mainstream. Since the late 1990s he has worked in journalism education and is currently a senior lecturer at the University of Sheffield in the UK. Tony is the author of *The Ethical Journalist* (Sage, 2007) and *Journalism: Principles and Practice* (Sage, 2004 and 2009), and his research has been published in *Journalism Studies*, *Journalism Practice*, *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism* and other academic journals. His next book will be *Alternative Journalism, Alternative Voices* (Routledge, forthcoming). Tony is an active member of the Association for Journalism Education (AJE) and the National Union of Journalists (NUJ).

# Barbara Mitra

Dr Barbara Mitra is a Senior Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Worcester. Her main research and teaching interests are in the fields of children and gender, television commercials, new media, television journalism, and methodology. She has previously published in the areas of children and gender, television and the use of technology in learning and teaching.

# John Price

John Price is a senior lecturer in journalism at Sunderland University. He formerly worked as a journalist for North east Press and the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* before moving into academia. He has an MA in Mass Media and Politics from the University of Liverpool and a PhD, analysing EU news production in the UK press, from the University of Central Lancashire. He is co-author of the book Race, Racism and Sports Journalism, published by Routledge in 2012. The co-authored article 'Changing the Game? The impacts of Twitter on relationships between football clubs, supporters and the sports media' is forthcoming in Soccer and Society. Other publications: (2010) 'A Tale of Two Cultures: A comparison of EU news reporting by Brussels based and national based journalists', in C. Valentini & G. Nesti (eds) Public Communication in the European Union. Cambridge Scholars Publishing: Newcastle upon Tyne; (2009) 'Beyond the Eurosceptic / Europhile divide: Towards a new classification of EU news coverage in the UK press,' Journal of Contemporary European Research, v5(3), pp 356-70; (2008) co-authored article 'An Evaluation of the Press and Communication Reforms of the Prodi Commission of 1999-2004', European Journal of Communication, 23(1), 29-46.

**Editorial**

## James Stewart

James Stewart is a senior lecturer in the division of Media, Culture and Journalism at the University of Glamorgan, external examiner at the University of Bedfordshire and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He has worked as a journalist for more than 30 years in newspapers, magazines, radio and TV, producing numerous documentary programmes for the BBC and ITV. He has trained journalists in Romania, Moldova, Serbia, Macedonia, Indonesia and Britain on behalf of the BBC and other foundations. He is the author of. 'Public Service Broadcasting in the Republic of Moldova' (forthcoming) in Hand, R. and Traynor, M. (eds), *Radio in Small Nations: Production, programmes, audiences* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press).

## Claire Wolfe

Claire Wolfe is Subject Leader for Journalism at Worcester and has a strong background in news journalism. She is particularly interested in developing students' skills and abilities to work across a range of media platforms. Her research interests include issues involving gender and ethnicity in journalism. Her twenty-five years in journalism include working at the Birmingham Post and Mail, the Daily News, and the Sunday Mirror, as well as editing business magazines. She has been associated with journalism training throughout her career, much of it related to the NCTJ. Claire sits on the Board of the Worcester community radio station, Youthcomm.

## Roman Gerodimus

Roman Gerodimos is a Senior Lecturer in Global Current Affairs in the Media School at Bournemouth University. He holds an MSc in European Politics and Policy (LSE) and a PhD in Political Communication (BU). He is the founder and convenor of the Greek Politics Specialist Group (GPSG) of the Political Studies Association and a faculty member at the Salzburg Academy on Media & Global Change. He is currently co-editing a book on *Agents of (dis)empowerment: exploring the media's contribution to civic engagement* for Routledge (with R. Scullion, D. Jackson and D. Lilleker).

# Editorial

**We warmly welcome you to this first issue of** *Journalism Education***, an international peer-reviewed journal devoted to publishing original research articles, commentaries and reviews of interest to everyone actively involved in teaching and research in this field of enquiry.**

*Journalism Education*'s aim is to reinvigorate current thinking in a manner alert to the importance of aligning academic scholarship with real-world, professional priorities. It is interdisciplinary in its scope, inviting contributions from a diverse array of approaches committed to identifying, exploring and critiquing pressing issues of common concern.

At a time when journalism's very status within modern societies is being profoundly recast by formidable challenges, it is hardly surprising that discussions about what counts as 'journalism education' tend to be rather lively. We hope to encourage stimulating dialogue and debate, both by revisiting familiar assumptions with a critical eye, as well as by inspiring fresh perspectives about new ways forward.

Please join with us in making this journal relevant to your engagement with journalism education. May it reflect on its pages your insights, passions and convictions and, in so doing, enrich the quality of teaching and research in our field in the years ahead.

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By way of a brief history, *Journalism Education* was first envisaged on the steps of Cardiff University's Bute Building, appropriately enough during a break in the proceedings of the 'Future of Journalism Conference' in September 2009. Sipping coffees in the sunshine, Tor Clark (De Montfort), Sallyanne Duncan (Strathclyde) and Mick Temple (Staffordshire) shared their thoughts about the difficulties facing journalism academics - especially acute for those newly arrived from the news industry – where teaching-related research and publication were concerned.

In a field otherwise resplendent with excellent journals, not least the *British Journalism Review*, *Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*, *Journalism Practice*, and *Journalism Studies*, amongst several others published near and far, there nevertheless seemed to be a gap that might be advantageously addressed by a journal focusing on matters of specific interest to journalism educators. Tor, Sallaynne and Mick agreed to make a formal proposal to the Association for Journalism Education (AJE) in the hope that it would support a new journal seeking to complement the provision offered by existing titles.

Members enthusiastically endorsed the idea at the AJE summer workshop, hosted by Tor at De Montfort University in June 2010. After much debate, the AJE committee set in motion a plan to launch *Journalism Education* as an online, open-access journal. Four established academics agreed to take primary editorial responsibility, namely Mick Temple (Staffordshire), Chris Frost (Liverpool John Moores), Jenny McKay (Sunderland) and Stuart Allan (Bournemouth). Working closely with an editorial board as well as an extensive network of academic referees, the editors will oversee the publication of two issues of the journal per year.

To be a success, of course, *Journalism Education* asks you to help shape its development in whatever way you feel able to contribute.

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The Association for Journalism Education was founded in 1997 to help advance journalism education in the UK's higher education institutions by pursuing excellence in pedagogical standards, providing a voice for those delivering journalism education in academic and professional contexts, as well as promoting and supporting scholarly research into journalism.

The AJE's multi-faceted remit was formulated as a response to the rapid increase in undergraduate journalism programmes transpiring at the time, though also sought to represent postgraduate courses able to trace their origins back many decades earlier. One of the purposes of the AJE is to enhance the teaching skills of its members, many of whom having enjoyed successful careers in journalism. Making the switch from newsroom to classroom can prove challenging, and it is part of the Association's remit to help facilitate this

transition.

The AJE also campaigns on behalf of its members, representing their views to accrediting bodies, government, policy-makers and others. For instance, it nominates sub-panellists for the Research Excellence Framework (REF), and recently submitted evidence on behalf of the association to the Leveson Inquiry. The AJE also keeps members in touch with what is happening around the world in media pedagogy, striving to involve them in international debates in a variety of fora. It is a partner in the World Journalism Education Congress, and participates on the planning committee of the three yearly conferences.

The distinctiveness of the AJE's remit is also shaped by its commitment to research. Further education colleges, industry training bodies and private colleges all have a strong role to play in the training of journalists, but only universities generate the scholarly research necessary for improving journalism education. The AJE endeavours to assist members in meeting this responsibility, such as through the resources made available on its website, as well as by organising public events, including seminars, workshops and conferences.

Now into its second decade, the AJE continues to build its membership, develop its role and strengthen its voice. It believes the timing of this journal's launch is fortuitous, chiming as it does with a series of initiatives to foster points of connection with journalism educators around the world.

## Mick Temple, Chris Frost, Jenny McKay and Stuart Allan

# Articles

All papers in the Articles section are peer reviewed and discuss the latest research in journalism and journalism education. These are intended to inform, educate and spark debate and discussion. Please join in this debate by going to www.journalism-education.org to have your say and find out what others think.

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# Tweeting with the enemy? The impacts of new social media on sports journalism and the education of sports journalism students

**John Price, Neil Farrington & Lee Hall Sunderland University**

***Abstract.*** With more than 200m users worldwide, Twitter is becoming an increasingly significant tool for journalists and their audiences. Yet, to date, there has been relatively little academic study of its impacts on the journalism profession. This article provides one of the first attempts to investigate how Twitter is influencing journalism, focusing on the specialist area of sports reporting. Through interviews with members of a press pack, the article explores how Twitter is perceived by sports journalists, how it is affecting their professional relation-

ships, and how it is being employed in everyday working practices. Findings suggest the new technology is creating some problems and divisions among journalists, due partly to a lack of clear guidelines and best practice. While Twitter undoubtedly offers new journalistic opportunities in terms of sourcing, publishing and accessing audiences, it poses a number of potential problems including workload, loss of exclusive source access and content, and abuse from readers. As a result, training in the use of Twitter should form an essential part of any sports journalism course if future reporters are to get the best out of this social media. The article concludes by identifying the key areas which should be covered by such training.

**Key words**: *Twitter; sports journalism; Internet; social media; education*

## Introduction

**From the introduction of the printing press, to the telegraph, to the arrival of the Internet, changes in technology have always shaped the nature and delivery of journalism (Conboy, 2004). As Temple (2008, p.2) has observed: 'Change is an essential factor in journalism.' Taking this idea as its foundation, this article seeks to explore how a recent technology is changing the nature of journalism.**

If good journalism involves saying a lot in a few words, then Twitter's 140 characters could provide one of its greatest tests. So far, relatively little research has been done on the influence of the online platform on the journalism profession. As Ahmad (2010, p.147) states: 'Within academia... virtually nothing has yet been published on Twitter in journalism studies, the social sciences or, for that matter, in the field of media studies.' This article takes one of the first steps in addressing this shortage by examining how Twitter is affecting the world of sports journalism.

Sports journalism has become one of the most important sections of the UK media, increasing greatly in the amount and prominence of coverage it receives (Boyle, 2006a) and the respect it gets within the wider profession (Boyle, 2006b). As in other forms of journalism, the character and practices of sports reporting is open to revision in line with social and technological movements. As Boyle says: 'Print sports journalism adapts and changes... to the arrival and consolidation of each new wave of media development and its wider social impact' (2006a, p.54).

Some initial work has been done to assess how Twitter is shaping the attitudes and working practices of sports writers in the US (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010). Here, we seek to perform a similar task in relation to the UK sports press. It will do so by addressing the following questions:

- How are sports journalists adapting to and using Twitter in their work?
- What do these journalists perceive to be the major benefits and drawbacks of Twitter for their profession so far?
- What lessons does this have for the training of future sports journalists?

The article combines an analysis of examples of Twitter in action with new empirical research into the perceptions and practices of sports journalists.

**Articles**

The new empirical material used in the article is drawn from structured interviews with sports journalists covering the Premier League fortunes of Sunderland and Newcastle United in the north east of England. The beat is covered by three regional newspaper organisations (Trinity Mirror's *Newcastle Chronicle and Journal*, Northeast Press – including the *Sunderland Echo* and *Shields Gazette* - and Newsquest's *Northern Echo*). A number of national newspapers also have sports journalists covering the area on a full-time basis. These reporters typically cover a Sunderland home game one weekend and a Newcastle home game the next. As such they have close links with players and press officials from both clubs. Material has been gathered from seven sports journalists, comprising three reporters from regional titles and four writers working for the national press. Journalists were purposively sampled to gather information from a variety of perspectives. In other words, not all the reporters interviewed are social media fanatics. Some use Twitter regularly, some use it occasionally, while some choose not to use the platform at all (for more details on this see the findings section below).

It must be acknowledged that the scope of research here is limited to a sample of print journalists, covering predominantly football, in one part of the country. Any findings must therefore be seen in this light and future research needs to expand on work here; for example, looking at the practices of broadcast and online journalists, the influence of sports and digital editors, and the views of fans and readers.

However, the focused nature of this study has some advantages over other possible approaches. A case study approach allows for an in-depth examination of a particular context which can then be applied to other, similar contexts. The north east beat analysed in this article has many parallels to other parts of the country where national and regional journalists regularly report on a small number of football clubs. Its conclusions therefore have wider relevance. Furthermore, a case study approach allows us to explore not only the individual perceptions and practices of journalists but also the relationships between colleagues and the changing dynamics of a relatively close knit press pack. As journalists do not work in a vacuum, an understanding of their working relationships is crucial to a fuller understanding of their professional output.

The following section will provide a general introduction to Twitter, discussing the nature of the platform and its potential uses by journalists. The article then moves on to analyse some specific examples of sports stories derived from Twitter, examining the implications of these for journalists and their relationships with sports stars. This is intended to provide context for the subsequent section in which new empirical findings are presented. These findings explore journalists' perceptions of Twitter and how it is affecting their practices and relationships with one another. Finally, a conclusion will draw together the main findings of the article and discuss their implications for how the sports journalists of the future should be trained.

## Twitter and journalism

Twitter is now an everyday tool for many journalists. It can be used as a publishing platform or as a marketing medium to highlight a personal brand or to divert followers to print or digital output. The service has empowered journalists with a new means to research stories, contact sources and uncover information. Moreover, Twitter offers an opportunity for journalists to maintain a relationship with their audience that extends beyond the sporadic interactions of print publications in letters pages or comments on articles published online. As Fahri argues: 'Twitter can be a serious aid in reporting. It can be a living, breathing tip sheet for facts, new sources and story ideas. It can provide instantaneous access to hard-to-reach newsmakers, given that there's no PR person standing between a reporter and a tweet to a government official or corporate executive. It can also be a blunt instrument for crowdsourcing' (2009, p.2).

At its most basic level Twitter is an online information sharing service, a micro-blogging platform that enables users to create 140-character updates, 'tweets'. Tweets are published to the user's stream of updates which can be followed, and subsequently 'unfollowed' by others. Users who access Twitter via mobile or desktop websites, or through popular readers such as Tweetdeck, view a real-time cascading timeline of messages from everyone they are following. Essentially it is a tool for managing trusted sources of information and entertainment from celebrities to sports stars, friends and family to colleagues.

Like other social media success stories, such as Facebook - Twitter's evolution has been driven by its users. For instance, a means of message amplification developed when people began to 'retweet' messages, effectively introducing the message and originator to a new stream of followers. This was originally achieved by prefixing a duplicate of the original message with RT and the name of the original tweeter. This method is critical to the tool's appeal for journalists as it provides a means for virally spreading information to a new audience. The retweet function is now built in to Twitter's interface.

The service was created in 2006 and grew steadily. Its potential as a journalistic tool was highlighted when it was used as a platform by eyewitnesses to report the Hudson River plane crash in January 2009 (Beau-

mont, 2009). The event showcased how Twitter could be used by anyone in a manner which subverts the role of journalist as information gatekeeper. And that process continues with reports from football matches, peace protests and even the operation to kill or capture Osama bin Laden.

Twitter has an estimated 200m users worldwide, which is some way short of the estimated 600m accounts registered on dominant social network Facebook (Chiang, 2011). And while the extent of the impact of Twitter as a referrer to major news sites is debatable, the service's growing user base makes it impossible to overlook for journalism students and practitioners. As a publishing platform, thanks to the advent of smart phones, 'tweeting' has become as simple as sending an SMS text message. Bypassing content management systems and production processes, creating Twitter updates is a simple means of communicating breaking news. Twitter is especially useful in out-of-hours situations and can be used via a 3G internet connection 'on the go'. The service is characterised by its ease of use - it simply requires users to type text into a dialogue box which is instantly added to their timeline. In fact, simplicity is a cornerstone of the service's appeal to users and journalists alike. The proliferation of content through Twitter is also becoming increasingly straightforward, with most websites featuring 'tweet' buttons that allow users to flag up web content in a few easy clicks.

lists contribute to a buzz of activity on Twitter alerting followers to sporting teamsheets, single lines of breaking news, or transfer speculation without the need for a longer article. Twitter's busiest day in the UK was recorded in May 2011 when the clamour to discover details of footballer Ryan Giggs' injunction saw traffic spike. On May 21 Twitter accounted for 0.55% of all UK internet traffic, making it one of the 20 most popular sites in the country (Arthur, 2011). By comparison, the BBC News site accounted for 1% of traffic.

Twitter can also be used as a cross-promotional device directing followers to print publications, events or most commonly to URLs containing articles.  But it's also a mechanism for journalists to market themselves, a means to establish them as an authority. The greater the following, the more people are effectively endorsing the journalist as a trusted source.

The notion of brand on Twitter is complex. Name is traditionally a cornerstone of brand. Changing a name means reacquainting consumers with your product and can prove costly in terms of money and time. On Twitter a user can change their name, borrowing the brand value of their current publication, team or employer to boost their appeal, without losing followers. So while celebrity and an attachment to a corporate brand can increase a 'tweeter's' following, in this democratized space individuals who tweet useful, insightful, exclusive or entertaining material can effectively create a personal brand. If a reader chose to follow a journalist when they switched newspaper they would have to actively change their consumption habits. Not so on Twitter, where aspiring journalists can snowball their following with every career advancement or their growing proficiency on the platform; or where people who are not journalists can break down the traditional barrier between the reporter and the audience.

Another potential journalistic use of Twitter is as a mechanism for finding stories. It provides a means of monitoring traditional sources with a presence on Twitter, but also to track sources that go 'under the radar' enabling journalists to pick up on chatter from members of the public that might previously have gone unreported.  Twitter's space is at once highly public, but also treated with a certain intimacy by users who frequently wish their followers good night, or outline the details of their last meal.  In this space journalists can overhear conversations without heading to the local pub and pick up on gossip or insight that may warrant further investigation, or else come to nothing. With geo-tagging and the use of hashtags which flag a message to users looking out for mentions of specific key terms it's possible for users, including journalists, to pick up information that may never have been reported to traditional sources with, say, a phone call to newsdesk.

Finally, Twitter is also used by reporters as a crowd-sourcing tool. It gives them an opportunity to appeal for information or sources either by capitalizing on their own or their publication's followings or by plugging into a network of millions of users.  Twitter, and its use by journalists, is defined by users who find new ways to exploit the platform. .

## Twitter and football

On August 31, 2010, Ryan Babel – Liverpool football club's Dutch international player –heralded an unforeseen, as yet immeasurable shift in momentum within the UK's sports media.  As always, unless it falls on the nation's final Bank Holiday Monday of the summer, August 31 was transfer deadline day for English Premier League clubs.  Satellite broadcaster Sky Sports had long since assumed unofficial ownership of a red letter day in football's calendar. A day when the perceived immediacy of their rolling sports news platform Sky Sports News (SSN), combined with Rupert Murdoch's chasm-deep resources, provided minute-

by-minute proof of the imbalance of power within British sports journalism. If it happened – *as* it happened – during the manic minutes and hours before the close of English football's bi-annual bout of horse-trading, the assumption was that SSN would deliver it to a captive, if not uniformly appreciative, nationwide audience. Although he might not have brought SSN's world crashing down, Babel at least questioned the assumption that Murdoch's billions could buy a monopoly on sports news. At around 2.10pm, SSN began reporting that Babel was aboard a helicopter bound for London and talks with Tottenham Hotspur. Having then, at around 2.50pm, claimed that he was also set to negotiate with West Ham United, they continued reporting both angles. Then, in separate, successive Twitter posts at just after 4.40pm, Babel declared: *'I'm going no where (sic)'* and *'#LFC all The Way ...#ynwa !!!'*.

It has not been established whether Babel was ever airborne that day, although when Sky Sports News reported on transfer deadline day the following January that Fernando Torres and Andy Carroll were flying to and from Liverpool, Babel mischievously reflected – again, via Twitter – that *'My Helicopter pilot called me for permission to fly someone real quick today, he didn't wanted (sic) to name the person #Strange'*. What is certain, however, is that SSN continued to report that Babel was in talks with Tottenham and West Ham even while his pledge to stay at Liverpool became common knowledge online. It was towards 5.30pm before SSN finally confirmed Babel's tweets, albeit while maintaining that he was on his way back to Liverpool by road because it had been 'quite a bumpy flight down'.

The ride received by Sky in the ensuing hours and days was more than bumpy. Having traded heavily on SSN's ability to break transfer 'exclusives' first, they had been outpaced by news delivered straight from source. Worse still was their embarrassing delay in catching up with the facts. None revelled in the event more than print sports journalists who often appear hamstrung in remaining revenue-reliant on the printing press during a digital age. While Babel's discrediting of SSN was swift, it was a vindication of the enduring value of the traditional journalistic tenets of 'patch' knowledge and contacts-gathering, with Dominic King - then of the *Liverpool Echo* - having tweeted at around 2.30pm that Babel was staying at Anfield.

However, the bigger picture to emerge from that episode was as worrying to sports journalists across all traditional platforms as it was potentially liberating to those they report on – and no doubt chilling for those employed to filter, censor and frequently suppress the opinions of our sporting icons. For Babel showed how everybody (press officers, agents, administrators and journalists) and everything (including a sense of perspective - and common sense) standing between a sports star and his public can be bypassed in much less than 140 characters on Twitter, where source and subject are one and the same.

Inevitably, where Babel led, others – for better or for worse - have followed. For some the platform is one of compulsion, not least in the aftermath of 'battle'. Having angered Liverpool by revealing he had been dropped for a previous game, Babel was censured by the Football Association after re-tweeting a mocked-up picture of referee Howard Webb in a Manchester United shirt immediately following his handling of a match between the two clubs. Fledgling England international Jack Wilshere narrowly escaped similar action after a Twitter tirade at referee Phil Dowd after Arsenal had surrendered a four-goal lead against Newcastle United in January. Of lesser profile but greater impact was a rant by Aldershot Town striker Marvin Morgan, who was suspended and made available for transfer after posting: *'I hope you all die'* in response to being jeered by the Football League Two side's own supporters.

Wider offence was caused by West Ham United striker Carlton Cole's tweets on the night Ghana – backed by 20,000-plus supporters – faced England in a friendly in April 2011. *'Immigration has surrounded the Wembley premises! I knew it was a trap!'* Cole posted. *'Hahaha. The only way to get out safely is to wear an England jersey and paint your face w/ the St. George's flag!'* The Football Association, albeit after nine days of telling prevarication, later charged Cole with improper conduct, before fining him £20,000.

However, the most disturbing example – and perhaps the most consequential - of footballers talking out of turn on Twitter came in April 2011, when two youth-team players at Scottish lower league clubs were sacked for posting abuse towards Celtic manager Neil Lennon after it emerged he and two of the club's most high-profile supporters had been sent nail bombs through the mail. Berwick Rangers Under-17 captain Kieran Bowell admitted tweeting that he wished the bomb had killed Lennon, while Clyde Under-19 player Max Mckee described the sending of the nail bombs as *'hilarious'*.

Though seemingly less significant, Wayne Rooney's arrival on Twitter in April 2011 – he accrued around 170,000 followers within 24 hours of signing up – was warmly welcomed by the tabloid press. For a while, the Manchester United and England player tweeted with both surprising restraint and lucidity. That changed, however, after a fellow tweeter – purportedly a fan of United's bitter rivals Liverpool - dubbed Rooney *'a fat whore'* and threatened to attack him with a golf club. Having responded by urging his abuser to *'come and do it'* at the United training ground, and then been given the promise *'ill (sic) be down tomor-*

*row lad in me (sic) twin turbo nissan micra'*, Rooney tweeted: *'I'll put you asleep within 10 seconds hope u turn up if u don't gonna tell everyone ur (sic) scared u little nit. I'll be waiting'.*

Responding to the subsequent media storm, Rooney described the exchange as *'banter'* and urged that people *'chill out'*. Interestingly, he appears to grow ever more wedded to the concept of Twitter, to the point where he used the site to reveal the results of a hitherto secret hair transplant.

Further proof of Rooney's unanticipated resilience in the face of uniquely unfettered criticism on Twitter was the brevity of his club-mate Darron Gibson's connection with the medium. Having joined the site at around midday on April 25, and picked up many followers on the back of a tweeted plug from English football's most followed tweeter, Rio Ferdinand, Northern Ireland international Gibson closed his account - @dgibbo28 - within two hours, seemingly in response to a hail of criticism from supporters – many of his own club. One typical tweet read: *'@dgibbo28 hasn't tweeted yet. Seems somewhat fitting after the countless anonymous performances we've seen from the "footballer"'*.

While Gibson did not relish his online profile, the new platform allows some to gain far greater attention on Twitter than they ever have or will on the pitch. Once tipped for success in the Premier League, Rohan Ricketts struggled to realise his reputed potential and became a footballing nomad, with spells in Canada and, more recently, Moldova. However, the candid and unusually articulate nature of his Twitter posts, revealing the reality of life as a journeyman footballer, has seen him build a prominent online profile, writing regular blogs and then developing his own website.

There is little such eloquence about another of English football's former bright young things, Leon Knight. Yet he too, in a hail of profanity, has gained on Twitter the fame which eluded him on the field. In one manic evening in September 2010, Knight posted repeated accusations against his former club, non-league Rushden & Diamonds, amid a rancorous argument over his player registration documents. 'I've started a volcano on Twitter…', Knight told newspapers.  Although most recently playing in relative obscurity in Northern Ireland with Coleraine, Knight has more than 11,000 Twitter followers.

Knight's fellow striker, Darren Bent – one of the first English footballers to embrace Twitter – initially appeared to have done equally little for his career in aiming similarly strident criticism at his then club Tottenham Hotspur in July 2009. Bent was fined an estimated £120,000 after accusing Tottenham's hierarchy of delaying his proposed move to Sunderland, and imploring Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy to *'stop*

| J/st | Uses Twitter? | For how long? | Time daily on Twitter | Tweets | Followers | Following |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| A | Yes | 2 years | 1 hour | 500 | 1,300 | 270 |
| B | Yes | 1 year | 5 mins | 2,500 | 2,400 | 170 |
| C | Yes | 18 months | 90 mins | 10,500 | 5,700 | 235 |
| D | Yes | 2 years | 30 mins | 4,383 | 14,200 | 240 |
| E | Yes | 3 years | 3 hours | 11,400 | 20,600 | 210 |
| F | Yes | 18 months | 1 hour | 7,318 | 2,850 | 215 |
| G | No | ---------- | ----------- | | ---------- | -------- |

Table 1: Sports journalists and their use of Twitter

*f\*\*\*\*\*\* around'*. At the time, some saw that as cause to heap further ridicule on a player already in receipt of mocking criticism by Tottenham manager Harry Redknapp. However, although having been forced to apologise, Bent was a Sunderland player within a week. Not only did his supposed social media own-goal appear to break a career-blighting impasse, he has rarely stopped scoring since.

Some, particularly among those reaching the end of their playing career, use social media seemingly to raise their profile, and brand, ahead of a projected career change.  Robbie Savage, for example, still plays for Derby County, but finds time to regularly bait fellow sporting personalities on Twitter – most famously, then England captain Rio Ferdinand – in a manner strikingly similar to that he adopts in his burgeoning role as a radio and TV pundit.Ferdinand, the most followed Premier League footballer on Twitter, regularly debates the wider world issues of the day – 'Twitter+facebook (social media) played a significant role in the revolution in Egypt. We are involved (if not directly) in a powerful #movement !' - but tends to remain quiet on matters sensitive to his club and country. Ferdinand has Tweeted: 'I'm addicted to Twitter . . . It really bridges that gap between us and the fans'. Furthermore, as former News of the World editor Phil Hall has observed: 'Twitter turns you into a franchise.  Instead of someone like Rio Ferdinand being part of the Manchester United franchise he is effectively creating his own' (in Gibson, 2011).  In other words, Twitter is changing the nature of relationships between players, fans, clubs and the media.  What we turn to now is how sports journalists perceive and are adapting to these changes.

## Sports Journalists and Twitter

Twitter divides sports journalists.  Some love it.  Some are prepared to live with it.  While some wish it had never been born at all.  This is reflected in the amount of time and energy different journalists are prepared to devote to the platform

Spending at least three hours each day on Twitter, and sending thousands of Tweets, is a big commitment to a platform that some colleagues choose to ignore entirely.  In fact, the potentially time consuming nature of Twitter is a concern for some journalists:

> One problem is spending too much time on it.  It can be quite overwhelming when a big story is breaking or it's the transfer window and so on, but I think the positives outweigh that.

> It's very easy to spend a lot of time on there and to become embroiled in time-consuming debates and arguments.

Twitter is an always-on platform that enables a journalist to publish instantly from a phone without visiting the office. From an audience perspective this is a major strength of a service that empowers journalists and users alike to post instant updates on breaking news. But from a professional standpoint this does raise questions about expectations on journalists. Being always-on is arguably an extension of journalist's already stretched office hours.

We can see (from Table 1) that those who devote time to Twitter have the potential to build up large networks of followers.  However, there is not a clear link between time spent on the platform and the number of followers gained.  Other factors are at work here.  The two journalists with by far the most followers (journalists D and E in Table 1) work for national newspapers and include the name of their publication in their Twitter usernames.  Branding therefore appears to be crucial in developing audiences.

But branding also creates some grey areas.  While the use of an official brand can help increase audience and add credibility to a Twitter feed, it could also be seen as inhibiting some of the inherent qualities of the platform.  Tweets are often informal, jokey and sometimes crude.  Many journalists try to get around this potential conflict by adding a caveat to their feed along the lines of: 'Tweets on a personal basis', or 'these views are my own'.  In other words, they want the benefits of branding while seeking to sidestep its potential constraints.  As with many issues in social media, this is likely to remain a grey area until such time as the lawyers are called in.

Most, but not all, of the journalists interviewed had been encouraged by their sports desks to use Twitter and to post links to articles on the publication's website.  However, in no cases had this been insisted upon.  Furthermore, no journalists had been given instructions by their employer about what they can or cannot say on Twitter.  While employers seem to have a sense that Twitter could be a useful tool for their reporters, none appear to have a clear strategy on how best to use it.

We've had nothing official. They encourage us to tweet from matches on a Saturday as part of their live match day coverage. Occasionally we'll be asked (although never told) to link something - a webchat or online debate or match report etc. They're keen for people to use Twitter, but don't demand it. I was the first one to do so in the department and have always had a mixture of the personal and professional. I've never

been told what to do/say/link/not link.

> They like us to have a Twitter feed, but have never attempted to exert any influence over what's said on it.

> I was encouraged by my sports editor and website editor to have a Twitter feed but already had one. There have been no guidelines from them regarding its use, other than to use it to send links for articles which have appeared in print or on-line, which is mainly what I use it for. Judging by the content of my colleagues, there are no real guidelines regarding the content of tweets.

A lack of clear guidelines on the use of Twitter has also created some division and resentment within the press pack itself. For example, there is confusion about what can and cannot be Tweeted during and after press conferences with managers. In the case of a Saturday match, the journalists usually take it in turns to question managers following the game. The broadcast journalists go first, followed by the Sundays and then the dailies. This helps ensure the latter group of reporters have something different to say in their Monday reports. But journalists have differing interpretations over how these conventions relate to Twitter. One journalist said:

> The rule is that TV and radio quotes can be tweeted straight away, while written press info and quotes have an embargo.

Another said:

> There aren't really any rules, although you're not supposed to Tweet anything from the dailies press conference. It is a grey area whether anything should be tweeted from television and radio.

A third said:

> There don't appear to be any rules at all.

Therefore, perhaps the most apt comment of all came from the journalist who suggested the rules needed to be 'clarified and adhered to'.

Where you have a relatively new technology and differences in the uptake and application of this technology, then some difficulties and uncertainties are bound to emerge. These uncertainties though have the potential to create problems and resentment within a press pack. The comments below reflect a feeling among some journalists that views Twitter suspiciously and those who Tweet as being driven as much by personal vanity as sound journalistic motives:

> Let's not overstate the importance of Twitter. After all, even someone who proudly proclaims he has 10,000 followers, is twitting to just a fraction of his newspaper audience.

> One of the problems has been the belief among some that being able to use a laptop or iphone quicker than someone else makes you a good journalist or that you've broken a story reading a Twitter feed.

> One of the bad aspects of Twitter is dealing with the egos of other journalists who are more interested in their own follower numbers than the papers they work for.

Are these criticisms simply born of fear of change? The answer to this possibly lies in an analysis of the way Twitter is actually being used day-to-day by sports journalists. As discussed in an earlier section, the main potential journalistic uses of the platform fall into the following categories: research, finding stories, breaking news, comment and analysis, signposting people to content on other forms of media (print or online), and communicating with the audience. All the journalists interviewed saw Twitter as a potential source of stories for journalists:

> Several stories have come from Twitter. Several footballers in particular have used it for the wrong reasons to give quotes which wouldn't have otherwise come to light. It can offer a fascinating insight into a sportstar's routines and mentality.

> It allows you to pick up stories from sports people who have their own Twitter accounts.

Stories are the lifeblood of a journalist's job and any new means of accessing or creating a story is potentially good news for reporters. However, the public nature of Twitter also provides a threat to sports journalists and the potential value of their contacts. While journalists have access to the Twitter feeds of sports stars, often bypassing the potential constraints of PR officials, so do many supporters. Twitter gives consumers, fans, the audience unprecedented access to sports stars and insight into their lives. While direct messages on Twitter are only possible when the recipient is following the sender, the '@' device enables anyone to direct a message to the recipient and will often provoke a response.

It could be argued that the direct access to players provided by Twitter in fact removes some of the traditional value of the sports journalism profession. This is reflected in the

following comments:

> One of the problems with Twitter is an over-reliance on the site by players themselves to express themselves or tell stories or anecdotes which used to be done in face-to-face interviews.

> There are a lot of rival media on Twitter who follow sports journalists in the hope of picking up stories in this manner.

As Boyle (2006, p.43) has observed, the 1980s marked 'the end of the close relationship that had existed between sports journalists and the sports stars they reported on.' The influx of money into football and the rise of club PR machines meant the days of players and hacks regularly going out drinking together became a thing of the past. Access became more restricted and controlled. So, on the one hand, Twitter has reopened some of this direct access for journalists, but, on the other, it has opened this access to almost anyone.

However, while some journalistic activity involves unearthing exclusive stories from contacts, much journalism has always been about restructuring information already in the public domain. Most people do not have the time or inclination to seek out information or sift through data themselves, instead relying on journalists to do it on their behalf. It could be argued that Twitter has merely added to the total mass of information available, therefore increasing the need for journalists to act as gatekeepers, selecting, analysing and attempting to make some sense of it all. As Ahmad (2010, p.152) has commented: 'If readers can go directly to diverse kinds of sources, traditional journalism will come under even greater pressure than it has done to offer the user something unique: analysis, comment, collation and so on.' Hermida makes a similar prediction when he says: 'Journalists would be seen as sense makers, rather than just reporting the news' (2010, p.304).

If the public nature of Twitter is a potential threat to a journalist's exclusive access to sources then its instant and relentless character also threaten their ability to hold on to stories:

> One of the biggest problems I have encountered is that you might think you have a story, which you are saving for the paper, and someone has put it out on Twitter beforehand. It might only be 140 characters, but it is enough for other people to get wind of a story that you think you have in the bag.

> A real problem for journalists is stories leaking on Twitter before they're published on the publication's website or paper.

One of the dilemmas posed by Twitter is: how much to reveal and when? Only so much can be said in 140 characters, but it could be enough to tip off others to a breaking or exclusive story. This decision is much easier in relation to other online content as these stories can be updated almost as instantly as Tweets, with direct links provided to the site:

> Tweets are the perfect way to drive hits to a story which you have online - the modern day newspaper bill.

> One of the main benefits of Twitter is the marketing of your own stories to improve hits on newspaper websites.

The decision becomes more complex when signposting people to forthcoming print editions. As one reporter commented:

> The constant race to Tweet things first means stories are wasted, breaking on Twitter rather than in your own newspapers. You also get people throwing away good info and quotes that should be held for the paper.

The solution for some journalists is to follow their paper's embargo rules, meaning not publishing information until an edition has gone to print. But, as discussed earlier, there are as yet no clear rules or conventions in this domain and so journalists tend to be making individual and ad hoc judgements.

So far we have discussed Twitter being employed in what could be described as traditional journalistic practices – those of finding stories and headlining content. But the platform also opens up new possibilities for journalists in terms of what they publish and how they communicate with their audience. In recent studies of American sports journalists, Sheffer and Shultz (2010) found the main use of Twitter was to provide commentary and opinion. However, they also found some important differences in usage among journalists. While some settled for using Twitter to promote content on more traditional platforms, others were more likely to use it in new ways, such as publishing new types of content or interacting with fans (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010). Findings here show examples of UK sports journalists using Twitter as a means of employing these new practices.

First, in terms of publishing, one of the benefits of Twitter cited by journalists is the ability to release material that would not always be appropriate for their online or print publication. As Schultz and Sheffer argue, Twitter can allow journalists to 'cover stories the mainstream media often ignore' (2010, p.229). Tweets of

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this kind may include jokes, anecdotes or the type of banter more usually associated with a fans' site.  For example, journalists said:

> Twitter is a useful way to break stories that won›t get in the paper.

> Twitter is a useful outlet for small jokes/observations that wouldn›t make paper.

Second, Twitter offers an immediate means of interacting with fans and getting feedback.  As Schultz & Sheffer (2010, p.229) argue: 'Much like blogging, Twitter offers a unique opportunity for real-time conversations.  It could be used by journalists to directly connect and communicate with audiences on topics and stories'.  On the evidence of findings here, those journalists who most welcome the advent of Twitter are those who have tapped in to its potential to have direct dialogues with audiences, as the following comments demonstrate:

I like the immediacy of Twitter; the instant feedback, the conversation. It wasn›t too long ago that we worked in a vacuum.  The only feedback we got, if anything, would be the letters page or the odd bit of correspondence. Now it›s constant. Most of all,

- Twitter is a source of debate, stimulation, argument and banter.
- Twitter provides a new form of interaction with readers which can create a more loyal readership.
- However, this new form of interaction is not without its problems as it provides a platform for those who have things to get off their chest:
- One of the downsides to Twitter is the mindless abuse you can get at times.
- Sometimes you get fans taking the info you put out, then not believing it, as if we make it up.
- It can be difficult not to take criticism to heart.
- One of the bad aspects of this is getting slagged off for Tweeting things which are supposedly ‹old news›.

Initial findings in the US have suggested a difference in how Twitter is being used by the broadcast and print media. 'Print journalists seem to be ignoring many of the obvious technological breakthroughs associated with Twitter (such as the ability to connect directly with sources) and instead are using it to point back to the journalism they grew up with – developed stories on the printed page based on traditional journalistic practices' (Schultz & Sheffer 2010, p.236).  However, findings here show that at least some print journalists are fully embracing the interactive potential of Twitter and all the fun and fire that may entail.

## Conclusion

Twitter is becoming an increasingly important part of a sports journalist's role, even for those who may wish it was otherwise.  For some it is a major element of their working day, for others it is a potentially useful tool, while even those who choose not to participate directly must at least take account of the fact that most of their colleagues do.

Findings here suggest that Twitter is a potential source of friction within press packs as journalists take-upTwitter at different rates and for differing means.  While some have embraced Twitter and see it as a regular and important feature of their working day, others remain suspicious of the platform, questioning the motives and actions of their more Twitter friendly colleagues. This friction is exacerbated by a lack of clear guidelines both within news organisations and among the press pack as a whole.

Crucially, Twitter is not only changing the way traditional journalism is practised (in terms of researching, sourcing and publicising stories), but is also encouraging new types of journalistic activity such as entering into banter with readers and publishing short, anecdotal material that may previously have not seen the light of day.

- To sum up, findings suggest some of the main benefits of Twitter for sports journalists have been:
- Direct access to sources, bypassing PR officials;
- A supply of stories;
- A new and instant means of interacting with readers;
- A way of signposting readers to online and print content;
- A platform for new types of content.
- Some of the main drawbacks of Twitter have been:
- The potentially overwhelming and time consuming nature of the platform;

- Loss of exclusive access to some sources;
- Material being leaked/released ahead of publication on other platforms;
- Abuse from readers;

A lack of clear guidelines leading to confusion, friction and resentment within the press pack about the accepted use of Twitter.

In other words, while Twitter has undoubted positive qualities for sports journalists, it has also created some significant problems.  However, many, if not all, of these problems could be reduced with clearer guidance and education in how to use the platform.  In light of these findings, it is suggested that Twitter, and the use of social media in general, should form a crucial part of the curriculum on sports journalism courses. As journalist and academic Julie Posetti (2011) argues, if social media is no longer discretionary for many journalists, it follows that the 'professional training of journalists in social media theory and practice is also essential'.

Based on findings above, it is recommended that sports journalism students would benefit from training in, and critical discussion of, the following issues:

How to create their own Twitter brand;

How to find stories on Twitter (who to follow and how);

What to publish on Twitter and when;

How to manage Twitter and filter the flow of information;

How to create and communicate with an audience;

How best to use Twitter in relation to other platforms.

This article has taken some initial steps to explore the impacts of Twitter on the world of sports journalism and journalism education.  The research now needs to be developed in a number of areas. Future areas for research could include examinations of how broadcast journalists are using Twitter, how and why fans are using social media, which are the most successful sports journalist brands on Twitter, and why and how clubs and official organisations are reacting to the challenges and opportunities of the new platform.

