

# 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](mailto:tclark@dmu.ac.uk)

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**Welcome to the second reviews section of the liveliest new Journalism journal on the block. We are again small, but hopefully eclectic, with the aim of reviewing books our readers want to read themselves, use in their courses or recommend to students.**

This edition's selection of new titles examines the history, practice and study of journalism across traditional print, broadcast and online platforms, so hopefully offers something for everyone, and certainly most courses.

Our aim is to introduce readers to, and offer useful judgements on, the latest texts about Journalism for the benefit of academics and students alike.

I should like to sincerely thank this edition's reviewers for their excellent contributions and invite all readers to consider if they would like to offer reviews for future editions. We are interested in hearing from potential reviewers, with or without specific texts in mind, publishers offering books for consideration and authors suggesting their own books for review.

I hope you all enjoy the Reviews Section and find it both interesting and useful.

Anyone interested in getting involved in the Journalism Education Reviews Section can contact me at [TClark@dmu.ac.uk](mailto:TClark@dmu.ac.uk), 0116 207 8810, or at the Leicester Centre for Journalism, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester, LE1 9BH.

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## **The Online Journalism Handbook: Skills to Survive and Thrive in the Digital Age, Paul Bradshaw and Liisa Rohumaa**

**Review by Sallyanne Duncan, University of Strathclyde, UK**

**In the process of setting up a Master's degree in Digital Journalism this year I faced the daunting task of finding suitable reference materials for this new course. It's a tricky exercise to select the right key texts that will meet the needs of bright gradu-**

## **ate students who come from diverse disciplines and who have mixed experiences of journalism.**

A fine balance needs to be struck between recommending a book which challenges their intellect but does not assume they are all digital natives who only need to polish their inherent skills. Equally, students tend to expect something which goes beyond the basic skills-based manual which often fails to engage them in current debates.

Paul Bradshaw and Liisa Rohumaa's book *The Online Journalism Handbook: Skills to Survive and Thrive in the Digital Age* certainly does not fall into the latter category. This is a fine, nuanced resource, particularly for those with limited knowledge but who are keen to extend their understanding of not only their skills but also the context of digital journalism. For example, the first two chapters on the history and technology of online journalism are comprehensive scene-setters, written in an informative, concise and pacy style.

When I received it I was immediately struck by the look of the book, the manner in which data is broken into manageable chunks and the quality of the colour plates. I was also surprised by how compact it is – I expected a much larger tome – particularly when I examined the comprehensive contents. The authors pack in a great deal of material in only 203 pages. There are chapters on writing for the web, data journalism, blogging, audio, video, interactivity, user generated content, and the law. It is also written with a touch of levity on occasion, which assists in putting over complex issues and building the confidence of the reader, perfect for students who are all too aware of their lecturers' expectations that because they are young they will know all about this online stuff.

Throughout, Bradshaw and Rohumaa debunk myths about the internet by writing in an accessible, intelligent, clear style without any unnecessary techno-babble. The chapters are split into logical sections which gives the reader the opportunity to master one particular form of online activity before moving on to the next rather than confronting them with several platforms at a time. The colour plates are superb and it would be useful if these were available as slides (or other suitable format) so they could be projected on to a screen for use in class.

That said, there could be more on how journalists use online tools, social media and the invisible web to research routine news and features as opposed to data journalism which is dealt with extensively in Chapter 5.

There is a useful chapter on the law and online communication, saving the reader from having to search out relevant legal texts. This chapter looks at the usual suspects of freedom of expression, privacy, defamation, contempt of court and copyright but through the lens of convergence. Numerous examples support the discussion through 'closer look' sections on specific legislation, approaches to stories, and the efficacy of using terms and conditions.

Overall, *The Online Journalism Handbook* is a valuable guide for the reader who wants to extend their knowledge of digital journalism, and one that should be recommended reading on every university journalism course. It certainly tops our reading list.

