

brand and is considered to be the leading provider of educational resources on freelance journalism in the UK. This all occurred extremely rapidly and completely accidentally.

By commissioning a graphic designer to create the artwork for our podcast series we inadvertently created a brand. Within two months of the release of the podcast in March 2020 we were asked to run a four-week freelance training course for journalism.co.uk. We also received widespread coverage in the trade press and were invited to give numerous talks at universities. It was at this point that we realised we were no longer Lily Canter and Emma Wilkinson, freelance journalists and lecturers, but we were a brand. Together we were Freelancing for Journalists. Upon this realisation we decided to act quickly and start our own webinar training programme, remote work experience initiative and newsletter. Around the same time the Facebook group we had set up in March to promote the podcast was taking off and becoming a hub of conversation and advice sharing for freelance journalists in the UK and globally. To date the Facebook community has more than 3,200 members, with 420 posts a month on average.

What started as a pilot podcast project within the university has turned into an external small business which currently generates around 25% of our freelance income and continues to grow. We have hired a part-time research assistant and finally feel we are in a position to provide valuable, practical and up-to-date advice and support on freelancing which has been missing from much of journalism training and education. Through this process we have learnt about digital marketing, online event management, business partnerships, collaboration and sponsorship which will inform our teaching going forward.

Reflections

As our graduates enter an extremely volatile job market it has never been more important to imbue them with entrepreneurial skills and the ability to create a sustainable and autonomous portfolio career. This could be through a range of skills such as podcasting, newsletter writing, freelance writing, freelance producing and/or copywriting.

There is a demand from students for podcasting skills and we have seen a surge in graduates launching excellent journalism podcasts such as JobsBored, Northern Natter and Views Our Own. As our world has shifted almost entirely online we need to recognise the need to teach podcasting outside of radio studios and equip students with online recording and editing skills. Alongside this there is a need to approach work experience in innovative ways and enable remote opportunities such as shadowing freelance journalists rather than the traditional approach of being a 'workie' in a newsroom.

Whether it is through freelance knowledge, podcasting skills or other entrepreneurial teaching we need to ensure that we equip our students with the tools, confidence and belief that career opportunities are limitless.

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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 tor.clark@leicester.ac.uk

Welcome to this bumper Journalism Education reviews section, with nine fascinating accounts of recent books which will be of interest to Journalism educators and their students. This month's selection is eclectic, but hopefully useful as Journalism lecturers start to turn their attention to what will be on their next sets of reading lists.

We begin with Kerri Watts' review of *Freelancing for Journalists* by Lily Canter and Emma Wilkinson from Sheffield Hallam University, a book which is bound to be useful to students studying journalism and even more so to those who want to cut their teeth on their own merits as freelancers at a time when being an employee becomes less important in the world of commercial journalism.

Journalism Education's editor Chris Frost's latest book *Privacy and the News Media* is seen as incredibly valuable by its reviewer and AJE secretary, David Baines of Newcastle University. Professor Frost, of Liverpool John Moores University, is an authority on the ethics and regulation of journalism so his decision to delve deeply into privacy and set it in an international context is welcomed by Dr Baines.

Former Guardian editor Alan Rusbridger has more recently been writing and lecturing from his new Oxford pulpit and his latest offering, *News and How to Use It* is considered insightful by regular reviewer Michael Foley of Dublin Technical University.

Also focusing on news, but questioning its value is Tony Harcup of Sheffield University. Harcup's interesting take on news and its relationship to ethics in the 21st century, the product of decades of journalism and research into this area, is welcomed and recommended by reviewer Chris Frost.

In a similar vein, Frost enjoys *The Roots of Fake News* by father and son academics Brian Winston of Lincoln University and Matthew Winston of the University of Leicester. The Winstons investigate the legitimacy of the oft-trumpeted search for truth and question whether journalism has any right to associate itself with objectivity. Frost notes the claim to objectivity may in itself have resulted in a wholesale damaging of trust in the supply of public information by legitimising dubious sources.

In the final of his trio of reviews for this edition, Chris Frost recommends *Murder in Our Midst Comparing Crime Coverage Ethics in an Age of Globalized News* by Romaine Smith Fullerton and Maggie Jones Patterson, which in taking a global view of crime coverage ethics comes to interesting and original conclusions, worthy of further study.

The BBC, home of one of the largest and most respected journalistic networks in the world, comes in for much scrutiny and not a little criticism. Broadcast journalist-turned-journalism educator and prolific editor John Mair has produced three books about the BBC in the last year alone, so is a good judge of another text on the Corporation. He finds much to commend *The War Against the BBC* by Patrick Barwise and Peter York. Barwise, a professor at the London Business School and York, the cultural commentator and president of the Media Society, have turned out a fascinating look at the BBC, which Mair recommends, though feeling York is a little more sympathetic than he need be.