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# Newspapers on the naughty step: An analysis of the ethical performance of UK publications

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***Abstract.*** British newspapers are facing their worst ever ethical crisis with allegations of phone-hacking and other unethical practices including data-hacking, harassment and intimidation. The industry's regulator, the Press Complaints Commission, has announced it is to wind down and is transferring its asset and staff to a new authority ending its 21 year history as the newspaper regulator. Sections of the industry are fighting to ensure that any future body continues the pattern of self-regulation by portraying the *News of the World* as a rogue newspaper operating outside the standard practices of the industry. This paper seeks to discover if self-regulation as carried out by the PCC showed any signs of limiting press excesses and whether the *News of the World* really stood outside the industry norms by examining PCC complaints data and data from the Information Commissioner's Office concerning computer hacking.

## Introduction

**The Press Complaints Commission, Britain's press regulatory body, came into existence in January 1991 in the wake of growing concerns about the invasive nature of some newspapers and the falling reputation of the Press Council, the previous self-regulatory body for newspapers and magazines.**

The PCC has now announced its closure and transfer of assets to a new regulator, the shape of which is yet to be decided at the time of writing. The decision to close was taken following the appointment of a new chairman, Lord Hunt. In a discussion document aimed at media owners and editors he suggested its replacement with a new self-regulatory body, one that he hopes will satisfy Lord Justice Leveson and the public as

being a more suitable replacement for the PCC.

The PCC that has ended in controversy was set up amidst controversy with many suggesting its very constitution was flawed. It was obliged only to receive complaints from the public and then decide whether they breached the Editors' Code of Practice and, if so, how they should be dealt with. It had no role in campaigning for press freedom (see Frost, 2001; Shannon, 2002).

The PCC was aware of the possibility of widespread use of unethical practices, such as phone-hacking, but despite carrying out its own review and reporting its findings to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee it found no evidence of systematic hacking, a conclusion the committee found inconceivable:

> We are concerned at the readiness of all of those involved: News International, the police and the PCC to leave Mr Goodman[1] as the sole scapegoat without carrying out a full investigation at the time. The newspaper's enquiries were far from 'full' or 'rigorous', as we – and the PCC – had been assured. Throughout our inquiry, too, we have been struck by the collective amnesia afflicting witnesses from the *News of the World* (Culture Media and Sport Select Committee, 2010, p.103).

The report went on to say:

> Following the *Guardian* revelations, the PCC started a review of the phone-hacking and blagging affairs. In its conclusions, published in November 2009, and which quoted only part of the police evidence to us, it effectively exonerated the *News of the World*. This drew an angry response from the *Guardian*, whose reports, the PCC said, "did not quite live up to the dramatic billing they were initially given". Mr Rusbridger then resigned in protest from the Code Committee. We accept that in 2007 the PCC acted in good faith to follow up the implications of the convictions of Clive Goodman and Glenn Mulcaire. The *Guardian's* fresh revelations in July 2009, however, provided good reason for the PCC to be more assertive in its enquiries, rather than accepting submissions from the *News of the World* once again at face value. This Committee has not done so and we find the conclusions in the PCC's November report simplistic and surprising. It has certainly not fully, or forensically, considered all the evidence to this inquiry (*ibid.*, p.109).

The PCC's poor response to phone-hacking is just a small part of both its work and its failures. The PCC identifies itself as "an independent self-regulatory body which deals with complaints about the editorial content of newspapers and magazines" (http://www.pcc.org.uk/ accessed 21 March, 2012). However, it was only set up to consider complaints and its most recent chairman Lord Hunt, in his proposal for a replacement PCC identified it as such, giving up any idea of it being, or ever having been, a regulator (http://www.pcc.org.uk/assets/0/Draft_proposal.pdf, accessed 21 March, 2012). As Lord Hunt has identified, the PCC has clearly failed as a regulator; it has no investigatory powers, no ability to monitor the industry it was supposed to be regulating and no campaigning or regulatory role over press freedom. But its critics claim that it has also fallen down as a mediator, failing to offer reasonable redress to the traduced subjects of stories. An analysis of the complaints made and their fate will therefore be central to this paper making up research question 1: are there any signs that the PCC limited press excesses?

The performance of News International has been central to the collapse of the PCC and the *News of The World* (*NoW*) was the newspaper at the centre of the scandal surrounding press behaviour in the UK. Initially News International tried to portray Clive Goodman, the *NoW*'s royal correspondent, as one rogue reporter after he was jailed for phone tapping. As it became clear, following revelations in the Guardian and elsewhere, that others at the NoW had been using similar methods the *NoW* was closed by its parent company in July 2011. James Murdoch, Deputy Chief Operating Office News Corporation and Chairman of News International said on 7 July, 2011:

> In 2006, the police focused their investigations on two men. Both went to jail. But the *News of the World* and News International failed to get to the bottom of repeated wrongdoing that occurred without conscience or legitimate purpose. Wrongdoers turned a good newsroom bad and this was not fully understood or adequately pursued. As a result, the *News of the World* and News International wrongly maintained that these issues were confined to one reporter. We now have voluntarily given evidence to the police that I believe will prove that this was untrue and those who acted wrongly will have to face the consequences (http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/07/james-murdoch-paper-sunday, accessed 21 March, 2012).

Suggestions that other papers have been involved in phone hacking were quickly denied following the closure of the *NoW* as other papers tried to limit the damage to the industry. Paul Dacre, Editor in chief of Associated Newspapers, including the *Daily Mail* and the *Mail on Sunda*y, told the Leveson Inquiry in the opening sessions:

> there are thousands of decent journalists in Britain who don't hack phones, don't bribe policemen and who work long anti-social hours for modest recompense – and if they're in the regional press often for a pittance – because they passionately believe that their papers give voice to the voiceless and expose the misdeeds of

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1 Clive Goodman was the Royal Correspondent for the News of the World found guilty of intercepting phone messages and jailed.

the rich, the powerful and the pompous http://hackinginquiry.org/news/paul-dacres-talk-at-leveson-inquiry-seminar/, accessed 22 March, 2012).

So research question 2 concerns the *NoW* – was it a rogue newspaper? Is there any evidence in the PCC's complaints statistics that it raises significantly more complaints than other newspapers? If the News of the World is just one rogue paper and the PCC was any kind of regulator or even complaints mechanism, then the PCC complaints statistics should confirm this.

## Methods

This paper will use quantitative methods to analyse the performance of the PCC and to see if any one newspaper or a group of newspapers are significantly more likely to cause complaint than another. If the PCC as the industry regulator was any measure at all of the standards existing in the industry it should surely identify papers that fell short of expectations by the number of complaints it attracts and upholds. Since many complaints made to the PCC do not breach the Code of Practice or are outside the remit of the PCC altogether, a count of the number of complaints made in total would not actually be particularly informative. For instance the PCC does not deal with:

> Complaints about TV and radio (Ofcom is the regulator for the broadcast industry); Complaints about advertising (the Advertising Standards Authority is the regulator for the advertising industry); Concerns about matters of taste and decency; Legal or contractual matters that are dealt with more appropriately by the courts; Complaints about books; Complaints about online material that is not on newspaper or magazine websites (http://www.pcc.org.uk/complaints/makingacomplaint.htmlc, accessed 7 December, 2010).

A database of all the PCC's published resolved and adjudicated cases (that is, cases that potentially breach the code) was set up and this allows for examination and analysis of the number of complaints made against each publication and each type of publication. It is the complaints the PCC identifies as potentially breaching the editors' code that allow us to identify unacceptable press behaviour. A league table of publications reflecting this performance was produced from the data that allows for examination of the reaction to these figures by the publications.

There are two sets of statistics flowing from the PCC: adjudicated complaints and resolved complaints. When the PCC first receives a complaint, it looks to see if it can resolve it, something it sees as its primary aim:

> Depending on the seriousness of the case, there are a variety of ways in which complaints can be resolved. For instance, if a serious error has been published, a correction or apology in the paper may be required. Alternatively, we can seek assurances about future coverage or perhaps look to have online material amended or deleted. We cannot generally obtain financial compensation. If your complaint is resolved, we will publish a summary of the case on our website (http://www.pcc.org.uk/complaints/makingacomplaint.html, accessed 7 December, 2010)

Only if the PCC believes the code has been breached, and has not or cannot be remedied, will it move to adjudicate the complaint. Where possible the PCC will always seek to resolve a complaint, leaving adjudication only for obvious breaches of the code that cannot be remedied or resolved. The PCC will discuss the case with the publication and with the complainant seeking to either persuade the publication and the complainant to agree a suitable resolution, in which case it will sign the case off as resolved or, where the newspaper offers a resolution that is not acceptable to the complainant but which the PCC feels makes a reasonable offer, the PCC will conclude the case under the rubric "sufficient remedial action offered".

The PCC publishes its adjudications and resolutions of complaints on its website, but despite a request from the parliamentary Culture, Media and Sport select committee in 2003, has always refused to keep a league table of the performance of different publications choosing instead to publish some limited examples of complaints. The PCC has however published annual details of the percentage of investigated complaints by publication type apart from a short period (2005-2008) when it published only the percentage of complaints made about privacy. No explanation is given in the annual reports for this change of data collection, although it does make the statistics look more favourable for national newspapers, something of concern to the PCC. In 2003, the only year when complaints against regional papers came close to matching those of national papers the PCC reported:

> "Interestingly, the proportion of investigated complaints against the national and regional press is exactly the same at around 41%, while 8.7% of investigations were into the Scottish press, 2.4% into the publications of Northern Ireland and 6.7% into magazines." (http://www.pcc.org.uk/assets/80/2003.pdf: 3)

The following year, as numbers returned to more typical values, the PCC started producing breakdowns for privacy and noted that "most privacy cases concern the regional and local press – perhaps not surprising-

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ly given the size of that industry" (http://www.pcc.org.uk/assets/80/Annual_Review2006_mid_res.pdf: 4).

In 2009 it reverted to publishing the full breakdown to show that more than 51% of complaints were against national papers, emphasising that the 20 or so papers (dailies and Sundays) with the most experienced staffs and the biggest editorial budgets received consistently more than half the complaints. The PCC commented, rather strangely bearing in mind the balance of the figures:

> People are often surprised that complaints about the national press do not make up a higher proportion than they do. Looking at cases where an investigation was warranted, the proportions are as shown
>
> (http://www.pcc.org.uk/review09/2009_statistics/complaints_dealt_with.php)

## Analysis

The first figures analysed here examine the performance of various types of publication and particularly national newspapers and regional newspapers as identified in the PCC's annual reports. Taking an average over the 13 years available (1993-2010 excluding 2005-2008 because of the change in collection methods mentioned above) national newspapers are responsible for almost half of complaints.

**Table 1: Average percentage of complaints investigated by the PCC sorted by publication type**

|                          | Average 1993-2010 | Privacy only (2005-8) |
| ------------------------ | ----------------- | --------------------- |
| National papers:         | 47.9%             | 33.8%                 |
| Regional and local papers: | 34.5%           | 49.7%                 |
| Scottish Papers:         | 8.7%              | 8.6%                  |
| Northern Irish papers:   | 2.3%              | 2.7%                  |
| Magazines:               | 5.6%              | 5.3%                  |
| Others:                  | 0.9%              | -                     |

Table 1 concerns all investigated complaints but only a handful of investigated complaints go on to adjudication by the Commission. Most are resolved by either the publication complained of offering remedial action that the commission considers acceptable or by offering a resolution accepted by the complainant. Table 1 makes it clear that the national newspapers are the largest problem in terms of total complaints for no obvious reason connected with publication. Circulation sizes may be much greater than for most regional papers, but circulation can have no effect on the editorial standards of the stories or their likelihood of breaching the code in itself. National newspapers do not publish more often than regional papers and Sunday newspapers do not publish more often than many magazines. There are hundreds of publications in the UK and 306 publications in total have had complaints adjudicated by the PCC. Several hundred more of course will have published without any complaints at all to the PCC. Of the 306 newspapers with adjudicated complaints only 50 count as national or Sunday newspapers, 16.3% of the total, well short of the 47.9% of complaints. It is worth noting that when privacy complaints only are compared in 2005-2008, the position is reversed and regional papers are responsible for almost half of complaints in this category.

Moving on to look at the individual complaints themselves, if the PCC is obliged to move to adjudication (involving typically only 40 or so cases a year out of [for example] the 7,000 plus cases it received in 2010) it will decide if the publication has breached the code. If the PCC upholds a complaint:

> The newspaper or magazine is obliged to publish the critical ruling in full and with due prominence. This is a serious outcome for any editor and puts down a marker for future press behaviour
>
> (http://www.pcc.org.uk/complaints/makingacomplaint.html, accessed 7 December , 2010).

This implies that the very act of having to publish a PCC adjudication is designed to be seen as an admission of failure by editors, something supported by editors themselves. As *Daily Mail* Editor Paul Dacre told the Culture Media and Sport select committee during its inquiry into press intrusion in 2003, and later the Leveson Inquiry:

> Let's quickly debunk the other myths: …Editors regard adjudications as a slap on the wrist: They certainly don't. They are genuine sanctions. I, and other editors, regard being obliged to publish an adjudication as a real act of shame  (http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2011/oct/12/paul-dacre-leveson-speech, accessed 2 December, 2011).

This "naming and shaming" is the only tool the PCC has to control newspaper and magazine behaviour. The PCC, unlike its broadcast counterpart Ofcom, is unable to fine a publication or punish in any other way. Since the only serious punishment is an adjudication and the subsequent obligation to publish in the offending publication, rather than a resolution of a complaint, the only way to measure standards of journalistic performance is to analyse data showing which publications are most complained about, which have most

upheld adjudications and to what the various resolutions and adjudications refer.

**Table 2: League table of newspapers by number of complaints resolved by the PCC (as at October,**

| Publication | Resolutions | Average |
|---|---|---|
| Daily Mail | 239 | 11.95 |
| The Sun | 180 | 9 |
| Daily Mirror | 106 | 5.3 |
| Daily Express | 104 | 5.2 |
| News of the World | 94 | 4.7 |
| The Times | 90 | 4.5 |
| The Mail on Sunday | 86 | 4.3 |
| Evening Standard | 80 | 4 |
| The Guardian | 63 | 3.15 |
| The Daily Telegraph | 62 | 3.1 |
| The Sunday Times | 57 | 2.85 |
| Sunday Mirror | 52 | 2.6 |
| Daily Star | 51 | 2.55 |
| Daily Record | 50 | 2.5 |
| The people | 46 | 2.3 |
| Sunday Express | 45 | 2.25 |
| The Independent | 38 | 1.9 |
| Scottish Sun | 37 | 1.85 |
| The Sunday Telegraph | 36 | 1.8 |
| Sunday Mail | 35 | 1.75 |

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Newspapers high in the league of both resolved complaints and adjudications are unlikely to cause gasps of surprise. They include 19 of the 50 national daily or Sunday newspapers. The odd one out is the *Evening Standard,* the regional paper for London and the Home Counties. The *Sun* and *News of The World*, both News International publications, are at the top of both tables, together with Associated News' *Daily Mail* and *Mail on Sunday*. The *Daily Mirror* competes closely, as do several other national papers, including the *Daily Express*, *the Star* and *the Sunday Times*. *The Sun* is a clear leader in the adjudicated

complaints table with 39% of its 64 complaints upheld.

**Table 3**: **League table of newspapers by number of adjudicated PCC complaints (as at October, 2011)**

| Newspaper | total | upheld | part uh | % uh | reject | notpur | res | Avg | Avg uh |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The Sun | 64 | 25 | 1 | 39 | 37 | 0 | 1 | 3.2 | 1.3 |
| News of the World | 54 | 17 | 5 | 31 | 28 | 1 | 2 | 2.7 | 0.9 |
| Mail on Sunday | 52 | 16 | 3 | 31 | 30 | 2 | 2 | 2.6 | 0.8 |
| Daily Mail | 49 | 7 | 2 | 14 | 36 | 0 | 3 | 2.5 | 0.4 |
| Daily Mirror | 48 | 12 | 5 | 25 | 26 | 0 | 3 | 2.4 | 0.6 |
| Sunday Times | 39 | 13 | 0 | 33 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 2.0 | 0.7 |
| Evening Standard | 36 | 10 | 1 | 28 | 22 | 0 | 3 | 1.8 | 0.5 |
| Daily Star | 31 | 11 | 1 | 35 | 17 | 0 | 2 | 1.6 | 0.6 |
| Sunday People | 26 | 9 | 1 | 35 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 1.3 | 0.5 |
| Daily Telegraph | 24 | 6 | 1 | 25 | 15 | 0 | 2 | 1.2 | 0.3 |
| Sunday Mirror | 23 | 10 | 1 | 43 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 1.2 | 0.5 |
| Daily Express | 23 | 6 | 2 | 26 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 1.2 | 0.3 |
| Sunday Mail | 21 | 8 | 2 | 38 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 1.1 | 0.4 |
| Daily Record | 17 | 6 | 2 | 35 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0.9 | 0.3 |
| Today | 16 | 11 | 0 | 69 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0.8 | 0.6 |
| Sunday Telegraph | 15 | 2 | 0 | 13 | 10 | 0 | 3 | 0.8 | 0.1 |
| The Guardian | 15 | 2 | 1 | 13 | 12 | 0 | 1 | 0.8 | 0.1 |
| The Times | 14 | 2 | 0 | 14 | 11 | 1 | 0 | 0.7 | 0.1 |
| The Independent | 11 | 3 | 0 | 27 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0.6 | 0.2 |
| Daily Sport | 10 | 9 | 0 | 90 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.5 | 0.5 |

| Newspaper | total | upheld | part uh | % uh | reject | notpur | res | Avg | Avg uh |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The Sun | 64 | 25 | 1 | 39 | 37 | 0 | 1 | 3.2 | 1.3 |
| News of the World | 54 | 17 | 5 | 31 | 28 | 1 | 2 | 2.7 | 0.9 |
| Mail on Sunday | 52 | 16 | 3 | 31 | 30 | 2 | 2 | 2.6 | 0.8 |
| Sunday Times | 39 | 13 | 0 | 33 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 2.0 | 0.7 |
| Daily Mirror | 48 | 12 | 5 | 25 | 26 | 0 | 3 | 2.4 | 0.6 |
| Daily Star | 31 | 11 | 1 | 35 | 17 | 0 | 2 | 1.6 | 0.6 |
| Today | 16 | 11 | 0 | 69 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0.8 | 0.6 |
| Evening Standard | 36 | 10 | 1 | 28 | 22 | 0 | 3 | 1.8 | 0.5 |
| Sunday Mirror | 23 | 10 | 1 | 43 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 1.2 | 0.5 |
| Sunday People | 26 | 9 | 1 | 35 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 1.3 | 0.5 |
| Daily Sport | 10 | 9 | 0 | 90 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.5 | 0.5 |
| Sunday Sport | 9 | 9 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.5 | 0.5 |
| Sunday Mail | 21 | 8 | 2 | 38 | 10 | 0 | 1 | 1.1 | 0.4 |
| Daily Mail | 49 | 7 | 2 | 14 | 36 | 0 | 3 | 2.5 | 0.4 |
| Daily Telegraph | 24 | 6 | 1 | 25 | 15 | 0 | 2 | 1.2 | 0.3 |
| Daily Express | 23 | 6 | 2 | 26 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 1.2 | 0.3 |
| Daily Record | 17 | 6 | 2 | 35 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0.9 | 0.3 |
| Sunday Mercury, Birmingham | 8 | 6 | 1 | 75 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0.4 | 0.3 |
| Bedfordshire on Sunday | 6 | 5 | 0 | 83 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0.3 | 0.3 |
| The Observer | 7 | 4 | 0 | 57 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0.4 | 0.2 |

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## Numbers of adjudications

The PCC received over 7,000 complaints in 2010, more than triple the number of the early nineties (the PCC has still to announce numbers for 2011 at the time of writing but adjudications have remained at the same level as 2010). Despite this increase in complaints, the number of adjudications made by the PCC has fallen and has averaged just under 40 over the past three years, compared with an average for the full 20 years of 53.3.
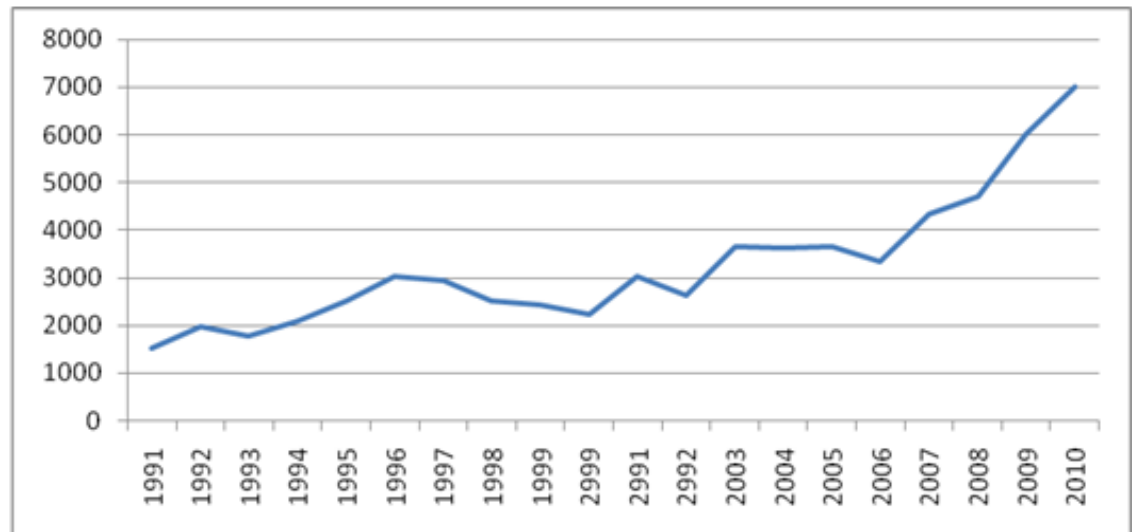


- *Please note: PCC claims to have received more than 37,000 complaints in 2009, of which at least 21,000 relate to complaints about Jan Moir's column in the* Daily Mail *and have been deleted from total.*
- *Figures for 2010 given in annual report refer to more than 7,000 complaints.*

**Figure 1: Total number of complaints made to the PCC**



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**Figure 2: total adjudications, both rejected and upheld**



**Figure 3: Complaints to the PCC leading to public censure (upheld)**

Part of the reason for this fall in the number of adjudications, according to the PCC, is that they now resolve far more complaints than they did in the early years and only seek to adjudicate where there is a serious prima facie breach of the Code of Practice. The PCC believes that its role is to negotiate amicable settlements to cases where possible (PCC annual report 2003: 4) and claims that the fall in the number of adjudications is because this drive towards resolution has been successful and there is certainly evidence to show they resolve more cases than in the early years (see figure 4). The PCC resolves cases in two separate ways. The first is where the case is resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant:

> Some of the ways of achieving this are: the publication of a correction or an apology; a follow-up piece or letter from the complainant; a private letter of apology from the editor; an undertaking as to future conduct by the newspaper; or the annotation of the publication's records to ensure that the error is not repeated

(http://www.pcc.org.uk/cases/, accessed 9 December, 2011).

The second is where the case cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant and so the case goes to adjudication but the PCC decides it is satisfied that the paper has offered "sufficient remedial action".
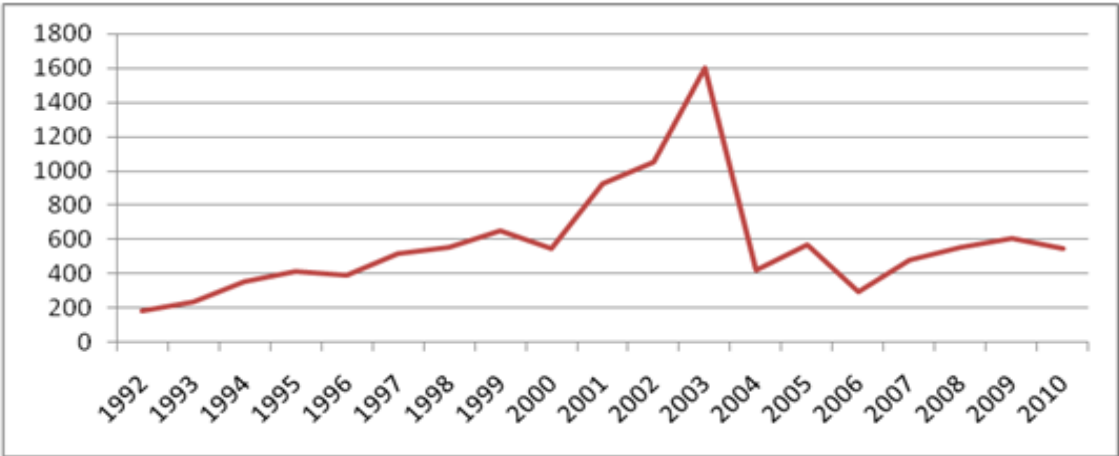
**Figure 4: Complaints to the PCC that were resolved**

Many of the resolutions involve matters that could have been resolved by the editor without the need to involve the PCC at all. Virtually all resolved cases concern complaints about accuracy.

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Analysis of the data shows that *The Sun* (64 complaints, 25 upheld), *The News of the World* (54/17), *The Mail on Sunday* (52/16),*The Daily Mail* (49/7), and the *Daily Mirror* (48/12) top the complaints league table. The same papers top the resolved cases league as well, where they are joined in the top seven by the *Daily Express* and *the Times*. This is not to suggest they have necessarily committed the worst offences, just that they regularly produce stories that are the centre of complaints. In order to examine their records in more detail, a smaller sample of complaints adjudicated in the five-year period January 2007 up until the end of November 2011 was selected.

Choosing just the last five years shows some changes in the league tables. The News of the World has slipped down the league table quite considerably, although it is still in the top ten of both resolutions and adjudications. Its closure in July 2011, with a consequent zero complaints from that time, would not have caused this drop

| Publication | Resolutions | Average |
|---|---|---|
| Daily Mail | 87 | 4.35 |
| The Sun | 62 | 3.1 |
| Daily Mirror | 36 | 1.8 |
| Evening Standard | 30 | 1.5 |
| The Mail on Sunday | 27 | 1.35 |
| Daily Express | 25 | 1.25 |
| News of the World | 25 | 1.25 |
| The Daily Telegraph | 25 | 1.25 |
| The Times | 17 | 0.85 |
| The Guardian | 16 | 0.8 |
| The Sunday Times | 16 | 0.8 |
| Sunday Mirror | 14 | 0.7 |
| Metro | 13 | 0.65 |
| Daily Star | 12 | 0.6 |
| Scottish Sun | 11 | 0.55 |
| The Sunday Telegraph | 11 | 0.55 |
| London Lite | 10 | 0.5 |
| Sunday Mail | 10 | 0.5 |
| The Independent | 9 | 0.45 |
| Edinburgh Evening News | 8 | 0.4 |

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**Table 5: League table of newspapers by number of resolved PCC cases 2007-2011 (as at October, 2011)**

| Newspaper | total | upheld | part uh | % uh | reject | notpur | res | Avg | Avg uh |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Daily Telegraph | 10 | 2 | 0 | 20 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 0.5 | 0.1 |
| Daily Mirror | 9 | 2 | 0 | 22 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0.5 | 0.1 |
| Sunday Times | 9 | 3 | 0 | 33 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0.5 | 0.2 |
| The Sun | 9 | 4 | 0 | 44 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0.5 | 0.2 |
| Daily Mail | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 0.4 | 0.0 |
| Scottish Sun | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0.3 | 0.0 |
| Mail on Sunday | 6 | 1 | 0 | 17 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0.3 | 0.1 |
| The Guardian | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0.3 | 0.0 |
| Daily Record | 5 | 3 | 0 | 60 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0.3 | 0.2 |
| Sunday Telegraph | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0.2 | 0.0 |
| Daily Star | 4 | 2 | 0 | 50 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.2 | 0.1 |
| News of the World | 4 | 3 | 0 | 75 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| Daily Express | 3 | 1 | 0 | 33 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0.2 | 0.1 |
| Woman | 3 | 2 | 0 | 67 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.2 | 0.1 |
| Sunday World | 3 | 3 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| Echo/Daily Gazette | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| Gazette (Renfrewshire) | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| Scottish Mail on Sunday | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| Loaded | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| Paisley Daily Express | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.0 |

**Table 6: League table of newspapers by number of adjudicated complaints 2007-2011**

| Newspaper | total | upheld | part uh | % uh | reject | notpur | res | Avg | Avg uh |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The Sun | 9 | 4 | 0 | 44 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 0.5 | 0.2 |
| Sunday World | 3 | 3 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| News of the World | 4 | 3 | 0 | 75 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| Daily Record | 5 | 3 | 0 | 60 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0.3 | 0.2 |
| Sunday Times | 9 | 3 | 0 | 33 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0.5 | 0.2 |
| News of the World, Scotland | 2 | 2 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Take a Break | 2 | 2 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Evening Argus, Brighton | 2 | 2 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| FHM Magazine | 2 | 2 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Woman | 3 | 2 | 0 | 67 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.2 | 0.1 |
| Daily Star | 4 | 2 | 0 | 50 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.2 | 0.1 |
| Daily Mirror | 9 | 2 | 0 | 22 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0.5 | 0.1 |
| Daily Telegraph | 10 | 2 | 0 | 20 | 7 | 0 | 1 | 0.5 | 0.1 |
| Loughborough Echo | 1 | 1 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Newham Recorder | 1 | 1 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Dorset Echo | 1 | 1 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Lancashire Telegraph | 1 | 1 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Hamilton Advertiser | 1 | 1 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| Strathspey and Badenoch He | 1 | 1 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.1 |
| The Sun website | 1 | 1 | 0 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.1 |

**Table 7: League table of newspapers by upheld PCC complaints 2007-11**

Generally, as the number of adjudications each year has fallen and the number of resolutions risen, so we see a similar adjustment in the chart for each of these five newspapers. Each of them sees an approximate ten-fold drop in both the number of complaints adjudicated and the number of adjudications upheld over the period of the last five years of the study. There is also a three-fold fall in the number of resolutions in the same period. A newspaper such as the *Daily Mail*, which leads the resolution league across the lifetime of the PCC with an average of 11.95 cases, only requires resolution on average 4.35 times a year from 2007. This could be caused by a change in process by the PCC and/or by mass improvements in standards by newspapers (although the evidence given at the Leveson inquiry suggests this is unlikely) or it could be caused by a change of approach by the papers under review.

This was suggested to Paul Dacre of the *Daily Mail* at the Leveson inquiry when Mr Robert Jay, QC to the inquiry, asked whether it was the *Daily Mail's* policy to avoid adjudication at all costs by wearing down complainants. Mr Dacre said:

> "I don't know what you're trying to say. If someone makes a complaint to the PCC, they investigate it, they decide whether it goes for adjudication and a decision is made, and then we will carry that ruling against us in the paper and the reasons why the PCC found against us."

> (http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Transcript-of-Afternoon-Hearing-6-February-20121.pdf , pp.43-44).

Whilst Mr Dacre's answer is instructive, publications other than national dailies, Sundays or magazines receive too few complaints for this tactic of wearing down complainants to be useful. The typical regional paper receives on average about one complaint every ten years with half or fewer of those being upheld. Of the 1,058 complaints adjudicated in 20 years, 477 of them (44%) were made about the top 20 publications listed above. However, it is worth examining the number of "sufficient remedial action offered" responses for national newspapers in light of Mr Jay's question. The PCC uses this adjudication when it thinks newspaper have done sufficient to ameliorate the complaint even though the complainant may still not be entirely satisfied. This judgement has become particularly popular since 2003 with all but one of the 36 resolutions happening since then. Of these only nine are from provincial papers with the other 27 (75%) being national newspapers or magazines.

In order to understand the type of complaints received about national newspapers, the complaints faced by the top five papers for adjudication together with the outcomes are given in Table 8.

**Table 8: PCC adjudication findings for top five complained of newspapers 2007-2011**

|  |  |  |  | Complaint concerned | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Paper** | **upheld** | **rejected** | **SRA** | **accuracy** | **privacy** |
| **Daily Mail** | 0 | 6 | 2 | 75% | 50% |
| **Daily Mirror** | 2 | 5 | 2 | 33% | 55% |
| **Mail on Sunday** | 1 | 4 | 1 | 50% | 50% |
| **News of the World** | 3 | 1 | 0 | 50% | 50% |
| **The Sun** | 4 | 4 | 1 | 44% | 55% |

Moving away from the PCC to look for further evidence of press behaviour, the Information Commissioner's Office in 2006 published *What Price Privacy Now*, a report of its Operation Motorman investigation into the illegal trade in confidential personal information that explained:

> Section 55 of the Data Protection Act 1998 … makes it an offence (with certain exemptions) to obtain, disclose or procure the disclosure of personal information knowingly or recklessly, without the consent of the organisation holding the information. Offences are punishable by a fine only: up to £5,000 in a Magistrates' Court and unlimited in the Crown Court."(ICO, 2006, p.4)

*What Price Privacy?*, an earlier report about Operation Motorman, had reported that 305 journalists had been identified as customers driving the illegal trade. *What Price Privacy Now?* identified the papers these reporters worked for. These are listed in Table 9 (below) and it can be seen that the list of papers identifies

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many of the same newspapers that are high up the league table of PCC adjudications.

| Publication | Number of transactions positively identified | Number of journalists/clients using services |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Daily Mail | 952 | 58 |
| Sunday People | 802 | 50 |
| Daily Mirror | 681 | 45 |
| Mail on Sunday | 266 | 33 |
| News of the World | 228 | 23 |
| Sunday Mirror | 143 | 25 |
| Best Magazine | 134 | 20 |
| Evening Standard | 130 | 1 |
| The Observer | 103 | 4 |
| Daily Sport | 62 | 4 |
| The People | 37 | 19 |
| Daily Express | 36 | 7 |
| Weekend Magazine (Daily Mail) | 30 | 4 |
| Sunday Express | 29 | 8 |
| The Sun | 24 | 4 |
| Closer Magazine | 22 | 5 |
| Sunday Sport | 15 | 1 |
| Night and Day (Mail on Sunday) | 9 | 2 |
| Sunday Business News | 8 | 1 |
| Daily Record | 7 | 2 |
| Saturday (Express) | 7 | 1 |
| Sunday Mirror Magazine | 6 | 1 |
| Real Magazine | 4 | 1 |
| Woman's Own | 4 | 2 |
| The Sunday Times | 4 | 1 |
| Daily Mirror Magazine | 3 | 2 |
| Mail in Ireland | 3 | 1 |
| Daily Star | 2 | 4 |
| The Times | 2 | 1 |
| Marie Claire | 2 | 1 |
| Personal Magazine | 1 | 1 |
| Sunday World | 1 | 1 |

**Table 9: Cases of personal data accessed by reporters according to the ICO in 2006**

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Source: ICO: *What Price Privacy Now?* (2006)

The report identifies the seemingly widespread use of private detectives to hack into the personal data of a number of people. Such hacking could or might include health records, bank account details, computer records and other private information accessed, although Paul Dacre told the Leveson inquiry that the breaches as far as his paper was concerned were almost exclusively to get ex-directory phone numbers and stopped after the Motorman report. Asked at the Leveson inquiry if he should have conducted an inquiry into the use of private detective Steven Whittamore's services at the time, Mr Dacre responded that he thought that unfair:

> Everybody, every newspaper - and I see the BBC spent nearly as much on enquiry agents as we did - was us-
> ing him. We didn't realise they were illegal. There was a very hazy understanding of how the Data Protection
> Act worked and this was seen as a very quick way of obtaining phone numbers and addresses to corroborate
> stories (http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Transcript-of-Afternoon-Hearing-
> 6-February-20121.pdf, p.49)[2]

Little was published about this at the time, probably because none of the newspapers involved wish to emphasise the problem.

## Conclusion

Even an analysis as detailed as this fails to throw up any reason to believe that the PCC is addressing issues of standards through the industry. It is a complaints body pure and simple, offering an opportunity for the subjects of stories to get some redress, but no more than should have been possible by complaining direct to the newspaper. There is nothing additional to be gained for the complainant in using the PCC other than an experienced case officer to help them pursue their complaint to the point when either the complaint is adjudicated or they are told that it would be best to accept the resolution on offer. Nor is there any compelling evidence that the standards and behaviour of the *NoW* were any worse than other newspapers of it type.

There are clearly two distinct categories of publication making up the PCC's work, excluding those who never come to the PCC's attention. The first are small circulation magazines and provincial newspapers that make the occasional ethical lapse, usually a clear error of editorial judgement, perhaps caused by inexperience or a lack of training, that is either serious enough for the PCC to uphold the complaint despite the paper taking its own action, or where the publication offers sufficient remedial action for the PCC to accept it. The latter is rarer, but the typical publication in this category averages one complaint every ten years, a complaint rate that many a business would envy.

The other category almost exclusively concerns national publications, mainly newspapers. There is no reason to suppose that their much higher circulation will have been the reason for a very much higher level of complaints. Complaints are normally only accepted from the subject of a story and for the average person, the local paper is as important as a national. For those in the public eye, more likely to feature in a national publication, there is more likely to be an acceptance that publication is only to be expected and perhaps this explains the balance of privacy complaints identified in Table 1. There is no obvious reason for national newspapers to figure more prominently in the PCCs work nor is there evidence that the intrinsic nature of the publication or the nature of its circulation can have any effect on the number of complaints. The type of story on the other hand does have an effect. Moreover, it seems from a close examination of all the complaints that whilst the regional press is more likely to carry errors that are excruciating and often embarrassing for all concerned, the stories complained of in the nationals are more often deliberate attempts to push the story to the very limits of its credibility. This would explain the much higher use of the remedial action defence as those papers seek to avoid complaints by offering more and more in terms of remedy until finally the PCC accepts that sufficient action has been offered, even if the complainant is still not fully satisfied. The *Daily Mail* is a good example of this, despite Mr Dacre's response at the Leveson inquiry. Although no complaint was upheld against it in the last five years, it came fifth in the league of adjudications made, slipping only just behind the *Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* (although it's worth noting that the *Daily Telegraph* is the surprise head of the table). However, looking at resolutions, the *Daily Mail* is the clear leader with almost a third more complaints than any other newspaper.

These figures suggest that some newspapers are dodging the spirit of the PCC by avoiding making corrections or offering apologies early on to either the PCC or complainant. This in turn obliges the PCC to enforce a settlement, in terms of the form of words and placement, and so minimises the newspaper's culpability even though the complainant finds it unacceptable.

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2 In fact, the BBC was not listed by the ICO's report.

It is this avoidance of the spirit of the PCC, relying on it to present a public face that is in fact far from the reality, that has brought the PCC into disrepute, has led to the Leveson Inquiry, and will may well lead to a form of regulation that will be highly unpalatable to editors and proprietors who have relied on providing cheap-to-produce salacious stories to boost both their circulation figures and their profits. It is something of an irony that not only did this policy clearly fail, but that it was also the mechanism that will oblige adherence to stronger codes of ethics, long desired by many both within and without the industry.

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1  Clive Goodman was the Royal Correspondent for the News of the World found guilty of intercepting phone messages and jailed.

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# Hyper-local learning: enhancing employability, sustaining professional practice

**David Baines, Newcastle University**

***Abstract.*** This paper reviews, as a case study in enhancing teaching and learning on journalism programmes, the development of a 'hyper-local' news website set up in an English city by a freelance journalist on which students volunteer as reporters and editors. The review finds that the news site met initial expectations in providing a supportive space to develop students' skills and knowledge, but that it later developed in unexpected trajectories. The project became a space for innovation and experimentation in journalism practice and the paper concludes that such a venture can sustain professional values, knowledge, skills and practices; encourage innovation and enhance journalism students' employability. There was evidence that the project contributed to community sustainability and helped to resolve dilemmas which arise when journalism students undertake unpaid placements to gain work experience in media organisations which might be making editorial staff redundant.

**Key words:** *Journalism education; hyper-local; employability; professional sustainability; community sustainability*

### Introduction

**This paper examines, as a case study in enhancing teaching and learning on journalism programmes in higher education, the development of a 'hyper-local' news website. This was set up in September 2009 in Newcastle upon Tyne by freelance journalist Ian Wylie, a former section-editor of the British national newspaper *The Guardian*, in collaboration with the author, who leads the journalism programmes at Newcastle University. The reporters and**

**'content providers' and latterly editors, were made up of journalism students working on the project as volunteers.**

The review finds that the news site met the initial, but narrow, expectations of tutors in providing a valuable and supportive space in which student journalists could develop traditional skills and knowledge and explore the role of journalism in a community. But it developed, and continues to do so, in a number of unexpected and (in terms of journalism education) beneficial directions. This evolution has been driven in part by a desire to make the endeavour self-sustaining as an entrepreneurial enterprise; by constant critical reflection on the role(s) of journalism within the community and the manner in which the project could meet the community's needs; and by seizing opportunities to experiment and try something new. This has resulted in collaborations involving local schools; civic institutions; civil society; the BBC; the BALTIC contemporary Arts Centre and the Turner Prize contemporary art exhibition on Tyneside; independent media professionals working in the area. At the time of writing, journalism workshops within the local community are being organised to share skills and knowledge and tell untold stories. The unexpected trajectories the project has taken have been characterised by development of personal and institutional relationships and mutually beneficial networks of support within and beyond its immediate community of use and the seizure of opportunities which arise as a result of these relationships to meet those perceived needs and explore new directions in journalism.

The enterprise has thus become a space in which experimentation takes place in new ways of doing journalism and producing new journalistic products, by-products and processes, both online and offline. The paper concludes that such an experience can enhance journalism students' employability and sustain professional values, knowledge skills and practices while encouraging innovation at a time of significant transformation for journalism. It found evidence that such journalism has a role in enhancing the sustainability of communities, and it is upon such communities having an interest in journalism that journalism, and journalists, find sustenance – a virtuous circle.

