

The day students scooped the established media: the extreme experiential learning in a pop-up multiplatform newsroom

Ivana Ebel and Alex Canner, Derby University

Abstract

Simulations are not enough to teach student journalists to react to unpredicted situations and produce high-quality content under adverse circumstances. Therefore, the university needs to provide experiential learning activities and training in real-world scenarios. This article explores one extreme experience of creating a pop-up newsroom as a learning environment to cover a local, riotous game, steeped in medieval tradition. More than a hundred students were involved in real-time multimedia coverage, scooping the established media and creating new avenues of partnership and collaboration.

Introduction

In an era of technological-driven changes, fast-delivery is one of the crucial characteristics of journalism. It combines both the responsibility of informing the population quickly and the inner motivation of scooping the competitors in being the first to publish new content.

The adrenaline of running against time to publish high-quality content and the motivation of engaging in the newsgathering process in challenging field situations is difficult to reproduce in simulated newsrooms within the university environment. However, learning how to behave ethically and being able to respond quickly to unpredictable situations are fundamental values for successful journalists and must be an integral part of what is offered in higher education.

Universities tend to rely on simulations and organize so-called newsdays to provide the students with closer experiences of the routine they will face inside the newsroom, however the absence of an experimental mode makes it only partially effective. The solution is to replace the emulation by real-world activities and the pop-up newsroom responds to this necessity. The University of Derby adopted the strategy and organized a unique multimedia coverage of a medieval game, Shrovetide, involving more than a hundred students, scooping the traditional media and producing unique content about the traditional festival.

This article shows the rationale and theoretical background behind the project, detailing the ethos of the decision-making, the organizational process, the implementation and its results. Overall, it focuses on the vocational training of future journalists and the experience gained during the activity in which the young reporters embraced adverse weather condition to provide a professional multimedia coverage of the event in real-time. It shows, in numbers, the massive impact of the students' work on the content produced about the game and the recognition received by the local media who now, see the students as high-qualified contributors and partners.

Theory and practice to provide a multiple set of skills

Journalism has faced some of the most drastic changes in the last two decades. The most common tools and delivery platforms currently used (smartphones and social networks) were a novelty in the market less than ten years ago (Guribye and Nyre, 2017; Ifrim et al., 2017). The fast pace of change requires the professionals to adapt constantly and imposes different challenges in the academic environment. Initially, journalism was 'closely linked with the literary field' (Joseph, 2009, p. 44). Technology-driven changes required a trained journalist to be a specialist in one specific media: writing, photography, television or radio. Now, all the students completing a degree must have a broad multiplatform knowledge and an elevated grade of digital literacy (Spyridou and Veglis, 2016; St Clair, 2015).

Therefore, efficient training in journalism requires a balance between theory and practice. Much has been discussed about real-world learning environments in journalism and university programmes tend to try hard to recreate these types of opportunities or to arrange work placements to offer students the chance to learn by doing (Freedman and Poulson, 2015; Parks, 2015; St Clair, 2015). Inside the universities, web platforms and blogs are commonly used to help the students to develop professional skills, aiming to simulate news desks (Hodgson and Wong, 2011). They are common tools used for multimediatised content produced in so-called newsdays (Hill, 2014) learning by doing Part 2: Do as I say, shiny new newsroom, student feedback Part 3: More research required, what news do you cover? Part 4: Assessment, other points, conclusion Part 5: Examples - journalism news sites Introduction Newsdays are a workplace simulation where the aim is to replicate the 'real journalism' that goes on in newsrooms of places like the BBC, Sky and ITN. In the last few years they have become an important and core component of BJTC accredited journalism courses. Content (copy, audio, video, images, a simulation of a newsroom used as a 'route to confidence building, industry engagement and employability' (Fowler-Watt, 2016, p. 7).

However, is the proximity with the real world that helps to create better learning opportunities. In fact, Herrington & Herrington (2007) suggest that only real problems can ensure authentic approaches. For the scholars, the tasks that the students perform are the crucial aspect of the activity design, comprising ideally 'ill-defined activities that have real-world relevance, and which present complex tasks to be completed over a sustained period of time, rather than a series of shorter disconnected examples' (Herrington and Herrington, 2007, p. 70). From that perspective, the newsdays are only partially authentic.

The University of Derby runs four distinct programmes in Journalism and promotes the course promising 'substantial practical experience of researching and producing powerful print, audio, video and online stories' (Derby, n.d.). With that, the curriculum combines vocational and academic training and the students expect to be involved in practical work. To diversify the activities commonly developed during the newsdays, that use the classrooms equipped with computers to simulate the newsrooms, the department decided to take a bold step towards authenticity in two simultaneous steps. Firstly, by creating a web-based platform for the students' work that emulates the industry standards, it being used as an important local media outlet, it also allows the students to learn by doing. Secondly, by releasing this platform with content produced in what Wall (2015) defines as a pop-up newsroom.

