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Journalism Education is the journal of the Association for Journalism Education a body representing educators in HE in the UK and Ireland. The aim of the journal is to promote and develop analysis and understanding of journalism education and of journalism, particularly when that is related to journalism education.

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The role of local media outlets and hyperlocal news sites in England during the COVID-19 pandemic

By Rachel Ammonds, University of Worcester

Abstract

The media, particularly news outlets, have played a major role in keeping citizens updated and informed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst the national news outlets have looked at the national and international picture, local media have continued to provide the news, both nationally and with a local angle. But local media are declining and resources have been cut in recent years. This paper explores how local media outlets coped with producing regular content for their specific audience in unprecedented circumstances.

Alongside the traditional local media, a sense of community has grown during the lockdown and hyperlocal news sites have appeared and proved a popular source of information amongst smaller communities. This research looks at the rise of these sites and their place in the media landscape.

The research includes interviews with those responsible for production, newsgathering and output, investigating how local communities interacted with news sources dur-

ing the pandemic. To contextualise these interviews and to enable meaningful discussion, it examines from where people received their news on the Coronavirus situation, using data gathered through a questionnaire.

Introduction and aims

It is not very often that journalists report on stories that they are personally involved in – in fact it is often avoided.

But everyone is part of the COVID-19 story – and all news journalists have had to adapt and play a major role in keeping people updated and informed.

Viewing the pandemic coverage from a local angle and wanting to understand how local newsrooms were functioning and what their aims were led to the research undertaken in this paper.

It is not disputed that local media is declining and resources have been cut in recent years. Times were difficult even before we had heard of COVID-19.

'Journalists, scholars and pundits of every stripe agree that journalism confronts a global crisis reflecting extensive and rapid developments in media technologies, changing business models, shifting organizational and regulatory structures and the transfer of advertising revenues to online sites' (Franklin, 2011 pp. 90).

Research by YouGov for The Times found a sense of community has grown during the lockdown (Wright, 2021) and digital hyperlocal news sites have proved a popular source of information amongst smaller communities.

This raises the question of whether they can work together and survive and, indeed, would there be an audience? Is it what people want?

The research aims to investigate people's consumption of news during the pandemic, going further than the Downing Street briefings.

There is a particular focus on the local picture and how local media outlets, with all the challenges they face, have coped, producing regular content for their specific audience in unprecedented circumstances and what the considerations for those responsible for output were.

It also starts to look at how the hyperlocal news sites have fitted into the media landscape, particularly during the pandemic and what the relationship is between the differing outlets and platforms.

Background

The analytics firm, Comscore's data for the overall UK local news sector shows the total number of monthly unique visitors grew from 39.4m in January 2020 to 41.6m in June (*Comscore*, 2021) at a time when people reached for news of Covid, what it was and what it might mean for them.

Ofcom has been analyzing audiences and their viewing habits throughout the pandemic and the figures for June 2021 (when this research was undertaken) show 82 percent of people were still using traditional media for information on Covid (Ofcom, 2021).

As the need and thirst for local news spiked during the pandemic, revenue and funding in the area dropped dramatically. The BBC announced 450 jobs are to be cut in its English regional TV news and current affairs, local radio and online news as it needs to save £125 million because of the financial pressures resulting from the pandemic. (BBC, 2020)

Rescue plans were hatched as it was argued local news cultivated a sense of belonging, providing public interest journalism but also building community identity and cohesion.

Local news is a critical source of information, as well as an area for public discussion and debate, and pro-

vides cohesion in communities (Freeman, Hess and Waller, 2017). And the calls for help included appeals to support hyperlocal media. As Williams, Harte and Turner (2015) discuss thanks to the centralization and consolidation of traditional local journalism, we've seen an increased role for hyperlocal media to provide information and build communities.

'Hyperlocal media operations are geographically based, community-oriented, original news-reporting organisations indigenous to the web and intended to fill perceived gaps in coverage of an issue or region and to promote civic engagement.' (Metzgar et al, 2011 pp. 772).

According to the Independent Community News Network (ICNN) – which has more than 120 members throughout the UK – a 'hyperlocal' news service is one which typically pertains to 'a specific geographic area such as a town, neighbourhood, village, county or even postcode' (Independent Community News Network, 2020).

And, when launching the National Union of Journalists' *News Recovery Plan* last year, Michelle Stanistreet, general secretary of the NUJ, said: "Specific intervention is needed to protect and invest in hyperlocal and community enterprises. These have provided much-needed diversity and proactivity in the press sector yet are especially vulnerable." (National Union of Journalists, 2020).

It could be seen as a sector in crisis at a time when it was needed most and change in production was inevitable.

