

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

Reviews section

By Tor Clark, Reviews Editor

Welcome to the reviews section of the fourth edition of *Journalism Education*. This time we focus two of the biggest issues facing journalism and journalism education – the regulatory environment and the rise and rise of social media.

Leveson will have forced his way onto every Journalism degree lecture schedule and is hopefully already provoking lively discussion in both the seminar room and practical workshop – and not just because of the NCTJ's raised emphasis on ethics. Here is a journalistic earthquake equally relevant to the practical and theoretic branches of our academic discipline. Jackie Gregory has ploughed through the quickest book out about Sir Brian's recommendation and offers her verdict.

Meanwhile Gary Hudson welcomes a new guide to the world of social media, though appropriately for a senior journalist, has some pointers about its editing.

Seasoned editor of a famous 'hackademic' series of useful texts (including *After Leveson*, above) John Mair, has taken time out from turning round texts, to sample moving memoirs of a war zone reporter and shares his views on the more serious side of foreign reporting.

AJE chair and co-editor of this journal Chris Frost takes a look at *Search: Theory and Practice online* by Murray Dick.

And finally, this edition's classic is the book no student of political journalism can do without, James Morrison's *Essential Public Affairs for Journalists*.

This edition's reviews section once again tries to take a broad view of what might be interesting to students and tutors involved in journalism education, but as always, the invitation is there for more participants, either in suggesting texts for review or reviewing them themselves.

Anyone interested in suggesting a book for review, providing a review of an interesting recent book about journalism, or reviewing a journalism classic, should contact Reviews Editor Tor Clark TClark@dmu.ac.uk

The editors hope you enjoy the reviews and find them useful for your own course.

Social Media for Journalists: Principles & Practice, by Megan Knight and Clare Cook

Review by Gary Hudson, Staffordshire University

A generation of journalism educators has been waiting for this book. I am, in the words of The Who, talking about my generation - the generation who stopped working regularly in newsrooms just before social media redefined the news industry.

Part of that substantial demographic is now employed in universities teaching student journalists. We are aware of the impact of social media and the new truisms – that ‘journalism is a process not a product’ and ‘the deadline isn’t now because there is no deadline’ – but wondering how to incorporate them into the extensive range of skills we already teach on journalism courses.

Knight and Cook guide us through the minefield of new working practices and the technologies that inform and assist modern journalism with a clear narrative backed by extensive research and case studies from around the globe.

Unfortunately even as they navigate what for many of us are uncharted seas, their publisher appears to be doing its best to scuttle the ship.

To suggest the vessel for all this knowledge is holed beneath the waterline is not to suggest a Titanic-style disaster, merely that limping into port for repairs is the best option.

Not for the first time in my experience, Sage is guilty of sloppy editing. The introduction tells us this is ‘the one book which the new social, connected journalist should’. Should what? Read? Find indispensable? Throw away immediately? I remain unenlightened, because the sentence does not end. The next page is blank.

A printing or proof-reading error, perhaps. But then we get to the substance. Chapter One begins ‘The media are changing’; clearly the authors have decided (correctly in my view) that ‘media’ is a plural noun. Except here it isn’t, drifting in the next few pages from singular to plural and back again.

And it’s not just the grammar that is inconsistent. Consulting the glossary for ‘Crowdsourcing’, I discover that it’s referred to in Chapters 2 and 7. True, it gets a mention in those chapters, but then there’s a whole chapter called ‘Data journalism and crowdsourcing’, and that’s Chapter 4.

The book’s design is enhanced by a liberal sprinkling of text boxes, which are visually appealing. Some of the definitions though - of concepts as disparate as ‘trolling’ and ‘public interest’ - are vague and inadequate. The book works better as a practical handbook (for beginners) than as a guide to theoretical perspectives. For example, a few paragraphs on Habermas barely scratches the surface of consideration of the public sphere. Some of it tries too hard for an international perspective – so the chapter on ethics barely mentions BBC editorial guidelines, or the Ofcom and NUJ codes (but rather pointlessly includes the PCC).