The pop-up newsroom was focused on a very specific event – Royal Shrovetide Football, as will be detailed next – and used as an improvised space for the students to produce and publish live content. 'This newsroom does not focus on a final, polished end-product produced behind closed doors in a traditional newsroom, but rather collects news in the moment, feeds it into an ever-changing news stream, and performs much of its work in public spaces' (Wall, 2015, p. 124). The website SHDerby and its co-related

social media platforms exercises multiple abilities, as it requires the students to produce content in different formats and at the same time, it requires elevated digital skills. It contemplates the set of skills required by an uncertain market, that only has space for journalists that are ‘multi-skilled for the digital news age, but they must also be comfortable with changing technologies, innovative story forms and workflows’ (St Clair, 2015, p. 124).

The combination of both, helped to create an experiential mode, that combines ‘observable attributes (the physical surroundings, sentient beings, objects, systems and events that occur) and the non-observable perceptions of the learners (the engagement, cognition and affective responses)’ (Appelman, 2005, p. 64). It contemplates transversal learning outcomes, engaging the students in live coverage, directly competing with established media outlets, and providing them with the chance to produce content that can be used as a portfolio.

A cultural controversial game

Royal Shrovetide Football is a game in which anyone can take part. It is played over two days during winter in the town of Ashbourne in Derbyshire, UK (Visit Peak District, n.d.). Essentially, two non-uniformed teams compete to transport a ball in any way they see fit to their goal. The goals are three miles apart. The teams are the inhabitants and sympathisers from the two sides of the town: those from the South are named Down’ards and those from the North are named Up’ards. There are very few rules, no referee and hundreds of people take part. ‘To an outsider the game more resembles a riot, havoc wrecked upon an unsuspecting, quaint, rather up-market Georgian town’ (Picard and Robinson, 2006, p. 100). It’s a singular spectacle, which has been played every year since the 1800s.

Coverage of the game from most media outlets in the UK has been sporadic to say the least and the community are reticent about external attention. The game is being considered at risk ‘not because of insufficient local participation, but due to new challenges and pressures felt from the growing numbers of spectators’, which increase the pressure on organizational issues such as insurance, security, and health and safety measures (Harrison, 2017, p. 219). Gadsby (apud Picard and Robinson, 2006, p. 108), the chair of the Shrovetide committee in 2002, remarked on the worldwide interest following a Japanese film crew hiring a helicopter to cover the game. He talked about keeping the right balance with enough publicity to satisfy curiosity but not so much that it attracts too much attention.

Overall, the local participants are sensitive to negative coverage, so it was significant that the students understand the cultural importance of the festival. To truly represent all the game’s facets, tradition, gameplay, and the sheer number of people involved, all platforms of journalism should be used to tell the story.

Space for a broad coverage and cooperation

The local media covered the match in previous years with mixed results. Staffing is low at a local level at the BBC (Plunkett, 2016) and this always hampered a more complete broadcast of the game across all platforms. In 2015, University of Derby covered the game for the first time with three students and one lecturer from the BA (Hons) Media Production programme. As a result, they produced a short video for the BBC (Uni Derby, 2015)3,29]]}}}, “schema”: “https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json“} which was shared on Facebook 82,000 times in its first day and broadcast on the regional news to approximately 300,000 viewers.

The new strategy was to increase the coverage, organise a local pop-up newsroom to work in coordination with a central one based at the university, in a different city. To realistically cover the different aspects of the game, it was estimated that at least 40 journalism students would need to be engaged: 100 volunteered and joined the coverage. The plan targeted a heavily image-based coverage, with pictures, video and audio to build a unique narrative that has not been seen at the game before. In addition, the strategy was to share the content produced by the students with the established media. This requires not only content produced towards industry standards, but of high quality, enough that they surpassed it and the opportunity to achieve larger audiences through social media platforms.

The clear goal was to maintain a high level of journalism in the content produced by the students. The directive was also to provide news and information to professional journalists and local media outlets. Besides the space ensured in the SHDerby, this practice helped to add professional currency to the students’ work. These targets were achieved via strong communication strategies. Journalism students and academics were included in a live chat group using WhatsApp. Due to the unique nature of the game, this was crucial to communicating the location of the ball across the five-mile radius - and the messages were many and

constant.