When the BBC cuts mentioned above were announced, Helen Thomas, Director of BBC England commented: "We are in the age of the Facebook community group and the WhatsApp neighbourhood chat. We must adapt to better reflect how people live their lives, how they get their news and what content they want.' (BBC, 2020)

Methodology

An online questionnaire was distributed gathering data on people's news consumption during a set period until the end of the last lockdown in England in March 2021.

It is recognised the data has limitations because the questionnaire was made available online only. However, one hundred respondents completed the survey – all were over eighteen and a range of ages, ethnicities and employment statuses was achieved.

The questionnaire was kept short and consisted of a range of multiple choice and single answer questions alongside those that gave respondents the opportunity to expand on answers given and give opinion.

Qualitative semi-structured interviews were then conducted with editors at local and regional news outlets in England, including both print and broadcast, to discuss their experiences leading a newsroom during the pandemic and to gather their views and opinions on local coverage and audiences' responses. Data from the questionnaire was analysed prior to the interviews taking place to enable findings to be shared with editors and their opinions on them sought.

The interviews also covered the editors' perspective on hyperlocal news and looked ahead to possible outcomes for local news providers in a post-pandemic media landscape. Interviews were carried out online via video and audio conferencing platforms.

Findings

The online survey conducted provided data on news consumption, specifically regarding news on the pandemic, up until the end of the lockdown in England in March 2021 and twelve months since the first lockdown.

Unsurprisingly, news consumption was very high. Until the Euro 2020 group match between England and Scotland on 18th June, the Prime Minister's statement on 4th January announcing the third lockdown was the most viewed programme on TV so far in 2021 with 14 million people tuning in (Ofcom, 2021).

92 percent of respondents said they kept up to date with news on Covid and almost three quarters of respondents checked the news at least once a day, with a third checking for updates more than once a day.

(Figure 1 over page).

This was an increase for just over half of respondents to their pre-pandemic news consumption. (Figure 2, over page).

As was expected, the main source of news on COVID-19 was national television, with other traditional platforms of national and local radio, local television and national and local newspapers only used by 9 percent of respondents between them (Figure 3). Their online offerings did contribute to the online news sources used by 34 percent of respondents, though the main website used was BBC online. This is evidence that it is still the case that in times of crisis or news of great note, the BBC is the favoured option for information in the UK.
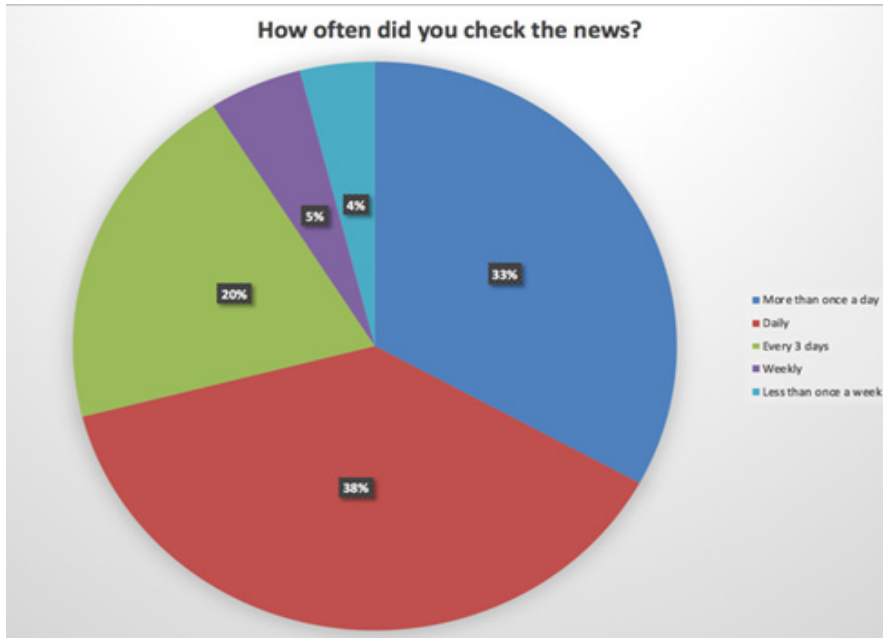
Figure 1: How often do you check the news?
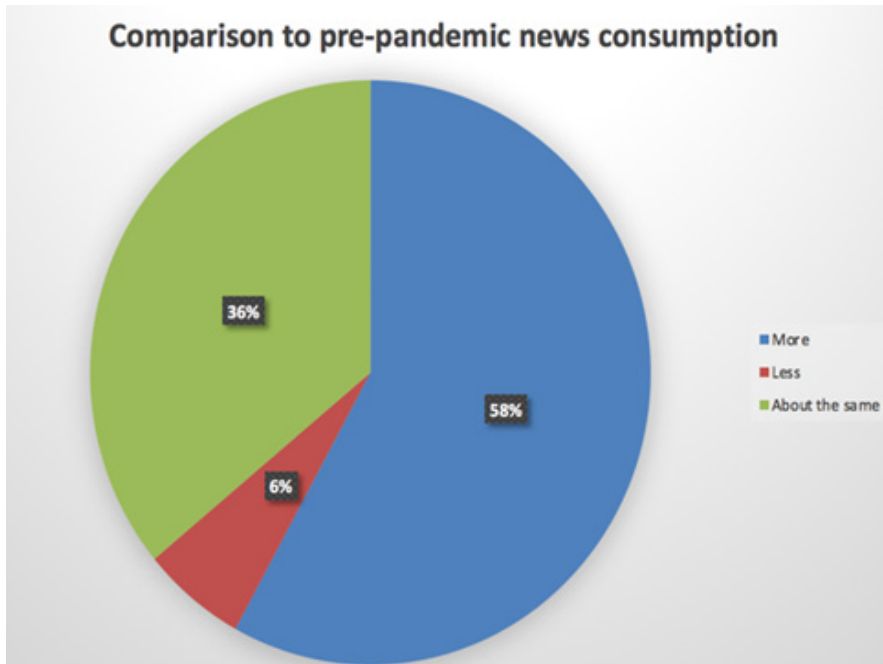
Figure 2: Comparison to pre-pandemic news consumption.