***The Online Journalism Handbook: Skills to Survive and Thrive in the Digital Age* by Paul Bradshaw and Liisa Rohumaa, published by Pearson Education Ltd, 2011. 203 pages; ISBN-978-1-4058-7340-6 RRP: £26.99.**

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## **The Broadcast Journalism Handbook, Gary Hudson and Sarah Rowlands**

Review by Gurvinder Aujla-Sidhu, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK.

**The Broadcast Journalism Handbook, first published in 2007, has been updated for 2012, with greater emphasis on covering recent changes in the industry. This text is**

## **essential reading for journalism students and trainee journalists hoping to pursue a career in broadcast journalism.**

It is a very practical guide, covering essential skills such as writing for on-air and online, interviewing, using equipment on the road and putting together the material for television and radio. The layout has been revised slightly, making it easy for the reader to pick out key points. Useful features include 'remember' boxes, case studies, a closer look, think-pieces, and key quotations in large fonts.

One of my students rated the 'remember' bulletin point list very helpful because it summarises the key points of the chapter so clearly. She and her fellow students liked the way chapters were divided so they could dive in and read sections related directly to their current studies.

Other features include updated cases studies or recent examples from the news which allows the user to put the theory into context. I am fond of the Tip Boxes and Closer Looks, littered throughout the text, which give helpful advice for journalists starting out.

Social media as a journalistic tool is a topic covered in various books but this text presents the reader with an explanation of how to really utilise it and to best exploit its advantages, rather than just giving the theory or background to social media. The reader is advised on using tools such as Twitter on a daily basis, and on how to subscribe to groups to monitor output in their local area or region.

With the growth of technology and social media it can be easy to overlook that good writing is an essential skill for broadcast journalists. This text doesn't just tell the reader the basics, on using short words for instance, but encourages students to delve deeper to understand the story they are trying to tell. It has numerous examples of headlines, scripts and news cues to put broadcast skills properly into context.

This second edition places a greater emphasis on the online element of the broadcast journalist's job, forcing readers to think about how they can deliver their work on other platforms. Most broadcast journalists are now expected to tell the story online with headlines, images, fact boxes etc, often with little additional training. Hudson and Rowlands offer useful advice to the novice on writing headlines which fit the character limits and contain the key words to be found on searches, and breaking up long text. The art of trying to sum up a story in 140 characters is also touched on, but is clearly a skill that comes with experience.

A particular highlight throughout is the authors' use of testimony from leading broadcasters, who share their advice and disaster stories, but also offer insight into their job by focusing on how they tackled particular stories.

This text is fairly expensive for students, and I do feel the authors could have given more room for online skills - perhaps even a chapter devoted to it - as this is now a crucial element of the job, but overall it is very useful and I recommend it as it a core text on my course.

**The Broadcast Journalism Handbook (2nd edition), by Gary Hudson and Sarah Rowlands. Published by Pearson Education (2012). ISBN 978 1 4082 4521 7. RRP £29.99.**

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## **A Century of Journalism 1900-2000, Dennis Griffiths**

**Review by Claire Wolfe, University of Worcester, UK**

**This is a launch title from a new publisher which aims to focus on specialised books related to journalism and the history of the press. It offers a brief guide to key moments and players in the last century.**

The author stacked up half century 'doing' journalism then turned to 'documenting' it. Previous publications include 500 Years of the Press (2006, The British Library)

His new book shows how quickly the landscape changes. The Rebekah Brooks entry, appearing in a list of 'movers and shakers', has her resignation noted in July 2011 but no details of why. These are the perils of documenting living people when the timescale is fixed with a precise endpoint. Likewise with the entry for Conrad Black, now a disgraced fraudster and no longer running the Daily Telegraph Group.

The book opens with a summary of 100 years of journalism which had to be shoehorned into 46 pages. This is a bit like squeezing Leveson into a page lead.

Nonetheless this sprint through time with the 'press barons' era covered succinctly does provide a framework for the Biographies section, which focuses on 100 influential people. There are lots of relevant and interesting facts, tales of skulduggery and some drama.