Having all the involved parties in the same virtual space, it struck up a working relationship using both social and professional banter between industry professionals and students. It helped to enrich trust, as it is intrinsically related to ‘the rate of social information exchange rather than the amount of information exchanged’ (Brewer, 2015, p. 23). The inclusivity fuelled the students to be ambitious with their coverage. Even though most of the students and journalists had never met each other, the method formed a strong bond of confidence within the team.

Having this frequent, non-competitive, open working practice turned out to be essential to the success of all organisations publishing their best work for the game. Indeed, within the industry, this practice has been developed, but often in-house. The so-called bi-media strategy consists in utilising all technology innovations available to make the news gathering more efficient (McNair, 2009). It could be remarked that this has been achieved here on a local level and not in-house, but innovatively, across the competitors, students and academics.

Building a coverage strategy

The visual of Royal Shrovetide Football has a large impact as thousands move in compact mobs through the town to follow a rarely visible ball. It means that the coverage needed to have a focus on images and video to help tell the story. In such unique events, ‘television has always been a better mirror than a spotlight. It reflects reality far more effectively than it creates it’ (Krajicek, 1999, p. 185). However, along the years, ‘TV news has not traditionally been that local’ (Bull, 2010, p. 309). Mobile journalism and its combination with social media platforms ensured new ways to explore hyperlocal video content. In fluid situations such as Shrovetide, ‘mobile technology has the potential to be a central tool within the breaking news environment’ (Mills et al., 2012, p. 682).

The pop-up newsroom and logistics

Inviting and motivating the students to cover an open-air game during the winter was not the only challenge. Despite the facilities of mobile gadgets, there are still technological constraints to be overcome, as there is still ‘a yawning chasm between, on the one hand, the social imaginaries of locative news, and, on the other hand, the materialities’ (Goggin et al., 2015, p. 55). Several challenges with this had to be addressed in the planning stage. To tackle it, the answer was the installation of a pop-up newsroom fulfilling the two main roles described by Molina & Medeiros (2017). First, by helping the students acting as reporters to gather original content and publish it via Twitter. Second, by working as a content hub – a centre of command – that monitors all the content produced by the students, that also edits and re-distributes it in different platforms.

Even if ‘smartphones could be seen to function as a converged newsroom in their own right (Mills et al., 2012, p. 681)’, in large agglomerations, the connections can be unreliable (Bhushan et al., 2014). During Shrovetide, there were thousands of people surrounding the game including spectators using 4G mobile data. To address the issue, the students needed to follow a pre-determined routine: gathering images using mobile phones, action cameras or small handycams and publishing via data connection when possible; taking the material to a hub equipped with laptops and wireless broadband; filing the material directly to the SHDerby platform or sending the material to the newsroom base at the university where more students would edit, file and publish the content. Academics would support the students during the process.

The pop-up newsroom required securing a location big enough to house 40 students at a time, with wireless broadband. After research and contact with locals, three possible locations emerged, with positive and negative aspects related to them: 1, the local leisure centre (Pros: private space, good facilities. Cons: secured company broadband, weak wireless, not central to the town, closes at 6pm, cost attached for room hire); 2, a small liquor shop (Pros: close to the starting point of the game, free access, open late. Cons: sells alcohol, weak intermittent wireless signal, small rooms, public access); 3, the social club (Pros: private space, free access, open until the early hours, free strong wireless signal, close to the centre. Cons: furthest from the drop-off point for transport. Second closest of the three options to the centre of play). The latter was the chosen option.

Transporting large numbers of students and equipment for different working shifts would mean detailed attention to planning. Over 100 students were taking part and they all needed to be briefed on health and safety aspects of the game, including how to deal with the adverse weather and freezing temperatures. The game is marshalled with a first aid team and insured by its own committee, so it is liable for any injuries sustained. In total, an accessible coach made four trips between the university and the pop-up newsroom, ensuring the teams would cover a large extension of the game.

To contemplate the versatility and immediacy required in live coverages, the students produced content in

the following formats:

Social media: covering key-parts of the game via short video, pictures, tweets, retweets from players, local people, authorities and news outlets. In addition, links to the content published on the students' platform SHDerby. Students managed to scoop local and national outlets by publishing key parts of the game in full using video and pictures.

Video: the videos published on SHDerby captured the opening ceremony in the town and the ball being turned up (official start of play). Headcam GoPro footage from inside the hug - one of the most violent parts of the game. Gameplay from around the town, and interviews with spectators.

Pictures: SHDerby received a rich collection of pictures, including slideshow stories depicting the game throughout with high quality images from DSLR cameras. The platform surpassed the local online media in quantity and value of the images, being the first outlet to publish the picture and profile of the player who scored the goal. Local media republished the student's original content.