Articles

Third for main source of news on Covid was social media (Figure 3). Those who selected social media as their answer were asked to name the platform used. Facebook named most, followed by Twitter and Instagram. Again, this is not surprising given the situation we were in with many people at home, not going out and using resources readily available to them via computers, telephones and other devices.
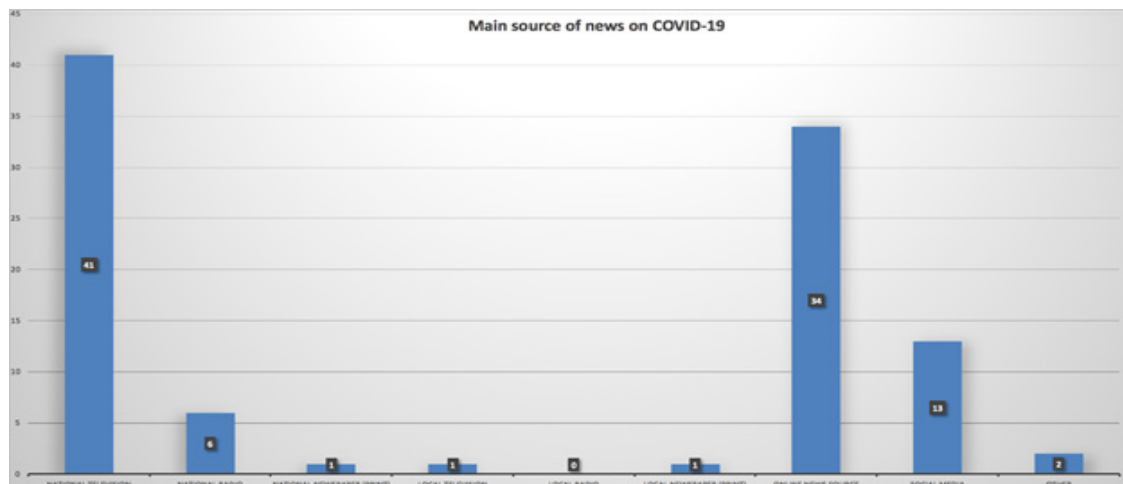
Figure 3: Main source of news on Covid-19

The next questions in the survey shifted the focus to look at what other sources were used alongside the main one, and a much broader spread can be seen.

Figure 4 shows the options available and respondents were asked to tick all those applicable.
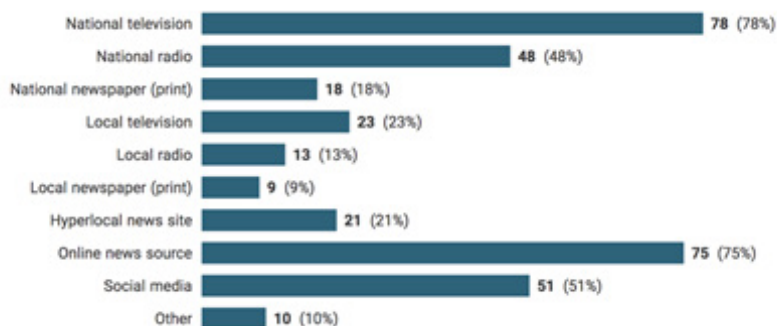
Figure 4: Type of media

Evaluating the responses shows people were getting information from multiple sources. The majority were watching television and checking online sources and many were listening to news on the radio as well (Figure 4).