We hear how a young Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe) galvanised readers into action with a competition in 1888 offering a pension of £1 per week for life as the prize. Circulation soared to 700,000. I daresay if you stuck a few noughts on the end of the annual payout you could do the same today - provided the readers trusted the pension fund wouldn't go bust... or worse. The Robert Maxwell section recounts how The Mirror owner also saw pensions as a pot of gold, but in this case plundered £300 million from his employees' fund.

But Harmsworth's foray into newspaper competitions helped him to stash up enough cash to launch the Daily Mail in 1896 and the rest, as they say, is history.

Some sections are so condensed that at times I wanted more, for instance about Beaverbrook's campaign which sparked Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin's famous quote about newspaper owners seeking 'power without responsibility'. There is, of course, now the well known text of that very name, and others, to add detail.

I was surprised there wasn't a section on the emergence of the 'new media' but just hints of what was to come, largely through Rupert Murdoch's crystal ball-gazing.

Yet, in 1994 the Guardian began developing online publication with its technology section going online in 1995. The Guardian Unlimited network of websites launched in January 1999 and by March 2001 they had more than 2.4 million unique users.

The author seems to have stuck with his area of greatest knowledge, or maybe he is saving up material for the next instalment?

The biographies cover everyone from Sir David English and Eve Pollard to Eddie Shah and Michael Foot, who of course, was not only a Labour Party leader but a distinguished journalist. A former editor of the Tribune, he was involved in an attack on the Government over the disastrous retreat at Dunkirk. He came up with the title 'Guilty Men' for a book penned by his Evening Standard colleague, Frank Owen.

This new text provides a useful snapshot of an era and its leading personalities and there are useful references at the end of each entry for those hungry for more.

**A Century of Journalism 1900-2000, by Dennis Griffiths. Published by Coranto Press: Oxford. ISBN 978-0-9572232-0-2. RRP £10 available directly from Coranto Press, 2, Gloucester Court Mews, OX286HX sparbles@live.co.uk**

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## **Changing Journalism. Peter Lee-Wright, Angela Phillips and Tamara Witschge (2012)**

**Review by Mick Temple, Staffordshire University**

**Based on a large-scale empirical study of news journalism, this timely book concentrates on three specific areas of journalism. As the book's title implies, change is the dominant motif. The first section examines changing political and economic struc-**

**tures, section two focuses on changing journalistic practices (in particular the impact of new technology), while the final section looks to the future of news journalism.**

Throughout the book is the view that news is too important to be left to ‘the vicissitudes of the economic cycle’ (p.20) leading to a conclusion that some form of ‘public intervention’ is probably necessary in order to ensure the informed populace necessary in a democracy. The authors argue that ‘if the market in news seems likely to fail, then governments across the world should step in’ (p.153), a view that will not find favour everywhere.

The final substantive chapter’s examination of transparency and ethics specifically addresses the problems of an increasingly commercial news environment. And the views presented by some journalists who attempt to stand up for ‘truth’ in their news reporting – that editors literally don’t care whether the news ‘is true or not’ (p.139) – chime with much of the evidence uncovered by the Leveson Inquiry. This lack of journalistic autonomy, of course, is not necessarily new, although the implication of the book is that the pressure on journalists to toe a proprietorial line has increased in recent years.

The book also offers a much-needed reaction to the technological determinism that has driven the adoption of news media. Within the newspaper industry the belated enthusiasm for ‘going online’ has introduced many ill-considered practices and, as Tamara Witschge argues, closed off a number of paths that might have used new technology in ‘more progressive ways’ (p.113).

One ‘progressive’ way in which new technology might have been utilised is for greater audience participation. But as other researchers have found, news organisations have tended to adopt the most minimal form of interaction with their audiences. Surprisingly, the research found that local journalists were even more dismissive of the value of user participation than those working in national news - perhaps the greater threat to their jobs from the hyper-local citizen journalist explains this.