But the paper notes that the development of such a project is characterised by a complex range of dynamics and these dynamics are likely to be different, and generate different outcomes, in different communities and localities. So while the study is indicative of practices and processes which are likely to be of benefit, it does not offer a template for universal application. One particular benefit of such projects is, however, that they offer alternative means of gaining work experience to student journalists who are sometimes encouraged to undertake unpaid placements in media organisations which might be making their own editorial staff redundant.

## Work and work-place experience in journalism education

Experience of the workplace – variously referred to as placements, internships and more formally work-based learning - has a long tradition in education programmes which specifically address vocational subjects and is seen as valuable by educators, students, governments and industry alike. Reeders (2000, p.206), citing research by Candy, Crebert, & O'Leary (1994) and Crebert (1995), says students find value in work experience because it allows them to test their learning against real world problems and they produce something that is used by others. He points to surveys of teachers, media professionals and social workers which show them to believe they learned more from their work placements than from their academic programmes (ACE, 1999, p. 35; Ciofalo, 1992; Clare, 1999). In Britain, the Dearing report, which strongly influenced government higher education policy, proposed that workplace experience should be extended to all courses (NCIHE, 1997). On journalism programmes specifically, work experience is considered to be desirable by Britain's industry accreditation body, the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ)[1] and essential by the Broadcast Journalism Training Council (BJTC)[2].

Employers and students alike see work-placements as opportunities for students to impress and possibly gain permanent work. Purdey's research into radio journalism recruitment found that 'most telling was the number of editors who recruited people who had worked with them on work experience: 56.3 percent of BBC editors recruited via that route while in commercial radio the figure rose to 78.1 percent' (2000, p.332). Employers also see work experience as an opportunity for their organisation to benefit from those who bring 'a young person's knowledge of multimedia to the job' (Austin and Cokley, 2006, p.84).

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1        NCTJ Accreditation Standards and Information Pack- course accreditation performance indicator: 'Students are encouraged to gain work experience and there is sufficient time allowed for this.'http://www.nctj.com/assets/library/document/a/original/accred_info_standard_sept_11.pdf

2        BJTC Guidelines for Accreditation and Requirements (Section 3.8): available at http://www.winchesterjournalism.co.uk/Joomla_1.5_DDM/

But placements can be problematic. From the university's point of view, the variability of such experiences poses significant problems in assessment and arranging placements for large numbers of students can be very demanding on academics' time. It can be disruptive to other elements of the course, taking the student away from classes for several weeks. It can be unproductive if the student is not given an opportunity, during the placement, to engage in a variety of useful tasks. Bradford and Halliday (2009) reported that trainee journalists who were employed on Northcliffe Media's local newspapers and news websites in Britain who had expected to put their knowledge and skills in multimedia journalism into practice providing online content found that they were given little opportunity to do so and were disappointed at being obliged to concentrate on print publication. It is unlikely then that work-experience candidates would have been given opportunities to produce multi-media content. Ethical issues also arise when unpaid students are producing content for publications which are cutting the jobs of editorial staff.

The number of students on journalism programmes is growing. In Australia, Austin and Cokley (2006, p.79) found industry recruiters introducing new ways to manage the number of journalism students who were seeking internships. In Britain, Hanna and Sanders (2007, p.404) reported that:

in 1994/95 the equivalent of 415 British full-time students joined (journalism) programmes … In 2004/5 the total was 2,035, a "pattern of explosive growth" which Splichal and Sparks (1994, p. 115) observed occurring earlier in other countries.

This presents problems for journalism organisations which traditionally provide work placements for students. In 2011 Britain's BBC restricted to 190 the number of placements it made available to students on 'nearly 70' BJTC-accredited programmes[3] and these were rationed accordingly. (Newcastle University was allocated five placements for a programme with 27 students.) Newsroom executives working in severely time-pressured environments can find it difficult to oversee students on work placement, assign tasks, guide them in the performance of those tasks and provide feedback on completion. The quality of the experience for both host and student can be unpredictable and a bad experience can have far-reaching consequences. Hanna and Sanders (2007, p.409) found that the proportion of journalism students planning to enter the field through local newspapers declined as the course progressed and they noted: 'This perhaps reflects internship experiences and/or perceptions that this sector offers comparatively low pay.' In one respect such an experience can be seen as valuable, convincing the student that that is not their choice for a career after all. But there is a danger that their experience colours their overall view of journalism – a field which offers a very wide and varied range of work and career paths.

In a review of the literature on the value of prior work-experience, Anakwe and Greenhaus (2000, p.5) found those 'studies (Page et al., 1981; Taylor, 1988; Luzzo, 1995) that have undertaken a more rigorous approach in examining the benefits of prior work experience suggest that the *characteristics* of prior work experience rather than its existence or non-existence should be investigated' (my emphasis). Brooks et al (1995, p.346) discovered that 'internship and work experiences that include a high degree of variety, feedback and opportunities to deal with others may be more effective for progressing through the career development process than experiences without these qualities'.

But research on workplace experience on vocational education has focused on experience in the traditional workplace, as part of educational programmes designed predominantly to produce people equipped with skills to function as employees and, in journalism education, to train students to work in newspapers and latterly for radio or TV broadcasters (see Becker, 2003; Dickson, 2000; O'Dell, 1935, cited in Mensing, 2010, p.513). Yet, employees of journalists can no longer be regarded as such a homogenous group. Non-governmental organisations, charities, local authorities, even operators of cruise liners, are among many varied non-media organisations which employ journalists around the world to produce newspapers, websites and TV and radio content. Baines and Kennedy (2010, p.99) questioned the validity of educating journalists primarily for employment in traditional industry sectors while journalism undergoes significant long-term systemic, economic, technological, structural, cultural and societal transformations (Aldridge, 1998; Davies, 2008; Deuze, 2008, 2009; McNair, 2003; Rosen, 1999). For many journalists, working freelance or entrepreneurially, the concept of a 'work place' might be fluid, or even meaningless. So experience of work as a process, rather than work-places and situated products may be more valuable, as long as it provides the high degree of opportunities identified by Brooks (1995).

Mensing (2010, p.512) notes the changes journalism is undergoing and argues that were journalism educators to move their focus away from 'the transmission-driven, industry-conceived model of journalism' and towards the community they 'could reconnect journalism with its democratic roots and take advantage of new forms of news creation, production, editing and distribution'. She argues that:

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3  Personal communication. For BJTC-accredited courses see http://www.bjtc.org.uk/

A community-oriented model of journalism would place the journalist as reporter, editor and facilitator within a community … and refocus attention on the role that journalism can play in the health of a community…Working with students in a laboratory of inquiry, researching how journalism matters and experimenting with ways to practice journalism in a rapidly reconfiguring environment could reinvigorate journalism programs and encourage more productive connections between the work of educators, scholars, and practitioners. (*ibid.*)

There is a great deal to commend this community focus, and the BJTC for one recognises the value of and encourages placements in 'non-mainstream' media organisations (see note 2). Of course, traditional media concerns such as the BBC, CNN and major newspaper and magazine publishers around the world remain the largest employers of journalists. The brief list of non-media industry employment opportunities for journalists given above suggests that there remains a demand for industry-model employment, even if that employment is not necessarily in a traditional news-industry, and Purdey's work reinforces the value of industry experience as a route into paid work. So there remains a place for workplace experience in the learning process.

But students emerging from, as Mensing puts it, 'a laboratory of inquiry, researching how journalism matters and experimenting with ways to practice journalism in a rapidly reconfiguring environment' offer those industries employing them advantages that do not necessarily come with students whose work experience has focused on gaining familiarity with current industry practice. For example, the BBC's policy in recruitment is indicated by Mark Harrison, Head of Digital Production, BBC Vision:

I am looking for creative people . . . Production teams will gather in creative clusters round projects rather than programmes … the most valuable quality will be the ability to walk into a team, adapt to the needs of the project and acquire the skills needed . . . When I was head of Arts at the BBC, I had young producers whose big ambition was to produce a perfect Arena programme. I told them that I was doing that 30 years ago, you need to bring the creativity you use in your home life to a production for the BBC . . . I am looking for mindset, rather than skill-set. (Speaking at the BBC Connect and Create conference, Liverpool John Moore's University, 19 January, 2009)

The BBC's focus is thus not on specific skills, but on the creative process, on innovation, and his comments possess a clear commercial logic: does a media organisation most need people who can do what it and its competitors already do, or people who distinguish what it does by finding new ways to engage with audiences?

This paper will present a case that the hyper-local project under review offers that change of focus from an industry-conceived towards a community-focused model of journalism and provides the laboratory of inquiry which allows students to experiment with new ways to practice journalism. But it also embeds within the learning professional knowledge, values and practices – and that in doing so it is supporting both community sustainability and the sustainability of journalism, as practice as well as process and equipping journalists to, as de Burgh puts it, 'make essential contributions as analysts and brokers of information' (2003, p.95).

## Methodology

The continuing study on which this paper is based adopts and is informed by an 'action research' approach, defined by Reason and Bradbury as:

a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing … [which] seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.' (2001, p.1)

Action research has a long-established critical role in developing education theory and practice and embraces a much wider sphere of engagement within the educational subject area than the development of pedagogical practice. Carr and Kemmis highlight the essentially collaborative nature of the methodology and conceive of the teacher-researcher as:

'a member of a 'critical community made up of teachers, students, parents and others concerned for the development and reform of education. The professional responsibility of the teacher is to offer an approach to this task. To create conditions under which the critical community can be galvanised into action in support of educational values, to model the review and improvement process and to organise it to colleagues, students, parents and others can be actively involved in the development of education.' (Carr and Kemms, 1966, p.5)

In the current case study, both educational and journalistic practice intersect and the 'critical community' embraces both journalist and educator colleagues, students and community members as they are 'galvanised into action' in support of educational, journalistic and communitarian values.

The hyper-local journalism project, Jesmond Local, was launched in September 2009 and I have worked closely with the project's editor, Ian Wylie, since then to facilitate institutional support from Newcastle University, encourage the student journalists to engage with the project, and taken part periodically in critically reflexive discussions with the editor to analyse and evaluate current practices and procedures and explore possible new directions for development and exploration. I have not been involved in the day-to-day running of Jesmond Local. I have recorded my meetings with the editor and these transcribed recordings, and those of meetings with several student participants, have been subject to a framework analytical approach (Richie et al, 2003) within the context of issues raised within the literature and research on work experience as an element programmes of learning in higher education (university level) and specifically with regard to work in journalism. Other data comes from qualitative reflections on current and past students' experience with Jesmond Local submitted in late December 2011. No attempt has been made to gather quantitative data regarding the total numbers of students who have engaged with the project or how many have continued to be engaged throughout their course.

Students who have taken part in the project have been drawn from four academic programmes at Newcastle University: The BA (Hons) in Media, Communication and Cultural Studies (three years); MA Media and Journalism (one year full time, two years part time); MA Media and Public Relations (one year full time, two years part time); MA International Multi-Media Journalism (one year full time only). Undergraduate students on the BA programme have usually joined in the second year and taken part in the project for two years. Most MA participants have been full time students and taken part for one year. Three of the students have graduated and are working full time in media-related jobs, but maintain a commitment to Jesmond Local and continue to engage with it and the projects it has generated.

Eleven participants were interviewed for this paper. They were: the editor, Ian Wylie (IW);

two MA journalism students who were involved at the start of the project, one of whom, "EI", continues to work in media in the region and continues to take part in the project; the other, "SG", gained a job on graduation in 2010 as a newspaper journalist in another part of the country and has no longer any contact with the project; one graduate who now works on a community newspaper in the USA, "KP"; a student who graduated in 2011 and is currently working as a journalist for the BBC but continues to engage with Jesmond Local: "TC". The remainder are six MA journalism students who are currently studying for an MA in journalism and are working on Jesmond Local: "FI", "MH", "OT", "NM", "KS" and "EI".

IW, EI and TC were all interviewed on tape at various times and EI and TC were also invited to contribute their thoughts on their experience of the project. No prompts were given regarding which aspects of that experience they might focus on because it was important to discover what they highlighted as – and perceived to be - significant aspects of their experience, but there is a risk that their recollections and reflections might have been influenced by memories of topics discussed during previous interviews. The others were invited to submit their thoughts and were not prompted about areas of particular interest. The academic programmes referred to above draw an international cohort and while most who take part in the project are British, NM and OT are Greek, MH is Italian and IN is a US citizen. The initials of all the students and former students who have contributed to this review have been changed to preserve their anonymity.

The number of participants is small, but this is a qualitative study and while its findings are indicative they do not offer and are not intended to offer statistical generalisation. The range of participants allows the project to be interrogated from a number of perspectives, specifically: its value as an adjunct to classroom studies, its value in terms of enhancing employability and its value in terms of community and professional sustainability. Former students now working in journalism were able to reflect on the relevance to their current jobs of their experience on Jesmond Local.

## The establishment of the hyper-local project

Long-term systemic, economic, technological, structural, cultural and societal transformations in news media around the world (Aldridge, 1998; Davies, 2008; Deuze, 2008, 2009; McNair, 2003; Rosen, 1999) mean traditional news industry career paths are dissolving and journalism graduates are embarking on professional lives which are increasingly likely to feature consecutive and concurrent periods of employment, contract/project work and self-employment inside and outside the traditional news-industry sectors.Journalism educators and programmes need to prepare students to survive and succeed in such a landscape and this issue was addressed by myself and a Newcastle University colleague in a paper for the Association for Jour-

nalism Education conference in June 2009 [4] and in a subsequent article in *Journalism Practice* (Baines and Kennedy, 2010). We argued that journalism courses should introduce students to opportunities to embark on entrepreneurial media careers as well as preparing them for employment in traditional industry sectors, and cited the then emerging hyper-local news sites as examples of enterprises which might offer such opportunities, such as Novelda (digital and print)[5], in Alicante, Spain, which was launched by two graduates: one in journalism, the other in business.

Ian Wylie, who had recently left *The Guardian* as a section editor (work and personal finance) to embark on a full-time freelance career writing primarily for the business press (such as the *Financial Times* in the UK and *Monocle Magazine* in the US) saw a blog-report of our conference paper. He lived in Newcastle and contacted me to discuss the establishment of a hyper-local site in the city. As a result, Ian launched the hyper-local news site Jesmond Local (http://jesmondlocal.com/) providing news and information to the Newcastle city suburb of Jesmond. This is a fairly prosperous and multicultural area with a population of some 16,000 made up of students, elderly people, families, and served by independent traders and businesses, a small chain supermarket, schools, bars and restaurants. It has a strong cultural life and a perceived sense of community and local identity. Students on Newcastle University's post-graduate programmes in Journalism and PR and undergraduate programme in media and cultural studies were invited to join the project.

Jesmond Local's initial concept was similar to that of a traditional local newspaper: to be paid for by advertising, but online and multi-media rather than print, serving a particularly small, though metropolitan, community –a suburb, rather than a town or city. Reporters are given patches (beats): crime, shopping, business, property; community, transport; food and drink, politics; sport; arts and culture; environment. At weekly news conferences reporters pitch ideas and are assigned stories by the editor.  He invites outside speakers to many of these conferences - such as council, police and private sector press officers; experienced journalist from national and local print and broadcasting backgrounds; politicians and people whom the news media regularly contact, to allow the student reporters to explore the terms on which reporters and sources negotiate engagements and to build networks and contacts.

**Cultural shift**

Reflecting on the project nine months after the launch, Wylie spoke of his personal expectations. He comes from a national newspaper background where, despite the benefits of new technologies, face-to-face contact with sources was now rare and despite managements' efforts to encourage journalists to work collaboratively, he had found that 'people didn't work collaboratively. He said 'it became very territorial', people would guard their ideas, 'it was all about by-line, self-promotion, getting to the story'.  But as a freelance, 'I am quite sociable and didn't like the idea of sitting at a desk at home on my own', so the opportunity to work in a team was attractive. He also thought that hyper-local journalism offered him an opportunity to 'give something back': to the community in which he lived by putting his skills and knowledge at its disposal and journalism and by sharing those skills and knowledge with the students. He also had to negotiate a shift in news values:

My nervousness about this project was … can I get excited about reporting on flower arranging. But it's not just about reporting, it's not just about bringing a newspaper out. It's about being woven into the fabric of that community, about being part of that community. You got to know the  people behind the flower-arranging feature, the bobby on the beat, and all these stories are important, they are important to me because they are important to people I have got to know as friends.

Wylie believed that what he and the students, as journalists, could bring to the community was 'training, skills, the high value we place on good quality, reliable, truthful news – but that didn't mean that news could not be done in different ways.'

# New ways to do journalism

Students gained the opportunity to put into practice in the field, their classroom learning and try out new ways to do journalism.

I am honestly proud to be part of it – it is a very efficient way of putting everything we learn on the course into practice. (NM)

We were able to experiment with new digital reporting styles rooted in the values of newspaper journalism. (EI)

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4  AJE conference and AGM, City University, London18-19 June, 2009
5  Novelda Digital: http://www.noveldadigital.es/

The work at Jesmond Local has enabled me to gain a greater understanding of networking. (FI)

It has armed me with essential knowledge of social media… I have developed my writing skills … I have acquired more confidence; I have understood the importance of writing for a specific audience and specific medium. I have gained enormous experience finding stories, reporting them and finding new ways to engage my audience in creative and innovative ways. (OT)

Ian really kept me at the forefront of new digital media, introducing me to tools such as 'cover it live' … 'audio boo' [and] 'Bambuster', which is a live video-streaming app. that I used to livesteam Jesmond Local's meeting with the Geordie Shore cast. (TC)

Students also recognise the value in what they are doing as journalists to the community which they regard themselves as serving.

Working with JL has given me a huge insight into social and community journalism … really brought it home about the role of a journalist in society – the way in which hyper-local can increase social cohesion, increase social inclusion and engender community spirit, and organising and covering an election hustings (when rival election candidates face collective public questioning) even highlighted the power of hyper-local journalism to drive community interest in local politics. What I really loved about it was I was out and about on the streets of Jesmond, not tied to a desk like so many journalists are these days. (TC)

I was interested in contributing to the Jesmond community while gaining some hands-on work in journalism. (MH)

The work at Jesmond Local has allowed me to gain a greater understanding of networking – how to meet people, fin contacts and build bonds. (EI)

The experience of immersion in a community and the opportunity to explore the complexities of community life is valued later when it is found to inform the practice of journalism on a mainstream local newspaper.

I think my time at Jesmond Local taught me to really appreciate the role of a journalist within a community. That has helped greatly in my current job, which is as a night-time, cops, breaking news and general assignment reporter at a paper in --- (USA). It is situated in a very unique area, which is a major, major tourist spot during the summer months. As such, the newspaper circulation fluctuates between the peak season and the off-season and the community here, especially off-season, is extremely strong and in-tune to what is happening around them. (KP)

The experience of reporting on Jesmond with a fluctuating student population and settled resident population has possibly been useful in preparing KP for a community with similar characteristics, but I would suggest that what is more important is the legacy of continuing critical reflection on the journalist's role within a specific community – a recognition that communities are diverse and have different needs of journalism.

These understandings of the journalist's role within a community resonate with Jansson's definition of community sustainability in his study of ICT networks in rural Sweden:

The enduring potential of a particular community to maintain the social and cultural interests of its inhabitants, including equal access to various services, good opportunities for political and cultural participation, expression and integration and an enduring sense of community.' (Jansson, 2010, p180)

The student journalists are embracing, through their experience on Jesmond Local, communitarian values of extending access to information about the community and of use to their audience, expanding opportunities for 'cultural participation, expression and integration' and are seeking to sustain 'an enduring sense of community'.

## Collaborative journalism and sharing skills

But from the beginning, the students involved in the project approached journalism not as a highly competitive endeavour – an exercise in getting the by-line, the story, promoting themselves, which was Wylie's experience of newsroom-culture – but as a collaborators in a joint enterprise, reflecting on and exploring new ways to do journalism.

Jesmond Local is founded on communication, openness and sharing ideas. (OT)

I'm elated to be making interesting and useful stuff and working with such a cracking bunch of talented and passionate people. (EI)

It is great to be working with such a dedicated team. (MH)

## Journalism and community sustainability

There is a strong case to be put that the Jesmond Local project has met Mensing's call (2010, p.512) for

a focus in journalism education away from "the transmission-driven, industry-conceived model of journalism" and towards the community, reconnecting journalism with its democratic roots and taking advantage of new forms of news creation, production, editing and distribution. But an initial expectation was that more people within the community would join the project, telling stories, creating content. And reflecting on the exercise nine months later, Wylie noted that they had not done so. This was a pragmatic issue: it is difficult maintaining the momentum of the news site when student journalists are on holiday, but a site in which journalists tell the community stories about itself is not an ideal paradigm for a journalism which, to paraphrase James Carey (1989), amplifies the conversation society has with itself. "For me, that is the next big leap," Ian said. "So how do we go and find them, engage them, equip them with the skills. For me, that is clearly the next step."

I have argued that if journalists are to play a role in amplifying that conversation, then "teaching journalism is part of doing journalism"[6]. Jeff Jarvis of New York University notes in his column in Britain's *The Guardian* newspaper that this sharing of skills lies at the heart of hyper-local journalism:

A key skill of journalism today is learning how to recast the relationship with the public: not just broadcasting news, but organising, supporting, curating, even educating people. Part of supporting community journalism is helping community members learn and this, too, is new: journalists have never been terribly generous with their skills (priesthoods never are). (Jarvis, 2009)

It is this willingness to share that underpins the Jesmond Local project: Ian Wylie sharing his time, skills and knowledge with the students; journalists and sources sharing their time skills and knowledge with the students; former students returning to share their knowledge: EI and TC now both work in media, but continue to work with Jesmond Local. So the student journalists on Jesmond Local are to run 'journalism bootcamps' in 2012, working with and sharing their skills and knowledge not only with each other, but with members of the wider community to find and tell untold stories from that community over a three week period. The intention is in part to broaden the conceptualisation of journalism which accommodates the role of journalist within a network rather than as part of an industrial process: as community participant, as educator, curator and facilitator - as well as broadcaster- of news.

## Experimentation and the 'laboratory of inquiry

Jesmond Local has become a hub for new experiments doing journalism and journalism-related activities:

It has become involved in organising community-based events such as election hustings and concerts and the team take part in as well as reporting and recording the annual community festival.

It is embedded in the university's journalism education delivery and is also working in schools and the community through the 'journalism bootcamps' to extend media literacy and media practice and production.

It has broadcast a community radio show.

In December 2011, it produced a 'pop-up' magazine in a single weekend for the Turner Prize exhibition[7] and award, which covered production costs and raised a further £1,000 for charity. The team plan further pop-up projects in a number of different formats and platforms – from websites to mobile phone apps – to mark major occasions and to offer further pop-up publications as a commercial revenue source.

In November 2011, Jesmond Local produced a documentary on a special school (a school for children with learning difficulties) for the BBC Radio 3 Free Thinking Festival[8] held on Tyneside and embracing the festival's theme of 'Change'.

The team are also working on plans to produce a further documentary and explore the possibility of engaging in community TV.

The pop-up magazine project involved the students and other creative sector professionals based in the North East of England including designers, illustrators, photographers, filmmakers and business development people.

It was a real buzz to work with such an interesting and diverse bunch of people on such an exciting project. We're now planning to trial the pop-up concept with different formats, subjects and groups of people over the coming months and years, all rooted in community journalism. EI

Ian said in December 2011:

6  See the discussion paper on the AJE website: http://www.ajeuk.org/2010/11/22/is-%E2%80%98teaching-journalism%E2%80%99-part-of-%E2%80%98doing-journalism%E2%80%99/

7 Turner Prize 2011 BALTIC Exhibition http://www.balticmill.com/whatsOn/future/ExhibitionDetail.php?exhibID=148

8  BBC R3 Free Thinking Festival 2011 http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0144txn

I thought it was just going to be about Jesmond Local and the upload of stories every day. That is the anchor, but the stuff that has taken in forward has been the one-offs. The publishing project has taken us forward, the 'bootcamps' will take us forward. I think this TV thing, if we make a really good short film . . . will take us forward and accelerate our progress. Whereas the day-to-day stuff, it is important and it is what allows us to teach our students the business. So maybe it should be more closely linked to the education, because how we pass on our values about what we are about and what good journalism is about is through Jesmond Local.

There are two distinct but interdependent objectives at play here: to both maintain our journalistic values, and to explore, experiment, interrogate how professional practices might be adapted and deployed better to sustain those communities in which they are hosted.

## Enhancing employability

The experience offered by the hyper-local project meets Brooks et al's (1995, p.346) criteria for effectiveness in work experience in that it provides 'a high degree of variety, feedback and opportunities to deal with others'. In the weekly news conferences, meetings with industry professionals and projects such as the Turner Prize magazine produced in a weekend, it provides a replication of the work-place experience in terms of the news gathering, editing and production processes and the critical community which came together to undertake the project.

The best experience by far was the 48-hour magazine that we created at the BALTIC; it was a unique experience for me. We had the chance to see how an actual newspaper is in the making … the contacts we made with individuals that work in the industry (journalists, photographers, illustrators) were of extreme value. (NM)

Purdey, above, found that recruiters of radio journalists tended to recruit those who had worked with them on placement and TC, who was recruited by BBC local radio upon graduation (this at a time of significant job cuts being announced by BBC local radio) had enjoyed a placement with the corporation's international radio wing, BBC World Service. But she was also invited to interview by Sky TV, which was recruiting at the time to launch a new local TV service. TC said "There is no doubt" that her hyper local experience played a role in her landing her job with the BBC and being sought out as a candidate by Sky. SG, who had also undertaken a placement in a mainstream regional newspaper, was recruited upon graduation by Trinity Mirror, a national publisher of local and regional newspapers and immediately given her own district to report on and weekly edition to fill. She later said that her experience on Jesmond Local had been:

invaluable as one of my main roles … is to generate stories from (named village) in particular, a front page splash every week, which can be difficult … the experience we all gained (with Jesmond Local) through attending council meetings, holding a live hustings debate and tweeting and live-blogging has proved invaluable at the (named newspaper) and I now use these skills during important debates which affect the whole of (the county) and have a loyal twitter fan-base who provide me with stories and quotes. Being part of a small hyper-local site has helped me and my paper realise that stories can be found online and in small streets and villages that might otherwise be ignored. (SG)

There is recognition here that communities are not homogenous, of the importance of wider inclusivity in local reporting and of the importance of developing professional practices to achieve that inclusivity. There is also strong support for Austin and Cokley's finding (2006, p.84) that employers see value in work experience as an opportunity for their organisation to benefit from those who bring 'a young person's knowledge of multimedia to the job'.  But it also indicates that at a time when journalism is undergoing significant transformations, projects such as this are, in Mensing's phrase (2010, p.512) "take[ing] advantage of new forms of news creation, production, editing and distribution" in order to "reconnect journalism with its democratic roots". Industrial media organisations, such as Sky TV, the BBC and Trinity Mirror are finding value in their recruits' experience of the project as a "laboratory of inquiry, researching how journalism matters and experimenting with ways to practice journalism in a rapidly reconfiguring environment" (*ibid*) and their recruits' innovative, reflexive, experimental approach to their practice.

## New directions in employability

The value of this project in terms of employability does not lie solely, or even primarily, in enhancing opportunities for students to find employment in mainstream – industrial – media. Jarvis has argued that 'The structure – the ecosystem – of news will not be dominated by a few corporations but likely will be made up of networks of many start-ups performing specialized functions based on the opportunities they see in e market….' (Nov 1, 2009)[9] and Baines and Kennedy (2010) have argued that journalism education must

9 'The Future of News in Entrepreneurial' Blog Posting on The Buzz Machine: http://www.buzzmachine.com/2009/11/01/the-future-of-journalism-is-entrepreneurial/

equip students for an entrepreneurial career path to equip them to identify such opportunities and equip them with the business skills to exploit them. Both arguments are open to challenge. However, some industrial media organisations are reorganising parts of their operations along those entrepreneurial lines, characterised by Mark Harrison's model of "production teams … gather(ed) in creative clusters round projects rather than programmes" (Liverpool John Moore's University, 19 January, 2009). Such a media ecosystem also offers opportunities for start-ups which both serve the needs of larger organisations and compete with them.

Finding a sustainable business model to support Jesmond Local has been elusive but Wylie has concluded that while no single sufficient source of funding will sustain such a project – as advertising sustained the regional and local press for so long – a 'bootstrap' approach, drawing in a variety of strands of support both financially and in kind, is developing. Wylie supports Jesmond Local in part from his earnings as a freelance writer for the *Financial Times*, *Guardian* etc. The hyper-local operation and the projects which have grown out of it have opened doors to fees for formal teaching on university programmes, support for the journalism education in the community from the university and the charitable trust and advertising revenue which paid for the pop-up magazine and provided a surplus for charity. Involvement in the annual Jesmond Festival offers opportunities to access specific funding resources from the city council. Advertising space on the site and sponsorship for specific projects and campaigns is sought from local businesses and organisations. Support in kind comes from within the community in the provision of facilities and rooms. Students and other media professionals give their time and commitment for free and students are able to access university media equipment such as camcorders and audio-recorders to produce content for Jesmond Local – further support in kind.

But the mutually supportive relationships that the project has given rise to also offers 'network capital', a variety of social capital and a resource which can support entrepreneurial sustainability (Wong and Salaff, 1998; Welman, 2001; Fafchamps and Minten, 2002). Wylie said of the media professionals who took part in the pop-up magazine project:

> A lot of these guys work on their own and they really enjoyed being part of something bigger. People who are freelance, they don't often get a chance to be in an office environment.

He is now exploring hosting a gathering of independent publishers in the region so the project starts to become a "hub or a network, or just a means of encouraging local journalists - there are lots of them out there working on their own". Wylie sees the unexpected developments which have arisen as a result of Jesmond Local – such as the pop-up magazine - as offering the project greater potential for commercial sustainability.

The students have the opportunity in such a project to be part of this process of development of a business model and find value in it. SG recalls:

> I got involved with Jesmond Local even before it was called Jesmond Local so, at the very beginning. It started out as a small team and we worked together to create the branding and the website. It was a lot of hard work, but very worthwhile and it let me have a go at getting behind a brand new idea, work on it and try to push it to the next level. It was all very exciting. If this is the future of journalism, I hope that once again, one day, I will be able to get involved in a project like this. Maybe even set up my own. (SG)

## Conclusion

The project's sustainability in strictly commercial terms is precarious and it continues as it does largely because it has at its centre an individual who has high levels of professional expertise, is committed to the project and is prepared to subsidise it in part from his earnings as a freelance journalist working at the higher levels of his profession for national and international audiences. The project has also attracted a strong and supportive network of individuals and institutions of civil society. It has grown and developed in unpredicted but beneficial ways as a result of the editor's and his associates' search for a financial sustainability; the constant critical reflection on journalism processes and purposes and the willingness to experiment and seize opportunities. For these reasons, it does not offer a template which can be implemented at will in another location. But it does bring to the fore a number of factors which can support and sustain a work-experience environment for journalism students which is not embedded in the industry, but in the community and which encourages critical reflection, innovation and experimentation at a time when journalism needs to explore new directions.

This review has found that the project offers, and continues to offer, student journalists relevant experience of work in which they can apply skills and knowledge learned in the classroom in a real-world context. It offers the "high degree of variety, feedback and opportunities to deal with others" which Brooks et al (1995, p.346) found to be conducive to effective career progression. It did not offer experience of journalism situated in an industrial media work-place, but it was able to offer critical components of such a placement:

news production routines through weekly editorial conferences; meeting of deadlines; reporting a patch (beat); regular contact with professionals and one-off experiences replicating workplace activity, such as the pop-up Turner Prize magazine.

The culture of journalism in which this experience was embedded was found to be supportive and collaborative, rather than conflicted and competitive, which is seen by the editor as atypical of many journalistic workplaces and there is a body of literature which supports this (Aldridge, 1998; Ross, 2001; Filak, 2004). This collaborative culture also extended to a commitment to sharing skills and knowledge with the wider community and a commitment to supporting civic engagement and community sustainability, confounding Jarvis's (2009) scepticism that journalists, like priests, would be prepared to share their mysteries. Where Hanna and Sanders (2007) found evidence that work experience could be a factor in students' decision not to pursue a career in journalism, this was not the case here and all the respondents had found it to be a positive experience. However, these findings should be treated as indicative, rather than conclusive because the sample was small and did not include any who might have lost interest in the project and fallen out along the way. The opportunity to participate in the project was voluntary, and so those who seized the opportunity and made the most of it were likely to be those students who were already the most committed to a career in journalism and those most willing to commit to undertake work beyond their coursework. Caution must also be exercised in drawing overly-emphatic conclusions about the project's enhancement of employability – those who took part were likely to be among the best candidates for jobs in the first place. Nevertheless, there is strong evidence from the accounts upon which this study is based that employers did find the candidates' experience with Jesmond Local to be relevant to their needs, and particularly so at a time when journalism was (and remains) in flux. The experimental nature of the project, Mensing's 'laboratory of inquiry' also offered employers the promise of candidates who had traditional knowledge and skill sets, but were also innovative and creative. Furthermore, the entrepreneurial nature of the project offered students opportunities to consider journalism as an activity which was not confined to traditional industrial media roles.

The project was also a space in which educators, practitioners and the community collaborated critically to produce processes of journalism which were embedded within the civic and social life of a real community, rather than the commercial socializations of the industry. There is evidence that this was found to have a recognised value within that community, and that it encouraged practices that are valued by the community served now by SG on her newspaper and KP on his – hosting, curating and amplifying society's conversation with itself.

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# Deer departed: a study of the news coverage of the death of the Exmoor Emperor

## Alec Charles, University of Bedfordshire

***Abstract.*** This paper explores the socio-political symbolism which underpinned the UK's mainstream national press coverage of the death of a red deer stag known as the Exmoor Emperor during the autumn of 2010. It employs both qualitative and quantitative methods of content analysis, and draws upon interviews with journalists and public figures involved in the telling of this story in order to suggest reasons behind the significant public and media interest in a narrative which had no ostensible material impact upon a general readership. In doing so, it proposes that journalists, journalism students and journalism educators might significantly benefit from viewing the meaning of apparently trivial news stories through the frames of broader contexts and subtexts, and that such an approach might prove more enduringly useful than a pedagogical focus upon more ephemeral technicalities.

**The actor-comedian Steve Coogan in his online sitcom *Mid Morning Matters* (2011) and in the guise of his celebrated alter ego, North Norfolk Digital radio presenter Alan Partridge, imagined a scenario in which Britain's "last osprey egg is stolen and scrambled for a Russian oligarch's breakfast – who eats it without one iota of remorse." Coogan appears to be satirising the furore which had engulfed the UK news media just a few months earlier when another representative of Britain's native fauna had been reported slaughtered, apparently at the hands of a wealthy foreign national.**

　On 27 October 2010 the second issue of *The Independent*'s sister paper *i* chose the shooting of a deer as its cover story. The story of the killing of the stag reputed to have been Britain's largest wild animal and known as the Exmoor Emperor recurred in the pages of the UK's national press for nearly a fortnight. One

might reasonably inquire why, in the words of Sarah Stride, the General Manager of the British Deer Society, "it appealed as a story on so many levels." Did the fate of the Emperor stag symbolise the demise of Britain's greatness at a time of national austerity – coming exactly a week after the publication of the British Government's Comprehensive Spending Review? Might the later reports of the creature's resurrection suggest wistful dreams of better times ahead? Was this just another animal tale so beloved by the readership of Middle England? Or might this story's popularity lie in its negotiation of contemporary concerns within a narrative archetype?

## Methodology

This paper will seek to examine the reasons for the success of the story of the Exmoor Emperor across the mainstream national press in the UK. This paper first presents the narrative structure of the story as it appeared in the British press; it will then look at the journalistic commentaries which appeared in the press in relation to this story; and it will go on to explore the recurrent themes in the reportage of this story. This study will finally examine the views of politicians and journalists involved in the story as to why this narrative proved so popular, and will ask how journalism students and educators might learn from this kind of case study.

This study is based upon a survey of the 59 stories related to the death of the Exmoor Emperor which appeared in the British news media (specifically in the *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Independent*, *Guardian*, *Sun* and *Times* – and their Sunday stable mates – as well as *BBC News Interactive*) between 25 October and 16 November 2010. These newspapers and the *BBC News* website were selected as core institutions of the UK's mainstream national print/online news media outlets. The statistics resulting from a preliminary quantitative analysis of these stories were collated according to the following criteria: number of stories featuring in each publication; number of occurrences in each publication of key recurrent metaphors and narrative structures used to frame the accounts (these comprised references to celebrity, literary, cinematic and mythical/legendary antecedence, to the specific narrative genres of mystery and whodunit, and to the economic or monetary value of the stag or the cost of hunting); and the number of occurrences in each publication of the main terms used to describe the unknown killer of the stag in question (wealthy, mysterious, stranger, outsider, or foreigner).

The quantitative analysis showed that the story had featured most extensively in the *Telegraph* (10 articles) and *The Times* and *Mail* (9 each), following by *The Guardian* (8), the *Express* (7), *The Independent* (6), *BBC News Interactive* (4) and *The Sun* and *Mirror* (3 each). It demonstrated that the most prolific framing metaphors were related to whodunit and mystery genres (17 and 11 occurrences respectively), mythology (17 occurrences) and celebrity (10 occurrences). Every publication included references to economic and monetary value, with by far the highest number featuring in *The Telegraph*. The most popular descriptor for the stag's killer were 'foreign' and 'wealthy' (16 occurrences each), followed by 'outsider' and 'mysterious' (4 each): *The Telegraph* and *The Guardian* included the most references to foreignness (5 each), but the latter paper deployed the term ironically or meta-journalistically; *The Guardian* also contained the most allusions to the perpetrator's wealth (6), while *The Telegraph* contained none. These themes were selected because of their clear recurrence throughout these stories. The qualitative analysis, which closely investigated these narratives at the level of symbolic discourse, was framed by the results of the quantitative analysis; that is to say, areas of thematic significance demonstrated by the quantitative analysis were focussed upon in the qualitative analysis.

This study also draws upon a series of interviews conducted in November 2010 with five politicians and eight journalists involved in this story. One of the journalists interviewed represented a redtop tabloid newspaper, one represented the BBC's broadcast news, five represented 'quality' newspapers and one represented the specialist interest periodical *Shooting Times*. Five of the eight journalists interviewed requested anonymity: they will be referred to hereafter as RTJ (redtop journalist) and QJ1, QJ2, QJ3 and QJ4 (quality newspaper journalists 1, 2, 3 and 4).

## Theoretical underpinnings

Fiske (1989, pp.293-6) reminds us that the "textual devices that control the sense of news are all embedded in a narrative form" and that "stories are prewritten […] their meanings are already in circulation." The journalist's art as such is to recognise and repackage traditional or established narratives. There are no new stories; it is all old news. Thus McQueen (1998, p.101) notes that news stories "develop the narrative qualities of soap opera or epic sagas." There is nothing particularly new in this idea: Propp (1968) demonstrated how traditional folk tales follow similar structural models and employ recurring formal elements, and Propp's work has been applied widely to fiction and reportage. Indeed, the recurrent narratives of news produc-

tion can be seen from psychoanalytic as well as purely narratological perspectives: Anslow (2008) has, for example, witnessed how Jungian archetypes can be seen resurfacing time and again in the news coverage offered by the redtop press. Charles (2004; 2011) has examined how news stories concerning native British fauna reflect both traditional narratives (from Little Red Riding Hood to Beatrix Potter and Bram Stoker) and urgent contemporary concerns (from hysteria about immigration and paedophilia, to tensions between urban and rural perspectives, fears of terrorism and anxieties over the War on Terror).

News accounts are, as Bird and Dardenne (1988, p.73) suppose, constructed according to 'news values' which come down to no more than the symbolic systems of "culturally specific story-telling codes". When, therefore, trainee journalists adopt or learn these 'news values' one might suggest that they might also usefully be aware of the narratological or mythological structures which underpin them. The assumption and deployment of such values may for the most part represent an unconscious process, but it is not one without responsibilities. As Bird and Dardenne (1988, p.70) suggest, "news can act like myth" and it is through myth that "members of a culture learn values."

Anderson (1991, pp.35-36) witnesses within the processes of the production and consumption of what he describes as the "newspaper-as-fiction" (and therefore the blurring of mythical and material realities) the broader development of a mythical discourse of nationhood. Through the homogenising effects of its mass media manifestations, discourse is, for Anderson (1988, p.46), reified into the mythic fact of nationhood: "the convergence of capitalism and print technology [...] created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which [...] set the stage for the modern nation."

Wodak et al. (2009, p.22) argue that nationhood "is "constructed and conveyed in discourse, predominantly in narratives of national culture." The impact of such symbolic-discursive systems is societally seminal. As Wodak (1996, p.12) asserts, "institutional reality is produced and reproduced through discourse." It therefore seems a matter of some importance that journalists become conscious of the processes and responsibilities involved in this balancing of fictional or mythical structures and their avowed (albeit perhaps naïve) ideals of objectivity, so that they might at least come to terms with what is for Bird and Dardenne (1988, p.78) a defining dilemma or anxiety of the profession: "journalists find themselves poised between [...] the demands of 'reality' [...] and the demands of narrativity."