And when the authors stray into using broadcast terminology, there are enough mistakes to suggest they are on unfamiliar ground. But then their attitude to broadcast journalism might be seen in their observation about Piers Morgan, who after his fall from grace at the Mirror, ‘never worked as a journalist again, but he has done extremely well in television’.

Nonetheless, there’s enough useful content here and enough jargon untangled and ex-

plained to forgive the annoying mistakes. The section on the business models of networked journalism is particularly valuable, as many old school hackademics – even those with substantial freelance experience – will not be familiar with the range of options for monetising journalistic content. And throughout, the lists of suggested additional reading and resources are extensive.

So, despite the shortcomings listed above, we can probably find our own ending to the sentence about what the ‘new social, connected journalist should ...’. He or she should find this book very useful, should probably judge it to be the best guide of its type available so far, and should probably write to Sage and complain about the editing.

Social Media for Journalists: principles & practice, by Megan Knight and Clare Cook

Published by Sage, 2013, 278 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4462-1113-7. RRP £23.99

No Road Home Fighting for Land and Faith in Gaza, by James Rodgers

Review by John Mair.

James Rodgers is a serious man, a serious journalist and this is serious book to be taken seriously. He went about his work as a BBC Correspondent in Brussels, Moscow and the Gaza Strip (the subject of this book) with great purpose.

Rodgers was based in the Gaza Strip from 2002 to 2004, the only international journalist permanently there at the time. This is a part memoir, part analysis, part anti ‘road map’ that has been burning inside him for the near decade since he left Gaza. It is a cracking, if difficult, read,

Rodgers gets down with the people of Gaza, feels their pain, feels the strains and the permanent sense of siege and more. There is little room for too much detachment and ‘BBC objectivity’ in a land like Gaza.

There are (at least) two types of BBC foreign correspondent. The first lives the life of a lord, gliding from one diplomatic cocktail party to another, being treated with over respect by the locals, becoming almost a national institution in the country they are based. The second gets ‘down and dirty’ with the people in their struggle for survival every day, reporting with sympathy. There was no place in Gaza for the former. Rodgers’ was journalism from a country literally under siege by the Israeli behemoth around it.

Rodgers quickly became engaged in the Strip, perhaps it was impossible not to. Some might say he became too engaged, too sympathetic to the Gaza cause, too Arabist in outlook and maybe the BBC audience would have been better served with a non-resident correspondent ‘parachuting’ in for ‘more objective’ hits, but that is open to debate.

The lot of a foreign correspondent was never an easy one even a decade ago. The foreign news desk in London is only interested in ‘Bang-Bang’ - wars and riots – rather than context. It does lead to tension and active discussion with those in the field. Allan Little of the BBC told my students in Edinburgh last year the worst words you can hear on the

Stuart Ramsey of Sky News told my Brunel students foreign desks were pushing correspondents more and more into unsafe territory to get more 'bang bang' for their bucks. Rodgers supplied plenty 'bang bang' in his two years in Gaza.

He was a daily witness to history. He chronicles well in the book how daily life continued in fairly intolerable conditions. He knows, he had to live it too.

His political conclusions are straightforward. The much vaunted 'road map' to Middle East peace will not work without recognising the Palestinians' fervent, unquenchable desire for a 'homeland' - not unlike the Jews and Israel. Peace is as much a factor of economics as of sheer politics and the Palestinians will have to stop fighting each other if they are to effectively combat the Israelis. Israel will always have the upper hand to do as they please with the tiny Gaza Strip.

One comes away from this book with a huge respect for Rodgers and his ability to survive in such conditions and to regularly report it. The sheer danger of the job is shown by the kidnapping of one of his successors in the Strip, Alan Johnson for four months in 2007. Rodgers came out un-kidnapped and alive and with some very good notes to write this excellent book.

He is now hors de combat and has retired from the fields of war and taken his tin hat and flak jacket to the groves of the academe at City University London. That ought to be more peaceful.