Writing: Students researched and covered the ancient game using historical sources and traditional news-gathering expedients. Texts on SHDerby covered the origins of the game, historical moments, rules, statistics, FAQs, listicles, as well as comprehensively curating all of the days' highlights. Each part of the event has described within its context, representing play, spectators and the ethos of what the locals call the 'precious game'.

Audio: Students secured an interview with an ex-player, now a marshall of the game, to give perspective on how it has evolved in his lifetime. Crucially, students recorded audio of the goal being scored which was published in the SHDerby and passed on to the BBC who were able to run it in their bulletins. The local radio station credited the student and called the audio on air 'utterly joyous'.

Scooping the British media

Among the technological-driven changes faced by media, one of the most impacting is the rise of speed-driven journalism (Lee, 2014) "publisher": "University of Texas", "publisher-place": "Austin, USA", "number-of-pages": "119", "genre": "Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation", "event-place": "Austin, USA", "URL": "https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/25953/LEE-DISSERTATION-2014.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y", "language": "en-UK", "author": [{"family": "Lee", "given": "Angela Min-Chia"}], "issued": {"date-parts": [[2014]]}, "accessed": {"date-parts": [[2018, 3, 30]]}], "schema": "https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json". It adds up to traditional industry values that sees the scoop as a qualitative element and it being a thermometer of performance by separating successful newsgathering from fiasco (Lamelas et al., 2016). From the public point of view, Cushion & Lewis (2010, p. 170) considering that the technological possibilities increase the responsibility during the coverage, the 'audience has not only the need, but also the right, to get the information as fast as possible'.

Real-time coverage is especially important in sports and has been used since 2004 (Thurman and Schapals, 2016). The students were focussed on this perspective to cover Royal Shrovetide Football. Even though the emphasis was in respecting ethical aspects and prioritising quality, as 'the speed-driven news media place almost unrealistic expectations on journalists to perform quickly, resulting in reporting that is superficial and frequently full of stereotypes, stigmatising those it represents' (Thomas, 2016, p. 1).

The coverage was organised to contemplate distinct moments of the game such as the pre-game ceremony, assembly of players, turning up of the ball ('kick off'), big action moments (unpredictable and hard to capture), goal(s), reactions, and original stories. The produced content went through three main channels: first, through the student's personal social media platforms; second, when possible due to 4G connection availability, through the collaborative chat group; third, as multimedia content to the SHDerby and its social media accounts.

The workflow aimed to maximize the range and shareability, as the professional impact to the student's curricula was a priority over the SHDerby performance. It was clear that most local journalism websites operate on very tight budgets and [video] takes longer to prepare than text, audio or photos (Hill and Lashmar, 2013). With an army of more than 100 students covering the game with adequate equipment, a pop-up newsroom, a central newsroom and the necessary resources, it was evident that the SHDerby could offer to comprehensively cover the game in a competitive way. Even facing the field constraints for capturing video, the students managed to produce multimedia content combining photos, audio, and text generating broader outputs than our competitors.

To amplify the impact of the coverage, and following a common practice of the industry (Lee, 2015), the students were also encouraged to use their individual social media accounts, as the SHDerby was debuting

during Royal Shrovetide Football and had not achieved a meaningful number of followers. The idea, again, was to ensure the students could register the scoop (Bradshaw and Rohumaa, 2013), benefiting from the credit of being the first to publish the content. Data was collated after the event. It was clear that, although on occasion some key moments were published by the local press moments before SHDerby had shared them, the students' platforms were always first to contextualise the stories with video and other appropriate imagery.

Fast hands on news

Given the uncertainty of the gameplay, Twitter was a key choice as it is a flexible platform that allows quick reports (Canter and Brookes, 2016) and is a popular social media platform in the country (Sloan, 2017). In addition, Royal Shrovetide Football has been used to great effect on Twitter by local journalists and players also use it to dupe the opposition into the location of the ball. The students were asked to post from their personal accounts, as mentioned, but they also had access to the official SHDerby Twitter account to retweet the content. In doing so, they automatically fed the live-blog within the web platform, as it was set to publish all the content tagged with the hashtags #shrovetide and #SHDerby. The images that follow (names blurred due to peer review constraints) help to understand the results.

The first post of the day was announcing and inviting the users to follow the coverage (see Image 1). Soon after SHDerby, The Ashbourne News, the main local paper based in the town that hosts the game, tweeted a similar greeting as shown.