Harcup (2004, p.91) makes a similar point when he observes that it is inevitable that "part of the journalist's job is to entertain as well as to inform." Here however he cautions that "the trick – for both the journalist and audience – is to recognise the difference between the two." Toolan (1988, p.236) also emphasizes the need for readers to remain alert to this situation: "we can and sometimes should 'unpick' such phrases [...] so as to see what a particular narrative version of events is tacitly committed to."

It is precisely such an unpicking which this paper attempts. Indeed it suggests, along with Harcup and Toolan, that this unpicking represents a crucial strategy for news audiences and practitioners alike – and that we might benefit in our engagements with such discourses by attempting, as Wodak (1989, xiv) puts it, "to uncover and de-mystify certain social processes [...] to make mechanisms of manipulation, discrimination, demagogy and propaganda explicit and transparent [...] to [...] understand how and why reality is structured in a certain way." If, as Wodak et al. (2009, p.8) argue, discursive practices "serve to establish or conceal relations of power between [...] social groups and classes", it would seem essential that we develop strategic approaches whereby we might reveal those power relations at once established by discourse and which that discourse conceals.

These strategies represent a critical area of engagement for journalism audiences, journalism practitioners, journalism scholars and journalism educators. Bird and Dardenne (1988, p.68) point out that "like news, history and anthropology narrate real events, and their practitioners are finding that to understand their narratives, they must examine how they are constructed, including the story-telling devices that are an integral part of that construction." Bird and Dardenne's implication is clear: journalism would clearly profit from a similar level of reflective rigour.

## The narrative

On 14 February 2004 *The Times* had reported that "one of the finest stags on Exmoor" had been shot – although this had not at the time caused a major furore. On 4 October 2009 *The Times* had reported a similar case – that of two stags shot dead on the Exmoor. *The Times* had followed this up on 8 October 2009 with the news that another stag was thought "to be the largest wild animal in the British Isles." On 29 October 2009 *BBC News Interactive* had also reported that this stag "could be Britain's biggest wild land animal." A year later, on 5 October 2010, the *Daily Mail* had reported that "the UK's alpha male" was "back for his yearly stag do" – the autumn mating season on Exmoor.

Thus the Exmoor Emperor had become something of a celebrity by the time the story of his death hit Britain's national press on 25 October 2010. Early reports stressed the public shock at the animal's death (and hence the story's newsworthiness): people were "horrified" (*The Sun*, 25 October), "infuriated" (*The Guardian*, 25 October), "enraged" (*Daily Telegraph*, 25 October; *Daily Mail*, 26 October) and "outraged" (*Daily Mirror*, 26 October) – indeed, the story had "sparked fury" (*Daily Express*, 26 October).

The deer's killer was unknown and this prompted immediate media speculation. One journalist interviewed for this study (QJ1) commented that "from the outset it was clear no one would be found out – so this story would run and run with no definitive end to it." There is a clear attraction for the press in this kind of open-ended story: it had *Lost* and Lord Lucan written all over it. The *Telegraph* had, on 25 October, suggested that the shooting was the work of "a licensed deer hunter", but by the following day narrowed its suspects down to a "hunter from abroad who had paid a substantial amount for the shooting rights." The same day, *The Sun*, *Mirror* and *Mail* also blamed wealthy hunters, while *The Times* focused upon "wealthy European and American hunters." By 27 October the *Mail* was blaming "trophy hunters, maybe from abroad" – adding that "hunters are known to have come to Exmoor from various parts of Europe." The *Express* also hazarded a guess at the killer's likely provenance when, on 26 October, it noted that "hunters travel from [...] as far away as northern Europe to shoot the Exmoor red deer." While the culprit's financial status was a dominant trope in the left-leaning *Guardian* and *Mirror*, the *Mail* and the *Telegraph* seemed rather more interested in the perpetrator's foreignness.

It appeared that in the absence of a perpetrator the press were willing to fill the gap with their own stock villains. This hysteria did not go unnoticed by the papers' own commentators. Charles Moore in the *Telegraph* (on 29 October) challenged the received wisdom that the gunman came "from abroad, probably Europe." On the same day Alexander Chancellor in *The Guardian* asked whether the Exmoor Emperor was "really murdered by foreigners" and two days later John Vidal in *The Observer* questioned the talk of "dodgy bankers [...] who plague north Devon with their helicopter gunships." These commentators were notable for their implicit concern over the xenophobic and increasingly hysterical tone the narrative had adopted.

The story started to become somewhat repetitive. On 27 October the *Telegraph* had run with 'Who killed the Emperor?' and *The Independent* with 'Who shot the Emperor?' – a headline reprised in *The Times* three days later. On 27 October *The Independent* had suggested – in a reference to the myth of Actaeon (Ovid, 1955, pp.77-80) – that the "hunter becomes the hunted" and *The Times* had noted that "the hunter became the hunted." On 26 October the *Daily Mail* had suggested that the stag's "head and antlers are destined for the wall of a hotel or country home" and the following day the same paper proposed that its "glassy eyes will be staring out soon from a hotel lobby or a stately home hallway." The next day *The Times* announced that "his magnificent antlers [...] would soon be hanging on the wall of a schloss or château." This was clearly one of those stories which the media thought had captured the mood of the nation but about which (like the lingering death of a minor royal) there is not much to say. They therefore leaped on every development with hungry relish.

Public figures were welcomed to join the fray. Local MP Iain Liddell-Grainger was reported by *The Independent* (27 October) and the *Mail* (28 October) as being "bloody furious" about the shooting while the *Express* (28 October) noted that he had "vowed to expose the killer." A group of 16 other MPs (reported by the BBC on 27 October, by the *Express* on 28 October and by the *Telegraph* on 29 October) had on 26 October signed an Early Day Motion calling upon the Commons to condemn the shooting of the Emperor. These MPs' outrage was echoed by rock guitarist Brian May as reported in both the *Telegraph* and the *Mail* on 28 October and in the *Mirror* the next day.[1]

On 28 October the *Telegraph*, *Times*, *Guardian*, *Mirror*, *Express* and the BBC reported claims that the Exmoor Emperor might still be alive. The *Express*, the *Mail*, the *Mirror* and the *Telegraph* suggested that the stag's death had been faked in order to protect it from "rogue hunters". The *Mail* reported that various locals had seen it in their gardens (28 and 29 October) and that a photograph appeared to depict the Emperor alive (30 October). On 30 October *The Sun* announced the discovery of a possible hoof print.

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1　Brian May has proven a popular focus for animal welfare stories, offering a celebrity hook much valued by contemporary journalism: on 17 December 2010 he published a polemic against fox-hunting in *The Guardian* and on 23 May 2011 his opposition to the culling of badgers afforded *BBC News Interactive* an opportunity to feature a related story in their 'Arts & Entertainment' section – although it remains unclear whether the Corporation views badger-culling as artistic or merely entertaining. One might also note, in the context of this self-consciously patriotic narrative, that Brian May, a rock musician who achieved fame with a band called *Queen*, had played the national anthem on the roof of Buckingham Palace in celebration of Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee in June 2002. May, like the Exmoor Emperor, has become something of a focus for royalist nostalgia himself.

**Articles**

The tale then turned to the death of another large stag (known as Bruno) on Exmoor twelve years earlier. On 29 October the *Telegraph* reported that "Richard Austin, the photographer who first reported the stag's death [...] following an anonymous tip-off, said the same person had contacted him 12 years ago to inform him that Bruno had been killed [...] on exactly the same day." Also that day *The Times* announced that "Johnny Kingdom, the Exmoor film-maker who made a documentary about a giant stag called Bruno [...] believes the Emperor was Bruno's offspring." The following day the *Mail* reported that "it was 12 years to the day when the same informant rang to tell [Austin] the Emperor had been killed in almost exactly the same spot. Mr Austin believes the Emperor was the son of Bruno and finds the whole business 'unnerving'."

Seasoned journalists were also becoming unnerved as the coincidences continued to accrue. On 29 October Paul Harris in the *Mail* and Charles Moore in the *Telegraph* challenged these increasingly absurd accounts. Harris wrote that "in a twist in which Agatha Christie herself might have delighted [...] Austin revealed [...] the stag is 'almost certainly' the son of the last famous red deer to have been shot on Exmoor." Moore added that "the Emperor is 'certain', according to Mr Kingdom, to be the son of Bruno" – before condemning the entire narrative as "an inverted pyramid of piffle." Moore also denounced claims that the Emperor had been Britain largest wild animal. Two days later *The Observer*'s John Vidal noted that the stag had not been Britain's largest – a fact pointed out five days earlier by *The Guardian*. The story was clearly starting to unravel.

On 31 October *The Sunday Times* revealed the identity of the eyewitness to the deaths of both Bruno and the Emperor as none other than nature pundit Johnny Kingdom. The same day the *Sunday Telegraph* recounted Kingdom's claims that he had confronted a poacher over the Emperor's death, while the *Mail on Sunday* published pictures supplied by Kingdom which purported to show the stag's final moments. The *Independent on Sunday* also reported on the *Mail*'s scoop, and the next day the *Express* ran the story.

By this time, however, the tide of press opinion had turned against Johnny Kingdom. As early as 28 October *The Times* had noted that Kingdom "has a new series coming out in two weeks' time. He is also the last person to have filmed the Emperor and has been selling clips of the stag for £300 a time." On 1 November the *Mail* branded Kingdom "the man who cashes in on every twist of the Emperor saga." It was at this point that Kingdom withdrew from the limelight. His agent informed this researcher that he had "taken the decision not to speak about the past few weeks to anyone again. He is so thoroughly disgusted with what has happened to him and his family. He has now gone away on holiday to simply get away from it all."

The story was by this time dying down, but the press still found a few further angles. The first of these – as seen in *The Times* and the *Daily Express* on 1 November – was to compare the fate of the Exmoor Emperor to that of stags in the Scottish Highlands. The second was to make a story out of the fact that this had never been a story at all: the "Exmoor Emperor was just another stag" (*Telegraph*, 6 November). The third was to seek the Emperor's successor. As early as 25 October *The Guardian* had suggested the possibility of "the empire of the son"; on 27 October the *Mail* had speculated that another large stag might be the son of the Emperor; on 31 October the *Sunday Telegraph* had reported the appearance of a stag "hailed as the Emperor's son and named 'The Prince'." The *Mail* ran a story on 6 November about a bigger stag spotted in the New Forest; this was followed, ten days later, by a report in the *Express* and *The Independent* that another stag (dubbed the Viceroy of Rackenford) could be the Emperor's son and might (in the words of the *Express*) "soon attain his illustrious forebear's mighty presence." As one journalist interviewed for this study (RTJ) commented, "the resurrection of the great beast we thought was killed – that would be the happiest ending possible."

## The themes: economics

When the Exmoor Emperor appeared on the front page of *The Independent*'s budget spin-off, the paper billed its 20-pence price as offering "Exmoor for your money" and thus signalled a relationship between the fate of the stag and the nation's economic situation. Charles Moore in the *Telegraph* (29 October) suggested that the interest in this story might simply be "down to money". Rachel Johnson wrote in *The Times* that the story had revealed profound changes in the economy of Exmoor, pointing out that "in the old days it was all Land Rovers with a sheepdog hanging out of the passenger window. And now it's Learjets." On 30 October *The Guardian* included a sub-section to its coverage which charted the "cost of hunting around the world" and on 26 October *BBC News Interactive* published an interview with a professional deer stalker which stressed the costs of the pursuit. There seemed to be a close relationship between issues of wealth and issues of foreignness or outsider status in these stories: the *Daily Mail*, for example, referred four times to "wealthy outsiders" and the *Telegraph* observed on 27 October that "the Exmoor economy [...] now largely relies on [...] shoots in which visiting guns may barely know which country they are in." Just as economic hardship tends to provoke media antagonism towards immigration, so it seems that domestic austerity meas-

ures may have forged a link in these stories between wealth and foreignness. Perhaps unsurprisingly the other economic scapegoats of the age also emerge in these accounts: the bankers. The *Daily Telegraph* noted on 27 October that "hotels on Exmoor have been turned into residences for bankers", while *The Observer* (31 October) referred to the rumours that "an evil trophy-hunting banker" might be behind the death of the Emperor.

If this story was about money, then it was eventually about the disparity of wealth: the wealthy outsiders contrasting with the poor locals. On 27 October *The Independent* quoted a 'local source' as pointing out that "people are facing hard times and struggling to make ends meet. When they can get thousands of pounds from this, they do." This story appears to chime with public consciousness insofar as it specifically addressed what, at a time of national austerity, was perceived by some as an increasing inequality between the luxurious lifestyles of the wealthy ruling classes and the economic pain experienced by the broader population. It was perhaps no coincidence that just as the story of the Exmoor Emperor subsided from the press, reports about the Prime Minister's personal photographer began to appear (see for example 'Cameron forced to axe "vanity photographer" from public pay roll in embarrassing U-turn', *Daily Mail*, 17 October 2011).

## The themes: nationality

The newspapers which most heavily featured the story were the *Times*, the *Telegraph* and the *Mail* – three publications which generally promote a traditional (and relatively rural) perspective upon Britishness. This may be specifically related to the newspapers' readerships, or to their perceptions of their readerships. As one journalist interviewed for this study (QJ1) suggested, "from the point of view of our readers there's an interest in country pursuits – deerstalking, that kind of thing – it's our natural territory."

The stag represents something traditionally British; as *The Sun*'s leader suggested on 26 October, it is a figure associated specifically with the monarchy. Michael McCarthy in *The Independent* (30 October) referred to the aptly named Emperor stag as "His Majesty" while Charles Moore in the *Daily Telegraph* (29 October) called the stag "His Imperial Majesty". Ruaridh Nicoll in *The Guardian* (27 October) alluded to the stag's "majesty" and indeed the term 'majestic' appeared 13 times in the 59 stories surveyed for this study. Furthermore, the Emperor's possible son was dubbed the Prince or the Viceroy.

At a time in which national self-esteem had been undermined by economic crisis, the stag might be seen as representing something great about the British spirit, a humble native and a *Monarch of the Glen* – a memorial to British greatness as evocative as John Constable's *Cenotaph*. This magnificent creature (and the word 'magnificent' appeared a total of 49 times in the 59 stories surveyed) offered to represent the imperial in all of us, a last moment of British glory before the cuts started to bite. How much the worse then that this hart of England might have been cut down by a wealthy foreigner. Hence the need for the tales of the stag's resurrection, and then of the Emperor's succession, and the possibility of the restoration of national pride.

On the very day – 16 November – that *The Independent* and the *Daily Express* announced the sighting of the Exmoor Emperor's heir – his son or grandson – the Queen of England's eventual heir announced his engagement to Kate Middleton. Again, the nation was offered a majestic consolation or distraction from its woes. The two stories served similar feel-good functions: the imperial stag was to be followed by a royal wedding.

## The commentaries: narratology

The press was clearly drawn to the story because it had a celebrity narrative built around it (the stag was already gaining celebrity status at the time it was shot, although its death enhanced that fame). The cinematic and literary nature of the narrative also clearly added to the story's appeal. Both Rory Bruce Knight in the *Telegraph* (27 October) and Paul Harris in the *Daily Mail* (29 October) specifically cited R.D. Blackmore's *Lorna Doone*. But what is most interesting about the comparison with *Lorna Doone* is that, while Blackmore's novel was set in the seventeenth century, it was published in 1869: it is itself a hearkening back to a romantic Britain which only ever existed in the minds of nostalgic fictionalists.

The most interesting commentary pieces were perhaps those by Charles Moore in the *Daily Telegraph*, Alexander Chancellor in *The Guardian*, John Vidal in *The Observer* and Paul Harris in the *Daily Mail*. All four commentators considered the story in terms of broader popular narratives. Moore (29 October) described the television presenter Johnny Kingdom as the "Crocodile Dundee of Exmoor" and compared the stag itself to "King Arthur, not dead, but somehow occulted, waiting to return." Chancellor (29 October) saw the success of the narrative as owing something to the mystery tradition of Agatha Christie and argued that this "celebrity" stag followed a model laid down by Walt Disney "who portrayed Bambi's father, the 'Great Prince of the Forest', as a heroic creature of matchless courage and dignity." Vidal (31 October) also

saw the story falling within the whodunit genre, and suggested that the Emperor of Exmoor had become one of those "British archetypal legendary beasts, like the Hound of the Baskervilles, the Beast of Bodmin, the black dogs of the Quantocks, the Loch Ness monster, the Surrey Puma." Harris (29 October) viewed the story again as a whodunit and again as having assumed "the flavour of other great animal stories of our time, notably those of the Tamworth Two piggies, and, for anyone with a longer memory, Blackie the Donkey."

The themes of the murder mystery appeared in other journalistic commentaries. The *Daily Mirror* (on 28 October) included a *CSI* report as part of its coverage (thus emphasising the story's adoption of the idioms of a TV crime series). In their column in the *Daily Express* on 30 October Richard Madeley and Judy Finnigan suggested that "Agatha Christie would have loved *The Mystery of the Mighty Emperor*." Reportage of the story in *The Times* (28 October) also emphasized that the narrative was "worthy of a television murder mystery"; while the *Daily Express* (30 October) featured a light-hearted piece which presented this "bizarre whodunit" in the style of a "Hollywood pitch".

## The commentaries: hypocrisy

Giles Coren in *The Times* (30 October) bemoaned the "childish sentimentality" by which the animal had been given a name and turned into a celebrity: "Emperor was killed because he had a name. He fell victim to the ludicrous anthropomorphic tendencies of over-civilised modern Man. But he was an animal. He should never have had a name. For then we should never have loved him, and then nobody would have killed him, and we wouldn't have been bothered if they had." Glynn Evans in *The Guardian* (30 October) similarly argued that "people seem less likely to understand essential wildlife and habitat preservation techniques when animals are Disneyfied and given monikers such as 'Emperor'." Ruaridh Nicoll – also in *The Guardian* (27 October) – penned an opinion piece celebrating the joys and values of hunting. Indeed, the *The Guardian*'s uncharacteristic openness to such pro-hunting voices led Joe Dimbleby, the news editor of the *Shooting Times*, to argue that "*The Guardian*'s coverage of this issue was much more level-headed than any of the other nationals and shamed the other broadsheets by its maturity. This is ironic given that *The Guardian* is not normally thought to be the newspaper of the countryside."

While the pro-hunting lobby found an incongruous haven in *The Guardian*, Rose Prince (like Coren, a food writer) complained in the *Daily Telegraph* (30 October) of the hypocrisy of meat-eaters who get upset about the shooting of a deer. The same day Michael McCarthy in *The Independent* offered perhaps the most original analysis of the popularity of the story. Like various commentators, McCarthy noted that this story was virtually without evidence – he quoted a colleague who had said that the story had "dodgy written all over it." McCarthy suggested that the success of this story came primarily as a result of the personalisation of its tragic lead, arguing that the stag had become that "key figure of our age, a celebrity." This position was not dissimilar from that of other commentators; but McCarthy went on: "the essence of the fuss about the Emperor [...] is beauty. For the Emperor is – or was – quite extraordinary beautiful." McCarthy's emphasis upon the aesthetics of the situation reveals the overwhelming significance – as in all such celebrity iconography – of the image itself.

## The politicians

In order to assess the reasons behind the popular interest in this story, it is perhaps useful to seek the opinions of a number of public figures involved in the narrative. Ian Liddell-Grainger, the local Conservative MP who had been reported as being "bloody furious" at the shooting of the stag, explained the success of the story in rather less emotive terms:

> The story 'took off' because it appeared to involve a huge brave beast that nobody had ever heard of before, being cut down by a wicked marksman just for fun. Good tale. Not totally true, of course. There are scores of stags on Exmoor. Some every bit as big as the so-called Emperor. But a photographer got a decent close-up shot of this one and gave it a name. The Emperor tale touched a chord only in those places (usually urban places) that have never seen a stag in the raw.

Echoing *The Times*'s Giles Coren and *The Independent*'s Michael McCarthy, Liddell-Grainger observed that it was the story's use of pictures and personalisation which prompted its popularity. This is clearly a phenomenon which influences much contemporary news-making (see, for example, McQueen 1998, pp.96-97, pp.101-102).[2]

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2  The prioritisation of personality and picture (in both senses, of image) is clearly a process which has affected the practices both of news media and, by extension, of contemporary western politics (see, for example, McLuhan, 2001, p.337; Greenstein, 1967; Swanson and Mancini, 1996, p.272; van Ham, 2001; and Savigny and Temple, 2010, p.1051).

The Members of Parliament who put their names to the Early Day Motion condemning the killing of the Exmoor Emperor included Conservative Peter Bottomley, Liberal Democrats Bob Russell and Adrian Sanders and Labour's Michael Connarty. Interviewed for this study, these four MPs all saw the media-friendly nature of the story as central to its popularity. Peter Bottomley noted that it had been "a continuation of an earlier story" and that it also offered a series of elements which secured its coverage in the mainstream press: "a photograph, good quotes, a suspect and an echo of an incident in the film *The Queen*." Like Liddell-Grainger and Michael McCarthy, Bottomley was aware of the significance of the photographic image (as was Russell below); and, like the press commentators cited above, he was also aware of the story's narratological genealogy (indeed, his specific point about *The Queen* was also made by *The Sun* on 26 October).

Bob Russell argued that it was clear that this story keyed into a British sympathy for stories about animals:

> I think it was one of those stories which people wanted to relate to – like they did a few years ago with 'the Tamworth Two', two pigs who escaped from an abattoir. With the Exmoor Stag it was even more of a 'people's story' because people, in the main, are animal lovers – and this stag was impressive, as the photographs of this wonderful beast in the national media portrayed.

Like Paul Harris in the *Daily Mail* (29 October), Russell cited the case of the 'Tamworth Two': a pair of pigs which fled from an abattoir van and went on the run for a week in January 1998 – much to the delight of the media. One might note in passing that the *Mail* sponsored a life of comfort for the two pigs, once recaptured, at an animal sanctuary in Kent; one might also note that on 8 October 2010 (just three days after reporting on the return of the Exmoor Emperor to his annual rut) the *Daily Mail* had reported on the death of one of those pigs and had suggested that the pair had "shared a spirit of survival which struck a chord, particularly with the British." The Exmoor Emperor certainly seemed well qualified to take the place of the Tamworth pigs in the nation's heart as a stereotypical symbol of Britishness.

In citing the Tamworth Two, Russell recognised that this story adhered to a popular news formula: not just an animal story, but also an account of tragic celebrity. Like Princess Diana – or for that matter Marilyn Monroe – the stag became an icon of tragic iconicity. Adrian Sanders also observed that, in addition to the animal welfare aspects of the story, "the iconic stature of the stag garnered a great deal of interest."

A similar point was made by Michael Connarty. Connarty noted that his own response stemmed from the iconic nature of the stag in question:

> There are iconic images of nature which deserve to be protected. The eagle in flight and some other bird species compare to a multipointed stag on a hillside in reminding us of what we must preserve in the wild if we are to pass on ideals and values to our children. That such a symbol, such a reminder of our duty to nature could be sold for a hunter's money disgusted me.

Connarty's perspective recalled that of the commentator Michael McCarthy in *The Independent*. The story was not about the animal but the image. It was not about the individual stag, but about what the stag represented: the stag might, for example, be seen as bridging the urban/rural socio-political divide, bringing the wonder of nature to the metropolis, and thereby restoring an imaginary integrated national community. In this sense, we might see the fate of the stag as a result not simply of its anthropomorphism but of its celebritization. This was (not entirely unlike the death of Princess Diana) about the loss of an ideal: and it was the ideal – rather than the individual – which the public mourned.

This seemed to be a key idea for all of the politicians interviewed: Liddell-Grainger and Bottomley commented on the pictorial personalisation and anthropomorphism of the stag; Bottomley and Russell saw the story in terms of recurring media narratives; and Sanders and Connarty referred to the image's symbolic iconicity. All appeared conscious that the stag represented something beyond itself as a symbolic figure within a broader national discourse.

## The journalists

The BBC's James Naughtie – whose report on the stag's death for the *Today* programme had been criticised by Charles Moore in the *Telegraph* (29 October) for "throwing all BBC impartiality to the wind" – also suggested that the appeal of this story lay primarily in an aesthetic personalisation which bolstered a narrative emphasis upon mystery, myth and majesty:

> The story would have been a non-starter, save for the extraordinary picture of the beast which, not surprisingly, was picked up by every picture desk on Fleet Street. The image was powerful, and it played to an instinct which is familiar to many people – namely, an admiration for the wild, and a longing to be part of its mystery. When the alleged trophy-hunter came in to get the Emperor, the story reached its natural climax. An elusive beast stalks the moor and mesmerises all the hunters, not only the deer around him. He is hunted and killed. You don't have to have read *Moby Dick* to know how deep that story lurks within us. It was the

playing out of a tragedy that was inevitable. And the truth is that many people, having seen that picture, will have felt that it must end with slaughter. They wouldn't admit it, but that's what they were waiting for. Majesty in the wild is endlessly alluring; so is the hunt to the death. We may not like it, but that's what we're like.

It was, for Naughtie, the inherently tragic nature of this narrative which attracted its audience. Naughtie's emphasis upon the stag's majesty is also revealing. It is notable that the redtop tabloid journalist (RTJ) interviewed for this study also emphasized the "the idea of this majestic creature roaming wild in modern Britain." This language further exposes the significance of this narrative within a discourse of national identity.

RTJ also addressed the socio-economic aspect of the story: "the idea that it had been killed by a rich git who didn't give a monkey's about the creature would have upset a lot of people." This factor was also noted by one of the quality newspaper journalists (QJ2): "there's a slight class/money element to it, which newspapers love: the idea that a City fund manager or foreign hunter could kill this famous creature." The same journalist also cited aesthetic and hermeneutic factors as key reasons for the story's success: "the opportunity it gave for newspapers and websites to print dramatic pictures of this beautiful animal [...] and the sheer mystery of what happened."

Another quality journalist (QJ3) proposed that the success of the story might be attributed primarily to the fact that its mythic structure had already been established within the news media: "I believe the reason the story caught the attention of editors was because it reminded them of the Beast of Exmoor story from a couple of years previously. Editors tend to like stories that follow a tried and tested pattern – they knew the Beast of Exmoor had been a popular story; it followed that the Emperor would catch the public imagination in a similar way."

## Another reporter (QJ4) commented that:

Animal stories always prove hugely popular. Readers seem to take tales of perceived animal cruelty to heart and are more likely to respond to such stories than many others. I took several calls on this story from outraged readers, a couple of them lawyers, who demanded we do everything in our power to find who was responsible. I don't know why, but in my experience animal stories always provoke the most reaction from readers. I would guess that the pictures are emotive and animals are considered helpless at the hands of humans.

RTJ argued that this emotional impact was specifically dependent upon the personalisation of the victim:

It looked so majestic and it had already been given a name. Whenever you do an animal story you always give it a name so that people have affinity with it. Personalising things made it a goer in newspaper terms. If I wrote a story that 50 stags had been killed on Exmoor it probably wouldn't have got much coverage. I was thinking back to the Vietnam War – to that famous picture of the little girl on the street – if you'd written a story about 5,000 killed in Saigon it wouldn't have had such impact. I mean, this was just an animal, but it had that personalised kind of impact.

The synthesis of emotional impact depends upon such processes of personalisation. Primo Levi (1989, p.39) suggested that "a single Anne Frank excites more emotion than the myriads who suffered as she did but whose image has remained in the shadows" and the impact of photographer Nick Ut's 1972 image of Kim Phuc clearly illustrates Levi's point. Yet, in this case it is unclear whether the humanisation of the animal prompts real human sympathy or whether it merely synthesizes the kind of Disneyfied sentimentality against which Giles Coren so railed. Coren's perspective was supported by journalist QJ1:

I don't know if it's isolated to British people – a bizarre, perverse interest in issues of animal welfare over human welfare. A dozen stories about children dying in Africa never see the light of day in a newspaper, but one deer attracts the frenzy that it does. Perhaps it represents Man's callousness that a deer being killed takes more prominence than the loss of human life. It was a not-very-big deer that needed culling. It was shot. That was my personal feeling about it.

Joe Dimbleby, news editor of the *Shooting Times*, offered a similar view. On 3 November, Dimbleby published a piece that complained that the mainstream coverage of the deer's demise displayed "**a 'Disney' view of wildlife.**" This was followed in the same publication by a rather more zealous opinion piece by Alasdair Mitchell (19 November) which blasted "the usual bunch of wildlife video-makers, tourism parasites and rent-a-gob protectionists taking advantage of the media feeding frenzy to promote their own vested interests."

Interviewed for this study, Joe Dimbleby suggested that the popularity of the story lay in is deployment of "the Disney factor". He added that "the Disney version of wildlife [has] become more widespread as a thoroughly urbanised society loses touch with the countryside and the natural world." Dimbleby also blamed the hysteria of the mainstream media for the way in which the story appeared to run out of control:

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> There is the moral outrage factor akin to the paedophile witch-hunt mentality. Panellists on prime-time BBC discussion programmes were calling for anyone who shoots a deer to be imprisoned for life, comparing stalking to hunting slaves for sport in the British colonial era and arguing that stalkers must be emotionally depraved.

Dimbleby also critiqued the professionalism of the coverage of this story, suggesting that "journalism is less balanced due to the fact that staff numbers have been so reduced across the board. Hard-pressed newspaper journalists no longer have the time properly to research stories and as such the quality of reporting suffers. A broadsheet newspaper should not carry front page headlines that are as misleading as calling the Emperor the biggest wild animal in the UK."

Dimbleby was not alone in his criticisms of the poor reporting of this story by the mainstream press. The *Telegraph*'s columnist (and former editor) Charles Moore emphasized that "from a media point of view, the most interesting aspect of the story is how badly covered it was – reporters were credulous, ignorant and lazy, in a way they would never be about a political or business story. The most basic checks were not conducted. This is often true with rural stories. It is interesting to ask why." One might suppose that the metropolitan hacks simply do not take the reporting of such country matters seriously: it might appear that many take the view that rural and provincial news is *de facto* soft news. Moore's condemnation of this lack of rigour was supported by the comments of two other journalists who pointed out that "there's an element of hyperbole in the story – which probably wasn't strictly true in retrospect" (QJ1) and that "one Exmoor official told me that some pics supposed to be the Emperor were of other stags" (QJ2). It was partly as a result of this lack of journalistic rigour that the uncritically sentimental and jingoistic elements of the reportage discussed above were able to filter through.

It seems significant that these journalists, like the press commentators and politicians cited above, discovered remarkably similar key themes in the construction of this story: (a) folklorish iconicity, cultural antecedence and narratological recurrence (Naughtie, QJ3; see also Knight, Moore, Chancellor, Vidal, Harris, Madeley & Finnigan, Bottomley, Russell, Sanders and Connarty above); (b) nationalism, patriotic symbolism or 'majesty' (Naughtie, RTJ; see also McCarthy, Moore, Chancellor, Vidal and Nicoll above); (c) economic symbolism (RTJ, QJ2; see also Moore, Johnson and Connarty above); (d) sentimentalization, anthropomorphism or personalisation (QJ1, QJ4, RTJ, Dimbleby; see also Coren, Evans, Prince and Liddell-Granger above); (e) pictorial aesthetics (Naughtie, QJ2, RTJ; see also McCarthy, Liddell-Granger, Bottomley and Russell above); and (f) professional, practical and factual failings of reportage (Dimbleby, Moore, QJ1, QJ2; see also Harris, Moore, McCarthy and Liddell-Granger above). It is evident that the culturally retrospective aspects of the story's representation [a] are nostalgically related to its patriotic tone [b], and it would appear that these are prompted as an escapist or nation-reaffirming response to a period of economic hardship [c]. This nationalistic nostalgia is echoed in (and tonally reinforced by) the sentimentalization of the subject matter [d] – that is, the Bambi-like sentimentalization of the death of the deer reflects the story's broader nostalgic sentimentalization of the demise of great Britishness. This sentimentalization is supported (indeed, made possible) by the pictorial aesthetics [e] and by the story's echoes of folklore [a]. The patriotic, nostalgic and sentimental tone of the accounts – curiously at odds with the perspectives of the journalists who commented on them – reveals a level of professional inconsistency which exposes an institutional hypocrisy reflected more broadly in the factual and practical inadequacies of much of the reportage [f].

## Discussion

According to ancient Roman tradition, the Emperor's deer wore collars which were inscribed with the words "do not touch me for I am Caesar's" (*noli me tangere quia Caesaris sum*). Petrarch refers to this in his sonnet 'Una Candida Cerva' as does Thomas Wyatt in his homage to Petrarch's poem, 'Whoso List to Hunt'. These inviolable deer were the Emperor's; just as the Exmoor Emperor, in its violation, became the nation's, an emblem of national identity. *Noli me tangere*: these words, we are told by the Gospel according to St John, were also spoken to Mary Magdalene by the resurrected Christ. The narrative of the Exmoor Emperor, this curiously Christ-like deer, transfigured, sacrificed and resurrected, thus invokes a folkloric tradition which can be traced from the transformation of Actaeon to the death of Princess Diana.

On 26 October 2010 *The Sun*'s leader column compared the death of the Exmoor Emperor to that moment in Stephen Frears's 2006 film *The Queen* when Helen Mirren encounters a dead deer. In Frears's film the stag is described as an "imperial" shot by "an investment banker [...] from London." The deer in the film may appear analogous to the late Princess Diana, an interpretation reluctantly acknowledged by the screenwriter Peter Morgan in the commentary accompanying the 2006 DVD release. Whether the analogy in Frears's film was intentional or not, one might note that the Exmoor Emperor, hounded to its end as a result of press interest, enjoyed a similar outpouring of public and media grief in its death as the late Princess of

Wales. Diana – the princess and goddess and huntress – became the hunted; the star became the martyr to her own celebrity, pursued to her death by what Tony (formerly 'Bambi') Blair would later (in June 2007) describe as the "feral" media pack. The Exmoor Emperor may have met a similar fate, yet his posthumous reign was brief, deposed as he was in the journalistic and public imaginations by the new Diana, the princess in waiting anointed by royal engagement on the very day that the Emperor's heir was announced by the press, the future Princess Catherine.

The Emperor's story stands then as a narrative of national identity. If symbolic discourse develops and sustains a sense of nationhood, then, as Wodak et al. (2009, p.27) argue, it does so by isolating and emphasizing the unique selling points through which a people may be proud to call themselves a nation. The red deer – like the red squirrel or the red cross on the flag of St George – represents the Little Englander within the Middle Englander, the ordinary Englishman ousted by the influx of foreigners and foreignness, and at the same time Britain's nostalgia for monarchic and imperial glory. The dead red deer in Stephen Frears's film *The Queen* serves a similar symbolic function: it is at once majesty and humility; it is the subject of an outpouring of grief for something bigger than itself, for the lost glory it represents.

Yet it remains unclear whether media discourses reflect national identities or whether they originate them. Do, for example, the nationalism and xenophobia implicit to much mainstream journalism – as witnessed in these accounts of the death of an even-toed ungulate – reflect the ideological positions of their readership, or do they provoke those positions? Temple (2010, pp.195-198) suggests that press racism may articulate a broader racism ingrained within the British populace. Yet, whether or not media racism is responsible for originating public prejudice, it may play a role in perpetuating that prejudice. It is in the media's power to naturalize ideology – to make ideology appear unideological – that the press might be seen as at their most influential, insofar as ideologies are most insidious when they are least visible. It may therefore be the case that it is the stories that appear the least political (such as this beastly tale) whose political influence proves most potent.

## Conclusion

If journalists are to maintain their roles as gatekeepers, then they must ensure that they know what gets through the gate; if they are to function as the fourth estate, then they should not uncritically or unwittingly transmit the subliminal messages of power; if they are to speak truth to power, and mediate between their publics and that power, then they must understand the nuances of those truths and of those processes of mediation. The International Federation of Journalists lists as the first of its Principles of the Conduct of Journalists that journalists should demonstrate "respect for truth and for the right of the public to truth." It is therefore essential for any journalist to understand the meanings which underlie the narratives they disseminate. The National Union of Journalists asserts that "a journalist has a duty to maintain the highest professional and ethical standards." A journalist must therefore comprehend the need to base even the softest news stories in rigorously evidenced and expressed reportage, insofar as those softest stories might communicate the most ethically controversial subtexts. The Press Complaint Commission's code of practice requires that the press "whilst free to be partisan, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact." The press must therefore be open about its partisanship, must be explicit (to its readership and to itself) as to the politics of even that which appears the least political. Journalism must thus learn to analyse its own discourses and practices: because this interrogation of the relationship between truth and power is not only what academic researchers and educators do – it is also what journalists are expected by their audiences and by their own defining ideals to do. The phone-hacking scandal which engulfed the British press in 2011 offers the most prominent example to date in support of the argument for the urgency of such reflection upon professional and institutional practices.

There are powerful imperatives for journalists to narrativize – for the sake of their readers' pleasure and for the benefit of their proprietors' profits. Indeed, these narratorial approaches clearly have advantages beyond pleasure and profit: they contextualize stories within familiar frameworks which make their complexities more coherent and accessible. However, they also require that such complexities fit frameworks with which they may not be entirely consistent. Journalistic practice cannot stop telling stories, but might usefully make explicit where those stories have originated and how they work.

In the case of this particular story, a number of the press's own commentators endeavoured to reflect critically upon this narrative; and it is evident from this paper's interviews with journalists who covered the story that they also engaged in such reflection. Yet it is also apparent from the majority of the stories themselves that there has been little place, space or time for reflection in their original construction. This may be because of professional or institutional imperatives (make the story reader-friendly), practical considerations (no column inches available) or resourcing issues (limited sources, no one on the scene and

deadlines looming).

There is a tendency in some areas of journalism education to focus upon technical skills rather than underlying theoretical and contextual issues. This appears in part to offer a somewhat myopic response to the exigencies of employability. Rapid technological developments are calling into question such an approach: as shorthand gives way to web design, and when we can barely imagine the multiplicity of platforms upon which future journalists will perform, it seems clear that the enduring skills offered by journalism education are critical and analytical.

Wodak et al. (2009, p.8) have argued that discourse constructs, legitimises and maintains the social order, but that it may also transform that order. This is why we research, study and teach journalism – not simply as a technical skill, but as an academic exploration of a field of practice whose societal impact functions in more profound and complex ways than superficial observation or literalist interpretation might at first perceive.

The journalist's potential for a critical citizenship which investigates the societal contexts and ideological subtexts of her/his practice is essential for her/him to function as an ethical professional. The press coverage of the death of a deer may be insignificant in itself, but, in that it leads us towards further-reaching questions as to the formulation of media meanings, the discovery of significance within the ostensibly insignificant affords a perspective of some value and pertinence to a progressive and constructive notion of journalism and of journalistic education.

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# Twitter: What is it good for?

# Using social media to foster retention and learning for journalism students

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*Abstract:* The issue of student engagement is one of the most crucial in HE, as it is intimately linked to both retention and learning. Previous studies have underlined the value of community in fostering engagement. This project draws on the concept of "ambient awareness" (exemplified here by the Twitter service) to argue that such social networks engender "ambient communities" and hence can perform similar functions to a traditional community in relation to engagement. Finally a pilot study among second year journalism students uses Twitter to explore the practical implications of this approach.

**The haunt of PR-obsessed celebrities, home of aimless tittle-tattle and host to a daily barrage of groundless rumour – there's no escaping the social networking phenomenon of Twitter, nor its impact on news media. News organisations have taken to employing Twitter correspondents[1]; it is routinely scanned as a source of news; and media professionals value it as an instant networking tool.**

So given its current ubiquity, can Twitter have a pedagogical value for journalism students and, if so, how can we measure it and ensure it is used most effectively? Should we consider it as a resource in journalism education, and what can it offer the curriculum? In short: ***what is Twitter good for?***

The aim of this paper is to survey the current ways in which Twitter is used for journalism education, and then offer a model of 'ambient community' which links social networking to journalism student engagement and retention. The model is tested in a small-scale study of second year journalism students, and it is concluded that such an approach can deliver measurable results when used in an aligned fashion.

**The story so far:**

For those who have been living under an analogue rock for most of this century, Twitter is a micro-blogging service which launched in 2006. Initially adopted extensively by media and educational professionals, it has recently grown in popularity with younger users and it is now believed around 65% of users are under

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1  Sky News appointed Ruth Barnett as Twitter correspondent in March 2009, although her role was short-lived (http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/mediamonkeyblog/2010/jan/14/sky-news-reporter-off-tweets)

25 (Cheng and Evans, 2009).

Despite its relative newness, Twitter has already been adopted in various ways by Higher Education professionals. Grosseck and Holotescu (2008) list 15 educational uses of Twitter, ranging from a platform for metacognition to collaborative writing, and 20 ways in which it can have a positive impact on education.

In his blog article Twitter for Academia, Prof Dave Parry lists a further 13 uses, and sparked 16 pages of comment from users giving their own suggestions (Parry, 2008), while Prof Alan Lew details eight blogs which list further ways in which Twitter can be used in Higher Education (Lew, 2008).

Reporting on his experience of using mobile Web 2.0 including Twitter to enhance learner engagement, Thomas Cochrane of Unitec New Zealand found that "significant changes in pedagogical approach and levels of student engagement have been realised" (Cochrane, 2008: 10).

Arguing from a constructivist perspective which focuses on "students being involved in learning environments as an explorative and social process" (ibid. 1), Cochrane outlines a Communities of Practice (COP) model  whereby students were provided with smartphones to mediate on and off campus learning.

By combining mobile-friendly Web 2.0 capabilities - including photoblogging, geo-tagging, video recording, voice recording, and text input – with campus-based projects, Cochrane concludes that "the student and lecturer experience within the programmes have been enhanced" (ibid. 10).