No Road Home: Fighting for Land and Faith in Gaza, by James Rodgers published by Abramis 2013, ISBN 178-1-84549-580-0. RRP £11.99

After Leveson? The Future For British Journalism, edited by John Mair

Review by Jackie Gregory, Staffordshire University

From questioning if Jimmy Savile was a victim of information assault to musing about whether Hugh Grant may become an Honourable Member, this latest book from the John Mair/Abramis stable is once again – to bastardise an ad slogan – tomorrow's opinions today.

Barely had Leveson signed off his report, than Mair was reaching for his contacts book and commissioning journalists and hackademics to give their response.

The result is a range of voices and writing styles to make this book as much of a page-turner as any News Of The World fake sheikh expose – but with a longer shelf life.

This is the latest in Mair's series of fast turn-around books that combine the academic chalkboard with the chalk-face, with many contributors spanning the two. The idea is to offer informed response and opinion to the news of the moment. It's an alternative to waiting for the usual two-year gestation of an academic tome, which risks being out of date as soon as it gets an ISBN number.

It's true some responses by chapter authors may creak under strong academic interroga-

tion, but all are pugnacious and thought-provoking. If they inform a seminar, make a politician think, induce a newsroom row, or a barney in a university corridor - as they surely will - then their purpose is served.

Besides, a book which begins with Harold Evans exhorting the press to view any statutory underpinning as an opportunity to create press freedom, sets the standard for original thinking. He argues the right to be free is not the duty to be perfect, surely one of the great quotes of the book?

Duncan Campbell asks if Leveson ends the beautiful friendship between the police and the papers, with Dr Eamonn O'Neill articulating concern that Leveson's proposals could curtail investigative journalism.

Mick Temple references Mencken's dog and the lamp-post. A dog's daily lampoonery is well deserved if the powers that be dim the light. Behind all the contributors' arguments is the sense that, one way or another, the machinations of both press and politicians should not be conducted in the shadowy gloom.

It's possible a few dogs may try to show their disdain for some of the opinions expressed, while others will look up from sniffing around in the gutter and see the blue skies and approaching storms.

One thing I would change, however, is the question mark of the title *After Leveson? The Future For British Journalism*. It is in the wrong place. We are forever post-Leveson but the future for British Journalism is still open to question.

***After Leveson? The future for British Journalism*, edited by John Mair, published by Abramis, 2013. 290 pages. ISBN 978-1-84549-576-3; RRP: £19.95.**

Search: Theory and Practice in Journalism Online by Murray Dick

Review by Chris Frost, Liverpool John Moores University

The internet and its younger sibling, social media, are now indispensable tools for any journalist looking for stories, sources or that little bit of supporting research.

Virtually all basic contacts now come online in some form or another whether social media or email and the savvy journalist who wants to stay ahead of the opposition needs to know how to make the best of it.

This is made tougher by the constantly changing nature of online media; developments in this fast changing world pile in thick and fast. It's surprising to remember that Twitter has only been around for six years or so and that this international phenomenon was only recently floated on the stock market, because there hadn't really been time or need to do it before. It seems to have been with us forever but this is more about its usefulness and ubiquity than its history. This and other social media are now such an integral part of journalism it is difficult to imagine working without, but often the speed of development means that journalists are not able to make the best use of it as those who are not highly tech savvy struggle to grasp both the range of purposes to which social media and other

internet technology can be put and how to get the best out of what it offers.

Internet technology is a great tool for gathering stories and no journalist nowadays would consider producing a story without accessing the internet to provide background research and information using search engines, directories or serendipity. Similarly, sourcing stories is so much easier when experts are but an email away and crowd sourcing can access those hard to find contacts.

However using the world wide web or social media to seek stories, research them and find sources bring its own problems unique to this new media and this is where this book steps in providing just what every journalist needs to understand how the internet stores information and how to get access to it quickly and efficiently.