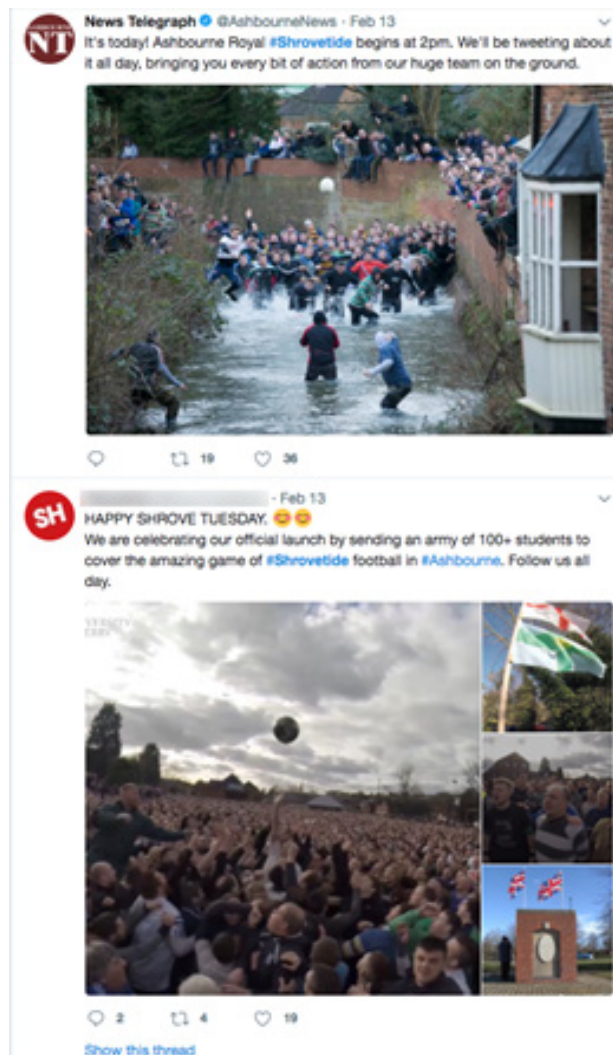


Image 1: the very first tweet of the day (SHDerby, 2018a)

Every year the game starts with a ceremony in the centre of town, where one local celebrity is chosen to throw the ball into a crowd of thousands, initiating the competition. A second-year student was the first to tweet video footage of the beginning of the game (see Image 2).

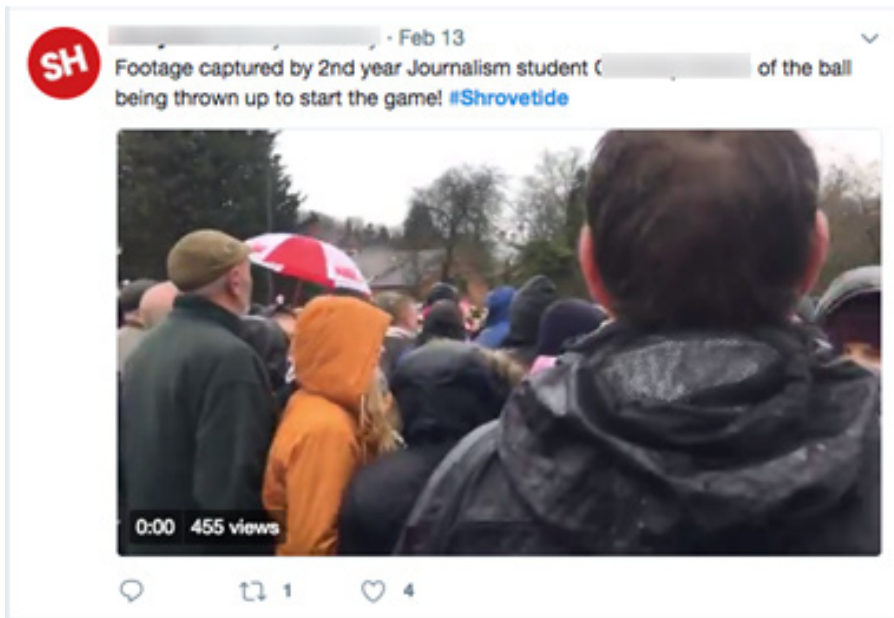


Image 2: first images came from a second-year student (SHDerby, 2018b)

The action is unpredictable, and the mob moves across the town trying to push the ball towards North or South, where the goals are situated, three miles apart from each other. The controversial game receives criticism due to the violent aspects and brutality of the male dominant tradition (Dunn, 2016). One of the crucial moments is the so-called hug, when players pile up on one-another, trying to reach the ball. Despite insurance, there were concerns for safety of the students and they were advised not to engage actively in the play. However, one of the first-year students caught the action. With a portable camera (Go-Pro) he registered exclusive images from the inside of the hug (see Image 3). No other media outlet captured such close and dramatic footage.