Of especial relevance to the current paper is Cochrane's observation that, "Many of the identified Learning scenarios were serendipitous rather than planned by the lecturers" (ibid. 5).

Finally, the JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) report 'Higher Education in a Web 2.0 World' recognises seven drivers for a move to use of tools such as Twitter in the HE environment, among which are diversity in the learner population ("Web 2.0 offers the sense of being a contributing member of a learning community") and a richer educational experience ("such an approach helps students become self-directed and independent learners") (JISC, 2009).

The emergence of Twitter as a news source has led to fresh ways of consuming news. Alfred Hermida draws on Ian Hargreaves's concept of "ambient news" ("news [...]  today surrounds us like the air we breathe. Much of it is literally ambient", Hargreaves, 2003: 2-3), to characterise Twitter as an "ambient awareness system" (Hermida, 2010a).

Hermida defines this as a computer-mediated, asynchronous, lightweight and always-on communication system: "a user receives information in the periphery of their awareness ... the system is always-on but also works on different levels of engagement" (ibid. 5).

Hence the user is immersed in a background sea of news, information and gossip, into which they will plunge to retrieve significant gobbets when these impinge upon their awareness. The user crystallises the normally fluid, amorphous sea of news around a meaningful issue, at which point awareness switches from the ambient to the engaged.

By analogy with "ambient awareness", this paper introduces the concept of an "ambient community" – a virtual network comprising a stream of micro-messages which, taken together, engender a peripheral notion of community. While rarely at the centre of the user's attention, at any time the user can dip into this stream to focus on or develop specific relationships or conversations (Lave and Wenger, 1991, use the phrase, although they do so in respect of real-world communities; and Dallas, 2004, defines the term as "community empowered through ambient intelligence", which is closer to the meaning intended here, albeit not in the context of journalism education).

Twitter users are aware of a constant stream of conversations, information, links and messages at the periphery of their awareness; they dip into this stream to retrieve or focus on details which interests them: "Twitter becomes part of an ambient media system where users receive a flow of information from both established media and each other" (Hermida, 2010b: 4).

Hence Twitter is communal; unlike email or instant messaging it is a public space where messages are shared. To send a Twitter message is to act as part of a community, albeit a loosely-structured and ambient one: "Twitter is largely public, creating a new body of content online that can be archived, searched and retrieved" (Hermida, 2010b: 4). This statement is true in principle, although in practice Twitter's usefulness as an archive is highly limited, since its current archival functionality is minimal (ReadWriteWeb, 2010).

**Engagement, retention and learning for journalism students**

It is widely accepted that the engagement of students is a necessary if not sufficient condition for them to become and remain effective learners: "The notion of engagement is key to both student autonomy and the wider goal of ISL [improving student learning] ... the evidence is convincing that fostering student engage-

ment does improve their learning" (Bryson and Hand, 2007: 349, 360).

Biggs and Tang assert that "with a history of successful engagement with content that is personally meaningful, the student ... develops the expectations that give confidence in future success" (ibid. 33).

The view is supported by empirical studies, including the annual American NSSE surveys (n.d.) and the study conducted by Ahlfeldt et al which found: "Students participate more in a classroom and also report better understanding of course concepts when steps are taken to actively engage them" (Ahlfeldt et al, 2005).

However, like the concept of "learning", "engagement" is a nebulous term which, as Bryson and Hand aver, "appears to have many meanings" (op cit: 352). These include the student being active in class; being an "active agent in society" (Mann, 2001); and being an autonomous leaner.

Similarly, when discussing retention, Yorke and Longden are doubtful that a single theory is capable of capturing in full the richness of the influences at play: "We remain unconvinced that a single theoretical formulation - a 'grand theory' - can be constructed to include all of the possible influences that bear .. on retention and success. Hence a comprehensive ... theory is probably beyond reach." (Yorke and Longden, 2004).

Bryson and Hand conclude there is a continuum ranging from engaged to alienated, and the same student may exhibit different degrees of engagement at the level of the task, the module, the programme of study, and within the institution. Nevertheless, they agree that "engagement is perceived to be a highly desirable goal with positive outcomes for all parties", where engagement is understood to be at the level of "the learning environment, broadly conceived" (op cit: 352-354).

Zepke and Leach have developed a four-fold taxonomy of engagement, comprising motivation and agency; transactional engagement; institutional support, and active citizenship (Zepke and Leach, 2010: 169). They add the cautionary note that "engagement is complex; it includes many factors that interact in multiple ways to enhance engagement or trigger disengagement" but concur that engagement is an indicator of student success (ibid. 175).

The link between retention, engagement and notions of community/belonging have been made by, among others, Kember et al (2001), Tinto (1993) and Perry (1999). Yorke and Longden emphasise this sense of engagement via belonging as a major factor in student retention: "An aspect of the social networks embedded in student sub-groups also fosters social integration: the greater the extent to which a student is named by other students as someone with whom they frequently talk, the greater the student's degree of social integration" (Yorke and Longden, 2004).

They cite Astin's characterisation of community as "a small subgroup of students espousing a common purpose through which group identity, a sense of cohesion and uniqueness, occurs. Communities emerge from residence halls, the classroom and student peer groups" (Astin, 1984, in Yorke and Longden, 2004). We argue that an ambient community shares the same characteristics and performs a similar function in terms of identity and cohesion.

The motivation for the present paper grew out of a Level 2 undergraduate module within the Journalism department at Liverpool John Moores entitled User Generated Editorial Content. This looked at how Web 2.0 technology enables the consumers of news to become part of the process of news production. Since Twitter is such a significant player in this area, it was decided that students would be asked to use Twitter throughout the module, both as a means of communication and part of their assessed portfolio. In addition, live Twitter messages from students were displayed in real time on a large screen during workshop sessions as a "back channel".

Hence the journalism students could experience at first hand how Twitter could function as a news medium, and a tool for reflecting on that function.

As the module progressed, it became evident that students were using Twitter in ways not originally envisioned by the tutor, reflecting the serendipitous usage noted earlier by Cochrane. In addition to specific tasks they were instructed to do (and a lot of general chit-chat!), students were using Twitter to talk among themselves about the module, topics relevant to the overall journalism programme, and journalism in general. Without prompting, they were researching, collating and sharing links and information which extended or supplemented the course material.

It became apparent that the observed behaviour of the students on Twitter was exactly that of deep learners – moreover, deep learners who were aware that they were part of a community and hence sought to share ideas with each other: "The deep approach arises from a felt need to engage the task appropriately and meaningfully" (Biggs and Tang, 2007: 24).

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It seemed plausible that through the use of Twitter, the cohort was developing a sense of community qua fellow Twitter-users, and this was contributing to their engagement with the module.

In order to test this hypothesis, it was decided to embark on a small-scale research project guided by the question: Can the use of Twitter encourage student engagement among journalism students? Three subsidiary questions were also identified, namely:

1. How can Twitter best be used to encourage journalism student engagement?
2. How can we measure the effectiveness of Twitter in encouraging student engagement?
3. Can we generalise from the context of this module to other institutions/programmes, or to other disciplines outside journalism?

**The research project and measurement**

The project was carried out via a content analysis of students' Twitter messages. As described by Bryman (2008: 289), the advantages of content analysis are that it is unobtrusive, highly flexible and can allow information to be gathered about social groups which otherwise might be difficult to access.

In principle, qualitative data are also available in the form of the module evaluation forms which the students were asked to complete at the end of the module; however, there are insufficient data to draw any meaningful conclusions from this source and in consequence it will not be used.

The key step in developing a content analysis is defining the taxonomy to be used: "The conceptually most taxing aspect of any content analysis is to define the dimensions or characteristics which should be analysed" (Hansen *et al*, 1998: 106).

In this study, each message will be sorted according to the taxonomy detailed in Table 1:

**Table 1: ID taxonomy**

| ID | Message type | Description | Example | Rationale |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Social, untargeted | general message not addressed to anyone in particular | "Valencia's been exceptional tonight, although Rooney's movement has been world class. Albeit against maybe the worst Milan defence ever seen" | The content is not specific to the programme and has no audience in mind. The message does not make use of any Twitter features. |
| 2 | Social, targeted | general message addressed to another member(s) of the cohort | "@lssmj2004chrisb looking like a hung parliament, whatya reckon?" | Although the content is not specific to the programme, it does make use of the Twitter "@" reply feature and involves the cohort (or part of the cohort) in an asynchronous conversation. |
| 3 | Relevant to module (prompted) | message content contains specific information pertaining to the module, as directed by tutor | "Hermida-Twitter embraces newsrooms as a device to distribute breaking news concisely and quickly;it's an expression of ambient journalism" | The student is sending a message on a topic directed by the tutor, and so must work out how to get their point across in 140 characters. By definition, the content is specific to the module and therefore can be of use to other members of the cohort (eg, those who missed the session or didn't follow it completely). |

| 4 | Relevant to journalism programme | message content concerns journalism in general | "Roy Greenslade: BBC reporter on being 'a Jew and a journalist' http://viigo.im/3Q0s" | An unprompted message which relates to journalism in general; both a record of the student's reading, and an index of how valuable they feel the content is, since they have elected to share it. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | Relevant to module (unprompted) | message content contains specific information pertaining to the module but not directed by tutor | "Making Twitter work for journalists http://bit.ly/aD-6Mwk" | An unprompted message which relates specifically to the issues explored in the module. Both a record of the student's reading, and an index of how valuable they feel the content is, since they have elected to share it. The message may supplement or extend material supplied by the tutor. |
| 6 | Relevant to other module(s) | message content contains specific information pertaining to another module(s)within the journalism programme | "Todays lecture on political parties was excellent... Really useful for our social change essay!!" | An unprompted message which relates specifically to the issues explored in another module. This demonstrates a sense of "ambient community" via the awareness of the needs of the rest of the cohort, since the student feels they could benefit from the information posted. |

The taxonomy has been designed to reflect different levels of engagement with Twitter, from the phatic to the academic. In particular, unprompted messages which specifically relate to the journalism module (labelled **ID 5** in Table 1) are seen as particularly valuable by this study – they implicitly acknowledge the existence of an ambient community, since the messages are addressed to other students in the expectation they will derive direct benefit from them. It is also an index of the value the sender places on the content of the message, because they have judged it worthy of being circulated within the community.

For each student, their Twitter messages were analysed and sorted into one of the six categories listed in Table 1. Because primacy is given to unprompted messages relevant to the module (**ID5**), the number of messages in this category is correlated with the student's grade. This is not a theoretically rigorous approach, since the quality of tweets contributes to the grade and hence is not a truly independent variable; however, Twitter messages only contribute 10% towards the module grade. It is therefore possible that students are fully engaged (as measured by their Twitter messages) yet perform badly in assessment, which would undermine the research hypothesis – so to this extent, the hypothesis is falsifiable.

Sixteen students out of the 23 registered on the module agreed to participate in the research; however, one student withdrew from the degree programme at the end of semester 1, so only 15 sets of Twitter messages have been analysed, coded as students A-O.

In total, there were 1,652 messages. The mean number of messages per student was 110, and the range was from 18-375.

Of the 1,652 messages, 844 were classified as "social" (51%) and 808 as "relevant" (49%). "Social" messages are defined as those with **IDs 1** and **2** in Table 1, while "relevant" messages are defined as those with **IDs 3-6**. There were 73 re-tweets (4.4%) but almost all of these were generated by just three students, which undermines the value of this dimension for analysis, and hence it was disregarded for the purposes of this study.

**Graph 1 shows each student's messages broken down into "social" or "relevant" categories:**

This is a mixed picture and suggests students saw no great difference between social and relevant messages – they neither felt compelled to focus on module-specific messages nor did they use Twitter exclusively

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for social purposes. Instead, there is a mixture of the two, which varies between students. This is largely
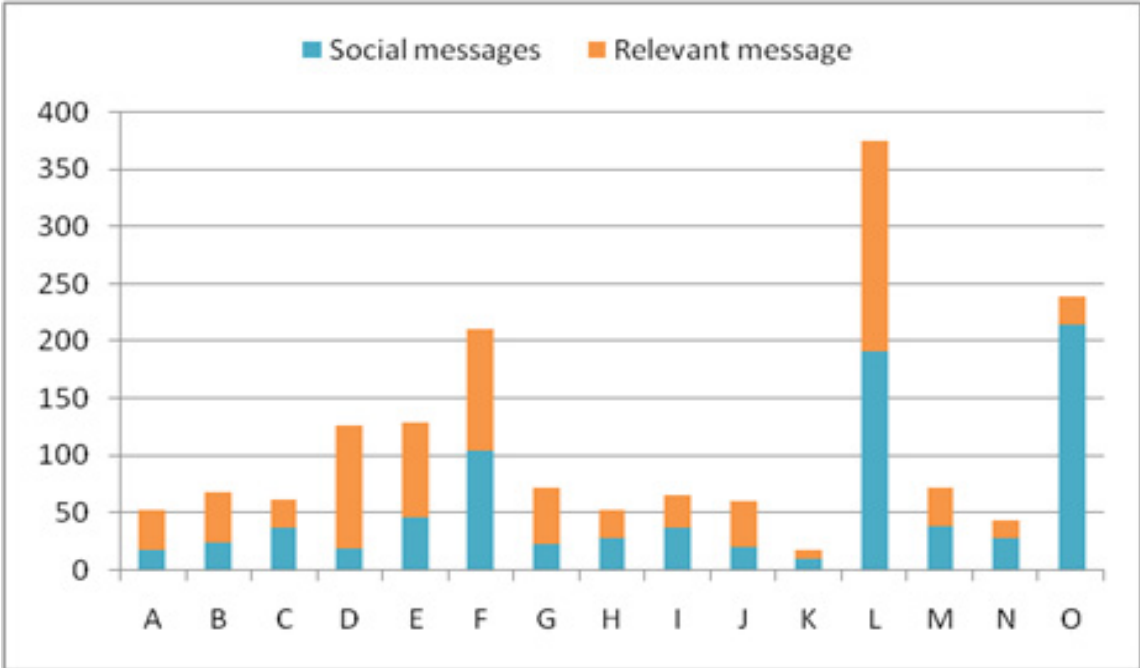


what one would expect if the journalism students have adopted Twitter as a communal space – while they do discuss the module and academic life, they are also engaged in chit-chat, gossip and social networking.

When we look at the number of unprompted relevant messages (**ID5** in Table 1) and graph them alongside the student grade, however, a clearer picture emerges. As mentioned above, these are the message types valued most highly in this study as they exhibit a high degree of involvement with both fellow students and with the module:

**Graph 2: Student grade and ID5**

The scattergram for the same data appears in Graph 3:
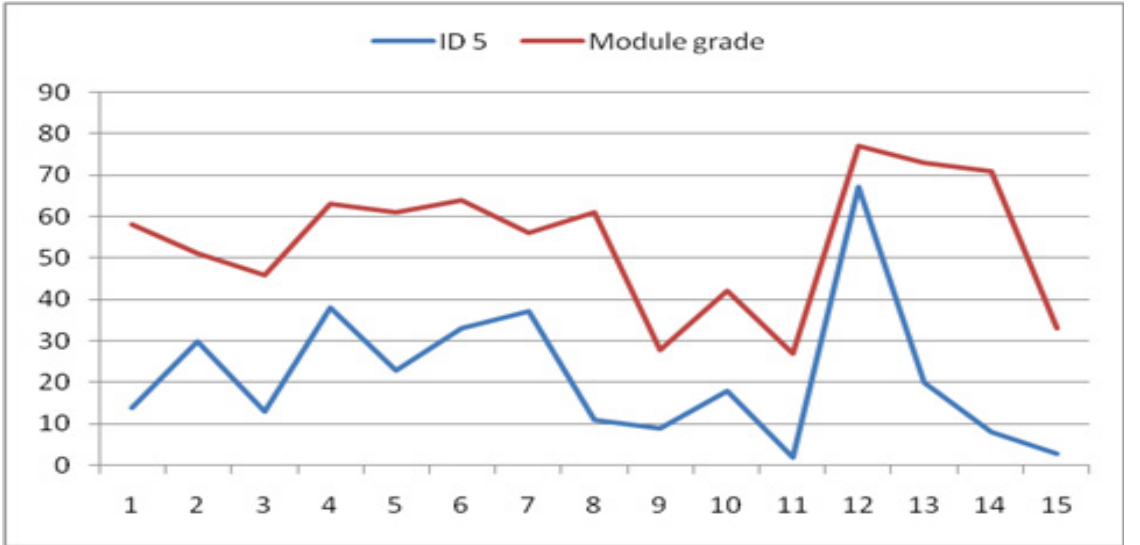


There appears to be a strong correlation between the number of such messages and the student grade. Indeed, this is the case. The scattergram is not curvilinear, and so we may use Pearson's correlation coefficient $r$. The Pearson $r$ is 0.607, which is significant at $p<0.05$, which means there are fewer than five chances

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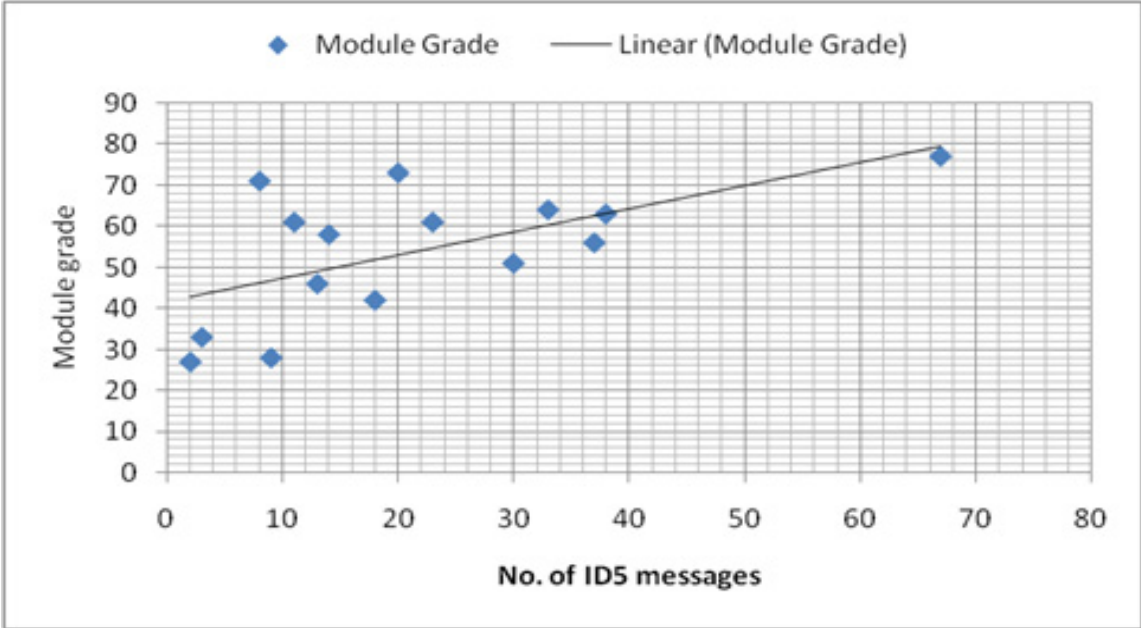
in 100 of the result arising by chance (see Table 2). Bryson advises: "The convention among most social researchers is that the maximum level of statistical significance is $p<0.05$" (op cit: 334).

**Table 2: SPSS output for the data in Graph 2**

This study's interpretation of the result is that it strongly supports the research hypothesis. Journalism students who frequently made unprompted relevant tweets performed better; the claim this study makes is that this is at least partly because of their engagement with Twitter.

Hence the data displayed in Graph 2 strongly suggests that students who engaged with Twitter did fare better. Of course, this conclusion is open to dispute, since correlation is no proof of causality – it may simply be that those students who did well in assessment were those most likely to take to Twitter anyway.

What is beyond question, though, is that the cohort sent 808 journalistically relevant messages over the

### Correlations

| | | No. of ID5 messages | Module grade |
|---|---|---|---|
| No. of ID5 messages | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .607[*] |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .016 |
| | N | 15 | 15 |
| Module grade | Pearson Correlation | .607[*] | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .016 | |
| | N | 15 | 15 |

[*]. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

course of the module, which in itself demonstrates a degree of engagement, albeit one which cannot readily be measured.

Hence with respect to the second subsidiary research question ("How can we measure the effectiveness of Twitter in encouraging journalism student engagement?"), this study has partially answered it by demonstrating a statistically significant correlation between a certain type of Twitter message and module grades; but also accepts that the effectiveness of engagement may be shown to exist while not always being measurable.

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We turn now to the first and third subsidiary research questions: "How can Twitter best be used to encourage journalism student engagement" and "How can we generalise from the context of this module to other institutions/programmes, or to other disciplines outside journalism?"

The use of Twitter does foster a sense of an "ambient community" and in this respect contributes to student engagement on a broad level. However, the introduction of Twitter into the User Generated Content module arose out of considerations of constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2007), because Twitter is part of the object of study, one of the tools used to complete assignments and part of the assessment process. This arises from the fact that Twitter has come to play a significant role within journalism practice.

It is less certain that Twitter would work so well in a module or programme which was unrelated to journalism, and was simply "bolted on" to an unrelated curriculum in an unaligned fashion. Hence instructors must judge the degree to which social media tools are or can be aligned to their module learning outcomes before employing Twitter-like services as some sort of panacea.

For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that of the 15 Level 2 students who took part in this study, all have progressed to Level 3. However, the numbers are so small that no significance can be attached to this in terms of retention.

## Conclusion

During the course of this project, three inter-related principles have become evident which can guide attempts to use Twitter as a mechanism for engagement – namely: privacy, pressure and play. Privacy is crucial as students must be secure in the knowledge that their messages are not going to be shared with the wider world, but confined to the group. Then there must be some pressure on them to use Twitter on a regular basis, such as pressure from the tutor to send a tweet on a specified topic to deadline. Finally, students must be free to play around with Twitter and not feel inhibited in the messages they send, so over-direction by the tutor must be avoided.

The first and third of these can be achieved by ensuring that students create a fresh account specifically for their academic work (assuming they already have Twitter accounts; in the cohort under consideration, only three did) and that they set their privacy settings to "Protect My Tweets". This means that any Twitter messages will not appear on the public timeline, but can only be seen by people whom the students accept as followers (ie, the other students in the group). This overcomes an objection some students may have about being compelled to use the Twitter service – namely, that their privacy may be compromised. But in addition it means students feel less inhibited about their messages since (apart from the instructors) only fellow students will see what they write.

An element of compulsion is essential to achieving a critical mass of take-up. Left to themselves, journalism students may find the novelty of using Twitter wears off and – short of a compelling reason to use it – they get out of the habit of creating or checking for messages. Therefore the task of sending Twitter messages on a regular basis must become part of the module curriculum and, ideally, be assessed. For example, the instructor may ask students to précis a reading in the form of a tweet, write a news flash, or work together to cover a breaking news story. The instructor can intervene to deliver feedback using Twitter, or to set or clarify further assignments. In this way, students develop a routine of checking for and sending messages.

On the basis of this project, it is clear that once journalism students become used to regular exposure to Twitter, their usage grows organically and they begin to use the service for fun, to organise their social lives and engage in chatter. It is this free adoption of Twitter that leads, or can lead, to the deep engagement with learning that motivated this study – the sharing of resources, the sifting of recommendations and the widening of research.

The researcher and educationalist Mantz Yorke remarked: "We need to focus on teaching as an essential element of engagement" (Yorke, 2009), and in her paper on learner engagement and alienation, Sarah Mann adds that: "We need to be alert to our own positional power ... and to become aware of the conditions in which we work and the responses we make to them" (Mann, 2001: 17).

Often in discussions of student engagement (and, by extension, retention), the emphasis is on the student as agent, such as Tinto (1993). While individual agency is important, the social nexus within which students and instructors are embedded is an equally powerful constituent of engagement. By encouraging students to become part of an ambient community, we use our positional power to supplement the possible conditions open to them. This maximises the opportunities for the student to participate in deep learning.

Naturally, the value of this approach will depend largely on how closely social media can be aligned with the course learning objectives. However, most journalism modules ought to fit this category, so it seems

reasonable to conclude that in the context of journalism education, Twitter and similar services can indeed act to encourage student engagement.

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# Journalism students as global citizens and mediators:

# incorporating global current affairs into the journalism curriculum

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**Abstract:** This article argues that journalism education is uniquely positioned to advance global awareness, and makes the case for a curriculum that places greater emphasis on global current affairs. A robust understanding of global issues, and of the challenges facing global reportage, is a vital part of media literacy and can help journalism students fulfil their dual role as global citizens and mediators.

**The paper sets the rationale and parameters for the integration of global current affairs into the journalism curriculum, taking into account emerging challenges and opportunities within a competitive, fragmented and multimedia landscape. It also reflects on the development and delivery of an undergraduate global current affairs module and highlights the need for a pedagogic strategy that is grounded in historical and geographical context. Journalism education can play an instrumental role in nurturing global reportage, by developing innovative forms of storytelling and by empowering young journalists to exercise their global voice.**

> *Journalism education as a socializing agent is becoming increasingly powerful in today's media, as a vast majority of newcomers in the profession worldwide come to the job with some kind of training or education in journalism.* (Deuze, 2006, p.31)

### Introduction and Aim

At a time of transition both for the profession and for the pedagogy of journalism, this paper highlights the role of journalism students as global citizens and mediators-to-be, and makes the case for a curriculum that places greater emphasis on global current affairs. During the last decade the strategic role of education in promoting sustainable development and global citizenship has been highlighted both internationally (e.g., 2002 UN World Summit on Sustainable Development; 2003 UNESCO framework) and in the UK (Osler and Vincent, 2002). It will be argued that journalism education is uniquely positioned to advance global awareness, both directly, amongst journalism students, and indirectly – through them – amongst the public at large.

A growing body of academic literature has been looking at the related concepts of global perspectives, global education, global learning, global citizenship and education for sustainable development, while efforts have been made to map the links and dynamics amongst these interdependent terms (Anderberg et al,

2009) as well as to outline the main actors, means of youth engagement and drivers of change (Bourn and Brown, 2011). However, this is still an emerging field of scholarship and a review of the literature reveals that research on global learning in Higher Education is still "comparatively rare" and "very few empirical studies appear to have been conducted" (Anderberg et al, 2009, p.369).

This is particularly true in the case of journalism education, which has taken significant steps towards accommodating – indeed embracing – technological convergence, yet has been less determined in addressing the challenges posed by globalisation both for the profession and for the world at large. The agenda of the 21st century features *global issues* that are highly complex and interdependent; they blur the boundaries of media genres; their relevance to contemporary audiences is not always apparent, especially within a noisy 24/7 global news cycle, disproportionately oriented towards celebrity culture; their reporting often requires not only familiarity with the issues themselves, but also an in-depth understanding of how global reporting differs from traditional journalism (e.g., the challenges involved with the coverage of conflict or humanitarian disasters, emerging obstacles to press freedom and greater awareness of cross-cultural professional perspectives). Hunter and Nel (2011, p.10) note that "the paradox between the increased globalization and complexity of practice and the marked increase in redundancy among U.K. journalism professionals poses a direct challenge to the pedagogical identity of the field". Surveying 65 journalists-turned-academics on the areas in which journalism research would be particularly useful, Harcup (2011) also highlighted the need to explore the impact of globalisation on journalism.

Hence, this paper makes the case for the establishment and nurturing of an interdisciplinary field of research, teaching and learning that brings together key elements of international affairs, journalism and pedagogy. For the purposes of this paper, and in the interest of clarity, I use the title "global current affairs" (GCA) to refer to this emerging field, as this title most accurately conveys both its substantive content and its pedagogic agenda (although the issue of the field's name is of lesser importance to its pedagogic mission). The aim of GCA as a pedagogic field is to provide emerging journalists with the vital context and skills that are necessary for them to fulfil their roles as global citizens and critical mediators between the global and the local. This includes the utilisation of historical, geographical, institutional and political concepts, as well as a reflective engagement with the available tools and emerging challenges relating to global issues. In terms of its position within journalism education, GCA aims to transcend the increasingly sterile divide between "theory" and "practice" as it combines a scholarly context with subject-specific and transferable skills that are vital to the profession. An indicative example of such combination might be the understanding of key theories, institutions and processes of global governance – including the challenges facing the United Nations as well as emerging questions of democratic deficit and online global protest – in conjunction with an ability to identify and critically engage with key sources (e.g. decision-makers and mediators involved with specific aspects of these issues) and resources (e.g. NGO briefings).

The concept of Global Current Affairs, as outlined here, is firmly positioned within the field of civic and media literacy – indeed one might argue that it constitutes one of its building blocks. Global news and current affairs literacy has a dual role in this agenda, both as an instrumental tool and as an end product of this process. It is becoming increasingly clear that the boundaries between scholarly research, pedagogy (learning and teaching), training, professional practice and public dissemination are, to a considerable extent, artificial. The realisation of the dynamic and interactive relationship between these practices can produce huge benefits for the public understanding of, and engagement with, global issues. As Mihailidis (2009, p.9) notes, "[m]aking the connections between media literacy, freedom of expression, and civic engagement can reposition media literacy as the core of new civic education. This can help supporters of good governance see media literacy as an educational response for the information age".

In the following sections, I make the case for the incorporation of GCA into the journalism curriculum further setting the parameters of such an application. I start by looking at the role of journalism students as global citizens, noting that they are ideally positioned to act as mediators between the global and the local. I then look at the evidence regarding the public's engagement with global current affairs and argue that, despite many revolutionary developments in the area of online engagement and civic protest, global reporting and global awareness (in the UK but also in the US and Europe) are both facing considerable pressure from changing audience habits, amongst other factors. I then outline and evaluate the development and delivery of a GCA unit within an undergraduate journalism programme in the UK, as a case study of global learning within journalism education. It is hoped that this bottom-up approach can inform and complement more strategic and comparative reviews into the role of journalism students as global citizens and the role of journalism education as a locus of media literacy and global awareness.

## Journalism Students as Global Citizens

Advocates of global or cosmopolitan citizenship have for a long time and through multiple normative models made the case for a field of civic participation that transcends the narrow boundaries of nation-states (e.g., Dower, 2003; Dower and Williams, 2002). In the past this discussion might have been considered as "academic" or abstract, but recent global developments – from international terrorism to the spread of mass epidemics to climate change to civic mobilisation through social networks to the global financial crisis – have been bringing the realities of globalisation closer to home. The effects of globalisation are already visible, while the structures of 19th and 20th century governance and citizenship are struggling to cope, creating deficits of democracy, legitimacy, policy effectiveness and quality of life – not to mention poverty and global inequality. The media are instrumental to this process: not only do new information and communication technologies accelerate globalisation, but they also frame the agenda and mediate the debate in the global public sphere.

A consensus has emerged both within academia and across government, industry and the voluntary sector about the crucial role that universities can and should play in empowering students to become global citizens. As with traditional citizenship, this includes becoming aware of the ways and means of active engagement, as well as its costs and benefits. It is also a process of understanding one's rights and responsibilities. However, citizenship is not only about awareness per se; it should ideally enable the citizen to critically engage with these concepts, i.e., to fully understand the possibilities and process of social change and the role of the individual within the community. Hence, global citizenship should enable individuals to develop their own voice and be part of a global dialogue – to participate in the global public sphere with a view to promoting sustainability (Anderberg et al, 2009) and social justice (Bourn, 2010; Bencze and Carter, 2011). This could have a range of results, such as: (i) well-equipped graduates in the global economy, (ii) critical thinkers who are aware of the complex world that they will inhabit and/or (iii) informed social activists (Bourn, 2010; Shiel, 2006).

The incorporation of global perspectives into the Higher Education curriculum is one of the main ways of achieving greater student awareness about their role as global citizens. The benefits of this approach have been demonstrated repeatedly and at different levels (e.g. see Bourn et al, 2006). Global learning enhances the development of critical skills, boosts employability, facilitates intercultural understanding and internationalisation, and ultimately transforms not just students but also HE institutions themselves, making them more environmentally sustainable and morally robust. In addition to these pedagogic benefits, global citizenship brings with it all the benefits associated with civic participation both at the micro-social level of the individual (such as increasing efficacy, empathy and trust; Barber, 1998) and at the macro-social, systemic one (law abidance, social peace, integration, cohesion and welfare; public policy that is more informed about the needs of the people and thus more effective; a political system that better represents the diversity of the community – see Elster, 1998; Nye et al, 1997).

Central to global citizenship is an understanding of the fundamental interdependence between the global and the local, and the realisation of the power that citizens have in bringing about social change. In practical terms, it may be the case that the best way to achieve this is by applying the principles, issues and skillsets of global learning onto specific fields of study, rather than in a generic, catch-all way. Interestingly, recent studies have evaluated the application of education for global citizenship within individual disciplines, such as engineering (Bourn and Neal, 2008) and social policy (Irving et al, 2005), although there seems to be a lack of such application in the field of journalism studies, which the present paper aims to address. Having said that, the similarities across fields, for example in terms of their global implications, or of the challenges faced in promoting global citizenship, can be striking, which only serves to prove that this ongoing, multi-disciplinary dialogue is vital.

A related debate has emerged on whether global learning should be content-oriented or process-oriented; that is to say, whether it should focus on the substance of the current issues affecting the world or the principles behind global citizenship and sustainable development (see Anderberg et al, 2009). However, the gap between the two can be overstated as by far the most effective learning and teaching strategy is the one that combines content with process; engaging students with current affairs in specific localities, while touching upon broader, institutional, systemic or moral debates. It is true that global education should be competence-driven (e.g. Irving et al, 2005), i.e. providing students with core skills not just of global citizenship, but also of critical thinking and empathy. However, I argue that the skills-oriented approach cannot be divorced from the context of ongoing events, which, as the case study outlined later in this paper shows, can be an excellent "way in" to more sophisticated and abstract debates. [As it happens, the same could be argued in the case of media literacy, which is usually interpreted and delivered through a generic, reflective approach rather than an issue-oriented one – see below].

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During the last few years we have witnessed the integration of global perspectives across a wide range of disciplines with the aim of enabling graduates to act as global citizens. While the moral, pedagogic and political principle for the conceptualisation of individual students as global citizens applies equally to all disciplines, it is hard to think of a field of study in which a critical engagement with global contexts is more vital. Journalists are not just global citizens; they are also gate-keepers of global agendas, mediators of global change, and interpreters of events and current affairs. Journalists constitute the crucial link between often abstract processes of global governance and individual citizens. Thus, they have a dual duty in the global public sphere: professional as journalists and personal as citizens themselves. Hence, I argue that the integration of global perspectives into the journalism curriculum and the parallel development of global journalism as a field of epistemology are crucial prerequisites for the fulfilment of journalism education's mission in the 21st century.

The challenge is not to merely add another – international – layer to journalism, above the local and national ones, but to prepare students for a fundamentally different paradigm of global news, mirroring the increased complexities and interdependence between global, national and local phenomena and actors. Berglez (2008) offers an articulate conceptualisation of what global journalism might – or indeed *does* – look like:

> The national outlook puts the nation-state at the centre of things when framing social reality, while the global outlook instead seeks to understand and explain how economic, political, social and ecological practices, processes and problems in different parts of the world affect each other, are interlocked, or share commonalities (2008, p.847).

Berglez rightly distinguishes the normative discussion on the moral need for a global journalism from the experienced reality of interdependent issues and peoples, and the need to capture, interpret and communicate that reality. The call for the integration of global current affairs into the journalism curriculum is not only a normative one, but a pragmatic response to the realities of globalisation. For example, an understanding of the links between international terrorism, transnational organised crime and weapons of mass destruction is vital in order to interpret events both in remote parts of the world and in our local communities. This includes a basic familiarity with the networks, movements and illegal trafficking of arms, drugs, human organs, minerals, diamonds etc from/to different parts of the world, the flow of money, the impact on the global economy and governance systems, as well as the direct effects on the security and quality of life in local communities across national boundaries.

Directly linked to this process of interpretation and reportage is the paradigm of journalism; its traditions, rituals and cultural "baggage". Therefore, a reflective process of engaging critically not only with the content of global current affairs, but also with the ways and means through which these affairs are reported in different regional or cultural settings should be a vital part of media education. An increasingly more integral part of that discussion is the role of the internet and more specifically online news and citizen journalism. The emergence of participatory news and user-generated content in particular is leading to an historic shift within journalism (Allan and Thorsen, 2009; Deuze et al, 2007; Allan, 2006). The processes of news-gathering, selection, editing and transmission, as well as the agents of these processes, are changing. Through the use of social media and first-hand accounts, citizens are becoming amateur journalists with profound effects for both journalism itself and the world at large. While the makeshift practices and firsthand accounts of citizen reporters cannot replace the output of mainstream, professional organisations (Reich, 2008), citizen journalism still poses considerable challenges in terms of editorial standards, ethics, personal safety, market sustainability, innovation etc.

Consequently, journalism graduates must survive within an increasingly volatile and competitive industry, which highlights the need for universities to cultivate their core critical thinking skills as well as their in-depth understanding of complex global situations. At the same time, the need for a media literate and globally engaged public is perhaps greater than ever.

## Global Current Affairs as an essential part of media literacy

Perhaps ironically, in this age of globalisation, promoting global citizenship amongst journalism students and global awareness amongst the broader public is becoming increasingly difficult. Coverage of world news is dwindling across American and European media, while news organisations are disinvesting in foreign reportage to an extent that signifies a systemic failure on the part of the media (e.g., Carroll, 2007; Alltmeppen, 2010; Livingston and Asmolov, 2010). Established news organisations, which have both the resources and the public service responsibility to cover world affairs through local bureaus, foreign correspondents and in-depth investigations, prefer to use wire services and focus on local stories (Zuckerman,

2008), which means that coverage of global current affairs is repetitive, superficial, occasionally inaccurate and lacking in context. A comprehensive survey of international factual programming by the International Broadcasting Trust (IBT) showed that in 2010:

> The main UK terrestrial channels broadcast fewer hours of new international factual programming than at any time since the study began in 1989. International content is in decline on every terrestrial channel except Channel 4, and BBC1 has now replaced ITV1 as the channel with the least amount of new factual coverage of developing countries (Scott et al, 2011, p.2).

There are multiple reasons for this systemic decline in the coverage of global current affairs and isolating or measuring the impact of individual factors is an almost impossible task. The end of the Cold War may have deprived international news of the sense of imminent conflict and drama, while another salient factor seems to be the radical transformation of media consumption habits due to increased competition and quantitative choice (Utley, 1997). That is to say, the rise of cable, satellite and digital television in conjunction with the diffusion of new media and the decline of newspapers have created a different pattern of media consumption – one based on segmentation, user choice, escapism and superficial, fragmented and multiple reception as opposed to a broadcast, public service model encompassing the "old" media of analogue TV, radio and the daily newspaper. The extent to which this new model is less controlled by gatekeepers (who might exercise their public service responsibility and provide global affairs coverage) is debatable, as is the extent of actual choice that multiple channels and billions of web and media outlets offer. In any case, quality international news is considered as expensive, complicated and not popular enough to compete against entertainment genres.

However, Carroll (2007, p.2) makes a powerful argument in favour of news organisations investing in foreign news coverage. She notes that coverage of global current affairs adds value to a news organisation that is not easily measurable in net profits, but which in the long term far outweighs the costs as it attracts employees of higher quality, guarantees exclusives and grants that organisation greater credibility. The call for greater contextualisation and more in-depth coverage of world news is quite pressing if one considers the impact that this systemic failure has had on the public's comprehension of global issues.

A range of studies and scholars from different backgrounds, following different methodological approaches, have outlined a lack of public understanding of global current affairs which can partly be attributed to the decline in media coverage, as well as to changing audience/reader habits. The link between news media use and political awareness is well known (e.g. Pasek et al, 2006). A study by the UK's Department for International Development (DfID 2000: 1) identified "a serious problem with audience understanding of development issues, especially on news programmes" and highlights the need for "continued work on making global issues comprehensible to viewers". Similarly, Philo (2002) demonstrates the negative effects in terms of news comprehension of low level explanation and stresses the importance of illustrating the interdependence of global issues. This is particularly crucial insofar as younger audiences are concerned. It has been shown (e.g., Gerodimos, 2010) that many young people find it hard to understand current affairs and feel that news coverage requires a lot of prior knowledge while political discourse is either patronisingly simplistic or intimidatingly complex.

Furthermore, Zuckerman (2008) makes the point that even the output of civic media may be incomprehensible to domestic audiences due to cultural or linguistic barriers, lack of relevant context and background knowledge and inability to authenticate or judge the material's credibility. Hence, it appears as if, at a time when emerging challenges make engagement with global current affairs more crucial than ever, rather than investing in more extrovert forms of journalism, news organisations are reducing both their physical presence across the world and the amount of coverage devoted to global affairs. Yet, what many studies of both adult and younger audiences demonstrate is that contemporary citizens genuinely want to know more about the world at large, although they are unable to do so.

It is often argued that the web can provide contemporary audiences with masses of information regarding international affairs at the click of a button. In fact, this argument has often been used as the rationale for the further devaluation of foreign reportage across broadcast media. Yet, that theory is based on two fundamentally flawed assumptions: namely that, firstly, audiences are, or ought to be, self-motivated (some people are, many aren't); and, secondly and perhaps more saliently, that audiences have the skills, news literacy and prior understanding of issues in order to filter and evaluate global current affairs material themselves (a few do, many don't):

> Audiences can now find their own routes to making sense of the world. But have passive audiences already deserted television to become curious and self-motivated global citizens or in an age of information overload do we underestimate the potential for television to remain the key source of information about the wider

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world for the UK public? (Padania et al, 2007, p.4).