The political and media events we are now experiencing were set in train in what seemed at the time and has been proved to be an auspicious year – 2016. The events of that year and crucially their impact on journalism are examined by a fine array of chapter-contributing journalists and academics in *Brexit, Trump and the Media*, edited by John Mair et al, the first of a trilogy of edited collections offering scores of chapters from the informed, which Sara McConnell of Sheffield University enjoys revisiting. She finds much to inform the student of journalism or politics within its covers.

Finally, recent years have brought us the UK's most recent journalist-turned-Prime Minister in Boris Johnson. Indeed, though other Prime Ministers – notably Churchill – have done much journalism, it could be argued Johnson is the first for whom journalism was a career he had trained for and worked in professionally. As such he deserves the scrutiny of his former brethren.

And so to conclude this larger than life reviews section it seems appropriate to look in depth at the journalist-Prime Minister himself. John Mair finds Tom Bower's recent biography *Boris Johnson: The Gambler* to be an enjoyable read, which if anything tends to go easy on the former Daily Telegraph Brussels correspondent and columnist. And though it is unlikely to make it onto the reading lists of many Journalism courses, it offers a telling lesson in how distorted journalism need not necessarily be a bar to a career at the very top of public life.

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As always, the Journalism Education reviews section welcomes suggestions for reviews and reviewers for any books which may be of use to journalism educators and their students. If you would like to recommend a book for review or offer your services as a reviewer please email reviews editor Tor Clark at tor.clark@leicester.ac.uk

Freelancing for Journalists by Lily Canter and Emma Wilkinson

Review by Kerri L Watt, PR strategist and trainee journalist

In a world where a global pandemic has impacted many traditional jobs, going freelance has now become a viable option for many journalists. Freelancing For Journalists is the essential resource for paid employees wishing to take their journalism career down a different path into the freelancing world or those just starting out in the industry.

Authors Lily Canter and Emma Wilkinson, both experienced freelancers and journalism lecturers, provide a detailed analysis of the media landscape and the routes to developing a successful freelance journalism career. The book has 12 chapters exploring:

[Introduction to being a freelance journalist](#)

[The training and experience required](#)

[Where to find freelance work](#)

[How to develop story ideas](#)

[Pitching and selling your story](#)

[Networking and growing your contacts](#)

[Writing great copy](#)

[Branding yourself](#)

[Tips to set up a business](#)

[Ways to supplement your income](#)

[Manage finances](#)

This book explains the types of freelancing opportunities available to journalists other than pitching your own stories including contracted work, shift working and becoming a stringer for a news organisation.

The authors are seasoned journalists with well-established freelance careers and both lecture at Sheffield Hallam University, UK. Lily Canter is a freelance money, health and lifestyle journalist working for a range of international newspapers, magazines and websites. Emma Wilkinson is a freelance journalist writing

about health, medicine and biosciences, working with several specialist websites, magazines and journals.

Based on the authors' extensive freelancing experience and drawing on 12 other case studies, the book offers a look behind the scenes of many established freelance journalist careers. In order to ensure prompt payment, and at industry standard rates or above, readers are shown how to combat the potential precariousness of generating a freelance income.

This book reveals what makes a good story to sell, where to find ideas and tricks for repurposing those ideas into multiple pieces; a feature, news story or opinion piece. Readers are treated to tried-and-tested email pitch templates to get on the radar of commissioning editors.

In 2016, the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) found that between 2000 and 2015 the number of freelance journalists had risen 67 per cent. This book brings hope to even more journalists now choosing to go freelance and shows there is a way to create both an inspiring career and a profitable business. With a whole chapter devoted to ideas to supplement income, readers are guided on how to design and juggle other money-making activities including copywriting, PR, blogging and even teaching.

I have been self-employed working within PR for a decade with a career in journalism always on my mind. After consuming this book, I finally took the leap and registered for journalism training. As well as the initial inspiration to join the industry, by using the advice and templates through the book, I have even secured newsroom work experience and freelance writing work as a trainee.

To continue the authors' dedication to supporting freelance journalists they also host the popular podcast *Freelancing For Journalists* and a free Facebook community with over 3,000 members.

Freelancing for Journalists offers an essential resource for established journalists and journalism students thinking of trying out freelancing.

Freelancing for Journalists, by Lily Canter and Emma Wilkinson, published by Routledge, 2020, pp212, £32.99, ISBN 978-0-367-13555-3.