Image 3: exclusive footage of being inside the hug (SHDerby, 2018c)

The criticism received by the game from the previous articles published by the established media meant that further journalistic work was opposed by some local townspeople. It created an extra challenge for the students to approach participants and gather opinions and information. Most refused to talk and there were reactions towards the obtained material (see Image 4).



Image 4: quotes from Ashbourne residents and then reaction (SHDerby, 2018d)

The privileged location of the pop-up newsroom facilitated the coverage and the students could obtain images directly from the establishment (see Image 5). The location played a very important role during the game as the temperatures during the day reached below freezing levels. Despite the advice to wear adequate clothing, some of the students needed to quickly return to headquarters due to the weather conditions.



Image 5: the privileged view from the pop-up newsroom window (SHDerby, 2018e)

The location also allowed the students to easily walk from one location to another and follow the development of the game. In one unique moment, the players lost sight of the ball and the students were able to rush towards the last point to investigate the circumstances. The exclusive information gathered by the students was shared with the local media outlets (see Image 6). On top of scooping the local journalists, the post made on @SHDerby account was conversational and gave a more detailed update.

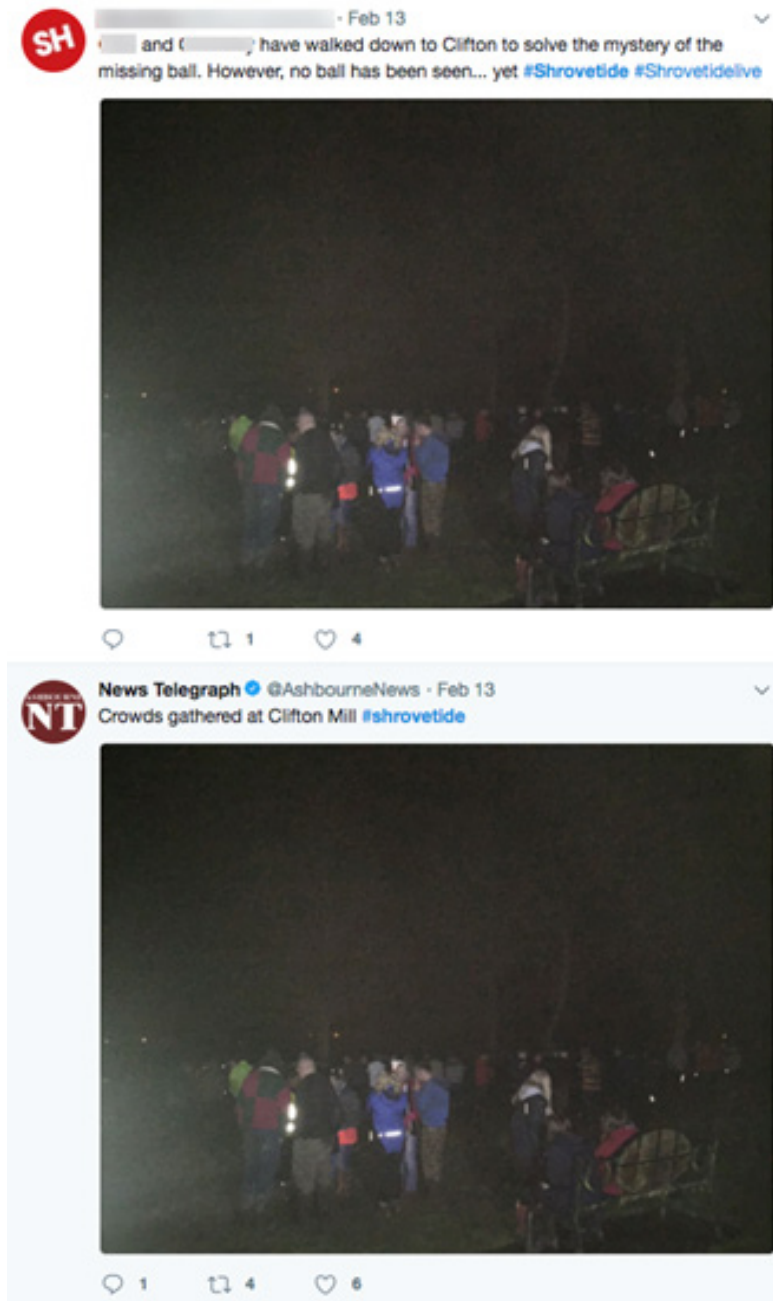


Image 6: collaboration with local partners (SHDerby, 2018f)

Again, another example of the local media tweeting the same story (see Image 7). @SHDerby provided more context and identified the student involved in the investigation. The ethos was to stimulate the engagement and apply a positive reinforcement to the developed work and at the same time it provided the audience with an opportunity to interact with the journalist. As Bradshaw (2018, p. 134) teaches, 'in the modern

news environment, when news breaks, readers don't want to wait for journalists to write a 300-word story: they want to follow developments as they happen'.