In fact, in a comprehensive survey of UK adults' media literacy, Ofcom found that "when people are asked for their views on which media they would trust *most* to provide fair and unbiased world news, TV is trusted most by 72%, the internet by 7%, radio by 6% and newspapers by 3%" (2011: 7 - emphasis in the original). Padania et al concur: "Television remains the main source of information for audiences – including young people – about the wider world. Broadcasters and NGOs should resist the temptation to direct disproportionate resources to online media." (2007, p.7).

The emergence of the internet as a dominant news medium embedded in people's everyday routines poses several challenges in terms of audiences' media literacy: the majority of citizen media around the world are "filled with the daily trivialities that also characterize American blogs" (Zuckerman, 2008, p.5); most people in the UK use the internet to search for topics that they are already interested in and "rarely read anything online which tells them about the lives of people in other countries" (Fenyoe, 2010, p.2); self-selection and sophisticated search engine algorithms are creating a "filter bubble" (Pariser, 2011) – a comfort zone, from which users are finding it increasingly hard to escape; the dependency on search engines itself raises questions about users' media literacy (Fenyoe, 2010, p.3) as many users don't know where to start from; while, marketing and aesthetics are becoming the key factors determining whether a user will be attracted by, and ultimately trust, a website, highlighting the tensions that exist between the current hegemony of online consumer choice and those civic responsibilities that are critical to a healthy democracy and global citizenship (Gerodimos, 2012).

In this context, is it possible to develop global learning that promotes media literacy and that equips journalists to engage with confused and busy audiences? And how does GCA fit in the journalism curriculum? Given the torrent of messages and available content, Scott et al (2011, p.29) note that "the question for international programming is 'what are its principal USPs and how can social and online media be used to enhance these?'". This is, in fact, part of a broader question regarding the factors that motivate citizens to engage with public affairs in general, and motivating journalism students to become global citizens in particular. It has been shown that demonstrating the benefits of civic participation in moral and practical terms is key to boosting a citizen's sense of efficacy, i.e., an individual's confidence in the impact of their own actions (e.g. Bowler and Donovan, 2002). A cyclical, reciprocal relationship normally exists between efficacy and participation: the more meaningful a citizen feels that their civic action is, the more likely it is that they will be participating, further boosting their sense of efficacy, and so on. Scott et al (2011, p.3) argue that current affairs producers should challenge many viewers' assumption that "'there is nothing they can do' to address global issues like poverty by offering clear options so that audiences feel that they can undertake action that will make a difference".

Linking public or global affairs to citizens' lifeworld, i.e., their immediate, micro-social environment, is also crucial, particularly in the case of young people. On the one hand – and contrary to contemporary myths – it has been repeatedly shown that young people are not indifferent to global issues (Gerodimos, 2010; Bourn et al, 2006). On the other hand, many young people feel profoundly disempowered, disconnected from the institutions and processes of democratic participation and ultimately emotionally detached from public affairs. A comparative analysis of youth participation organisations and issue-oriented Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) (Gerodimos, 2008) and a subsequent analysis of young people's own responses to NGO material (Gerodimos, 2012) showed that NGOs using personalisation and small-scale, tangible civic action succeeded in emotionally engaging young people, while youth organisations failed because they promoted participation in a generic and decontextual way, focusing on a vocabulary and repertoires of engagement that were far removed from young people's everyday realities.

Based on this analysis, it is argued that a learning and teaching strategy which uses specific issues as the starting and focal points of a global learning curriculum could effectively engage students (while also avoiding conceptualising engagement in the narrow sense of participation or action, as opposed to a broader sense of behaviour that includes the learning process – see Bourn and Brown, 2011). In other words, what I am arguing for is the utilisation of current affairs (and, in particular, global current affairs) as key starting points of a process of media and civic literacy.

Even a cursory glance at the four core elements of media literacy (Livingstone, 2004) shows that the model is applicable to the discussion on global awareness and journalism education:

*Access*: taken in its broader sense of coming across relevant material, access to global current affairs is limited due to scarcity of coverage in traditional media and information saturation on the web. Ways to increase access include greater investment in international reporting, as well as its incorporation across different genres of news media.

**Articles**

*Analysis* and *Evaluation*: coverage of GCA is lacking in context, and audiences – especially young people – lack basic historical and geographical knowledge that is a prerequisite for any form of meaningful engagement with GCA messages. Providing background information on the localities, key actors and events surrounding an issue is an essential tool of news literacy.

*Content creation*: for citizens to become active producers of global civic content, an understanding of the interdependence between the local and the global is required; demonstrating the global impact of local actions (and vice versa) facilitates citizens' voice expression, encouraging them to take part in a global dialogue.

It is true that media literacy has traditionally been conceptualised as a process-oriented reflective process (e.g., Hobbs, 1998, Lewis and Jhally, 1998). Mihailidis (2008) points out differences of conceptual approach and application across universities in the US, arguing for a media literacy curriculum that favours specific learning outcomes rather than specific content. The approach proposed here is somewhat different, though complementary: that is to say, specific content is important for news literacy and, through that, transferable, reflective or theoretical learning outcomes can *also* be served.

The next section outlines the learning and teaching strategy, including transferable learning outcomes, and key lessons emerging from the delivery, by the author, of a Global Current Affairs unit as part of an undergraduate journalism course at a UK university.

## Reflecting on the implementation and evaluation of a Global Current Affairs unit

In an attempt to further distil and apply the pedagogic agenda outlined above, the paper reflects on the development of a Global Current Affairs unit, delivered as part of the BA (Hons) Multi-Media Journalism programme at Bournemouth University. The unit aims to engage students with current issues at a global level, while also encouraging them to reflect on the issues and challenges facing journalists reporting on global affairs. The purpose is to develop students' news literacy, including both an understanding of major and ongoing issues, and the role of the media in covering those issues, as well as their professional ability to cover such stories.

The unit takes a thematic (issue-oriented) and topical (news-oriented) approach to teaching and learning, with a view to understanding globalisation in an applied, grounded way. Emphasis is placed on demonstrating the links amongst issues and the links between global developments and local contexts. The curriculum is interdisciplinary and employs elements of politics, international relations, geography, history and journalism studies in order to provide the theoretical canvas. An important thread of the unit that runs parallel to these global perspectives is the reflective element, which encourages students to examine these issues from the perspective of reportage – i.e., reflecting on the importance and relevance of issues, and also on ways of reporting, identifying key sources and resources and considering the challenges associated with them. Therefore, the unit's intended learning outcomes cover both an understanding of subject-specific material that could be labelled "the agenda of the 21st century" – global issues, role of various actors, perspectives regarding the role of the nation-state, global governance etc – but also skills that are highly transferable to the workplace.

An example of the topics covered, and of how current affairs can be used as entry points into a more theoretically informed discussion on globalisation is the first session which introduces students to key aspects of US politics, such as the separation of powers, the electoral cycle, the polarised civic culture of recent years as well as the salient political issues. This is achieved through a "who's who" of American politics as well as a review of recent events and key landmarks of the Obama Presidency: loss of the Democrats' filibuster-proof majority of 60 in the Senate and subsequent loss of the House of Representatives, key legislative achievements such as healthcare reform; the role of the Tea Party; the Tucson shootings and President Obama's speech; the role of the State of the Union Address; the recent Republican primaries and the role of the economy as a salient electoral issue.

While a two-hour session could not possibly cover all aspects of American politics in depth (indeed, a considerable portion of those two hours is occasionally spent explaining the concept and logistics of the filibuster, which many students struggle with), students leave the session having a basic understanding of key concepts and ongoing issues, which immediately allows them to engage with the news at a completely different level. Hence, when subsequent sessions examine the obstacles facing global action on climate change or reform of the United Nations, students are able, for example, to identify the role played by the US Congress in both issues, which affect everyone. Furthermore, having reflected on the resources available to them, their possible strategies of reportage as well as subject-specific challenges facing them as reporters (e.g., how to make the intricacies of US politics relevant to the daily lives of British audiences), students

develop a toolbox that they can carry with them to the workplace.

Other topics covered in the GCA unit include: an extensive coverage of developments in post-Soviet Russia, including the role of the oligarchs, the strategic importance of oil and gas pipelines, and the challenges facing journalists, leading to a critical evaluation of Edward Lucas's proposal (2008) of a New Cold War; Iran's nuclear programme and Israel's response, in conjunction with the progress achieved and obstacles facing nuclear non-proliferation; the links between Weapons of Mass Destruction, international terrorism and transnational organised crime (such as the drug war in Mexico, piracy in Somalia and the exploitation of Africa's natural resources); the rise of China as an economic super-power in conjunction with questions about its record on human rights and freedom of the press; the interdependence of food prices, development, climate change, energy and security (e.g., conflict in the Niger Delta); and the challenges facing the European Union, including Greece's debt crisis and how that has highlighted tensions between globalisation, democracy and citizenship.

The curriculum obviously covers quite a broad range of topics, which was a deliberate decision in order to familiarise students with most major global current affairs, but also be able to demonstrate the interdependence of issues. Taught sessions can only act as the starting point of the learning process so self-directed learning is crucial to this pedagogic process. Reflecting on the delivery of the unit, one of the main patterns observed so far has been the level of student enthusiasm for the unit, as demonstrated through formal and informal feedback, attendance and engagement during the taught sessions. For students to articulate questions which are not merely factual but usually go into the interpretation of actors' motivations or background issues is probably the most crucial pedagogic output. Not only does it demonstrate the development of critical thinking skills, but it also familiarises them with the uncertainty, nuances and multiplicity of interpretations facing journalists on an everyday basis.

Another interesting lesson emerging from this experience is the importance of structuring the material around a timeline of events, which helps students contextualise developments and gain a more in-depth understanding of issues. Jacoby (2008, p.301) argues that:

> The importance of chronology has been downplayed at all levels of the educational system for the past fifty years, and that is largely the work of those who fail to understand that students can hardly be expected to comprehend why things happened – the frequently stated mantra of progressive educators – if they do not know what happened and when.

Furthermore, and in addition to set texts covering global issues in extensive depth (e.g., Johnston et al, 2002; Seitz, 2008; Smith, 2008), newspaper articles have an important role in the learning and teaching process. Press cuttings are used and critically evaluated on all the major themes covered, providing both the background as well as an outlet of professional reflection. The systematic collation and use of newspaper articles has a number of pedagogic benefits, which are possibly under-researched:

> It provides a useful chronology of key events, which, apart from providing a basic historical framework, also helps students contextualise events by linking them to their own recollections of those events' media coverage

> It demonstrates how complex, ongoing issues are reduced to short, coherent stories that enable readers who are unfamiliar with the background of issues to engage with the narrative of those stories

> It gives us a glimpse of editorial policies and choices, especially in terms of framing and agenda-setting

> It provides students with useful examples of how complex global issues can be personalised or linked to local communities

> It is a useful source of edited maps, infographics and relevant images, which are themselves an important object of study as carriers of stereotypes and connotations.

Hence, this pedagogic experience has shown that reflective news curation can act as a crucial pedagogic tool of global learning and media literacy. Yaros (2006) proposed an Explanatory Structure Building model for the structuring of news stories with a view to aiding comprehension amongst non-experts. Our case study supports the view that more research is needed in developing innovative forms of current affairs storytelling that place emphasis on timeline and context, making the material accessible to non-specialist audiences.

Insofar as the unit's assessment strategy is concerned, as Sperandio et al (2010) note, assessing a curriculum that is oriented towards facilitating global citizenship and engagement with complex global issues constitutes a massive challenge. Even the initial process of translating the intended learning outcomes into tangible assessment criteria can pose difficulties, let alone the subsequent process of measuring the primary

or secondary pedagogic, journalistic or civic impact of the curriculum. The first part of the assessment scheme was a comprehensive written test combining 50 factual (multiple choice) questions on the material covered, with open-ended (comprehension) questions on key reports and a critical evaluation of an unseen report on a global issue. The written test certainly succeeded in motivating students to digest the taught material and it is a good method of achieving a high level of familiarity with global current affairs, while also allowing students to focus on a particular issue.

An effort was also made to utilise the assessment scheme as a core part of the learning and teaching strategy, i.e. as an outlet for the primary development of global learning skills. This was particularly the case with the photo-essay, which is part of the investigative and reflective portfolio – the second method of assessment. The photo-essay encourages students to link a global current affair of their choice to a local community through original photographs. The broadest possible definition of community was chosen, including local/geographical, professional, social and other communities, although one of the conditions posed was that the community should have a physical presence, rather than merely a virtual/online one.

The photo-essay has a dual pedagogic mission. Firstly, in an age of increased multimedia convergence and visual user engagement, it is imperative that journalism students develop their photojournalism skills and are able to tell stories through images. The success of online photo-essays on current affairs (such as the BBC News website's "In Pictures" (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/in_pictures/) and the increasing prominence of visually-oriented news storytelling demonstrate that there is an opportunity for journalists to engage with audiences in innovative, affective ways. Furthermore, the main challenge and key objective of this particular assignment is to encourage students to think of how global issues are embedded in our everyday life, or affect communities, in tangible, *physical* ways. Being able both to conceptualise a global current affair as a geographically present reality, and at the same time to communicate that through a coherent visual narrative, means that a journalism student assumes their dual role as a global citizen and mediator. Hence, the emphasis during the student training process was not placed on the technical or technological aspects of photography, as much as on the conceptual and aesthetic ones.

The photo-essay appeared to be by far the most successful element of the assessment strategy, with students producing highly sophisticated work of outstanding quality that demonstrated achievement of the unit's aims. Investigative photo-essays featured topics such as alternative energy in two local southern coastal city communities, Portsmouth and Southampton [Images 1, 2 in appendix], ethical food production at Gonalston Farm in Nottingham [Images 3, 4 in appendix], and the fishing industry in Hastings [Images 5, 6 in appendix]. Judging from student feedback and performance, the photo-essay succeeded in allowing students to inhabit their role as global citizens, consider the impact of global issues on local communities and reflect on their future role as mediators responsible for communicating that impact through a visual medium.

## Looking forward: what is the role of Global Current Affairs in the journalism curriculum?

In this paper I have argued that journalism is an ideal discipline for the application of the principles and methods of global learning. Journalism graduates are not only global citizens but also *de facto* gate-keepers and mediators between the global and the local. The skills transferred through global learning and media literacy are vital not just for trainee journalists, but for all informed citizens, especially in an era of complex, interdependent issues and torrents of competing media messages.

The paper made the case for a generalist module that covers major global issues and debates in an accessible way, facilitating students' understanding of those affairs' relevance to our everyday life. An undergraduate global current affairs unit was presented as a case study of integrating global learning within the journalism curriculum. The apparent success of this project, especially in terms of student satisfaction (Table 1 below), passion and output, further highlights the demand on the part of young people for a contextualised and historically informed curriculum that addresses ongoing debates. While, as with any pedagogic strategy, the learning and teaching scheme outlined here requires a certain amount of investment and content-driven delivery, the benefits in terms of pedagogy and student experience seem to far outweigh the costs, and content-intensive sessions can smoothly lead to meaningful and reflective self-directed learning.

**TABLE 1: Global Current Affairs – Student Unit Evaluation for academic year 2010/11**

| Evaluation question | mean |
| --- | --- |
| Unit is stimulating and challenging: | 4.63 |
| Unit relevant to current debates: | 4.79 |
| Workshops interesting/accessible: | 4.33 |

**Training seminar helpful:**                    4.48

**Quality/amount of materials on VLE:**          4.70

**Putting enough hours of homework:**            3.11

**Anonymous feedback survey; Likert-scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree); Covering unit delivery, learning resources, assessment and the student's own role; as well as the opportunity for qualitative comments on strengths, weaknesses and topics that the students would like to be covered.**

This pedagogic experience demonstrates that the synergies between journalism education and global learning are very substantive. This is true across all steps of the pedagogic process, such as the intended learning outcomes, the teaching and assessment methods, as well as the acquired skills and competencies, which also serve all steps in the process of media literacy. Moreover, the incorporation of global current affairs into the curriculum tackles several areas of tension in journalism education, such as the perceived dichotomy between theory and practice (Hunter and Nel, 2011), critical reflection versus skills, and research versus teaching (Harcup, 2011). The conceptualisation of theory as an abstract and luxurious philosophy removed from the reality of the profession, or even worse, as an irrelevant distraction, is a common pitfall. Rather, scholarship needs to be – and, increasingly, is being – reframed as the fundamental context which future journalists ought to command in order to survive, function and thrive in a competitive and cacophonous public sphere. That is to say, theory is not only a means of explaining or analysing past practice (Harcup, 2011) but also of shaping future practice. As with any transmission of principles or values, it is normatively charged – and so it should be.

Obviously, any such process of reflection would not be complete without a consideration of the limitations or weaknesses of the proposed approach. It should be noted that the pedagogic model described here is specifically designed for journalism education, hence its broader application and benefits ought to be tested. Furthermore, the outlined curriculum could be characterised as time-sensitive in the sense that both the line-up of the topics covered and the material within those topics have to be constantly revisited. However, my experience of delivering this particular unit over the last three years shows that there is remarkable continuity in the "narrative" of global current affairs. That is to say – as with every other module being launched – after an initial period of curriculum development, the material can be easily updated and tailored to each academic year's circumstances while maintaining a core narrative about the agenda of the 21st century.

One of the main difficulties faced during the delivery of the unit was ensuring that students invested the time and energy required to complete appropriate independent study, not so much during the assessment-intensive final few weeks, but from the very beginning. In an increasingly consumerist Higher Education environment, in which student expectations are very strategic, and attitudes towards independent learning can be counter-productive, demonstrating the relevance of political and historical narratives, including that of stories taking place in remote parts of the world, can be a challenge. However, the level of students' engagement with the material is a good indicator of whether they, in turn, will be adequately inspired and motivated in order to play that role as professional journalists facing audiences preoccupied with the distractions of escapism and entertainment offered by the media.

## Conclusion

Throughout this paper I have argued that it essential we stop treating global awareness and engagement (both within higher education and amongst the public at large) merely as the responsibility of the individual student or citizen who is adequately self-motivated and media-savvy enough to be self-empowered. While engagement – local, national and global – is a central element of civic duty shared by all citizens, in an age dominated by consumer choice, multimedia distractions and complex and multilayered decision-making processes, providing citizens with adequate support and resources for them to engage at the global level is not a luxury – it is a fundamental question of enfranchisement and democracy. Hence, at the particular level of journalism education, and while acknowledging the responsibility of individuals and the importance of independent learning, students should be provided with the appropriate context, direction, structure and media literacy tools necessary to access, evaluate and ultimately create globally relevant stories.

This brings us to the future of global current affairs, for which the role of journalism education is absolutely critical in two ways.

Firstly – and this is probably the more pressing and challenging of the two issues – journalism education can be instrumental in securing the future of foreign reporting by helping develop and apply new forms of storytelling and dissemination; especially forms which acknowledge the gradually more important role of marketing and social media, as well as the increasingly less relevant boundaries across genres and media.

This paper fully concurs with Zuckerman (2008) in making the case for new narrative forms of international reportage that attract wider audiences, especially those not traditionally engaged with global issues. This may happen by exploiting the potential of social media to mobilise and involve audiences: "Producers need to consider how they can learn lessons from other genres, such as youth drama, which have achieved a great deal as a result of their innovative use of social and online media." (Scott et al, 2011, p.3).

The benefits of interpersonal discussion for audiences' engagement with media messages were articulated decades ago as part of the "two-step flow" model. Robinson and Levy found that talking about the news had at least as powerful an effect on comprehension as mere exposure to the news media:

> Public understanding of the news does increase as people talk about it. Journalists and others would do well, then, to consider ways to create and present news which stimulates or otherwise takes advantage of this interpersonal "second stage" of the information flow (1986, p.172).

Social media – and emerging social trends such as viewers discussing on Twitter the media narratives that they are simultaneously watching on television – may offer an opportunity for that second stage to materialise.

Another way to develop alternative forms of storytelling on global issues is by utilising soft news (Carroll, 2007): global news is not short of drama and new generations of journalists should be encouraged to develop innovative storytelling formats that utilise the fascinating aspects of global current affairs, alongside traditional reportage. The commercial success of robust and often groundbreaking global investigations of international organised crime told through gripping formats (such as Misha Glenny's *McMafia: A Journey Through the Global Criminal Underworld*) shows that it is possible to reach and educate a large audience.

Furthermore, the informative and engaging role of fictional narratives (such as TV drama, films and novels that attract the curiosity of large audiences) should be acknowledged and embraced. Padania et al (2007) note the educational impact of fictional narratives such as *Blood Diamond* and *The Constant Gardener*. Scott (2009, p.3) found that people who had watched feature films and read literary fiction set in developing countries thought that these fictional narratives:

> had the ability to change their perceptions and enhance understanding but television drama had failed to realise this potential. This research found that, while television content about developing countries can engage and enthuse all audiences, this can only be achieved if a broad range of relevant connections to the lives of those in the audience is made in all genres of programming (Scott, 2009, p.3).

Secondly, and finally, journalism education has an additional role which is more long-term but equally important: graduates who have engaged with the world at large and also with their own role and responsibilities as global citizens and mediators may be more likely to lobby their editors or news organisations in order to invest more heavily in foreign reporting and global affairs coverage. Therefore, today's students will become tomorrow's ambassadors for global citizenship and sustainable development in the newsroom. Carroll (2007) reminds us that "foreign correspondents provide an essential contextualizing function, reporting stories in terms that local audiences understand and making connections to local issues that a wire story would be unable to make" (Zuckerman, 2008, p.4). A critical engagement with that role during higher education may prove to be a formative experience that will define a professional's future decisions and, ultimately, affect the world.

# Appendix

**Image 1: Sample from student photo-essay (alternative energy in two local southern coastal city communities, Portsmouth and Southampton – by Mark Allaway)**



**Image 2: Sample from student photo-essay (alternative energy in two local southern coastal city communities, Portsmouth and Southampton – by Mark Allaway)**



**Articles**

**Image 3: Sample from student photo-essay (ethical food production at Gonalston Farm in Nottingham – by Eli Beaton)**
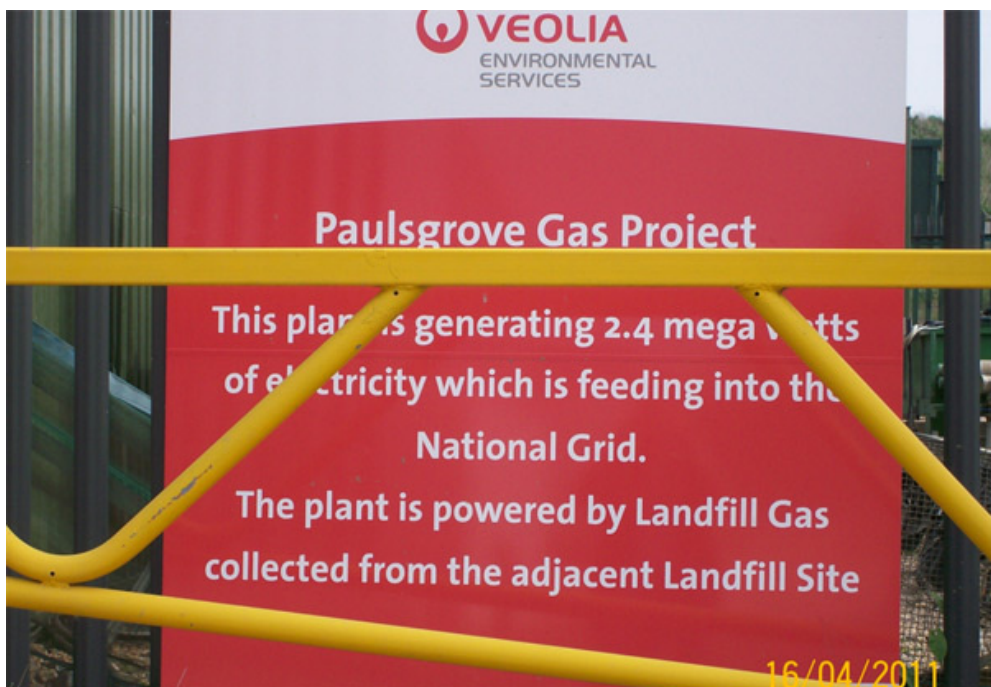


**Image 4: Sample from student photo-essay (ethical food production at Gonalston Farm in Nottingham – by Eli Beaton)**

Articles

**Image 5: Sample from student photo-essay (the fishing industry in Hastings – by Lu-Hai Liang)**



**Image 6: Sample from student photo-essay (the fishing industry in Hastings – by Lu-Hai Liang)**

**Articles**

## Acknowledgements

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# Confessions of a hackademic

## Tony Harcup, University of Sheffield

**Like the vast majority of my generation of hacks, I never came across names such as Galtung and Ruge during my years of gathering and crafting news. It was only when recruited by a local college to help with a new journalism training course, and after one thing led to another I ended up as a university lecturer, that I became aware of such luminaries of academe. As a 'hackademic', as none of us called it back then, I was suddenly required not only to pass on tips and techniques of the trade, but also to familiarise myself with what scholars had to say about it all.**

It was whilst immersing myself in such literature that I came across repeated references to Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge whenever the topic arose of what makes news. Apparently they had produced a landmark study, coming up with 12 news values to explain why some events get covered and others don't. This seemed to be all that a surprisingly large number of academic texts had to say on the subject, beyond listing the 12 news values or factors as if they had been carved into tablets of stone and handed down from on high for the rest of us to memorise and recite in the manner of primary schoolchildren chanting their times-tables.

Discovering this academic 'discourse' about journalism was all very interesting, but not half as interesting as when my hackademic colleague Deirdre O'Neill and I did what seemed the obvious thing for journalists to do, which was to go back to the source material and start asking questions. It turned out that, not only was their research getting a bit whiskery by the dawn of the 21$^{st}$ century, but Galtung and Ruge (1965, pp.64-65) themselves had never made any great claims for the comprehensiveness of their study when it came to defining news. It was originally a paper presented to a Nordic Conference on Peace Research back in 1963

before being published in revised form in 1965. You wouldn't know it from many of the academic works that have cited their article on news values since, but they were more interested in preventing the next war than in analysing journalism; the only news stories they examined were those published in four Norwegian newspapers in the early 1960s concerning international events around the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus.

## Having a go

It was hard not to conclude from perusing all this that some of the authors dutifully listing Galtung and Ruge's news values had never actually read their full article, but had relied on short extracts or citations in other works. Cuttings jobs are not the sole preserve of the time-poor journalist, it seems. So that was how Deirdre and I got into doing academic research: we read some of it, we asked some questions about it, we looked for some answers of our own, and we thought we would have a go. Our subsequent article (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001) has, we are told, become one of the most frequently downloaded *Journalism Studies* articles; not bad for a couple of humble hackademics, when you consider some of the stellar international names published in Professor Bob Franklin's esteemed organ. Yes, it was hard work on top of our teaching – apart from examining 1,276 news stories published in the UK press, we also tried to read everything we could lay our hands on that academics and/or journalists had ever written about news – but it was interesting. It was not research for research's sake; we felt it would be useful for students, scholars, 'practitioners', and us as lecturers.

It was also fun. Yet many journalists who teach within higher education miss out on such fun. It was to try to explore why so many hackademics don't seem to produce what is classed as academic research that I embarked upon a recent research project with support from the Association for Journalism Education. Via questionnaires and some follow-up interviews, I gathered information on the experiences and opinions of 65 journalists-turned-journalism-educators working within the university sector in the UK and Ireland. Findings included the fact that only just over a quarter of the sample had had any research published in a peer-reviewed academic journal; that fewer than one in ten had had any research submitted to the UK's Research Assessment Exercise; that many felt there were obstacles placed in the way of journalists becoming academically-recognised researchers; and yet, despite what many saw as the 'gobbledebollocks' of much academic discourse, many hackademics valued a questioning, reflective and scholarly approach to journalism education alongside the passing on of skills from one generation to the next (Harcup, 2011a; 2011b; 2012). These journalism educators, ranging from newbies to veterans, told some fascinating individual stories, and telling their tales with quotes and anecdotes forms the more journalistic part of the published research. Taken together, as a sizeable sample and considered alongside relevant literature, their responses shed enough light to help explore issues at the centre of journalism education in some depth; that's the more academic part of the research, if you like. But one hackademic was not offered the opportunity of completing the questionnaire; hence the article you are now reading, which offers some personal reflections.

## No monopoly on wisdom - or churnalism

One of the key questions explored was whether there is in fact any point in conducting academic research into journalism. Unsurprisingly, I think there is, otherwise I would not have bothered. In fact, there are probably many points, but the argument perhaps boils down to what each of us feels about journalism itself. If we conceive of journalism as just another job, or merely part of the entertainment business with no particular social significance, then it is not difficult to conclude that it could function perfectly well without academic scrutiny or insight. But if we feel that (at least some) journalism has (at least potentially) an important role to play in society, then understanding a bit more about how it works must be worthwhile; and using academic research methods is one (but not the only) way of helping us achieve a deeper understanding.

That is not to say that academic research exists on a higher plane than journalism. Academics certainly do not have a monopoly on wisdom, and much journalistic practice involves a depth of intellectual activity alongside a rough but effective form of 'peer review' that perhaps deserves a bit more respect than it often receives. Likewise, journalists do not have a monopoly on churnalism, with many academics churning out references to the likes of Galtung and Ruge's news values and even churning out - without checking - the canard that the *Guardian*'s Nick Davies coined the word 'churnalism'. He did not, nor did he even claim to, yet countless scholars mistakenly tell us that he did, often in the same breath with which they ridicule journalists for failing to research stories properly. For the record, the word was coined by Waseem Zakir, but that's another story (Harcup, 2008; Slattery, 2011). Scholars have been known to share the parochialism of some journalists too. Pick up books by many American 'j-school' professors, turn to the index or bibliography and look for mention of a world beyond the United States; you'll have found a rare gem if there are more than a handful of such references.

Yet, despite this fallibility of scholars, to dismiss academic research into journalism in its entirety would surely be to put on an elephant-sized pair of blinkers. Happily, hardly any of the sample took this 'anti' view in principle, notwithstanding much scepticism about the relevance, approach, style, tone, findings and all-round usefulness of some of the actual research they had come across (Harcup, 2011c). Indeed, the creation of the new AJE Journal is a reflection of a willingness to embrace research on the part of many hackademics. As one of my old schoolteachers puts it, echoing the ideas of influential educationalist Paulo Freire (1972): 'I have never taught without learning, and believe that there can be no true teaching without learning' (Searle, 1998, p.3). There can be constant interplay between teaching and research, and the day we think we've got nothing more to learn is probably the day we should stop trying to teach.

## 'It's not astrophysics'

When it comes to learning about and researching journalism, to what extent is it an advantage to have worked as a journalist? At a common sense level it must be an advantage, because of our familiarity with, and access to, newsrooms, their occupants, their argot, and their routines. But we have been advised by Antonio Gramsci (1971, p.423) – a journalist *and* an intellectual, no less – that we should question what seems to be common sense. Certainly I feel a background in journalism has been nothing but an advantage in my research, but not everyone feels the same; after all, a little distance can provide perspective. There is, however, one rather mundane but deeply felt way in which years spent working in journalism have disadvantaged many working in universities: late entry has sometimes left them lagging behind other colleagues in terms of promotion, at the same time as practitioner experience has landed them with heavy teaching and feedback loads that seemingly leave little time for anything else.

Chief among the obstacles that many hackademics feel placed in the way of their becoming academic researchers is this shortage of time, but others feel this is something of an excuse. I suspect there is a bit of both going on, because with all the time in the world some are just not going to do it, while some with no time still manage to make more. Yes, some of us have high teaching and assessment loads; yes, there are never enough hours in the day; yes, some of our institutions don't always get what it is we do. But this study forced me to read research published beyond my usual purview in journals such as *Studies in Higher Education*, *Journal of Professional Nursing*, and *Higher Education Quarterly*. Guess what: we are not alone in feeling overworked and undervalued. Tensions exist within other vocational or 'applied' disciplines, and even many academics teaching traditional academic subjects complain that the only time they now have for research is at the weekend, at night, or in the hours before dawn. As a trade unionist, I do think some very unreasonable demands are being placed on journalists-turned-journalism-educators; but there's a bit of me that thinks that, if we're really that keen on doing something, we won't let such obstacles prevent us. At least, those of us without small kids or other caring responsibilities won't. JFDI, as they say; up to a point, anyway.

It might help if, upon appointment, hackademics were offered some kind of beginners' guide both to university-speak and to academic research methods. As journalists, we should be good at asking questions and finding things out, but as strangers in a strange land it would still be useful if at least some of the known unknowns were pointed out to us by somebody who knows. I was lucky, I suppose, that my being approached to do some teaching coincided with embarking on a part-time MA. I became a mature student out of interest rather than with any thoughts of a different career, and the course was not even in journalism, but it did introduce me to the delights of exploring issues at length complete with literature reviews, proper referencing and all that. To that extent it helped demystify the research process. It seems perverse for higher education institutions to expect staff to be able immediately to conduct academic research without offering any such education into how it's done; nonetheless, one of the hackademics insisted that, 'curiosity should suffice – it's not astrophysics'. Harsh? Maybe, maybe not. Certainly, just taking (or making) the time to read some of the relevant journals would soon provide some clues as to how it's done, and on top of that there's always the old journalistic standby: ask.

## Peer review

Many hackademics *have* had a go and submitted research to academic journals, with a range of results. Whilst some have gone on to become frequently published researchers, others have been knocked back, disillusioned or demoralised by the response of the anonymous peer reviewers used by such journals. My own experience of having work peer reviewed has certainly been mixed. Sometimes comments have been insightful, learned and useful, resulting in a process of rewrites and resubmissions that, although perhaps irritating at first, resulted in some significant improvements to the quality of the finished work. At other times it has felt as if reviewers may have been badly chosen or just having a bad day, dismissing months of hard

labour with a few cursory lines of invective. Strangely, the worst experience was of a peer reviewer who was wholly positive about an article; so positive that he pasted more than a thousand words of it, uncredited and unedited, into a book he was 'writing' at the time (*Private Eye*, 2001). Welcome to the world of academic rigour.

Even putting such a – hopefully rare – horror story to one side, peer review as a system clearly has some weaknesses. I have now done enough reviewing myself to know that, even though we might think of ourselves as social 'scientists', there's a whole lot of subjectivity going on. How could there not be? When interviewed, journal editors said they were well aware of the imperfections of peer review, but that it remained the least worst way of assessing submissions (Harcup, 2011a: 45). The more of us hackademics who get involved in submitting articles, and then being asked to do some peer reviewing ourselves, the more we can broaden the pool of reviewers and thereby open up journals to a wider range of perspectives and styles. If this means declaring that a clever article is unpublishable because it is written in impenetrable gobbledebollocks, then so be it.

## 'Careful, discriminating criticism'

Not every journalist recruited by every university to teach journalism is necessarily keen on becoming an academic researcher, and there are many ways in which hackademics can be inspirational and reflective educational practitioners without ever contemplating a content analysis or a semi-structured research interview. But we could all benefit from reading more (critically) than we do because, as one of the respondents said, it's good for our brains. And if a few more of us then get stuck in to using some of the methodological tools at our disposal to enquire into our trade, there might be some positive spin-off benefits not just for journalism but also for the way research is conducted and communicated. If there is one thing that we ought to be able to contribute it is surely being able to write about complex matters in a clear and understandable way. So let's be confident enough not to ape the worst conventions of academe; the launch of this journal may be able to assist in that.

More than 100 years ago a professor at the University of Chicago was extolling the benefits of bringing journalists into the academy:

> The sum of the whole matter…is to bring practical newspaper men into the lecture and seminar room, not for mere general addresses on the importance of the press to civilization, but for careful, discriminating criticism and concrete suggestion… All efforts which the universities may make in the direction of journalistic training of a definite, practical sort will be futile until they succeed in securing the regular, compensated services of men recognised as leaders in their profession, representing its best achievements and its highest ideals and aims. (Vincent, 1905, p.31)

Without wishing to appear too grand, that's us; even better, we're not all men. But, on the basis of my own experiences and observations in and around the hackademy, I believe that alongside the careful criticism and concrete suggestions, a bit more openness, humility, mutual respect and inquisitiveness on the part of all of us involved – journalists, academics, hackademics – would not go amiss.

Of course, all such talk of devoting time and energy to research may sound unrealistic in an epoch of deepening cuts and increasing marketisation of higher education. But if *we* are not prepared to defend the value of striving for knowledge and understanding, even whilst contributing to vocationally-oriented courses, who will? In any event, conditions do not remain unchanged forever. I was reminded of this recently when listening to the venerable Professor Galtung himself speak in Yorkshire – not about journalism, as it happens, although he did praise WikiLeaks as 'a gift to humanity', but about his favourite subject of world peace - and he quoted a Chinese saying: 'Wisdom is to put your ear to the ground and hear the sound of the counterforce.'

Perhaps wisdom is also to know that we don't know everything. Research is just one way of trying to know a little more. What's not to like?

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# Newsreaders as eye candy: the hidden agenda of public service broadcasting

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*Abstract:* Television news adds to the wider discourses that permeate society about feminine beauty. Women still face much greater pressure than men regarding their physical appearance and body image. How they look matters, especially with regards to newsreaders and broadcasters. We investigated the opinions of journalists and audiences about the appearance of women newsreaders and found that physical appearance plays a significant role for female presenters. Also, our research suggests that where women are glamorised they are belittled in terms of intelligence and their abilities. The audience for television news are aware of the narrow versions of beauty that are being presented and note that they would like to see more diverse representations of women reading the news.

Keywords: *newsreaders, gender, sexualisation, age, representation, beauty, television news, discourse*.

## Aims

**This study investigates the physical appearance of male and female newsreaders in England with reference to age, credibility and industry response. We argue that television news implicitly promotes stereotypical physical attractiveness, particularly for women. Recent research demonstrates that television is still the main source of news for many older people (Clausen, 2004 cited in Weibel, Wissmath and Groner, 2008, p.466) and hence forms part of the discourses that permeate society (Giles, 2009, p.318).**

## Women looking good

Much has been written about the preoccupation with image for women in the media (see Downs and Harrison, 1985; Demarest and Allen, 2005; Wykes and Gunter, 2005) and how these reinforce dominant discourses of beauty as well as patriarchal norms. Patriarchy literally means "the rule of the father and refers to an overarching system of male dominance" (Milestone and Meyer 2012, p.10). It is where the system may oppress and exploit women and where it works in the interest of males. We relate the lack of older female newsreaders to the general system of male dominance in broadcasting industries, where older men tend to enjoy prestige compared with older women who are devalued or lose their jobs.

Discourses of beauty relate to how the media tend to portray images and notions of feminine attractiveness where women are asked to be "always young, white, beautiful and thin" (hooks 1992, p.62). Thus, the media

communicate about and give substance to narrow notions of feminine beauty. The way that female news-readers are presented, dressed, allowed (or not) to age, all add weight to the knowledge about perceived appropriateness of acceptable feminine beauty.

This very narrow image of femininity emphasises looks (Hamermesh and Biddle, 1994, p.1177) and stereotypical notions of beauty (Kaufman, 1980:37; Furnham, Hester and Weir, 1990, p.744). It has been argued that some organisations employ women who have the 'right look' (Warhurst and Nickson, 2009, p.385). For example, former GMTV presenter Emma Crosby admitted that she probably would not have landed the job if she had been less attractive (Cavendish, 2009). Similarly, the former *Sun* editor, Kelvin MacKenzie, argues: "The whole point of TV is that it's about image" (*Daily Mail,* 2009). We argue that specific criteria regarding image apply more to women than to men, that the sex appeal of women is exploited (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming, 2004), and that by this means patriarchal power structures are reinforced (hooks, 1994, p.86).

This emphasis on physical appearance applies to newsreaders (Engstrom and Ferri, 2000 cited in Weibel et al. 2008, p.468) and particularly female, rather than male, presenters (Cash and Brown, 1989, p.368). Appearance, especially youthful appearance, is valued more than ability (Standord, 2005, p.464). In another example, *GMTV* presenter, Fiona Phillips, (cited in Price, 2009) noted that: "Men run television. They have this thing in their heads that you have to have some young, sexy woman and an older man." Similarly, BBC journalist Kate Adie (cited in Leonard, 2001) commented: "They want people with cute faces and cute bottoms and nothing else in between . . . they are more concerned about the shape of your leg than professional ability." Conor Dignam, editor of *Broadcast* magazine, said there was "an element of the beauty parade about it" (Smith, 2005). And   Peter Sissons (former prime time presenter of news programmes including *BBC News at Ten*) hit out at what were dubbed 'autocuties' in 2008 claiming that many newsreaders had not "earned the right" to do the job (*Daily Mail*, 2008). Journalists latched onto the term 'autocutie' to describe female newsreaders who were perceived as succeeding through looks rather than ability (Eyre, 2006). We argue that this perception also applies more to female newsreaders and feeds male perceptions of beauty, supporting the dominant discourses that permeate wider society.

Previous studies have documented that there is discrimination against older women in broadcast institutions. The 1960s television presenter Dame Joan Bakewell said: " . . . the lack of women over a certain age is damaging. There are no grey-haired women on TV as there are grey-haired men . . . it's like they have all somehow died off" (Moore, 2009). As women age, or have children, they lose status within news organisations (Allan, 1999, p.136). Mariella Frostrup (2009) stated: "Take a look on your TV screens and you certainly won't see what's erroneously referred to as a 'minority' audience - those over 40 - fairly represented . . . the truth is that no realistic female presenter expects her career onscreen to run very far into her 50s."