Privacy and the News Media by Chris Frost

Review by David Baines, Newcastle University

It is a truism to remark that journalists today are working both locally and globally. The pandemic has surely underlined that.

Alongside public health, the critical issues of our day all play out across our planet and across our national and local communities: the climate crisis, environmental degradation, migration, corporate accountability, the growth of populist politics... As journalism educators, we have a responsibility to equip our students – who are themselves an increasingly diverse and international group – to report on these issues, to render their complexities accessible and understandable. And a critical element of that preparation concerns the exploration and analysis of the legislative frameworks which constrain or facilitate their practice, the values that inform their work and their relationships with their communities.

But courses, modules, in law and ethics pose particular challenges when we seek to adopt a global perspective. Ethical, legal, political, social, cultural, religious (and though we might be reluctant to admit it, commercial concerns) intersect. These vary from nation to nation, region to region, legislature to legislature. There are natural pressures to prepare students for employment in their home regions – and accrediting bodies such as Britain's National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) demand a place-based curriculum that meet the needs of industry stakeholders. As a result, most such courses adopt a narrow perspective. Few English and Welsh journalism schools pay much attention to even the Scottish legal framework.

So it is a delight to be presented with this volume. Frost does have a critical focus on privacy and the news media in Britain. But in both structure and content it is an interrogation of the field – and a guide through its many difficult patches – that allows us to adopt a more global perspective. It is a very welcome addition to our toolboxes as we seek to enhance the international relevance of our programmes.

Structurally, the volume is informed throughout by two critical strands of law and ethics: the former by grounding it on the international and national approaches to the development of universally acknowledged frameworks of human rights, the latter by exploring the conceptual foundations of ethical inquiry. Though it is fair to say that while the rights to privacy and freedom of expression are traced from the global (the UN Declaration) through the regional (the European Convention) to the national (the UK Human Rights

Act), the foundations of ethical inquiry draw exclusively on the philosophical traditions of the West. Nevertheless, this foundational work on first principles establishes the context for a closer interrogation of the manner in which privacy has developed as a legal and ethical concern. It allows the reader to adopt a greater universality of perspective as she or he follows Frost into the more specific concerns relating to celebrity, gossip, data protection, new technologies and media regulation.

The content is again predominantly focused on the UK context, but it does draw throughout on case studies and examples from different countries, different regions. And it includes two very valuable chapters on the traditions – social, cultural, legal, ethical, and professional – that prevail across Europe and across the USA and Canada.

Frost takes us through the efforts by unions, industrial bodies, politicians and judges to regulate the work of journalists and coherently to codify professional values in order to balance the right to free expression, a duty to serve a public interest and hold authorities to account – and maintain respect for privacy. He critically analyses the tensions that exist and the power-plays that shape the debate when journalism is undertaken predominantly as a commercial enterprise and private lives hold the potential to become marketable commodities. Where commodities are concerned, there is likely to be a struggle for their control. Defamation and privacy tend to be treated as separate elements on course curricula, but both relate to reputation and often that struggle hinges on where the power lies to make, and break, reputations. This book does us a service in its exploration of the intersections between privacy and defamation as the law in this area continues to develop.

For our students, for us all, these concerns are more than topics of academic inquiry and the development of professional skills, knowledge and understandings. Digital and social media have blended the professional and the personal and all of us now live our lives in media.

Frost investigates the challenges and opportunities new technologies have brought to journalists when so much that we would once have considered private is on public view. Much of this can be a conscious crafting of identity by sophisticated adopters of modern media platforms. But other lives are unwittingly revealed by people with vulnerabilities and Frost reminds us these are vulnerabilities to which journalists should be alert. And he is also alert to the susceptibility of journalists to invasions of their personal and professional privacy by police and other state agents who are able to trace their contacts with few restraints.

Ethically, legally, one area of our lives which tends to attract the greatest protection from intrusion relates to health and medical matters. Yet, for the past year and more, the media spotlight has been on health – public and private. And that story has also encompassed the climate crisis, environmental degradation, migration, corporate accountability, populist politics...

Frost has brought original and illuminating research to this timely work and gathered in one place much that is often widely dispersed and the international perspective is particularly valuable. A very useful addition to the reading list on law and ethics.

Privacy and the News Media by Chris Frost, published 2020 by Routledge, pp211, ISBN 9780367140236

What's the Point of News? A study in Ethical Journalism by Tony Harcup

Review by Chris Frost, Liverpool John Moores University

The news, as traditionally identified over the past century, is facing a serious crisis according to Tony Harcup. Its crucial link to democracy and equality in a free society in providing accurate information on which people can base their opinions is no longer so clear to many people.