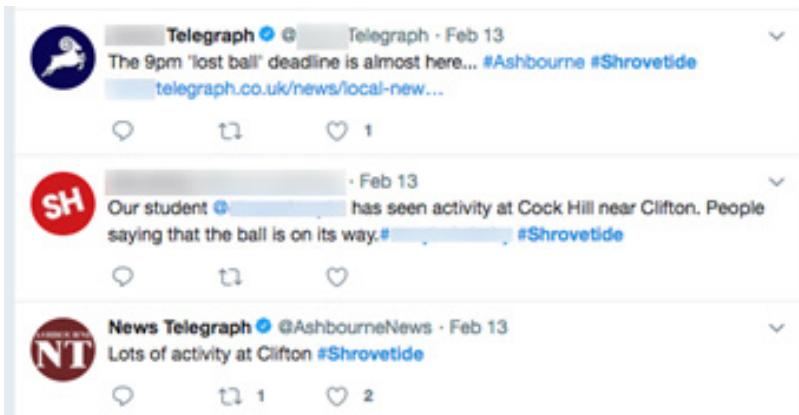


Image 7: the student got credit for the investigation (SHDerby, 2018a)

Another important moment was the first goal during day one. The students were first to tweet the goal, quickly followed by being first to tweet a picture of the scorer (see Image 8). A scoop and an exclusive.



Image 8: a scoop and an exclusive. (SHDerby, 2018g)

The field conditions were not favourable for mobile journalism. However, the students were first to tweet a video of the goal (see Image 9). The audio from this was lifted and sent to the local BBC Radio who included it in their bulletins.

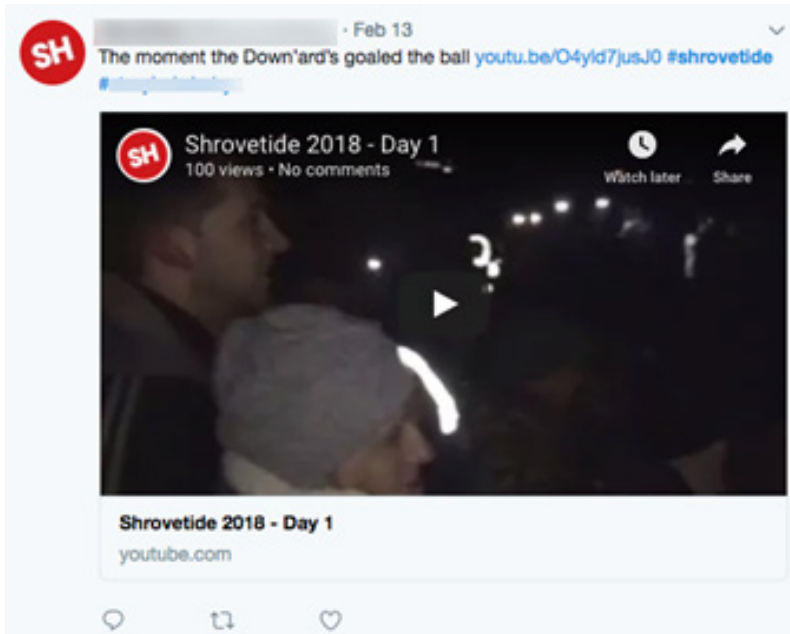


Image 9: the moment of the goal (SHDerby, 2018h)

The material was largely used by local media and the students received credits for the content used in different outlets, such as the local newspaper (see Image10).



Image 10: student credited in a local newspaper (Butterfield, 2018)

Coverage and collaboration in numbers

The numbers can provide a different understanding of the impact of the students' efforts on covering Royal Shrovetide Football. On Twitter, 182 posts mentioned the game of Royal Shrovetide Football to promote

journalistic content related to the coverage of the 2018 edition of the game. From that, 61 (33%) originated from @SHDerby (44) and the student's personal accounts (17). Considering only exclusive content (excluding retweets), out of 133 posts, 41 (31%) belong to the coverage efforts developed by the university. In general, @SHDerby was responsible for retweeting 20 journalism-related posts, making up 41% of all the media content retweeted about Royal Shrovetide Football.

The numbers are even more relevant when analysed from a multimedia point of view. Out of 45 images identified in media outlets, 7 (16%) were published by the students on their personal accounts and 11 (24%) originated from @SHDerby. The numbers related to video content exposes two situations: the competence of an elevated number of students producing content simultaneously and the low capability of the local media outlets to provide enough staff to cover the event. In this case, 71% of all video content produced around Shrovetide was originated on student's social media accounts (12 posts) and 24% from @SHDerby (4 posts).

