

Introduction

Journalism Education is delighted to welcome Dr Karen Fowler-Watt of Bournemouth University as our guest editor for this special edition looking at teaching journalism's storytellers.

It's the story that matters! Teaching journalism's storytellers

Guest Editor: Karen Fowler-Watt, Bournemouth University, UK.

The only thing I have wanted to do in my life – and the only thing I have done somewhat well – is telling stories - Gabriel Garcia Marquez

I was delighted to be invited to put together this special edition of Journalism Education. It didn't take me long to decide on a topic, since "the story", how we tell stories and how we teach storytelling constitute dominant and consistent themes in conversations with colleagues – both in industry and the academy – as well as a personal enthusiasm.

Storytelling is the journalist's craft skill: Shaped by the tenets of objectivity and accuracy, the news narrative informs the debate and brings us the human stories. If journalism is a craft, then the story is the journalist's work of art – it is 'hard-wired in' (Marr, 2006). Even in a rapidly changing landscape of technological revolution, shifting business models and ethical challenges, one thing remains certain – the story still matters. As award winning BBC foreign correspondent, Fergal Keane reminds us, the journalist is first and foremost a storyteller who is 'trying to tell them what it is like to stand where I do and see the things I see.'

But this craft skill is being challenged on all sides. The demands of the 24/7 news cycle emphasise story – processing, rather than storytelling. Originality – the storyteller's stock-in-trade – is often sacrificed as newsrooms shrink in size and journalists fail to get out of the office. The online environment moves us away from linear storytelling and focuses on the imperative of interactivity. Stories require simplicity and multi media features to engage an audience consuming in byte-size, whilst on the move.

If storytelling lies at the heart of journalism practice, how do journalism educators face these challenges? How do we teach the next generation of journalists to find original stories and to tell them in innovative ways? How do we encourage young journalists to engage audiences through their storytelling techniques? How does investigative, in-depth research and long-form storytelling fit in to this digital context? How do they make sense of the fragments and conversations in order to tell stories that are accessible to others, accurate and fair?

This special edition seeks to engage with these questions through six thought-provoking, peer-reviewed articles and a couple of invited essays, which focus on a specific area and from an industry perspective. I have also included a personal reflection on the challenges we face in narrating the identities of others. The final section contains some relevant book reviews.

Above all, this edition aims to invite discussion and debate about a range of challenges currently facing the role of storytelling in journalism education. It devotes particular attention to the ways in which journalism educators are embracing multimedia and new media approaches to storytelling. I hope that it provides

food for thought and creative ideas for your own research and pedagogic practice and would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to finesse their contribution to this special edition.

Key challenges

The two invited essays provide context—highlighting some of the crucial challenges encountered in teaching storytelling: the phenomenal rise of social media and its impact on our ability to engage audiences.

In *Get digital or die: News storytelling, social media and journalism education*, former Director of the BBC College of Journalism, Jonathan Baker canvasses opinion from industry colleagues to chart a path for journalism educators in the wake of the social media revolution and concludes that the story still matters, but we have to think very carefully about our sources and how we tell it. Peter Jackson, the leading magazine editor of his generation and UK launch editor of *Elle* explains *Why Words Must Paint Pictures*. His compelling essay highlights the power of an evocative phrase or sensuous description in drawing readers in to stories. Utilising his own experience, he paints a vivid picture of how long form storytelling can survive – and thrive - in the digital age.