Older women tend to be replaced by younger women (Plunkett 2010). For example, in 2006 Anna Ford left *BBC News* after 30 years, at the age of 62, saying she felt she would have been "shovelled off " to a graveyard shift if she had carried on (Revoir and Thomas 2009). After hearing of Dimbleby's *Question Time* contract being extended until he is 77 she said: "I wonder how these charming dinosaurs such as Mr Dimbleby and John Simpson continue to procure contracts with the BBC, when, however hard I look, I fail to see any woman of the same age, the same intelligence and the same rather baggy looks" (Walker 2011). Moira Stuart was moved off the current affairs *Sunday AM* slot and resigned six months later (Martin 2007). Although she stayed tight lipped about her removal it generated a lot of discussion about ageism among her colleagues, MPs, the public and and media (Martin, 2007). For instance, John Humphrys, who anchors the *Radio 4 Today* programme in his 60s said: "It may be pure coincidence but there do seem to be remarkably few women with a few lines on their faces presenting television news or current affairs compared with the wrinkled men" (Alleyne, 2007).

Miriam O'Reilly won an employment tribunal case against the BBC on the grounds of ageism. Aged 53 she was one of four female presenters of *Countryfile*, over 40, dropped in 2008 while John Craven, aged 68, was kept on (BBC 2011). The tribunal heard allegations that O'Reilly had been asked if it was "time for Botox "and was warned to be "careful with those wrinkles when high definition comes in" (BBC 2011). Michelle Mitchell, charity director at Age UK, said: "The idea that wrinkles or grey hair can sound the death knell for the careers of female TV presenters is beyond appalling, especially in a country where over a third of the population is aged 50 and over" (BBC 2011). Selina Scott also reached a settlement with Channel Five after launching legal action for age discrimination at the age of 57. She alleged that a deal to stand in for Natasha Kaplinsky while on maternity leave failed to materialise. Instead 28-year-old Isla Traquair and Matt Barbet, 32, were appointed (Revoir, 2009). So women who are chosen to read the news reinforce

discourses of beauty in cases where women remain young and beautiful. Such beauty is perceived by men as being a desirable hallmark of femininity.

Hamermesh and Biddle (1994, p.1186) argue that there is a significant penalty for 'bad' looks amongst men. However, we suggest that when male presenters have wrinkles and let their hair go grey, they are described as having interesting or distinguished faces. Likewise, older male speakers are seen as more credible than older female speakers (Strickland, 1980 cited in Weibel et al., 2008, p.471). Hence, women may self-select themselves out of the labour force if they do not perceive themselves to be attractive (Hamermesh and Biddle 1994, p.1188).

## Methodology

We conducted 167 questionnaires (not the focus of this article), eight interviews with senior broadcast journalists and 20 interviews with audiences for television news. The industry interviews consisted of a mixture of telephone and face-to-face interviews, lasting from thirty minutes to an hour. The journalists included a range of well-known presenters, editors and producers who had worked across various industries including the BBC, ITV and Al Jazeera English. The interviewees were asked their viewpoints regarding a selection of news presenters and about their own newsroom experiences.

The 20 audience interviews (10 men, 10 women) were conducted in the interviewees' homes. They began with some introductory questions and then a flexible approach was adopted in an attempt to discover their opinions about newsreaders and attractiveness.

### Beautiful newsreaders and dominant discourses

The journalists and interviewees commented that newsreaders were clearly chosen because of how they looked. One female presenter (industry interviewee) said: "I think if you are a young woman you have to be reasonably easy on the eye. It is unlikely you would get the job unless you fulfilled the attractiveness requirement." One former producer of BBC and ITV news and current affairs programmes said she had worked in environments where "the thinking behind the on-screener has always been to favour the better-looking women" (industry interviewee). Similarly, a senior broadcaster and former senior producer commented: "I think looks [for female newsreaders] definitely play a part. People have been chosen as anchors because they look attractive and people who were less attractive have not been chosen" (industry interviewee). One former male producer at ITV, commented: "I can't imagine any woman who is not good-looking, or who is fat, ever being taken on as a newsreader unless she is the funniest, wittiest person" (industry interviewee). So whilst there appears to be a measure of equality in the increased numbers of female newsreaders, they actually support the dominant discourses of femininity within patriarchal power structures. Hence, broadcasting institutions are promoting idealised images of women – particularly highlighting youth and a specific version of attractiveness. By casting particular types of women as newsreaders, this is perpetuating myths and stereotypes about women. As these discourses circulate they may seep through into everyday life (Giles 2009, p. 318) and promote idealised versions of femininity. Youth and narrow versions of beauty come to be perceived as the dominant discourse for women whereas male newsreaders are focused on in terms of their ability. Hence, men tend to be valued for their abilities whereas women tend to be valued for their looks.

A former BBC newsreader (female) noted that one "chauvinistic male boss ... made no bones about hiring blondes with big tits" (industry interview). However another female BBC radio broadcaster/editor (industry interviewee) argues there is now less focus on looks: "It is an historical legacy. A man could look like a bag of spanners with an attractive woman as a sidekick. This is a hangover and not the way women are recruited. There is something cheesy and old-fashioned about that now." Another former ITV producer (industry interview, female) commented that one particular female newsreader at the BBC was highly able but did not have a prime-time slot because she failed the criteria for stereotypical attractiveness. Hence, it is harder for such presenters and those working in this medium to escape the ideological notions of femininity.

Audiences are also aware of the stereotypes regarding female newsreaders. For example, Paul said: "It's difficult to think of female newsreaders that aren't attractive and therefore, attractiveness is obviously some quality they are selecting by." Another interviewee commented: "They are chosen for their look[s] and beauty . . . You only see young female presenters." Most of the interviewees were unhappy that female newsreaders did not look realistic and thought that news, particularly, should challenge dominant gender discourses.

News presenters may take the extreme measure of plastic surgery in order to fit such stereotypical images. One senior broadcaster, who was interviewed, said: "A reporter I worked with who very much wanted to be a presenter knew she wouldn't because she had a massive conk." That reporter went on to have plastic surgery and became a presenter within two months of the operation. She provided another example: "One

reporter I worked with had big boobs. She had a breast op and lost a lot of weight. She blossomed . . . and became a presenter." One former prime-time national newsreader that was interviewed suggested that all women felt pressure to dye their hair but such pressures are magnified when women are on television. According to another former ITV producer Botox injections, teeth whitening and veneers have also become common (industry interview). She said: "It's like *Stepford Wives*, making everyone look bland."  We argue that it not only makes everyone look bland, but it presents the news presenters (particularly women) in a particular way and this is part of the wider discourses about femininity which permeate society. *Sky News* presenter Kay Burley has spoken about having an eye lift after turning 40 and a facelift for her 50th birthday (Allan, 2011).

Some women are either passed over or do not apply to read the news because they perceive themselves to be too unattractive. A high-profile ITV news presenter stated: "If you consider yourself not to be the best-looking woman in the world then you won't put yourself up for it" (industry interviewee - male). Similarly, a senior female broadcaster that was interviewed noted: "Women . . . know appearance is an important part of TV so they see it as a barrier." So these implicit values are self-imposed by female presenters. Whilst there are many women behind the scenes, one male notes that some women will "never make it in front of the screen" and some make that decision for themselves. One female national newsreader said: "It is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because women are generally not accustomed to staying on much after the age of 50 there is a feeling women do not want to" (industry interview).  A former BBC senior editor (male) said: "You may get a woman who goes off because she says she's made to feel she can go no further. Has she been told this or does she feel this herself?" It is hard for women to single-handedly challenge these dominant discourses and so, rather depressingly, some women choose not to try.

A former newsreader suggested that female presenters often signed off their own careers when they became pregnant, noting there was dislike in newsrooms regarding 'frumpy, mother type figures' (industry interviewee - female). She said she knew of presenters, one currently high profile, who were choosing their jobs over motherhood. Presenters returning to the job after maternity leave, (such as Natasha Kaplinsky and Kirsty Young), have felt pressure to regain their pre-pregnancy shape. Young has said it does matter how you look on screen and said: "It is horrendous. But if you're in television, you either get out if it bothers you so much, or you try to find a way of participating in the game that is acceptable to you" (Petre, 2010). Kaplinsky appeared to have regained her pre-pregnancy figure within five months of the birth (Hale and Cable, 2009).

Some female presenters find they are sidelined when they return to work after maternity leave, although one female BBC editor (industry interviewee) suggests that "this . . . may have happened in the 1980s" but is no longer the case. Despite such assertions, women still feel that they have to conform to certain gendered norms of beauty in order to read the news on television.

## The age of beauty

Whilst the audience for television news is growing older (Chambers et al., 2004), the presenters (particularly female presenters) are getting younger (industry interview - male). A female national newsreader who was interviewed said: "When I was 29 there was a whole raft of women in TV, but there aren't that many of them left now. Some have gone into production . . . but there are not many on screen." She said there were plenty of 30-year-olds but few in their 50s. "It's a strange phenomenon. This is not true of men. You think this is a career, all the time you are getting better and then you look around and there are only a few of you left. Things are seriously amiss . . . 45 is probably the turning point. It is when we first start to think 'how much longer is my career going to last?' It doesn't occur to men in the same way . . . It would be nice to think 35-year-olds now are allowed to carry on until they are 60. At the moment they just disappear." Similarly, a former newsreader (industry interviewee - female) noted: "Many (women) drop off news screens when they hit 35." She said she had been dropped from her news presenter role and replaced with a younger journalist.  This clearly reinforces patriarchal norms and it establishes wider norms in society that being older and even having grey hair, are not acceptable versions of femininity.  Being young becomes the only acceptable version of femininity.

Audience interviewees also noted age as a factor. Sarah said: "The average age of female newscasters has come down since I was in my twenties."  Mark noted: "None of them have grey hair . . . I don't think I've ever seen a woman reading the news with grey hair." And another interviewee noted: "You rarely see an old woman presenting the news." However, a female national newsreader (an interviewee) suggested that if you put an ashtray on the TV to read the news and left it long enough, people would get used to the idea and: "If you had a grey-haired 60-year-old woman reading the news and left her there long enough then people would get used to it." But she warned about the impact of "unforgiving" High Definition television.

"There's nowhere to hide with HD. It could make it worse for women." She added: "One day they may let women grow older on screen." Surely, we argue, the decision-makers could challenge such dominant discourses rather than reinforcing them?

The audience interviews showed that the familiarity, trustworthiness and credibility of newsreaders -- irrespective of gender -- increased the longer they were on screen. Sarah noted: "An older presenter would be more trustworthy simply because I feel they have more experience in life." Reginald said: "Because you've seen them regularly for decades and they're a familiar face . . . that's part of trusting them." Mark noted: "I think it's having silver hair . . . Old men look more trustworthy." Similarly Donna said she was more likely to trust people if "they've been around for several years. You think, well they probably wouldn't be able to do that unless they were fairly reliable." The fact that older female newsreaders may be replaced by younger models means that the female newsreaders are generally seen as less credible and less trustworthy than their male counterparts. Again this underpins the patriarchal power structures, where women have to work within the limits of acceptable femininity which places female newsreaders at a disadvantage and subordinate to male newsreaders.

Whilst there is pressure on men regarding looks, there is more diversity for male presenters. This was highlighted by a high-profile news programme presenter (industry interviewee - male): "The criteria for women are much narrower and unimaginative. With men it's okay to have a craggy, lived-in, interesting and good face for television. With women they have got to be good looking. Blokes can be a bit of a minger but still get on TV because the criteria are wider." A national newsreader (industry interviewee - female) suggested as men get older they gain "authority and gravitas" whereas "it's very difficult to be an older woman" as a news presenter. She also said: "You aren't accepted for quite the same things . . . Everything good about a 45-year-old man is the same as for a 45-year-old woman but it isn't valued much." Thus, whilst male news readers are allowed to have grey hair and grow older, women have to remain young and physically attractive.

Veronica, one of the interviewees, noted: "They tend to hang on to older men . . . but there seem to be less older women. I think it's rubbish . . . it's being decided on the public's behalf that they don't want older women on the television . . . I would rather have somebody good at their job." Another interviewee, Joan complained about presenters like Moira Stewart being told they're too old "whereas the men don't have that requirement". So the audiences themselves would like organisations like the BBC to challenge such dominant ideology.

However, when female newsreaders have been sexualised (such as the way that Natasha Kaplinsky was presented in the wider media as well as on the television screen) they tend to be taken less seriously. It can damage their careers, pigeon-holing them into a certain type of femininity. One high-profile news programme presenter noted: "One channel that's guilty of going down the Barbie route is Sky Sports News." A male interviewee noted: "You can't quite take the bimbos as seriously as I could someone who is doing the job first and getting the numbers of viewers up second." Ratings leapt when Natasha Kaplinsky first appeared on Channel 5 with more than 800,000 viewers tuning in. This was dubbed the 'Kaplinsky effect' (Thomas, 2009) However, it grew by 25mper cent when she was on maternity leave and dropped on her return. Miriam O'Reilly has drawn attention to the fact that viewers are tuning in for older presenters with five million viewers for *Rip Off Britain* with Gloria Hunniford, Angela Rippon and Jennie Bond, " . . . broadcasters are finding that, surprise, surprise, viewers are watching," she said (Barnicoat and Spencer, 2011). This could lead to dismissive attitudes towards some female newsreaders. "I think it's about this credibility thing that if you have two people telling you something serious and one was in a suit and tie and one was in a red dress with [a] low cleavage, which do you believe? To me that dumbs it down. Just loses credibility in my mind."

Glamourising female newsreaders actually annoyed some audience members. "I do feel slightly irritated and slightly offended when news presenters look very like women who are put there to attract the male viewers" (Jean, audience interviewee). The male newsreaders appear to be better respected as professionals compared with women. Audience interviewees perceived some female presenters as being there to 'look good' rather than serious newsreaders. Another interviewee, Yasmin, noted: "The other thing that I really object to is when a young woman is placed in the position of co-presenting with an older man and she's made out to be kind of young and silly . . . She's labelled as being unintelligent or lightweight because she's younger." So the focus on physical appearance promotes a particularly demeaning version of femininity. This adds to our argument about physical appearance maintaining patriarchal power structures. Other discourses come into play here – where those female newsreaders who are sexualised are belittled in terms of their intellect and abilities in relation to male newsreaders.

**Comment & criticism**

## PSB and industry change

One female national newsreader (industry interview) said: "There's a huge swathe of women over 50 or 60 who hardly ever see themselves reflected on TV. It's sad and bad and slightly mad . . . We do not see many women on TV who are not in the first or second flush of youth . . . It's harder to be a presenter now." Hence, she disagrees with a national producer/editor (also a female industry interviewee) who suggested that things had become easier for women. One former senior editor (a male industry interviewee) noted that whilst the BBC does take representation seriously "it takes time to be implemented". However, an existing producer/editor (who still works at the BBC) commented: "The BBC is the most enlightened you'll get anywhere" and that "it is more important what you do than what you look like" (industry interview). A senior broadcaster was more pessimistic "Without an open discussion about it, I can't see how it will change." Overall, we suggest that industry changes have yet to make an impact regarding older female news presenters. However the BBC themselves note that they are "committed to fair selection in every aspect of our work" and will increase the training regarding selection for new appointments" (BBC, 2011). They were aware of the "need to have a broad range of presenters on air – including older women" (BBC, 2009a).

## Conclusion

Our study suggests that female newsreaders are still selected on the basis of their physical attractiveness and that there is still discrimination against older women in the industry. We found that when female newsreaders were glamourised, they were taken less seriously and the audience assumed they were less intelligent than their male counterparts. We also found that women appear to self-select themselves out of becoming presenters, based on their own assessment of their physical attractiveness. Women news presenters seem to 'vanish' from TV screens as they age and some resort to cosmetic procedures.

The lack of women with grey hair, compared with men, is worrying as it supports the trend that women are not allowed to age, but have to remain young and physically attractive. Similarly, the belittling of women who are young and attractive is also worrying as it bases intelligence on superficial looks.

Hence, we argue that the way female newsreaders are presented, supports and reinforces patriarchal norms and specific discourses of gender, despite the advances made by feminism in the 20th and 21st centuries. They also reinforce the dominant (male) discourses of beauty which provides limited role models for women. The pressure on female newsreaders to look physically attractive and young is part of the wider patriarchal power structures that dominate our society, as well as media organisations. We wonder, therefore, whether we will ever see a woman with grey hair reading the news.

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# Mission aborted: public service broadcasting in Wales without an IFNC

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### Introduction

**On 8 June 2010, the Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt scrapped plans for 'independently-funded news consortia' to provide services in Wales, Scotland and the north-east of England on ITV's channel 3. The process of selecting consortia in the three areas had produced innovative ideas for an alternative supply of public service journalism to compete with the BBC. The plans were widely welcomed in Wales, where there is perceived to be a 'democratic deficit' linked to the poor penetration of Welsh-based media.**

Imagine a news service – rooted in Channel 3 - for a small country of 3 million people which went beyond a daily half-hour TV programme, morning and hourly bulletins and a limited web site. The newsgathering operation would be fed by staff in bureaux across Wales (which ITV no longer has) and a network of local newspapers and radio stations (the consortium). The service would include a fully-fledged web site with opportunities for citizens to contribute and participate (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z5i5A3JpJw8). The outputs would include a supply of news (like a Welsh PA service) available to all non-commercial outlets (as well as the members of the consortium) including local websites and blogs, community radio and local TV. The blogosphere – such as it is in Wales – could become a central feature of the networked service.

Whether this is the face of future media, we don't know. Whether designing and supplying it from the top down is the best way, is open to question. But there's no doubt that the investment of £6m of public money per year in a pilot project to see what could be done in Wales was an interesting possibility. Of course, it's not going to happen. Instead, audiences in Wales will have to make do with whatever ITV Wales choose to give them under the terms of a licence which leaves that very much up to them. This brief review traces the development of the IFNC idea through Ofcom's reviews of public service broadcasting and explores the opportunity lost in Wales as a result of the Government's decision.

### Devolution and the democratic deficit

Journalism in the public service is something we all recognise and certainly for many journalists of my generation, it's been a clear 'mission' whether working in newspapers, news magazines, the BBC or commercial television. I've even travelled to eastern and central Europe - sharing the values of British-style public service journalism with colleagues in countries emerging from a state-controlled system. But I've spent most of my career in public service journalism in Wales – and I make no apologies for that!

At the UK level we are still well-served by comparison with many other countries, though there is speculation that even the BBC, the central pillar of our public service broadcasting tradition, is not considered sacred by Jeremy Hunt. The demand for public service journalism is there: audience research carried out by Ofcom, as part of its second review into the future of PSB in 2008, indicated that 78% of respondents *across the UK* said that 'providing good quality news about my area was important' (NAW Communities & Culture Committee Inquiry Report - *Public Service Broadcasting in Wales*, June 2009, Para 42). When it comes to the devolved nations – and in this case, specifically Wales – the availability of public service journalism has been an issue since 2003 at least. And there is every reason to suppose that – at the local or regional level – audiences in England are even less well served. At the Welsh level, there are important questions about public engagement with the democratic process which relate very directly to the weakness of the provision of public service journalism in the broadest sense. With pressure for further powers to be devolved to the National Assembly, these questions are not academic.

I was a young journalist at the time of the overwhelming 'No' vote in the first devolution referendum in 1979. The electorate in Wales was much better informed  then by the printed press about what was going on in the country than it is today – when (thanks to devolution) there's potentially much more to be informed about.  Circulation figures for the Welsh daily papers were roughly three times what they are now: the Western Mail sold more than 90,000 a day compared to well under 30,000 today (*Press Gazette* 31 August 2011).

It's not that people in Wales don't buy daily newspapers, but – as the National Assembly's report on PSB in 2009 put it, "early 90 per cent of daily newspaper readers in Wales are reading papers with no Welsh content (Welsh Assembly Government – *Communication and Content, The Media Challenge for Wales* – Report for the Minister of Heritage, November 2008 – BSC (3)-02-08, paper 2). While we've seen a steady decline in the Welsh press, this was compensated for – in the 1980s and 90s – by the flourishing of the broadcast media.  In the early 1980s, both BBC Wales and HTV expanded substantially and coverage of news and current affairs in Wales reached a high point.  Full radio services were established in English and Welsh; the Welsh fourth channel S4C was set up – incidentally making HTV very rich as a programme supplier and powerful as a force in broadcasting.

Almost thirty years on, a very different picture was painted in the report of the Commons Welsh Select committee on English language broadcasting in Wales in 2009. By now the talk was of a 'democratic deficit' - represented by the weak printed media, poor coverage of Wales and Welsh issues in the British media and – above all -  the anticipated decline in the ITV Wales service, which had been threatened for at least five years (as we will see). The concern was not just about news. In Wales (unlike the English regions) ITV was (and still is) broadcasting one-and-a-half hours of current affairs and 'other programmes' a week – maintaining some semblance of a PSB service (Occam, *The Communications Market in Wales*, 2011, p.17).

But the very clear threat from ITV in 2009 to withdraw from supplying regional news and other regional programming throughout the UK alarmed the MPs. They could have drawn no comfort from Ofcom's director for Wales, Rhodri Williams, who warned, "these are challenging circumstances the like of which we have not seen in Welsh broadcasting since television first came to Wales" (House of Commons, Welsh Affairs Committee: *English Language Television Broadcasting in Wales.* 14 July 2009. Para 31).

Independently funded news consortia (IFNCs) were the great hope for a way forward until the General Election in May 2010 – a new model for public service broadcasting, providing effective and healthy competition for the BBC.  The genesis of the idea can be traced back to 2003 and the growing role of the regulator Ofcom – under the influence of its now-chief executive Ed Richards – in formulating broadcasting policy. The new government's decision to kill off the IFNC experiment has coincided with its determination to clip the wings of Ofcom and Mr Richards.

## PSB, PSP, IFNC & Ofcom

I was working in current affairs at ITV Wales when Ofcom launched its first review of PSB in 2003.  At that time, the regulator was clearly warning that ITV might just walk away from its PSB obligations as the switch to digital transmission devalued its analogue licences. The broadcaster wanted deep cuts in the hours of PSB it was required to provide. In Wales we organised an effective lobbying action to minimise the concessions made to ITV Wales under the terms of its licence.  We were unable to get much support from our colleagues in the English regions who soon faced deep cuts and mergers. Even our own victory on hours proved somewhat hollow as there was no way of obliging ITV to maintain the level of investment in programming. (It's interesting to note that what has actually happened is that Ofcom has substantially reduced the annual cost of these residual licenses to reflect the decline in the return they provide to ITV.)

With the benefit of hindsight, it's clear that ITV's threat to hand back its licences was an idle one, but it lent weight to a new approach to the supply of public service broadcasting, invented largely by Ed Richards, then a senior partner at Ofcom. Ed Richards was Controller of Corporate Strategy at the BBC until 1999. Before that he was an adviser to Gordon Brown. He left the BBC in 1999 to become Tony Blair's senior policy adviser on media, telecoms, internet and e-government. He helped draft the act which established Ofcom *(Observer*, 5 February 2006).  It's fair to say that we on the staff of ITV and within the NUJ were suspicious of Mr Richards – and the agenda he was developing at Ofcom at that time.  He remains open to the criticism that he was too soft on ITV, but standing where we are now, it's possible to see him as a defender of the notion of Public Service Broadcasting.

The first PSB review in 2004 aimed to take a fresh look at public service broadcasting at the dawn of the digital age. Ofcom proposed that ITV should be allowed to withdraw from its non-news regional programming and public money should be provided to fund a 'Public Service Publisher' (PSP) on digital and

broadband networks.  By 2012, the PSP would receive £300m a year either from an increased licence fee, a Government grant (like that to S4C) or a tax on broadcasters.  It could be run by existing broadcasters or a consortium (note that word) – excluding the BBC (Guardian.co.uk, 12 March 2008). In the end, Ofcom dropped the idea, but the son of PSP turned up in the second PSB review which began in 2008 by which time Richards was chief executive of what had become much more than a regulator. By now, ITV wanted to make savings of £40m a year and Ofcom proposed that the network should be allowed to drop some regional news bulletins, reduce regional programming by 50 per cent and cut back on some current affairs programmes. Ofcom forecast that up to £235m per year would be needed by 2012 to maintain public service content on commercial TV (*Guardian,* 25 Sept 2008).

In Wales, some welcomed the second PSB review. A 2008, a report prepared for the Welsh Assembly Government Minister for Heritage, described this as:

> a once in a generation opportunity to define what should be the appropriate scale and range of English language television provision for Wales, as well as to ensure continued plural provision of well-resourced journalism (*Communication and Content: the Media Challenge for Wales*, Report for the Minister of Heritage, Welsh Assembly  Broadcast Advisory Group, November 2008).

By 2009, Ed Richards was warning the National Assembly's broadcasting committee about

the looming threat from ITV:

> We agree that it is a serious concern and that the question of plurality in general is crucial, especially in news and current affairs in Wales. This is also the case in Scotland and Northern Ireland, but there is an even more acute argument in Wales (quoted in NAW Communities and Culture Committee Inquiry Report: *Public Service Broadcasting in Wales*. June 2009).

It was during this review that Ofcom floated the idea of a new sort of consortium – at that stage specifically targeted at Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland:

> We believe government needs in parallel to plan for an alternative model of news for the devolved nations… this could be based on the establishment of independently funded consortia to provide an alternative source of news to the BBC (Ofcom's Second Public Service Broadcasting Review: *Putting Viewers First*. 2009).

The Government took on the idea and set up a panel to run the competition for pilot projects in Wales, Scotland and the north-east of England. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport said the IFNCs would receive Government funding totalling £47 million over two years to provide local news content across the web, mobile, and other new platforms, along with the television slot currently occupied by ITV and STV regional news. The funding would come from a £130m under-spend in the licence fee which had been set aside for the digital switchover.  There would be around £6m a year for Wales (which compared to £100m a year for the Welsh fourth channel S4C).

Richard Hooper, who chaired the panel, set out a vision of a new style of public service broadcasting:

> Let me be clear about what we are looking for: quality news reporting with a mix of local, regional and national (in the case of Wales and Scotland) audiences firmly in mind; genuine innovation, not just business as usual; strong multiplatform applications working together across the web, local newspapers, local radio and television where appropriate, utilising each different medium's special characteristics; and finally, a revenue generation model that aspires to longer term sustainability (DCMS press release, 13 January 2010).

The idea was for something which was much more than just a substitute for ITV's regional programmes. In January 2010, DCMS announced the successful applicants on the shortlist – there were three in Wales, each of which took a different approach to the idea of a 'consortium' and in each of which there were ideas worth studying in the context of exploring future options for public service journalism, with or without IFNCs (and it's going to be without).  They made their pitches to a public meeting in Cardiff in February that year, packed by the Cardiff media crew.

As I reported at the time, all three bidders promised a new start for journalism in Wales http://journalism.blogs.glam.ac.uk/ 3 Feb 2010).  All three talked about 'citizen journalism' and offered people the chance to tell their own stories in one way or another. When pushed, they appeared to concede that this had more to do with a two-way relationship between the production company and the public than with turning citizens into journalists. People would be encouraged to contribute their stories, videos and pictures and, in return, the news provider would make its publicly-funded output freely available to local websites, bloggers and other non-commercial outlets.

The web featured large in all three bids. While the main evening TV news would be the 'showcase' (in the words of one of the bidders), the website would be central in all three plans.  The biggest beast was Taliesin,

which had ITN, the current ITV Wales news staff and what it called 'a Grand Alliance' of media companies from across Wales (in TV, radio and many local newspapers) along with no fewer than four universities. It offered 'the first comprehensive alternative to the BBC across every platform' with '100 platforms' to tell stories. Taliesin was the only bid to promise investigative journalism. It sounded as though it would be bigger than BBC Wales, raising the fear that it would limit the range of journalism on offer rather than promoting diversity. (At an earlier session, hosted by Ofcom, one of Taliesin's potential partners had spoken of the benefit of more 'consistency' in the news – which would save people the trouble of having to choose between different versions of a story!)

The idea that a company from Ulster would be qualified to run the news service in Wales raised eyebrows. But UTV's news service has a good reputation and beats the BBC hands-down. They own Welsh radio stations Swansea Sound and The Wave and they'd teamed up with North Wales Newspapers to make a tight and strong bid. They said they were keen to work with university journalism departments.

Llanelli-based Tinopolis presented a very confident pitch, based on the wide experience of a Welsh-based company which described itself as 'the biggest independent supplier of public service programming' in Britain. Of the three, this was the bid which seemed to have its finger most on the pulse of the changing world of communications and the blogosphere. Rather than a heavyweight consortium, they were selling this as a network of bloggers, local websites and professional journalists passing information in both directions. They involved students from Cardiff University in their bid.

Cutting in from the sidelines was Gordon Main who had ploughed a lot of money and time into a web-based TV service for Pembrokeshire and wanted to see the IFNC money used to fund a network of local TV stations sharing a central resource in Cardiff.  Ironically, his idea – which was ruled out of the bidding process – looks close to the new Government's vision, as we'll see.

By the time the final selection was made on 25 March 2010, the prize was looking rather hollow as the Conservatives had made it clear that they would scrap the whole process if they formed the next government.  It may not have been a coincidence that around this time Archie Norman, the new chairman of ITV, was reported to be considering a U-turn on the plan to ditch regional news (Guardian 16 March 2010). However, the choice of the Wales Live bid from UTV did show what might have been.  Richard Hooper said they were attracted to UTV's "very strong philosophy" of hard news and also liked the consortium's emphasis on community websites and the importance placed on newspapers, so that the north of Wales was "not forgotten" (BBC Wales 25 March 2010). Radio stations were also a key element of their consortium.

I think it's clear from this review of the bids that were in the running that Wales has lost the opportunity of an exciting experiment in public service journalism – though it has to be said that ITV was under no obligation to carry the TV service and that long-term funding was not guaranteed.

## Mission Aborted

As he had promised, on 8 June 2010, the new culture secretary, Jeremy Hunt killed off the planned IFNCs, proposing to put the money into expanding broadband coverage.

> Fundamentally, they [IFNC] were about subsidising the existing regional news system in a way that would have blocked the emergence of new and vibrant local media models fit for the digital age,(he said). They risked turning a whole generation of media companies into subsidy junkies, focusing all their efforts not on attracting viewers but on persuading ministers and regulators to give them more cash (*Press Gazette,* 8 June 2010).

Hunt announced a review of the rules on cross-media ownership (for example newspapers owning radio stations in their area) and set up a review of the prospects for local TV to be carried out by Sir Nicholas Shott of Lazards investment bank.  The Shott report – *Commercially Viable Local Television in the UK –* was published in December 2010. It concluded that 10-12 local TV stations might be viable 'around major conurbations'   (http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/Local-TV-Report-Dec10_FullReport.pdf). A year later, Swansea and Cardiff were included on a list of 15 cities where Hunt proposed that local TV stations should be established within two years (BBC News, 13 December 2011).

In relation to local TV, Hunt has repeatedly pointed to the contrast between Birmingham Alabama with eight local TV stations and Birmingham England with none. Sceptics immediately pointed to the failure of local TV in Britain – including the examples which Hunt cited in his announcement.  Sly Bailey of Trinity Mirror said they did not see 'City TV' as a viable proposition. Their research suggests that the costs are too high and the revenues too low to support a sustainable business model (*Press Gazette,* 9 June 2010).

The views of the Welsh Assembly Government (and the majority in the Assembly) apparently carried

no weight with Hunt.  There was a feeling that the IFNC in Wales should have been enabled to go ahead, leaving STV to make its own plans  and the DCMS to experiment with local TV in the large English cities which are – at least  potentially – more suited to the idea than most of sparsely-populated Wales. Hunt also announced that he was clipping the wings of Ofcom.  He wants it to concentrate on regulation – not making broadcasting policy, as it had  done throughout Ed Richards's time as a leading player (Department for Culture, Media and Sport: *Structural Reform Plan*, 15 July 2010).

Pressure is mounting for control over broadcasting in Wales to be devolved, which – if it happened - might allow something like the IFNC model to be revived.  There is talk of a Welsh Media Commission which would, in effect, be a Welsh Public Service Publisher (NAW Communities & Culture Committee Inquiry Report: *Public Service Broadcasting in Wales*, June 2009. Para 51ff).

As things stand, Ofcom's communications market report (Aug 2011) showed that expenditure on English-language TV programmes for viewers in Wales (by the BBC and ITV) fell by 13 per cent over the previous year – the largest year-on-year reduction across the four nations. Over the previous five years, spending in Wales fell by 33 per cent, compared with 31 per cent for the UK as a whole.  However, spending on news by BBC and ITV in Wales was up by 22 per cent - a reversal of the previous year, which had registered an 18 per cent drop (Ofcom, *Communications Market in Wales*, August 2011, p16).

It's not all bad news. Real Radio (owned by Guardian Media Group and with a limited PSB brief from the Scott Trust) launched the first all-Wales commercial radio service in January 2011. And most interesting of all – in view of all the threats over recent years and the plans to respond to them – ITV has apparently changed its mind about the value of regional programming.  The head of news and programmes at ITV Wales said the company wanted 'to continue to be a PSB' (Western Mail 19 October 2011). In March 2012, ITV's Chief Executive, Adam Crozier, told Cardiff Business Club that if the company's licenses were renewed in 2014, all current programming commitments to Wales would remain in place – in news, current affairs and political programming (http://www.clickonwales.org/2012/03/itv-boss-says-news-for-wales-is-safe/).

Watch this space!

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# All journalism is not the same: a case study

## Tor Clark, De Montfort University

### Introduction

**The Leveson Inquiry casts journalism in a bad light, but we all know all journalism is not the same: the best journalism should be distinguished from the minority which threatens to tarnish the reputation of the entire profession. Journalists should never miss an opportunity to promote the fact most journalism is ethical and responsible.**

In regional journalism the difference is most obviously that journalists are very close to their consumers and therefore have to be more responsive to them. This short commentary piece investigates a classic example of this dichotomy in Leicestershire, where the coverage of the disappearance of local girl Madeleine McCann in 2007 was treated in diametrically opposed ways by local outlets and by the national tabloid media.

The fifth anniversary in 2012 of the disappearance of three-year-old Madeleine McCann will be marked by retrospective features in national and regional media. It is ironic that the media's coverage of the case has made so many headlines itself. But this case demonstrated as well as any other single story over those years the gap in standards between the regional media and the national tabloid press – and it is the redtop and mid-market tabloids on which many people make their judgements of journalism as a whole.

Three-year-old Leicestershire girl Madeleine McCann disappeared on May 3, 2007. This case inspired more coverage than any other of its kind, before or since. Two factors in Madeleine's disappearance meant the 2007 media response was greater than any before. The first was the willingness of the family to actively involve the media in the search for their daughter and the second was the availability of technology to aid the reporting process and to fuel the story by facilitating interaction and forums for discussion. What is crucially at stake here for the image and practice of journalism - as well as its study - is to attempt to understand how the coverage of Madeleine McCann's disappearance led to such an abandonment of the usual norms of journalism that it risked bringing the whole profession into disrepute.

Despite the widespread disregard for normal journalistic behaviour by the most extreme of the tabloid press covering the case, there was a branch of the media which had a greater interest in sticking to the usual norms of coverage. Both the Leicester Mercury newspaper and BBC Radio Leicester covered the disappearance extensively, but always as a local story. The difference between way these two organisations covered the story and the ways the tabloid press in particular treated it, offers an interesting view into current journalistic practice and standards.

### The story breaks

Many national tabloids ended up having to pay damages to the McCanns and others covered in their stories. But most journalists knew while it was ongoing that the national tabloid media's coverage of the case was unjustified and unethical, if only because of the gulf between that coverage and the Press Complaints Commission's Code of Conduct. Legal action against many of the papers and the tabloids' capitulation and failure to defend their actions in the face of the charges was only a reaffirmation of what most in journalism already knew.

Leicestershire has two county-wide, respected and established news providers, the daily Leicester Mercury and BBC Radio Leicester. They both have large offices in different parts of the city centre and their readers can turn up there and demand to see local management with whatever brickbat or bouquet they choose to offer. They are both accountable to their local audience. Richard Bettsworth is the editor of the Leicester Mercury. In 2007 he was deputy editor of the paper, and played a leading role in its coverage of the story. Kate Squire is the BBC's head of local radio development. In 2007 she was managing editor of BBC Leicester, and oversaw her station's coverage.

The national and local press did not diverge much in their initial coverage, the first national reports not

needing to range too far from the dramatic facts of this new story. But both Bettsworth and Squire recognised from the outset this story was incredibly unusual and would find huge resonance with their respective audiences. Bettsworth recalls:

It became quickly clear it was a very unusual story. We made a decision very soon after Madeleine disappeared to send a journalist to Portugal. It was not something we would normally do. In this case it was so obvious it was such a big story and there was a huge level of public interest that we had to have someone on the spot.

But Bettsworth, as an experienced journalist, also quickly spotted the unique character of this story and the interest it would have for his readers, who would have the additional hook of knowing the central characters lived in the same county and worked in the same town or city, or in some instances were acquaintances or neighbours.

Squire recalls her station's successful early efforts to localise the big national and international story for her Leicestershire listeners. She said:

I think we first noticed the story on GMTV. We picked it up very quickly – we were running it that morning. We knew that day she was from Rothley and it built very quickly. We did a full breakfast OB a couple of days later from Rothley. We did the whole of the breakfast show from Rothley, setting the scene, talking to lots of people, because in the early days people were happy to talk. Ben Jackson, our breakfast presenter lives nearby, so that I think gave us a real connection with the story. His children had gone to the same nursery she had gone to, so he felt very attached to the story and I think that came across in just the way he spoke about it, in how he spoke about Rothley and what the people in Rothley were like – you can't buy that.

Bettsworth recalls:

We were in that media pack in Portugal. The tabloid media really need new things to keep happening, to keep the story going. For us it was a local family and we didn't need lots of new things, we just wanted to cover it. The tabloid media were always looking for the next break in the story. There was some really outrageous reporting in some newspapers about Robert Murat [an early suspect]. It was the first example of where a different set of rules began to appear; defamation, contempt etc seemed to no longer apply. It seemed [to the tabloid media] to be OK to say all sorts of things about this guy. The bigger the story, the more it was a kind of open season. The normal rules of journalistic behaviour no longer applied.

BBC Leicester tried to retain its perspective, but recognised this was a big story and needed more thought and planning than run-of-the-mill news. Squire remembers that:

Naturally a huge amount of our time, energy and effort was dedicated to it because this was a story that was leading our bulletins, our programmes and the national stuff. We never consciously thought we had a different policy here, it was normal journalistic principles recognising it was a big story, having perhaps more planning meetings than we would normally have because you've got to keep it going. In a way it did just evolve but we didn't apply any wildly different principles to it.

## The McCanns as suspects

The point at which tabloid national newspaper coverage appeared to start to point the finger at the McCanns, and particularly at Mrs McCann, in August 2007, is when Richard Bettsworth believes the clear divide between national and regional coverage became obvious. He recalled:

I can remember when the media changed. Stuff started to appear which began to make suggestions about the McCanns' role in it. Then the police questioned Kate and Gerry McCann and there was a frenzy. We steered clear of speculative pieces because there was no evidence for these. A lot of them struck me as defamatory and that's where we started to question about what was going on here. [Many of the national stories were based on] rumour, speculation and innuendo. That's not the role of a journalist.

Bettsworth said his paper took the decision to run what was fair to run, but decided not to run what was defamatory, deliberately damaging or seemed to have no basis in fact. BBC Leicester's Kate Squire remembers the temptation to be led by tabloid speculation, but resisted and let her local journalism principles dictate how her station handled that phase. She said:

When they [the Portuguese police] questioned the McCanns we didn't go along with all the horrible headlines, because they were just being questioned. We [BBC Leicester] just went into complete factual mode. We said right we stick to the facts, let's wait and see if they are charged or not. Our job as a local station is to treat all local issues with a degree of sensitivity. As a local station it is your job and your duty to treat your listeners and viewers with respect.

## Tabloid explanation of the excesses of coverage

Tabloid justification of their reporting are hard to find, possibly because in conceding to the various legal

actions against them they were forced to apologise unreservedly for much of their coverage and remove stories they wrote and any contemporaneous justification for them from accessible media, particularly their websites. But Guardian Media commentator and host of Radio 4's Media Show, Steve Hewlett, reporting on a Media Society debate into the McCann coverage in January 2008, did manage to find an explanation of sorts for the reporting from a satisfyingly predictable source, former editor of The Sun, Kelvin MacKenzie. Hewlett wrote:

> MacKenzie cautioned the audience against being too censorious on the grounds that it was their fascination with the story that led newspapers - which are, after all, commercial entities - to deal with it so prominently and frequently (guardian.co.uk, 31 January 2008).

And in the end, that was as sophisticated as it got. Readers and viewers were avidly consuming this story. Both the Evening Standard and the BBC website noted at the time that whenever they led their coverage with this story, readership significantly increased. It doesn't make it right, but they were trying to keep the coverage going because they knew people wanted to read it – the problem was they were abandoning the usual rules of journalism to keep that coverage going. Latterly, Peter Hill, the decade-long editor of the Daily Express, the paper many regard as one of the worst offenders in terms of its obsession with the Madeleine story, used the occasion of his recent retirement from the editor's chair to explain, rather than justify, his paper's coverage. In a Guardian interview, he admitted to Roy Greenslade:

> I did too much on the story. I accept that. It was a huge story, and every adult in the country had an opinion on it. I admit it helped to sell the paper (*The Guardian*, 21 February 2011).