This is never more true that at election times, and it is clear that recent election examples in the US and the UK are showing a serious democratic deficit as traditional news carriers fail to provide trustworthy news and people come to rely more and more on social media and fake news that at least gives them news they can believe in, even if it is wrong.

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With the swirl of fake news and conspiracy theories all around us providing excuses and comfort to those who need it a book that takes back to the reality of why we have news is well overdue. Consequently this is an extremely useful and timely manuscript that will play a significant role in advancing the various analyses and arguments required to ensure 'the news' once again gets to play its vital role in presenting accurate information, but more importantly information people feel they need and want.

The pandemic is another excellent example of why news is important, watching the various arguments play out from the mainstream concerns about how soon, how hard and for how long we should lockdown, through constantly updated science about transmission of the virus, to the conspiracy theories of the wilder parts of the web that deny the virus, or claim it to be a tool of the elite and the antivaxxers who seek to deny what is probably our best tool to defeat it, balancing small risk against the giant risk of a rapidly evolving virus.

As with all Harcup's work, the monograph is well written and well structured allowing the reader's entire concentration to be brought to bear on the information, critiques, evidence and analysis contained within each chapter. Unlike many academic authors who like to flaunt their vocabulary and learning in a way that often hides their lack of analysis, Harcup's writing is as transparent as ever allowing him to present directly to the reader what he wants them to understand and explore. It is a pleasure to read the book and brings clear insight and understanding making it ideal for students and teachers alike.

The manuscript is structured as a series of essays, laying out logically what the author seeks to examine, the detail of that examination and his findings, taking us from the introduction to analysis and conclusion through chapters that examine the evidence of news, its point and some of its impediments.

Chapters flesh out the different arguments and information appropriately and logically. The manuscript avoids being dragged into the many byways and backwaters that this important topic produces such as fake news or softer subjects such as consumer news, sport or celebrity. Harcup has concentrated on the key point of why we produce news – whatever its uses – and is to be praised for its tightly written and full examination of this purpose of news, ethically handled.

This is a book that should be on the reading list of every undergraduate and postgraduate Journalism or Media course, bringing a topic which is often underestimated in its complexity but is of vital importance, particularly as students start their move into professional journalism, to the forefront. Understanding what makes a story news can take students a long time to grasp. This book will help enormously.

What's the Point of News? A study in Ethical Journalism by Tony Harcup, published 2020 by Palgrave Macmillan, 168 Pages, ISBN-10: 303039946X, ISBN-13: 978-3030399467

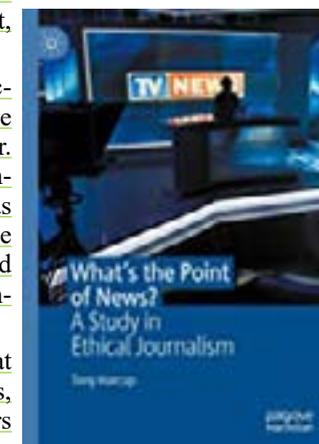
Brexit, Trump and the Media edited by John Mair, Tor Clark, Neil Fowler, Raymond Snoddy and Richard Tait

Review by Sara McConnell, Sheffield University

The UK 's vote to leave the EU and the US's vote for Donald Trump as president came within months of each other in 2016. But the aftershocks of those twin political earthquakes are still being felt, in the rise of populism, the social divisions and the ugly manifestations of racism and anti-immigrant sentiment.

It is no secret that the events of 2016 came as a shock to many journalists and academics on both sides of the Atlantic, comfortably cocooned in their Remainer/Clinton bubbles, hearing only the voices of those

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who thought like they did. The votes for Brexit and Trump came as a sharp reminder that millions of people despised the liberal media as part of an elite which had ignored them for years and rejoiced in making their voices heard. The calls to 'take back control' and to 'make America great again' resonated with people whose lives lacked control and greatness.

The value of *Brexit, Trump and the Media*, is precisely that it gives a range of perspectives on significant events outside the well-worn tracks of discussion in liberal media and university seminar rooms. It is one of the biggest selling of the 'Hackademic' series of books combining academic and journalistic analysis of events, written and published at a speed which would scare traditional academic publishers, but which is vital for swift and up-to-date commentary.

The same editing team produced *Brexit, Boris and the Media in 2020* and are now working on a final volume, *Populism and the Media* due for publication in June 2021.

This book, the first in the trilogy, contains chapters from all sides of the political spectrum on the question of how and why Brexit happened as it did, how and why Trump won, and the role of traditional print media, broadcasting and social media in shaping these outcomes. There are chapters on pollsters' prediction of results (spoiler alert: they got it wrong) and the future implications for the media in the aftermath of the seismic events of 2016. All these chapters provide important points for potential discussion in seminars and material for lectures, particular in modules focusing on the news industry, the way that journalists make news, and journalism ethics.