Telling stories responsibly

Indeed, the theme of journalists' responsibility runs through all of the articles and Josie Vine's contribution sets the scene for this section, providing useful context. Writing from an Australian perspective, she contends that the time spent learning technological approaches to storytelling reduces the time spent learning how to tell stories and minimises opportunity for critical reflection on practice. '*Teaching and learning journalistic responsibility in the post-digital revolution*' utilises a 3 - year case study and a paradigm of cultural-historiography to explore whether the core philosophy of journalism as storytelling has been transformed, or merely the tools with which stories are told. An important focus on ethics, diversity and the imperatives of scrutiny and holding to account underpin research that challenges assumptions about journalistic practice. Brad Gyori, an American now teaching digital storytelling in the UK pursues the theme of integrity as non-negotiable, but challenges journalism educators to interrogate the value of objectivity. Developed with reference to work done by researchers such as Jenkins and Kelley (2013) on reading in participatory cultures, whereby students actively approach texts in different ways to inform their understanding, Gyori offers a 'news remix' model that encourages us to think about the production of meaning, rather than just news production for its own sake. In his article, '*POV X 3: Helping Journalism Students Juxtapose Author, Actor & Audience*'. He advocates an immersive and engaging model, utilising point of view (POV) to develop critical thinking in students learning the art of storytelling.

Industry council accreditation forms an important part of the landscape for journalism education in the UK and Myra Evans shares her research on experiential learning, focused on teaching storytelling in a "classroom as newsroom" context. Her article *Storytelling in the Newsroom: An investigation into practice-based learning methods in the training and employment of tomorrow's journalists* emphasises the importance of the newsday as a route to confidence building, industry engagement and employability.

Two articles follow that focus on the challenges of sense-making through storytelling in a digital age. Australian academic Kate Ames looks at the Gamergate controversy as a way into investigating the challenges for journalism educators in a landscape where fragments of conversation have become stories and conversational narrative has become a dominant form. '*Gamergate, fragmentary storytelling, and news narrative: Convergence, 'conversation', and context in journalism education*' acknowledges that content creation remains central to the journalist's role, but contends that in order to produce accurate and fair stories, the journalists of the future should know how to make sense of social media, not just how to use it. Understanding conversational theory and the re-telling of stories therefore becomes a critical future skill for journalism students. Responsible journalism utilising data and visualisation techniques can arise from transparency, from showing your workings – what the data labs research team at Bournemouth University refer to as the 'layer cake' approach to sharing digital narratives that engage audiences. In '*Visualising Data Stories Together: Reflections on Data Journalism Education*' Anna Feigenbaum et al emphasise that core journalistic principles should not be distorted by the use of data in storytelling, so an understanding of design and audience is important. This project also engages with external stakeholders from NGOs to industry, and globally - illustrating the positive impact that innovative journalism education can – and should - have on wider society. The concluding article engages with notions of responsibility, journalism and storytelling through the lens of trauma training. The core principles of journalism are thrown into sharp

relief in conflict zones and when reporting trauma. Stephen Jukes, former global Head of News at Reuters and Professor of Journalism at Bournemouth University, calls for journalism educators to integrate trauma awareness into their curricula and illustrates how it engages with the key skills of journalistic storytelling – particularly the stock – in –trade of interview technique - issues associated with objectivity, notions of trust and emotional literacy. In challenging normative assumptions around ‘detachment’ *‘Where’s George Bush? University students weather the trauma storm of Hurricane Katrina’* underlines the intensely human nature of journalism, with its emphasis on the importance of human connections. We can only tell stories responsibly with meaning and veracity if we confront and seek to understand ourselves. Emotional literacy forms an equal partner to media literacy when reflecting on the challenges for journalism education and the storytellers of the future.

In conclusion, and ahead of a selection of pithy book reviews, I have included a short, personal reflective piece on a seminar that I delivered this summer at the Salzburg Global Media Academy, a matter of days after the Nice attack when the spotlight was sharply focused on the media’s portrayal of migrants and bi-nationals. Migration was the theme for the academy, providing an opportunity to consider the challenges and responsibilities for journalists in telling the stories of ‘others’. Perhaps above all journalism education should consider the teaching of intangibles such as empathy, compassion and how to avoid superficial generalisations or leaping to judgement. In a complex and fractured world, we need to ask ‘where does the good journalism, the compelling, fair, accurate storytelling reside?’ I hope that this special edition makes a useful and insightful contribution to the conversation.

Dr Karen Fowler-Watt

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