## The Leicestershire perspective

One part of the Leicester Mercury's response also demonstrates a particular aspect of the local media's relationship with its audience which the national media necessarily cannot replicate – its role as a local champion. The Leicester Mercury also decided to go beyond just journalism and to get involved in the story. Bettsworth explained:

> We followed it the usual way with due respect to issues such as defamation. [Our policy was to] just be responsible and to tell people what was happening [...] but just being sensitive about it. [What we were reporting was] responsible, accurate, sensitive, the normal rules of journalism. There was a lot of coverage. That's what our readers would expect. We tried to engage in doing something and giving readers the feeling they could help. There was a role for the paper then to be the means for doing something about it.

At this point then deputy news editor Sian Brewis had the idea to get 'Find Madeleine' wristbands made and sold at to raise funds for the Find Madeleine Fund. More than 50,000 were sold, raising £57,000 for the Fund. Bettsworth added: We made sure the McCanns were involved and we got a response from all round the country because the national media was supportive and people wanted to help."

Interestingly, as the McCanns began to be accused of having a part in the disappearance of their daughter the Leicester Mercury took a stand based not on fact or evidence but on policy and to some extent necessity, from a local point of view; its leading journalists began to say publicly they did not think Gerry and Kate McCann were responsible for their daughter's disappearance. The Mercury's stance was picked up by McCanns spokesman Clarence Mitchell in his response to the House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee report into the press published in February 2010. He said:

> The problem Kate and Gerry had was with a number of national newspaper titles not the regional press. The Mercury's coverage has always been broadly fair and balanced and for that they remain grateful. Kate and Gerry are also very grateful for the effort and thought which went into the wristband production and donations. Kate and Gerry are very pleased the Mercury continues to support them (Leicester Mercury, February 25, 2010).

Bettsworth says in fact the Mercury simply covered this case by the same rules it would have covered any story. It is merely the contrast with the nationals that points the differences up. He added:

> Some of it [national tabloid coverage] was terrible but some of it was also quite good. Some of the national tabloids were very good at questioning the police case against the McCanns. If you are a local paper and something big happens you are still very concerned with the proper rules of journalism and the proper function of journalism. In some papers and in some instances there's a drive for sales that's so [great] that some of these rules go out of the window. You are less likely to abandon these rules if you're a local paper. I think journalism is pretty good in the UK and the tabloids are, to a large extent, pretty good. What it does tell us is that the proper role of journalism is not just to report whatever rubbish someone says -what journalism must do is try to establish what is the truth. [Tabloids can go to excess in a rush for sales and that] leaves people with the impression that they make stuff up, and that's deeply damaging and most of the time that's not true. I do think it damaged journalism. We should just have been supporting these people [the McCanns]. The

family not only didn't get this support, but also became pilloried by the media. That is deeply disappointing when you are supposed to be about championing and supporting people. We did stay pretty close to the story, we were consistent throughout and we didn't waver. I hope, even though there has been damage [caused by national coverage of this story], people can see there was a difference [between local and national coverage]. I'm sure there were some faults in our coverage but I think overall we were pretty good.

Squire also focuses on the unique nature of local journalism and its connection with its audience, which she argues ultimately makes its journalism better:

We are here forever in Leicestershire. The national and international press ping in and ping out and don't care who they upset. That isn't that we do anything different journalistically – you don't compromise our principles – you cover the story in the same way, but in terms of treating people, there is greater sensitivity definitely from the local media than from the national press, because you have a very close relationship with your listeners on a local radio station. They trust you to tell them the truth, to care about them, to champion local people and so it's a different sort of relationship. I think we care more about people, so we're perhaps more respectful in that way.

## Conclusions

Roy Greenslade became one of the most persistent critics of tabloid excess. In November 2007, after six months of coverage, he wrote:

I know that papers understand there is a ready audience for speculative rubbish about the McCanns. I know how easy it is to concoct such rubbish. I know that editors are happy to defend their rubbish by asserting that they are exercising press freedom by probing a story in the public interest. But rubbish is rubbish (guardian. co.uk, 27 November 2007).

The approach of the local media, specifically the Leicester Mercury and BBC Radio Leicester, demonstrated a different set of standards operating in the regional media, standards higher than in the tabloid press, illustrating that recognition of the differences between national tabloid and local journalism is long overdue. Yes, this case is exceptional, but in this case of a local story also being a major national, and indeed international story, there can be little doubt that the local media tried to cover it responsibly and proportionately, while the national tabloid press did not.

## Original Interviews

Bettsworth, R., deputy editor, Leicester Mercury, interview conducted at Leicester Mercury, September 22, 2009.

Squire, K., managing editor, BBC Leicester, interview conducted at BBC Leicester, September 25, 2009.

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**The Association for Journalism Education executive committee has presented evidence to the Leveson Inquiry on behalf of journalism educators. Journalism education has been little mentioned in the inquiry so far, but is obviously of considerable importance in the development and maintenance of high journalistic standards for the journalists of tomorrow. The formal submission is printed below.**

# Journalism training and education and its part in the culture, practices, standards and ethics of the press

## Evidence from the Association for Journalism Education

### Introduction

**The Association for Journalism Education represents approximately 60 Higher Education institutions in the UK and Ireland. It was founded in 1997 to help advance journalism education by upholding standards, providing a voice for those involved in journalism training and education in Higher Education and to promote and support research into journalism. The need for the AJE arose out of the rapid increase in undergraduate journalism programmes throughout the nineties building on an earlier growth of postgraduate courses that drew scores of experienced journalists into the academy where they had to rapidly learn how to survive in Higher Education. The Association is a membership organisation with all journalism staff within a member institution able to access its networks and services.**

The Association runs regular conferences and seminars for its members, usually three a year, examining such matters as journalism research, delivering journalism education and training, including ethics and curriculum development. It is likely, for instance, that at the AJE conference to be held next September the central topic will be the ethics and standards curriculum to coincide with the Leveson Inquiry findings.

All the journalism courses provided by AJE members whether undergraduate or postgraduate are validated by their own institutions so all are slightly different offering a range of strengths. However, all AJE members take their courses very seriously and share ideas and developments with other AJE members and with local industry, involving local newspapers, radio, TV or news-based websites.

AJE members are usually former practitioners who switch to education in mid-career. Whilst experienced as journalists, many find the switch to teaching and research tough and the AJE aims to help members pursue the highest possible standards of journalism training by allowing debate, discussion, networking and training.

Universities are also there to research journalism as well as to teach it. Again the AJE does what it can to develop its members' academic research capabilities keeping us, our students and the industry up to date with what is happening in a fast-moving world driven by fast-developing technology.

The AJE also keeps members in touch with what is happening around the world and helps involve members in international and national debates by representing members views in a variety of fora.

### Evolution of training in the UK

There have always been people who have become journalists with no formal qualifications and whilst this is rarer now than 20 years ago, journalism is still seen by some as a job that can be done by anyone with a reasonably broad education and a willingness to learn and there is considerable resistance to the idea of a required qualification for journalism. However, most people now entering the industry have at least a first degree (in journalism or something else) with many also adding a postgraduate diploma or even a masters degree in journalism.

Practical journalism skills, including shorthand, are central to most courses along with media law, ethics and public administration. Many also offer specialist modules, or more general modules on media history, politics or sociology.

Journalism training in the UK has developed organically over the years responding to the needs of the

industry for employees with particular skills. The early years of journalism in the were driven by a mix of entrepreneurs, campaigners and enthusiasts, much like today's bloggers but as technology allowed an explosion of newspaper production through the late 1800s and early 20th Century newsrooms became more professional requiring better-trained journalists.

This was mainly carried out in the newsroom, and although some courses started as early as the 1920s, by the 1970s there were still only a handful of college courses.

With the changes introduced by the Thatcher government, the eighties were a period of rapid and dramatic change. Universities developed newspaper postgraduate courses building on their experience with pre-entry programmes and their Broadcast PG courses. These were given a massive impetus as the industrial changes sparked by the Thatcher era came in. First the abolition of the PPITB left newspaper proprietors keen to reduce their spending on training following the withdrawal of state funding (Cole 1998: 70). These changes in funding led to students' needs becoming paramount and universities led the substantial growth in graduate entry to journalism.

The ending of the provincial newspaper National Agreement between Newspaper Society members and the National Union of Journalists in 1987 (Gopsill and Neale 2007: 124) saw an end to the proprietor's obligation to train and whilst many continued with existing training schemes, for a while at least, slowly fewer and fewer upheld the tradition of employing apprentices and ensuring their training as outlined in the former National Agreement. Some big employers such as Westminster Press, Mirror Group and Thompson Regional Newspapers started their own training schemes moving away from the training that until then had been organised on the job by the NCTJ (Gopsill and Neale 2007: 230) and the PPITB. Others relied on recruiting student from the new courses at university to get bright young recruits with university degrees and a year-long journalism training course. These new university courses contained the elements required by the NCTJ to ensure engagement with the traditional skills taught to journalist but that were more intellectually challenging and better suited to a graduate.

With the market place filling with well-qualified graduates, many more newspaper groups saw an opportunity to save money by ending their training schemes and recruiting direct from universities. Only a small number of training courses are now run by newspaper groups, mixing basic journalism training with company induction.

It was not long before this student-driven desire to be trained as a journalist no longer linked directly to employment was converted by universities into undergraduate programmes. Lancashire Polytechnic, City University and London College of Communications were the first in the UK to launch an undergraduate degree in journalism with each launching courses in 1991. These were popular with students from the start. Nearly 2,000 candidates applied for the 40 places in journalism at the University of Central Lancashire [formerly Lancashire Polytechnic] in the early nineties. These numbers persuaded universities already running journalism post-graduate courses to launch their own journalism under-graduate courses and now more than 50 UK institutions offer journalism at undergraduate level.

By 1995, the Guild of Editors had found that the typical entrant to journalism was now a middle class graduate (Cole 1998: 73). This was not welcomed in many newspaper newsrooms, and the start of undergraduate programmes in journalism brought these long held prejudices against academics and academic journalism in particular to the fore (Gopsill and Neale 2007: 238; Cole 1998: 67). Many fulminated in public and in private about the "Mickey Mouse" nature of journalism degrees, the view being held that training for journalists was of limited value and certainly that a degree in journalism was largely pointless. It is difficult to discover why those who applaud the study of classical literature despite its present limited popularity belittle the study of the mass media whose opaque, coded messages are consumed by so many. For many journalism educators there is the suspicion that some editors feared journalists being trained in universities for concern at what intelligent external scrutiny might reveal. There is also the possibility that there was (and possibly still is) a general feeling of intellectual insecurity among some senior executives, particularly as so many of them did not themselves have degrees, or in many cases formal journalism training of any kind.

Whatever their concerns, the tide of journalism degrees was unstoppable; young people wanted to be journalists and they expected to get a degree so the choice of gaining a journalism degree became increasingly popular.

## Educating journalists

Education and research can and should play an important part in the ethical training of the journalists. Until the early sixties, virtually all journalism training in the UK was done in and by newspapers themselves (radio and TV relied exclusively on journalists trained by newspapers until they started their own schemes by the 1970s). With little published material on ethics in the UK and few training courses, there was limited discussion of ethics within the profession before the sixties.

It is the growth in undergraduate courses, the development of masters programmes combining theory and practice and the consequent expansion in the number of journalism departments that has done the most to advance thinking about ethics in the educational establishments and this is bound to have had some effect on journalism. A three or four year course allows time to develop students' thinking about ethics and their critical discussion of standards in journalism alongside all the other elements of a good journalism course. It is also in the nature of academic study to ask questions of everything, a trait it should share with good journalism.

The tradition on the one year courses, whether diploma courses run under the auspices of the NCTJ or post-graduate courses run at various universities, was for a practical approach with students spending much of their time learning to write news reports from exercise briefs or (towards the end of the course) going out and gathering stories. Law and politics were usually taught in an academic style, but there was little discussion of ethics as these were introduced in the practical sessions to be linked to problems as they arose. Discussion, for instance, about intruding into someone's privacy might be raised during an exercise that involved interviewing someone for a story. However, since it is difficult to devise exercises that challenge students ethically, more complex matters were often wrapped around a discussion designed to fill an afternoon when nothing else could be arranged and were rarely a significant part of the course. The PCC and NUJ codes of practice were a help here as they gave something concrete to use as a teaching aid.

Whilst more latterly, some Masters degrees have required an intellectual engagement with journalism as well as practice enhancing ethical decision making, the more traditional course often left students believing that ethical problems were rare and involved lengthy debate instead of being pervasive, often requiring instant decision against deadline. This can be identified from the books produced to initiate discussion and support the teaching of ethics both in the profession and for students.

A typical example of an early journalism textbook is *Practical Newspaper Reporting* by Geoffrey Harris and David Spark which was the standard primer during the eighties and nineties. This was first written in 1966 for the NCTJ. A second edition was published in 1993 (and reprinted in 1994). By then the PCC had been launched and with it, an industry Code of Practice.

This was included as an appendix in the book and a new chapter 19 had been included on ethics. It was entitled "A Note on Ethics" and was just two and a half pages. The first page is largely about the new PCC the subsequent pages bring up issues raised by PCC complaints covering issues such as addresses, freebies, illustrations, plagiarism and promises. This is not to criticise the book, which was typical of its type and entirely appropriate for the time, but is to draw some conclusions about the current general view of journalism ethics only 15 years ago.

Undergraduate courses started to develop modules in ethics from the beginning. These were initially rudimentary. However, modern UK undergraduate journalism courses carry much more in terms of ethics and the better courses now have quite significant modules teaching ethics and press freedom (see Liverpool John Moores University, Lincoln University, Sheffield University, City University, University of Sunderland, University of Strathclyde, Napier University, University of Central Lancashire, Nottingham Trent University and many others).

This is also reflected in the books published on the subject. In 1991 at the start of the undergraduate explosion in the UK the only learning support available were textbooks such as Harris and Spark, general ethics books (e.g.: Harman, G [1977] *The Nature of Morality* Oxford: OUP or Singer, P [1994] *Ethics* Oxford: OUP) or US-based ethics books from writers such as, Clifford Christians, John Merrill or Philip Meyer. Following the introduction of undergraduate courses, there was a rapid increase in the number of very useful books almost entirely about ethics and media responsibility from the following authors:

Matthew Kierans (ed) (1998), Colin Shaw (1999), David Berry (ed), Chris Frost, Claude-Jean Betrand, Tom O'Malley, and Clive Soley, (all in 2000), Richard Keeble, Raphael Cohen-Almagor, (in 2001), Karen Sanders (2003), Valerie Alia (2004) Harcup (2007) and then new editons of Keeble (2nd) and Frost (3rd). Half a dozen books on ethics were published in 2010 and at least that many are published or planned in 2011.

Practical journalism books also started to include serious discussion of ethics with either a chapter or two, or at least references in the index: Richard Keeble (1994), David Randall (1996), John Wilson (1996), John Taylor (1998), Jenny McKay (2000), Chris Frost (2001) and (2003). This massive increase in journalism ethics books tells its own story. The launching of a variety of academic journals at the start of the 21st Century also allowed an increase in published articles on journalism ethics. After 20 years of rapid development, journalism ethics was now being taken seriously in universities. This has more impact within the profession than would be expected. Journalism is a profession of young people with the typical reporter in his or her twenties or thirties; 70% under 40 (Spilsbury, M 2002: 4). In other words, many reporters have attended a course on journalism as outlined above, and many executives working in newspapers are also young enough

to have attended a course that had some serious ethical input. It is also worth remembering that many graduates of such course may not end up in staff jobs, but will become bloggers or content managers for websites or go into other professions and their understanding of ethics and standards should be of help to them there.

## Accreditation

Accreditation of journalism course is carried out by several organisations. These come under the umbrella of Skillset that itself identifies Media Academies that fulfil its criteria. There are three accreditation bodies: the National Council for the Training of Journalists, the Broadcast Journalism Training Council and the Periodicals Training Council. It is possible for a course to accredited by all three but only Sheffield University does this. Some courses are accredited by two of the bodies, but most accredited courses choose to suit their needs usually depending on whether the course specialises in print journalism, broadcast journalism or periodical journalism. Whilst the tradition of specialising in this way is still standard in postgraduate courses because of the limited time available to train students, many undergraduate courses now try to teach across the print broadcast divide to match the converging agenda of the industry.

## NCTJ

The National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) was started in 1952 by employers' groups, trade unions and editors overseeing training schemes in newspapers – it did not offer training for entry to journalism and sets standards by designing curriculum for course to follow and by examining students. It started to widen its scope with the new converging agenda over the past few years and now claims to accredit journalism courses, not just print courses. However, it still seems uncertain about its role in regard to three year undergraduate courses and still seems more comfortable accrediting the more traditional one year courses in both further and higher education institutions. The NCTJ covers law in its curriculum and exams and expects students to know about the PCC and its code, but there is little emphasis on ethics. Its website identifies that it has two modules on law, one optional on court law and says "All journalists must know the legal and regulatory boundaries of what they can and cannot report. This includes both the Press Complaints Commission and Ofcom.codes of practice." There is no specific mention of ethics.

## Conclusion

The AJE believes that education and training, particularly on undergraduate programmes over the past ten years have made journalists more aware of ethical requirements. There is some evidence that those working in the regional press, where many of these relatively newly qualified journalists will be working, are more aware of ethical issues than more senior journalists working in some areas at least of the nationals. We believe that education and training is central to good practice alongside good working practices in the newsroom, allowing for discussion between peers and journalist and editor. Ethics is not something to be left at the university door with the academic gown but needs to be nurtured and developed alongside other professional skills in the newsroom.

AJE members who have been practitioners (they continue to think of themselves as journalists) are well aware of a difficult double standard. That they should teach what is right, but also teach what is actually done. Honesty to the student requires that they be made aware that while there is a right way to do things, they might well be asked to do something different in the newsroom. This double standard can be reinforced by anecdotes from visiting speakers from the workplace.

We hope that the Leveson inquiry will see that it is important to persuade the industry to pay more attention to training and education both in the academy but also in continuing professional development and that there will also be calls to change the culture in the newsroom to one that is supportive of good professional practice rather than purely circulation chasing.

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# Reviews

The reviews pages are edited by Tor Clark. If you have a book you would like to review or have come across a new book we should know about please get in touch. Also if you have recently had a book published and would like to see it reviewed, please contact Tor on tclark@dmu.ac.uk

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**Welcome to the reviews section of our new journal, Journalism Education.**

Journalism is of course a fascinating subject and every year it seems more and more books are published about it, many of them involving members of the Association for Journalism Education, which of course is great news for us.

Our aim for this section is to feature reviews of books and other artifacts, events and conferences about Journalism which will be of interest to Journalism lecturers and their students. Above all we want this section to be useful and to that end we will feature reviews that might help students with their studies and academics with their research.

But it can't work properly without help from readers, so we would like to appeal to you to get involved, either by recommending or reviewing books about Journalism.

We are starting with a relatively small number of books from an established team of reviewers, all of whom are already connected to this journal. But in future we'd very much like to broaden the involvement out to members and other readers, so if you'd like to get involved please email me at T.clark@dmu.ac.uk.

The editors and I hope you enjoy our first selection.

**Tor Clark**
**Reviews Editor**

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## Journalism and Free Speech, John Steel

### Review by Mick Temple

**John Steel's new book explores the philosophical and historical development of 'free speech'. Its central argument is that challenges to freedom of speech and press freedom require a re-evaluation of journalism's relationship with these key tenets. Throughout his examination, the spectre of censorship, 'dynamic, fluid, sometimes opaque yet powerful nevertheless' is ever present.**

Steel argues that the 'actualisation of press freedom' has to encompass modes of censorship which place pressure 'upon the principled connection between journalism and freedom of speech'. As he also points out, censorship is not a concept we can complacently associate only with other, more repressive countries: free speech is something that has to be continually fought for.

His theoretical examination of the liberal tradition and defence of free speech is well presented, offering

a valuable starting point for those new to the arguments. That said, Steel's observations on the tensions inherent in free speech about 'offending' others (the clash between 'positive' and 'negative' liberty) might have highlighted rather more clearly the problems inherent in John Stuart Mill's idea that freedom of speech should be inhibited when there is a chance of 'harm' arising from airing of that opinion. Such a stricture would justify censorship of some opinions on religion, for example, however carefully worded. Steel's later discussion of the infamous 'Danish cartoons' leans towards Mill's interpretation, seeming to favour the view that the publication of the cartoons was an irresponsible and inflammatory act. For many of us, the principle of freedom of speech must triumph over giving offence.

His historical examination of the 'journalistic impulse' is rightly critical of the gap often existing between the ideal and practice of freedom of expression. Steel highlights the enduring centrality of a free press within liberal democratic theory, noting the 'self-reinforcing' relationship between journalism and democracy. Although he argues that technological innovation potentially puts journalism in a better position to function according to that democratic imperative, he does not ignore the 'dark side' of internet freedom, when even democratic nations frequently misuse internet technology for repressive means. In addition, despite the growth of online sites, homogenisation rather than diversity, especially among local media, seems to be occurring.

Like many before him, Steel observes that journalism is rather too often tied 'to the commercial imperatives of the market to fully provide a genuine public sphere' free from market constraints. As he points out, 'press freedom' should be understood more clearly as 'market freedom', intimately connected to notions of 'capitalist accumulation and enterprise'. As the journalist Hannen Swaffer once memorably noted: 'freedom of the press in Britain is freedom to print such of the proprietor's prejudices as the advertisers don't object to'. For Steel, free market rationality has had a deleterious effect on media plurality and notions of public service.

His chapters detailing the relationship between the public interest and privacy and libel quite rightly notes that recent scandals will impact on press freedom and individual privacy, although quite how remains to be seen. I particularly enjoyed Steel's examination of the 'tyranny of PC', which both the left and right on the political spectrum regard as a threat to freedom of speech. Just as PC has become a 'convenient shorthand' for those on the right who feel their values are under threat, so the concept has become discredited among more radical voices who see the concept as propagating a form of 'atomised politics'.

Steel's conclusion makes rather grim reading – censorship 'just is', a 'constitutive essence' that inhibits the capacity of modern media 'to serve the ideals of democracy'. That said, the author is to be congratulated on producing a book melding theory and empirical examination that will be essential reading for anyone concerned about the preservation and enhancement of both journalistic and individual freedom. All journalism educators should find value in this first rate study.

**Journalism and Free Speech by John Steel, published by Routledge: Abingdon, Oxon 256 pages, ISBN 978-0-415-49326-0 RRP: £19.99**

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# Journalism in Britain: a Historical Introduction, Martin Conboy

## Review by Tor Clark

**There is a growing movement promoting the teaching of the history of Journalism, with Martin Conboy among its most prominent and active advocates. He has already done much to encourage interest in this fascinating and diverse topic and with his new book he firmly cements his commitment and enthusiasm in a text which should be of widespread use across university Journalism, Media, and Communication courses in the UK and beyond.**

Whilst Journalism by its nature is about writing in the here and now, all good journalists know that to write a decent story, you have to know the background properly and the best journalists are the ones who understand why something has happened the way it has. The most respected journalists in their own particular areas, from Hugo Young to Michael Parkinson, achieved much of their acclaim because they bothered to research their subject, to 'do their homework'.

**Book reviews**

And just as this applies to the practice of journalism, so should it to its study. In Journalism in Britain, a Historical Introduction, Professor Conboy aims to help students to 'do their homework' and to develop a much better understanding of how we came to have the media we have today, an essential starting point to any serious attempt at studying the content or meaning of contemporary journalism.

Touching on diverse but crucial areas such as political coverage, advertising, the economics of the media and local journalism, Conboy offers a themed rather than chronological approach. While this differs to standard works such as Kevin Williams' ever-popular and accessible *Get Me a Murder a Day*, Curran and Seaton's classic *Power Without Responsibility* and Mick Temple's *The British Press,* it might actually be quite helpful to students answering specific essay questions around these themes, who might otherwise have to wade through more chronological works.

Other chapters cover broadcasting, ownership and control, women and journalism, the impact of technology, tabloids and magazines – a worthy sweep across the whole sector.

Conboy is well qualified to take on this role, having an excellent pedigree in this area, including six published works on the language and history of journalism, and working in one of the foremost Journalism departments in the UK, so it is to be expected he should know his stuff and the level of the students at whom he is pitching it.

His decision to cover in depth political journalism and local journalism, is to be applauded. Both are crucial and much overlooked, with only a few notable and noble exceptions, particularly Bob Franklin. Conboy is however slightly negative in his views about political journalism and could have included more positive views from current practitioners on why they covered the news as they do. Political journalists often give interviews about their work, so the other side of the story, as it were, is readily available. This is only a minor criticism and Conboy is by no means alone here. Most journalism textbooks underplay and underuse the voices of journalists in favour of those who would analyse them, which always seems a missed opportunity.

Conboy's recommendations for further reading with a brief sentence saying what they are good for is to be praised and welcomed on behalf of students, who always appreciate some steering on essential reading, rather than just the production of a reading list.

So, overall this new book is very useful and enjoyable, and is already on all the relevant reading lists at my institution, but there should always be room for improvement and discussion and there were only a couple of areas where I would take issue.

I am not convinced there has been a major demise of serious journalism in newspapers compared with entertainment or celebrity journalism. Year after year my students' dissertation research results surprise them in showing, contrary to much academic opinion, serious journalism still outweighs celebrity journalism column inch for column inch.

Conboy's writing style is more accessible than many, but having been a journalist for 25 years, I do always yearn for a simpler and more accessible style in writing about our subject. I'm not arguing for dumbing down, just more clarity and simplicity.

But these are only minor criticisms, and overall Conboy's book is an excellent addition to the growing ranks of Journalism history texts in an area for which he is a worthy champion and which should really now be being taught on all UK Journalism courses.

**Journalism in Britain: a Historical Introduction by Martin Conboy, published by Sage, 2011. 240 pages; ISBN-10: 1847874959 RRP: £22.99.**

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# Broadcasting in the 21ˢᵗ Century: Richard Rudin

## Review by Gary Hudson

**If a story is worth telling, it's worth getting excited about. That appears to be the author's starting point for an all-embracing gallivant around the world of contemporary broadcasting. And his book is none the worse for it.**

His claim that it is not the work of a 'lofty academic' but of a keen observer (and participant for many years) is borne out by his passion for the subject.

If academics and journalism educators are to drag their lazier students away from Facebook and persuade them to enter the alien environs of a library and pick up a textbook, this might be a good start.

The impact of digital media, the rise of interactivity and so-called citizen journalism, and the role of event television, including the flagship reality talent shows are all covered comprehensively. The impact of broadcast programmes on social relationships and on the national conversation receive equal weight.

The chapter on Reality Television and its various sub-genres is both well-informed and scary to those who have watched this juggernaut take over the airwaves.

Rudin acknowledges the impact of social media on mainstream broadcasting – it is the recurring theme of the book – and brings the same story-telling brio to this work as to his lively blogs, where no issue is unworthy of a rant.

News coverage, pop music and his beloved radio are consuming passions on the author's social media outlets and he has rejoined many of his favourite arguments here, albeit in a more sober fashion.

The text is informed by extensive cooperation from national and local broadcasters and personal interviews with major TV and radio personalities such as Sir Terry Wogan, and key decision makers including editors at BBC and Sky News. The cultural references spanning Kenny Everett to Charlie Brooker and *The Daily Show*, betray the author's sense of humour – and prove a real plus in his analysis of the values of contemporary news coverage.

While the new technologies are at the heart of what makes 21$^{st}$ century broadcasting different from the services that developed in the last century, Rudin doesn't forget his first love – radio. Describing it as 'a friend you always expect to be there', he offers a stout defence of its enduring appeal. This is an important consideration in a book otherwise devoted to changes in the broadcasters' relationship to their audiences.

I have just one serious caveat. The book suffers – as do many from the current crop of academic publishers – from inadequate sub-editing and proof-reading. Readers, particularly those of us from a background in journalism, will not enjoy the misuse of apostrophes, misplaced capital letters and a liberal smattering of grammatical mistakes. They would be annoying in a student essay, and are occasionally infuriating here. This otherwise engaging book has the potential to excite students and its author has been let down by the absence of a similarly enthusiastic editor to check the final product. It is a flawed gem.

**Broadcasting on the 21st Century by Richard Rudin, published by Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke  244 pages, ISBN: 978-0-230-01318-6 RRP: £18.99**

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# So You Want to be a Political Journalist, edited by Sheila Gunn.

## Review by Tor Clark

**Politics and Journalism: You can't have one without the other. There are so many books about politics and journalism, media and democracy, memoirs of political journalists, politicians and spin doctors, but books about the craft of political journalism are rare, so this new text is an excellent addition to this vitally important field of study.**

The first thing to say is this is not really an academic textbook, and as such you might question its inclusion here, but its value lies in shedding light on this incredibly important area in a range of voices all from around the real coal face. And for that reason it deserves to be on the reading lists of every course seeking to help students understand how political journalism works and what its impact can be.

Sheila Gunn is an excellent choice as editor. As a political journalist who has run a Prime Minister's communications who, apart from Alastair Campbell, can claim to have been more at the heart of what political journalism is, from both sides of the fence?

She has tried to gather up a wide range of diverse articles covering all the angles around her topic and used big, authoritative names to provide their specialist insights.

Make no mistake, this isn't a weighty, worthy tome exploring the deepest nuances of that most important

aspect of UK journalism, but it is perhaps more useful than that because it demystifies the process and it is very useful in doing so.

Gunn has assembled a vast array of talent to illuminate us on every conceivable aspect of this specialist trade, which reads like a who's who of political reporting. Legendary PA Westminster correspondent Chris Moncrieff contributes three chapters and would find himself in familiar company with many of his fellow contributors including Michael White, Peter Riddell, James Landale, Colin Brown, Andrew Pierce and Nicholas Jones.

The text is divided into 32 user-friendly chapters, allowing the reader to read right through or more likely just to dip in to those of most interest, again useful and unintimidating for students. The chapters are grouped into areas covering Westminster and Whitehall, working with politicians, specialist reporting, covering politics beyond Westminster and then a useful chapter on how to get there. The chapter 'Reporting the Town Hall' looking at covering local politics by Richard Osley is particularly welcome, focusing on a much overlooked area of journalism, but one which is fundamental to so many local papers and their communities.

So here's a book which tells readers what it's actually like to do these jobs, but also something which will be useful to students of politics, with Gunn's own chapters on 'Who's who at Westminster' and 'The birth of a Bill' and Moncrieff's on 'Changing the law' of definite benefit to students studying the political process as well as its effects.

The book has a natural symmetry, starting by posing the question of the title, taking in the mechanics and the fascinations of the roles described, as well their impacts, before returning to the question of why a student might want to get there and how that journey might unfold.

The only chapter which didn't seem to sit well was ironically the one written by Adam Holloway MP, which described 'A week in the life of an MP' which unfortunately, though obviously well-intentioned, read more like a justification of how he spent his time to his constituents than anything more useful to a would-be journalist. Perhaps using a politician who didn't need to seek re-election might have produced a more revealing account?

But that is a small niggle. Overall this was both interesting and useful and fills a distinct gap in the literature for students who hopefully might one day succeed some of the illustrious authors many of this book's chapters.

**So You Want to be a Political Journalist by Sheila Gunn, published by Biteback: London, 2011. 304 pages, ISBN 9781849540858  RRP: £14.99**

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# International Journalism: Kevin Williams.

# Journalism Across Cultures: Levi Obijiofor and Folker Hanusch

### Review by Chris Frost

**International journalism in the UK has for too long meant the provision of UK journalism for foreign students. This imperialistic approach may well have its place because, despite the horrors being exposed at the Leveson Inquiry, we have a lot to offer the world in terms of our journalism. But several courses have now appeared that put a wider interpretation on the meaning and delivery of international journalism, making it a subject more fitting for UK students in UK universities.**

Until recently, the number of books aimed at this group of students was limited. There are good chapters on aspects of foreign news gathering in a number of books, but nothing aimed exclusively at those whose journalism has an international focus. Things now seem to be changing, with the publication of several books aimed at scholars of international journalism.

Foreign reporting has long been seen as the pinnacle of the profession; a sort of Premier League to which reporters aspire and only the very best attain, with its hints of exotic locations, limitless expense accounts and exciting stories far from the madding newsdesk.

Yet in a world where Twitter and Facebook are fast becoming the transmission method of choice this celebration of the anointed may well be over. Foreign new budgets have been cut, with correspondents laid off in favour of "unverified" YouTube videos filed by telephone and tweets from the front line.

So how will this change the international journalism of the future? Williams possesses no crystal ball but he does have a sound analytical brain and plenty of solid research. His opening chapters give a clear and detailed explanation of the way international journalism works. This covers everything the student, novice or experienced, needs to understand how the news is brought from foreign lands. There are also detailed discussions about the meaning and purpose of foreign news as well as explanations of why foreign news is becoming less important in domestic media.

The international news agencies are also carefully outlined, allowing the reader to develop a full understanding of the nature of foreign news, how it is gathered and how we receive it.

The book then goes on to examine the changing nature of foreign news in a time of YouTube and Twitter. The danger of accepting news from these sources without the support of "our man in …." is measured against the extra information such up-to-the-minute reports can give; the reality brought to news bulletins by clips from the front line of this battle or that riot.

He also examines the levels of control and change that these new technologies introduce as mainstream media struggle to avoid being scooped on a regular basis by everyday technologies available to millions.

This is a book that admirably combines conciseness with a detailed examination of the issues. It is an ideal introduction for students to the complexities of foreign news in all its manifestations, giving a solid narrative to those for whom this is their first brush with the idea of international journalism.

The second book from Levi Obijiofor and Folker Hanusch sits well alongside the Williams offering. Although this also takes the world as its backdrop - this time instead of international journalism, the world of the foreign correspondent - it is journalism in its national manifestations that takes centre stage.

It's an interesting idea for a book and one that works well. Its novelty lies not when it is talking about the journalism; here it goes over well-trodden ground. No surprises here as it describes journalism, journalism education and the culture of journalism. What makes this book interesting and different is that it compares these approaches across cultures, picking out what is different as well as underlining what is constant.

The opening chapter, for instance, discusses evolving press theories and media models. It re-examines and critiques the classic four theories of the press, analysing the press particularly from a non-western viewpoint to identify some of the flaws (or potential flaws) in a body of theory drawn largely from an elitist and hegemonic western, capitalist perspective.

Other chapters carries out the same job on other vital areas of media, looking at the topic from a variety of cultural approaches to give a much broader approach than is usual from books that tend to be dominated by US, UK or European media theory. For instance, there are chapters on journalism practice examining journalism decision making, values and role perceptions. Gender in journalism and the position of women both as reporters and as the subject of news are examined in another chapter, whilst a third looks at reporting peace and conflict and the part that different journalistic cultures play in the drive for war or peace.

The book is well written and finishes each chapter with some useful seminar questions. It is rich in theory and good scholarship but easily avoids the dense obfuscation of academics nervous their work could not stand up to detailed criticism or who lack the skill to properly communicate their often ill-formed ideas. There may be complex ideas identified here going to the heart of journalism and being compared across cultures, but the authors make it as easy as possible to absorb and comprehend these crucial theories.

So well do they present these key elements of journalism that this book would be worth recommending solely as an introductory text to all journalism students, but it has the added bonus of doing this across an international platform allowing a much broader range of learning to take place. For students of journalism who have a particular interest in international affairs this is a must, but it is worth a place in any good library of journalism.

**International Journalism by Kevin Williams. Published by Sage: London (2011) 205 pages, ISBN: 9781412945288,   RRP: £21.99**

**Journalism Across Cultures by Levi Obijiofor and Folker Hanusch. Published by Palgrave Macmillan: London, 2011.  236 pages, ISBN: 970230236103,   RRP: £19.99**

# A classic from the Journalism bookshelf:

Press Gang: How newspapers make profit from propaganda, by Roy Greenslade, first published by Macmillan in 2003.

## Review by Tor Clark

**As a regular reader of Roy Greenslade's Monday Media Guardian columns before his short-lived defection to the Daily Telegraph in 2005, I had always rather hoped the Guardian might eventually publish a collection of his columns. So, imagine my delight when tucked away at the back of a card shop in Bakewell in Derbyshire during a family holiday I found a hardback copy of Press Gang, of whose existence I had until then been ignorant - and at a knock-down price.**

At first glance, based on its strapline 'How newspapers make money from propaganda', I was disappointed to see it appeared to be a critique of UK news media rather than a trenchant and perspicacious analysis of its important issues, which was to my mind the glory of his regular Media Guardian articles. But in a short time I was to come to dismiss that first impression and to cherish and value this superb addition to the growing literature on post-war UK newspapers.

Greenslade tackles the whole topic with enthusiasm, meticulous attention to detail and best of all incredibly useful analysis, which is unlikely ever to be surpassed because of his USP; he was there for most of the history he writes about and he knew many of its leading participants.

Throughout its near 700 pages Greenslade is never slow to acknowledge his role in the story, but he does this to 'declare his interest' rather than to emphasis any kind of contribution he might have made. Indeed his style is generally self-deprecating rather than self-aggrandising, especially when describing his early political affiliations. His later articles to mark the 20th anniversary of the 'Wapping Revolution' maintained this approach, in almost glorying in his own ignorance of the revolution about to occur until he too was let into the well-guarded secret.

His approach, in dealing with each period paper-by-paper and emphasising the personalities involved, helps create an understanding of why any one paper was successful or not during any particular era. He understands and describes the success of the Express in the 50s, the Mirror in the 60s, The Sun in the 80s or The Mail in the 90s equally well, whether he agrees with their worldview or not. He looks at how successful they were in journalistic rather than political or sociological terms, a method most journalists will be happy with, but many academics might not.

An idiosyncratic feature of each section is his pen-pictures of each new national editor as the musical chairs of editorial management revolve, always offering their age and quirky character traits which might help the reader build up a mental impression of the editor involved. This being the eclectic, charismatic and elite club of UK national newspaper editors, the quirks are many, varied, and as Greenslade might have intended, very useful in forming a view

The first section I read - in isolation at the time - and which to me remains the stand-out chapter of the whole book now, is the excellent piece on the The Sun and the 1992 General Election, inevitably titled Was it really The Sun wot won it?

Having reported on a marginal constituency at this most crucial of recent elections, it remains fascinating to me and thankfully on the syllabus of most serious courses covering politics, elections and the media. Greenslade's chapter could provide the last word, not least because one of his footnotes gets right to the heart of the issue with an illuminating reflection from the central character, Neil Kinnock, delivered in a private letter to the author. Despite being a character of obvious strong opinions, in this chapter and throughout Greenslade lets the evidence make the points and so the evaluations and conclusions emerge as natural extrapolations of the evidence of history, rather than forced polemics made to fit into a pre-determined partisan ideology, a criticism to which many works on the media are susceptible.

Overall, as one would hope, this is an immensely readable, insightful and historically rich work, full of authentic detail and perceptive interpretation. Its thoroughness also means that when it is consulted by stu-

dents they produce much better work.

It is simply an excellent read, from cover to cover, leaving the reader informed, educated and satisfied. Now what about that book of columns, Roy...

The next edition's classic from the bookshelf will be Herbert Gans' *Deciding What's News*

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If you have a book, TV programme, film or event relating to journalism that you would like to review, or you have come across a new book we should know about, please get in touch. Also, if you have recently had a book published and would like to see it reviewed here, kindly contact Tor Clark at De Montfort University on t.clark@dmu.ac.uk.

# Information for contributors

**We accept original articles about journalism education and topics linked to journalism and education that are not offered for publication elsewhere at the time of submission. Articles for peer review should be in the range of 5000-7000 words.**

Articles for Comment and Criticism should be shorter at about 3,000 to 4,000 words.

The copy deadline for the next issue is: Aug 30, 2012 but material sent earlier would be appreciated. Articles should be submitted to the editors at ajejournal@gmail.com together with a 100-150 word abstract. Comment and criticism articles can be more polemic and do not require an abstract.

## Presentation and submission:

Articles should be produced in Word format, double spaced and set in Times New Roman 12pt with the minimum of formatting. Please do not press the "enter" button to put a double space between paragraphs and do not use specialist templates. Referencing should be in standard Harvard form with citations in the form: (Simmons 1955, p404) whilst notes should be set as endnotes.

## Book Reviews:

Reviews of appropriate books should be approximately 400 words. We do not accept unsolicited reviews of books, but are always grateful to be given the opportunity to consider a review proposal. Please contact Tor Clarke, the reviews editor, if you wish to submit a review. All book reviews should include author, title, ISBN number, publisher, number of pages and price.

## Presentation and submission:

All tables and figures should be produced separately either at the end of the article or in a separate file. Each should be clearly labelled Tab1e 1:….. Table 2…… Fig. 1:…. Fig. 2: etc and a note inserted in the text identifiying approximately where it should be placed.

## Copyright:

Authors should confirm they have cleared all copyrighted work for publication and agree that they will indemnify the editors against claims for defamation, copyright infringement or plagiarism. All authors will be asked to sign a contract confirming this.

## Process:

Papers are sent to at least two referees for comment. On return your paper will be accepted, accepted following editing as identified by the referees or refused. Comment and criticism pieces and book reviews will be decided by the editors but may be accepted on the basis that they are edited as identified**.**

## Proofs:

Once accepted, authors are expected to return proofs within 72 hours of receipt.

# Journalism Education

## The Journal of the Association for Journalism Education

**The Asssociation for Journalism Education is a subject discipline membership association of journalism schools in higher education institutions in the UK and Ireland.**

## Volume one, number one. Inside this issue:

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