The belief that news organisations should adopt clear and accountable ethical standards and therefore emphasise their ‘unique and valuable’ product is offered by the authors as both a contribution to democracy and as a technique for survival in a highly competitive market. The public need to trust their news sources – and trust is a valuable commercial commodity. Such a message is not unusual within university journalism departments. The problem is selling that message to commercial news organisations.

The individual chapters are well-written and well-informed, but three authors contribute to a somewhat disjointed analysis: the book works best as a selection of articles on different aspects of journalistic change rather than as a coherent overview. That said, the authors deserve considerable credit for the quality of writing and the range of contemporary issues they address.

**Peter Lee-Wright, Angela Phillips and Tamara Witschge (2012) *Changing Journalism*. London: Routledge. ISBN 978-0-415-57955-1 (paperback)**

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## **A classic from the Journalism bookshelf:**

**The Universal Journalist, by David Randall, first published 1996, fourth edition published by Pluto Press in 2011.**

**Review by Tor Clark, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK.**

**After a while, we all develop our own ways of carrying out the basics of journalism effectively. This can make it difficult for journalism lecturers to recommend**

**any single ‘how to’ textbook from the many available to students. David Randall’s new edition of *The Universal Journalist* makes the task a little easier. I was made aware of this book by a colleague of a similar vintage who also made the switch from the newsroom to the classroom. She said to me: “You think you know all about journalism, then you discover a book like *The Universal Journalist* and realise how much there is to it.”**

The back cover blurb bills *The Universal Journalist* as ‘the world’s leading textbook on journalism...’ This hyperbolic claim can be offset against the obvious quality of the product and the home it finds on so many Journalism reading lists. In their useful ‘critical bibliography of newspaper journalism’, the final chapter in the excellent *Newspaper Journalism* (2010), Peter Cole and Tony Harcup sing its praises: “There are a number of good books concerned with newspaper journalism written by current or former practitioners and aimed at journalism students. One of the best is *The Universal Journalist* by David Randall ... Devoid of bibliography and references it might be, but it is full of insight and good advice from a reflective practitioner...” (p197)

Randall’s approach is to encourage journalism students and trainee reporters to strive to become great reporters and he bookends his text with the introduction and resolution of this aim. He stresses he does not consider himself ‘a great reporter’ but that he has been privileged enough to work with a few over the years and it is his aim to try to describe the skills and attributes which went into making these titans of our trade. In this sense Randall’s other notable work *The Great Reporters* (Pluto Press, 2005) which features great contemporaries Hugh McIlvanney and Ann Leslie among a wider historical cast, is something of a companion volume.

Randall breaks his chapters down into small sub-headed chunks of advice and good practice, often setting it out as lists of things to do, or avoid. As well as the many ‘how to’ chapters, Randall also explores investigative journalism in a practical way and takes a timely fresh look at ethics. This latest edition usefully brings current newsroom practice up to date with a discussion of online research techniques and includes a section on handling numbers and statistics, a vital if overlooked aspect of reporting.

This is then an excellent book, and I did not disagree with most of Randall’s suggestions, but two issues could perhaps do with addressing for the fifth edition. The first was the lauding of a reporter who had to ‘call the father a of a suicide victim seven days in a row before he will agree to talk’ (p5). This was obviously intended as an example of journalistic determination, but to me unfortunately jarred badly as a stereotypical example of unwarranted intrusion into grief, which I thought had been consigned to the past by the PCC Code.

The other problem, the ‘world’s leading journalism textbook’ claim, is almost certainly not of Randall’s making, as throughout the book he champions accuracy and rails against unnecessary journalistic hyperbole. Hopefully in future editions the quality of the book might be allowed to speak for itself and allow this claim to be avoided.

Randall’s approach is thorough, useful, intelligent and persuasive. Whilst there are a lot of textbooks out there offering advice to would-be journalists, few do it as well and it is to be hoped that a few of this book’s readers may indeed eventually develop into the great reporters Randall so admires.

*The Universal Journalist*. Published by Pluto Press: London (2011) 252 pages, ISBN: 978 0 7453 3076 1, RRP: £17.99.

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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](mailto:t.clark@dmu.ac.uk).**