The first section of the book is in some ways the most interesting because it focuses on the Leave campaign during the run-up to the EU Referendum. The different players in the Leave campaign arguably played a blinder and succeeded in getting the vote to go their way with skilful use of social media, appearances in newspapers and on TV and some vigorous (albeit highly misleading) anti-EU slogans. But they have not always been willing to talk to academics or journalists they perceive (probably correctly) as being against everything they stand for. So it was a coup on the part of the editors to secure a chapter from Nigel Farage, who tells the media they are out of touch and that it was his use of social media which enabled the rise of UKIP.

It was also interesting to read the chapter by Hugh Whittow, editor of the Daily Express at the time of the Brexit campaign. For those journalists and academics (myself included) who come from a broadsheet background, the Express possibly represents everything that is wrong with the popular press but Whittow proudly outlines his paper's work in 'capturing the mood of the readers', publishing content which 'reflects then reinforces the views of its readers' and turning this into 'powerful and constituent advocacy' and 'intelligent analysis'.

It wasn't clear if the authors intended a deliberate juxtaposition between Whittow's chapter and the following two, by journalist and media commentator Liz Gerard, and Hugo Dixon, chairman of InFacts. But there was certainly a shift in perspective. Gerard points to the Express's record on running anti-migration stories, its fact-free stories on the sunlit uplands in store post-Brexit, and most bizarrely, a front page lead claiming 'EU Exit Boosts House Prices' before the UK had left the EU, for which it was forced to apologise by IPSO.

Dixon's chapter focuses on factual errors published in right-wing newspapers in the run-up to the referendum and InFacts' attempts to get IPSO to take action. One such front page story in the Express had the headline 'Soaring Cost of Teaching Migrant Children' and a standfirst saying '£3 billion bill another reason to quit EU'.

It's all about perspective.

Brexit, Trump and the Media, edited by John Mair, Tor Clark, Neil Fowler, Raymond Snoddy and Richard Tait was published by Abramis in 2017, pp408, £19.95. ISBN 978-1-84549-709-5

Murder in Our Midst: Comparing Crime Coverage Ethics in an Age of Globalized News by Romaine Smith Fullerton and Maggie Jones Patterson

Review by Chris Frost, Liverpool John Moores University

Murder – the ultimate human crime and one so awful that the very word is used to draw us in to read or watch anything. Search for the title of this book in Amazon and at least three titles pop up using the phrase Murder in Our Midst. It is the sub-title, unsullied by the publisher's desire to sell more copies, that explains more clearly what can be expected within its 299 pages.

This is an eight-year international research project examining crime coverage ethics in eight countries and their approaches to it in an era of globalization.

The authors acknowledge freely they follow the methodology of Daniel Hallin and Paulo Mancini's *Comparing Media Systems: Three models of Media and Politics* which identify the different approaches taken by country groupings based on their political systems.

This is an important topic in an era of globalisation when many are suggesting there should be global codes of ethics trying to turn all journalism into a homogenised gloop of global journalistic goodness, ignoring entirely the enormous political, social and cultural differences that make visiting foreign countries and reading their media so rewarding. Nowhere, though, outside of tyrannical dictatorship-controlled media, are these differences more pronounced than in the reporting of crime.

Reporters, wherever they are based, say the authors, follow established patterns of reporting behaviour that are almost ritualistic, but are clearly based on how things are done in that jurisdiction. The authors acknowledge that even within a single country there can be completely different approaches to crime reporting both on a case-by-case basis and in differences between say print and broadcast coverage. Broadcasters may be more concerned at carrying horrific details and will keep reports short that cannot, by their nature, carry visual images. Print on the other hand may revel in the horrors revealed in the courtroom.

But what the authors were seeking and found was "a fundamental pattern about the values of ritual reporting patterns that spanned differences within each country and distinguished one country and one media model from the next. What we ultimately saw were three discernible, although loosely defined, ethical practices in our sample countries." (p10)

The three patterns of behaviour they identify are first the *protectors of Northern and Central Europe* that include Sweden, Germany and the Netherlands. Reporters here are as concerned to protect the reputation of the accused and their families up to and even after, a finding of guilt. The belief amongst the reporters and their readers is that rehabilitation and reintegration is as important as justice for the victims.

The watchdogs of Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Ireland firmly believe in informing the public about the justice system and keeping a check on the police and courts. The drive is to give as much detail as possible and there is only limited concern for the reputation of the defendant and often the innocent relatives.