Although a relatively slim volume, it packs in a load of useful information. It starts with a useful, if again slim, discussion of some of the underpinning theory to searching and the use of the internet in this way in particular. Whilst hardly an in depth discussion it does introduce students to key concepts about which they might wish to learn more. From then on this much more a practical guide to using the internet from basic searching through to detailed use of social media to crowd source and developing an online beat. All the advice is firmly based in good ethical practice; the author is clear “this is not a muck-rakers manual”. But whilst there is some discussion about the ethical issues that arise in the practices discussed, it is not a book about social media ethics either. It is about a new and developing form of journalism practice and how practitioners can make full use of it at its present state of knowledge. The only thing for certain about social media and the use of the internet by journalists is that things will continue to change and develop but this book at least can bring you and your students up to date with a system that clearly has enormous potential.

It is a must have on the desk (or desktop) of every practitioner or student.

Search: Theory and Practice in Journalism Online Murray Dick London: Palgrave Macmillan ISBN: 978-0-230-30189-4 153 pages

A classic from the Journalism bookshelf:

Essential Public Affair for Journalists, third edition, by James Morrison

Review by Tor Clark, De Montfort University, Leicester

Hands-up if you know what virement is? If your hand went straight up it's likely you have passed the NCTJ Local Government PA exam. Virement is to public affairs what shorthand is to the whole accredited curriculum - a kind of rite of passage which proves you've been there and got the certificates to prove it.

Happily virement is still there in the lengthy tome which guides today's would-be journalists through what is now known as 'essential public affairs' towards their very much

slimmed down 105-minute exam on all things local and central government.

James Morrison is the journalist and academic keeping virement alive as a useful concept to a new generation of NCTJ students and has now toiled over three editions of the NCTJ's recommended text on its PA syllabus.

Essential Public Affairs for Journalists earns its place on the Journalism Education bookshelf of classic journalism, not so much for its literary merit but for its ubiquity in the libraries and student bags of NCTJ-accredited courses up and down the UK.

Although a huge fan of all things about political journalism, I would not have envied Morrison his task even before the Coalition's many changes to the fabric of civic life. After those 'reforms', attempting to produce a textbook to help students understand the workings of government would seem a nightmarish prospect, but Morrison largely achieves it.

His big advantage, which he has proudly stated at the start of each edition, is that he is one of us, a former council reporter. Morrison remembers what it was like to cover council meetings and he knows his readers need to know what's between his covers so they can follow in his footsteps.

To that end he has set out to write a useful text which contextualises UK central and local government, but also provides the detail students need to pass their NCTJ Essential Public Affairs exam. His purpose is encouraging understanding as well as the acquisition of basic knowledge.

The third edition is at its most useful when detailing all the Coalition Government's most recent changes, particularly to the welfare state; health, education and benefits. These changes have been both fundamental and comprehensive and tutors, never mind students, are grateful for Morrison's help in getting to grips with the bewildering scale of changes.

To his credit, despite the NCTJ's recent downsizing of the PA exam and curriculum, Morrison has retained coverage of areas not explicitly examined anymore, so his book can also be used by readers simply wishing to learn more about government, as well as those needing to pass the NCTJ exam.

So, this is a very useful book, and written sympathetically from the point of view of someone who has had to learn to use and report the system for the benefit of the public, rather than from the narrower point of view of someone who has just studied it.

It is not a great work of literature nor a comprehensive work of political science, indeed it can be criticised for its failure to contextualise UK politics in its broader sense for students who have had little interest or knowledge of it before having to start studying it.

But a working knowledge of politics – from voluntary schools to virement (Morrison, 2013: 635) - remains a fundamental attribute which all journalists must always have and in meeting that need, the enthusiastic Morrison serves many Journalism students and their tutors very well.

Essential Public Affairs for Journalists, by James Morrison, 3rd ed published by OUP and the NCTJ, 2013. 665 pages. ISBN 978-0-19-966385-9; RRP: £22.99.

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, or have recently had a book published kindly contact Tor Clark at De Montfort University on t.clark@dmu.ac.uk.