The university platform, that combined the efforts of the pop-up newsroom and a centralised headquarters, was also the leader in stories about the game, considering all the local media outlets that traditionally cover the Ashbourne Shrovetide. Among the four most important local broadcasters/newspapers, 6 stories were published (27%), meaning that 73% of the web-based content (16 stories) about the 2018 Shrovetide was produced by students and uploaded on SHDerby.

Paving the way to event coverage

The success and learning experiences of Royal Shrovetide Football help to confirm the efficiency of using experiential modes as a strategic tool to teach journalism. The space normally reserved to large networks at major events was occupied by students providing real-world experiences that help to develop transversal skills across the curriculum: multimedia coverage, digital literacy, ethics, etc. It also added a meaningful experience to the individual's curricula, comparable to other situations that required agility and tenacity for real-time coverage under stressful and adverse conditions. It prepares the students to deal with unstable scenarios, as 'the unexpected may happen at any time, crises develop patterns so that, for journalists, even the unexpected becomes the predictable' (Curran and Seaton, 1997, p.276 apud Harcup, 2009, p. 20).

The students dealt with the unpredictable nature of the game and learned how to react, produce and publish real-time content, scooping the established media on different occasions. The main issues related to inexperience but as Paterson & Domingo (2008, p. 110) suggest, they are no different from the ones experienced in local newsrooms, where the challenges are the same: 'underdeveloped technology, inefficient production tools, limited and often young staffs, bureaucratic shifts, young managers and large ambition'.

Numerically, the journalism army also made an impression and none of the local media organisations could equal the students in this way. It was an experiment in team mentality, fast turnaround of media, collaborative workings with external newsgroups and ownership of exclusive storytelling. On reflection, new relations were built with media outlets and the local BBC radio station realised the significance of collaborating on future events. Reflectively, the feedback from the local press was invaluable:

Just wanted to send a note of thanks for your guys' tremendous efforts at Shrovetide. Our live blog on the event generated around 80,000 page views over the two days and our Ashbourne reporter, Gareth Butterfield, and Picture Editor, Victoria Wilcox, say the contributions from your students were invaluable. Gareth felt those involved on Tuesday were particularly impressive. It's another great example of our two organisations working together for mutual benefit. Please pass on my appreciation to all of those involved (Hall, 2018).

Conclusion

On reflection of this first-time experience, there are lessons which have been learned in terms of best practice. The most important is that the students reacted differently in simulations and experiential learning environments. It is almost impossible to recreate unpredictable circumstances to stimulate quick reactions. In an experimental mode, it will happen effortlessly, and the students will have no other option than to engage in situations that will contribute to acquiring additional sets of skills. They will learn how to deal with technological flaws, how to make ethical evaluations, and even how to assess risks during the news gathering process.

Another lesson is that the engagement will not be the same across a very large cohort, but the motivation is

more viral than the inside of a traditional classroom. The sense of accomplishment and pride, together with a constant positive reinforcement, creates a vibrant working atmosphere. In essence even for the students that did not engage directly with the content publication, experiencing the thrill of real-time coverage was beneficial. Ultimately, the outcomes for the students were the real immersion on experiential learning in one type of unprecedented media coverage for this area of the country.

The pop-up newsroom has proven to be a very efficient tool to create immersive learning environments. It offered all the necessary conditions to work as a content production hub, offering equipment and fast internet connections to help the students to share files with the central newsroom (based at the university) and the network of collaboration built with representatives of local media. In addition, the pop-up newsroom has an important psychological aspect, providing a safe refuge in the middle of a very challenging environment with freezing wet weather and a mob of thousands rushing through a small town. The students were more adventurous, because they knew they had this support structure.

The results were positive in different aspects. From the students' engagement perspective, it is important to note the individual dedication to be the first to publish the content, to include different voices and to gather multiple stories from around the game. The students' web platform ended up having the most complete coverage ever from the game. It is directly connected to the numerical perspectives. The students outperformed any other media outlet in creating video content and multimedia formats. The ability to publish the content and the digital skills necessary to operate multiple platforms and formats must be recognized too. In general, the experience has cemented the university's reputation as a hub for a credible team of journalists.

The long-term consequences of the experiment are not yet known. As an immediate response, the Journalism team (students and staff) were broadly recognized by the industry, improving relations, partnerships and establishing the trust for further collaborations. The students ended up with high-quality material to add value to their portfolios and with experience of coverage that will add extra credibility to any job application. They experienced an extreme real-world situation comparable with any other large-scale event.

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