The ambivalents of Southern Europe, Italy Spain and Portugal are limited by police and prosecutors who keep arrest details quiet to protect the right to presumption of innocence but journalists often gain information from leaks.

The book goes into considerable detail about the approaches taken by reporters in the various countries examining key cases and identifying differences in approach as such cultural and legal differences become more difficult to manage. Globalisation can mean a big story breaking in one of the protectionist countries can mean news outlets there, seeking to keep details of a breaking story to a minimum can find themselves being scooped by websites based abroad publishing the details they were keeping quiet. An example is the attempted assassination of Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands in 2009 that killed seven people when Karst Tates drove a car through police barriers. The story was carried worldwide, yet many Dutch newspapers only reported him as Karst T. to protect his family from harmful publicity.

For those who have not had a chance to study or consider these differences, the book is fascinating, analys-

ing these differences and how they are changing and indeed changed reporting over the eight years of the project. The book is a must for all journalism ethics bookshelves.

Murder in Our Midst: Comparing Crime Coverage Ethics in an Age of Globalized News by Romayne Smith Fullerton and Maggie Jones Patterson published 2021 by Oxford University Press, pp299, ISBN: 978-0-19-086354-8

Boris Johnson: The Gambler by Tom Bower

Review by John Mair, broadcast journalist, academic and editor of the 'Hackademic' series of books

Tom Bower is a journalistic wrecking ball. 'Britain's top investigative journalist' this book screams on the cover. He's taken on and wrecked or dented the public careers of Robert Maxwell, Richard Branson and Jeremy Corbyn inter alia.

Having Bower after you can be the kiss of death to many a reputation. Bower is certainly Britain's best-selling investigative journalist, if not the best. Most recently he has turned his attention to the UK's most recent journalist-turned-Prime Minister.

Bower honed his agitational skills as a weekend student leader at the LSE in 1968 (I was there at the time) then at the BBC making impactful current affairs films for *24 Hours* and *Panorama* essentially chasing villains of one sort or another all over the world. The methods used to hook them were interesting. Tales of Bower's style abounded in Lime Grove.

Post BBC Bower has had a hugely successful career with his wrecking ball biographies. They are on the top shelf of bestsellers in airport bookshops and serialised in the *Daily Mail*. It helped that his wife Veronica Wadley was the features editor. She went on to edit the London *Evening Standard* which became a Boris fan club when he was the Mayor of London. Wadley became a senior adviser to Mayor Johnson in City Hall. Veronica is now Baroness Fleet, ennobled by PM Boris Johnson. Bower plays down her role in this book.

In this book he rather pulls his punches and heads for psychological explanations. Johnson's father Stanley comes in for much criticism and, worse, being a Eurocrat. Johnson was brought up in Brussels where at school he first met his long-suffering wife Marina, daughter of a great journalist Charles Wheeler. The Johnsons are a competitive family (Boris announced a young age that he wanted to be 'world king') but one riven with insecurities. Bower takes that as the Johnson leitmotif for life. The gambler with few friends (political or otherwise), who has won through force of personality, wearing opponents down and having the Teflon skin of a rhino when it came to disasters, of which there are plenty. But a man who has developed bumbling charisma to a fine art and persuaded the British public, who love a rogue, especially if clever and posh, to buy into the imperfect 'Boris', especially as that is not his first name. He was christened Alexander Boris de Peffel Johnson.

Our esteemed Prime Minister has only really had one 'real' job, journalism, for the top end Tory papers *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*. Studying Classics at Balliol really does not equip you for life as a scientist or businessman. Hard graft is not Johnson's thing. Then and now. Like Donald Trump he, it is said, rarely gets to the bottom of a page on a document. Etonian arrogance allows him to bluff the rest. Latin and Greek aphorisms create a fog of competency.

Truth is not his strong point either. Johnson was fired from his first job at *The Times* for making up a quote about Edward II's catamite lover and attributing it to his godfather, the Oxford historian and Balliol Master Colin Lucas. Later, as the Brussels correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* he simply embellished if needs must. They did. He filed a series of stories about the EU, bendy bananas and other falsehoods about the size of condoms and many more. They were, in essence, the early salvos of the Leave culture war.

Some of those stories were true or partly true. Some were lies. They did register with Eurosceptics within and without the Conservative Party. But it went beyond the pale. So much so that his then editor Max Hastings reprimanded him and became a lifelong Boris-sceptic. When he stood for election as Tory leader in 2019 Hasting pronounced him 'unfit for national office'. His summary of the man expressed some years before was 'surely the British people deserve better than a comic cad and as serial bonker, however enter-

taining'.

This did not stop *The Telegraph* re-employing Johnson as a star weekly columnist in 2016 when he was in the political wilderness at a reputed quarter of a million pounds plus per year in remuneration. One observer calculated that was close to £5 per word. But even there his laziness shone through. Some of his columns involved stereotyping and casual racism, notoriously saying Muslim women dressed in burkas looked like 'letterboxes' and 'bank robbers'. But they kept him in the public and Tory MPs' eyes. Plainly it worked. He became leader and Prime Minister in July 2019.

His journalistic ethics are none too sound either. On the eve of the Brexit campaign in 2016 he sketched out two *Telegraph* columns, one for Remain and one for Leave. The Gambler struck lucky. He picked the latter and became the public face of the winning Leave campaign.

Journalists who become politicians are all too often hoist by the tendency to believe their own hype. They seem not to have the patience needed to govern well. Churchill, Johnson's hero about whom he wrote a biography, is an exception and the rule. He struck lucky with the Second World War. Johnson is hoping to repeat the trick with his war against Covid. Time will tell if it works.

Bower's tome is huge at 560 pages. It is well researched. It is well written, but has the great Bower, like so many others, fallen under the spell of the very clever Alexander Boris De Peffel Johnson? Nevertheless it is a useful account if you want to understand the journalist-turned-Prime Minister, the man who would be 'world king'.

Boris Johnson: The Gambler by Tom Bower, published by WH Allen 2020, pp578, £20, ISBN 978-0-7535-5490-6

News and How to Use it by Alan Rusbridger

Review by Dr Michael Foley, Professor Emeritus, Technological University Dublin

From A for Accuracy to Z for Zoomers, News and How to Use It, by former Guardian editor Alan Rusbridger, is an alphabetical glossary of journalism looking, sort of, at the decline in trust in news in a time of pandemic.

He examines journalism and its best and worst, how it is paid for, owned and controlled and does so in an unusual format of small opinionated observations ranging from one small paragraph to long essays. What he decided to include are 'random and subjective', which makes the book engaging and surprising, but if there is an argument it is hard to discern.

This is Rusbridger's second book since retiring from *The Guardian* and taking up the headship of an Oxford college and the chair of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. His earlier work, *Breaking News*, was a reflection on journalism as it moved from hot-metal to the computer screen. It was an exciting read, notably the story about publishing the Edward Snowden leaks and the investigation into phone hacking. It was also an important and thoughtful journalist's memoir.

Some of the observations in his work are but a few paragraphs: 'Facts' gets seven, 'click-bait' merits one, 'Inverted Pyramid' – the graphic structure of a news story – gets one long paragraph. 'Investigative Journalism' and 'Journalism' are both short essays. But 'Metrics' – how audience is measured, and its implications on editorial content – is long and detailed. Fake News gets a short entry, but turns up in other entries, such as Brexit, one of the longer entries while 'Sources' gets seven pages. Some headings are decidedly eccentric. 'Freddie Starr' gets nine pages, but much of that is devoted to *The Sun*.

There is no specific entry for Covid-19, but the pandemic is included in other headings. Under Climate Change, a major entry, he compares the coverage of climate change and Covid-19. "In some ways the 2020 crisis can be seen as a dress rehearsal for climate change... In four months, we had a compressed version of how climate change has been playing out in the media over four decades. Ignore; deny; underplay; ghettoise; marginalise; question; disparage; balance; shrug; pay attention; pivot; reassess; jump."

He imagined a harassed news editor faced with news of Covid. It was far away and there appeared to be nothing, no metric to suggest it would drive clicks or subscriptions. It was a story that initially failed on every count and the warning that might have come from the health and science correspondents was no more, both had been let go in the last round of cuts. When things deteriorated, it was not easy to catch-up. By March 2020 the story swamped everything and was no longer just about health but politics, business, sport, food, economy and travel.

Suddenly, it was a matter of life and death. Some journalists did fearless public service reporting, investigated government inactions, offered simple, but reliable, explanations to complex concepts. "The best news organisations have performed a real, vital public service." But there was also the bad, and here he singles out Murdoch's Fox News, which he says will have a 'special place in journalistic hell'. Its coverage, he said, contributed to 'numberless deaths'.

He includes analyses of the work of some individual journalists, including a scathing piece on the climate change denier, James Delingpole; a sceptical piece on Seymore Hersh; Michael Wolfe, he says might be an engaging writer, 'but ultimately lacks the reporting rigour to back up his prose'. He writes also of Robert Fisk, who died since the book was completed. Of Fisk he asks: 'Why was he so mistrusted by so many of his colleagues and yet revered by so many readers?'

Curated is an over-used word, associated as much with menus or lists of cocktails as museums, but one could say what Rusbridger describes as subjective is curated, in the best sense, because of his own expertise and the intellectual interconnections he draws between what might appear to be random observations in the hands of another.

So, who might be a model reader? Maybe a student, who wants accurate and verifiable information about media and journalism – there is an excellent bibliography, most references are online and accessible – from a known, authoritative and reliable source.

[News and How to Use it by Alan Rusbridger, Published by Canongate, 2020, pp316, £18.99, ISBN 9781838851613](#)

[The War Against the BBC: How an unprecedented combination of hostile forces is destroying Britain's greatest cultural institution... and why you should care by Patrick Barwise and Peter York](#)

Review by John Mair, editor of the 'Hackademic' series of books

[The BBC has many critics and they are increasingly vocal. Its defenders are quieter and tend to be in a 'liberal metropolitan' groove. That hymn sheet is well worn, tired at times. I know, having edited three books on the BBC in the last year.](#)

These two BBC 'friends' are a strange combo. Front half of the tandem Patrick Barwise is Emeritus Professor of Marketing at the London Business School and a long-term academic defender of public service broadcasting. His work on Channel Four has been seminal. Peter York's is a social commentator spotting trends and both writing about them and using them in his day job as a commercial market researcher. He is also President of the Media Society.

The unlikelihood of the partnership shows in the book. It's a hybrid. Peter enjoys conspiracy theories especially if they come from the right and from the USA. Some of them crop up in disguise in this tome. Easy to re-produce, easier to knock down. Trump is dead, even if Trumpism is not.

They had a not an easy task getting this book to publication. It was like writing about an amoeba. Throughout 2019 and 2020 the story simply kept moving. The BBC, then under previous director general Tony Hall, was either cruising towards its 2022 centenary or being due to be smashed to smithereens. Which you believed depended on the whims of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's then adviser Dominic Cummings. He

had a visceral hatred of the Corporation going back at least a couple of decades.

Lord Hall retired to be replaced by a sharper animal within the Corp, Tim Davie, head of BBC Studios, the commercial arm and a former Proctor and Gamble/Pepsi Cola marketeer. Fortuitously (or not) he had also been an active Conservative in his early life. The stars were aligning in different directions. The BBC story lurching from crisis to crisis as ever. For Barwise and York their subject was a moving target.

Barwise and York are unashamed BBC fans. They see little wrong. A clue is in their subtitle. The BBC is a superb world-beating broadcaster which can make superb television and radio programmes. It is also always at the digital cutting edge first into catch-up with *iplayer* and online news. It serves many audiences and many niches very well.

Look at radio where Radios One to Five (plus digital additions) cover the piste very well. Commercial radio has never been able to match it. Today, it has been reduced to a juke box of greatest hits with few live voices and 'shouty' radio like *TalkThis* and *TalkThat*. Radio is a BBC masterclass in making the market.

But Barwise and York are a bit reluctant to admit the BBC has faults and longer-term structural problems. Is the licence fee safe for perpetuity or will it be replaced by a hybrid fee/subscription model after 2027? Is the BBC World Service doing any 'soft power' good in a world in which the huge and well-financed propaganda outfits like Russia Today and China Central Television dominate? Are the bourgeois niches of the expensive orchestras, the Proms and even, whisper it gently, BBC Radio Three, really value for money? The big questions are there to be answered by new DG Davie. The price of universality is spreading yourself too thinly. This is the era of *Netflix*, *Amazon Prime* and *Disney +* with bottomless pockets (or borrowings). They and Sky have turned the eyes and ears of much of the UK. The BBC has to make great, well-watched, programmes which punch through to survive. The pandemic has reinforced its position as the primary informer of the nation. That needs building upon. *Netflix* has no foreign correspondents, the BBC has many.

This is a good book if a bit dense. For academics and students studying broadcasting and broadcast journalism it is essential.

The BBC is the cornerstone of British broadcasting and to an extent British culture in these strange populist times. Cummings may have gone out of the Downing Street front door with his plans in a cardboard box but coming in the back door are many wanting to cut the BBC down to size. It has to adapt or die but not surrender. 'Britain's greatest cultural institution' is entering its second century but in a dark tunnel of uncertainty. Tim Davie may have the Tory torch to get them out.

[The War Against the BBC: How an unprecedented combination of hostile forces is destroying Britain's greatest cultural institution... and why you should care by Patrick Barwise and Peter York, published by Penguin, 2020, pp503, £10.99, ISBN 978-0-141-98940-2](#)