It is at this point in the questionnaire where responses started to give an idea of the local picture, with hyperlocal news sites being almost as popular as local television and significantly more so than local radio or local print newspaper. It must be noted the online news sources named were a combination of broadcasting media websites, along with national and local newspaper sites.

More than half of respondents used social media to check Covid news, with Facebook being used the most, followed by Twitter and then Instagram. The sources named in the 'other' category, which 10 percent used, were mainly family and friends, with two respondents using medical and scientific journals as well.

Qualitative data was captured in the form of additional comments respondents were able to provide. These show evidence of Covid news fatigue amongst some and it must be noted this survey asked people for their news consumption right through until the end of the third lockdown in England in March 2021.

Comments included:

- *'I watched / listened to the news much less because Covid was the only story for several weeks but there*

wasn't enough to fill a bulletin and not much seemed to change from day to day so I partly stopped listening to the news.'

- *'I became fed up with the news and began to reduce my intake online towards the end of lockdown.'*

- *'Halfway through lockdown I quit looking on social media and following news on the pandemic.'*

- *'I felt the news has been repetitive.'*

- *'I became fed up with the main (BBC) news and eventually decided to stop watching.'*

- *'Sometimes there has been news overkill.'*

The data also shows some were unhappy with coverage given to COVID by the media as can be seen by the comments provided below:

- *'As the pandemic progressed all news outlets concentrated on tripping up the government by asking questions no one could answer. Too much emphasis on what was going wrong not was going right. Eventually became pointless questions & no longer informative. Too many big egos with journalists.'*

- *'Social Media played a large part in news consumption during the pandemic, especially Twitter. However, after too much false information was being consumed, I chose to remove my account.'*

- *'I avoided some news and information sources because of their alarmism and obsession with body counts.'*

- *'Paranoia on the situation led me to constantly check the news, but sometimes it was just scaremongering.'*

Questions in the survey then focused on the local landscape, aiming to gauge how important the local information on Covid was to people in comparison to the national picture.

It was interesting to discover only just over a third said news on the local situation was very important to them (Figure 5).
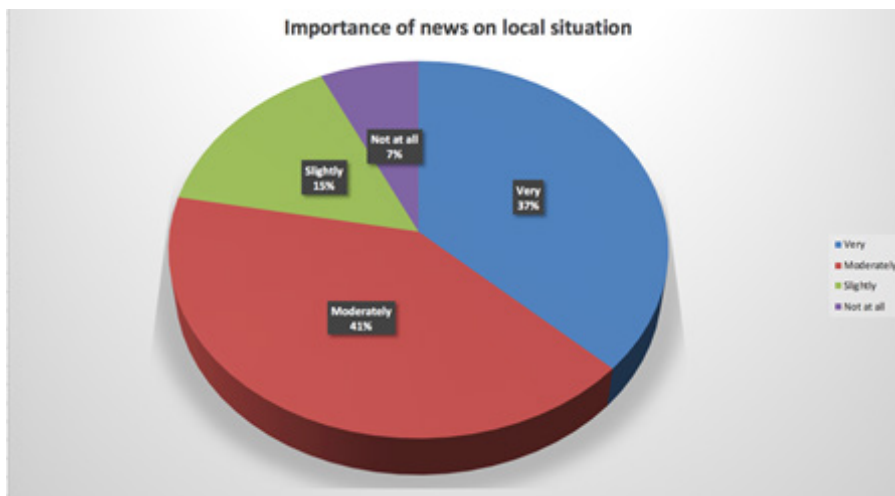
Figure 5: Importance of news on local situation

Of those who did use local media, the majority visited the websites of the local paper as their main source, but one in five used social media, particularly Facebook groups.

And most respondents found the source very or quite useful (Figure 6).

Looking at the qualitative data in the form of comments provided by respondents and there was a clear distinction in why and sometimes how they accessed local and national news and what they wanted from each.

Comments included:

- *'I would follow national news platforms for the wider picture on Covid-19 and local journalists on social media for the local news.'*

- *'Larger news sources (e.g., BBC) were awful - full of doom and gloom and unnecessary blame. Local news much more relevant and pragmatic.'*

Articles

- *'I think the introduction of 'regional lockdowns' made me look to local news sources more often. Additionally, the differences between the four nations of the UK made me seek out the rules relating to each when I had travel plans.'*
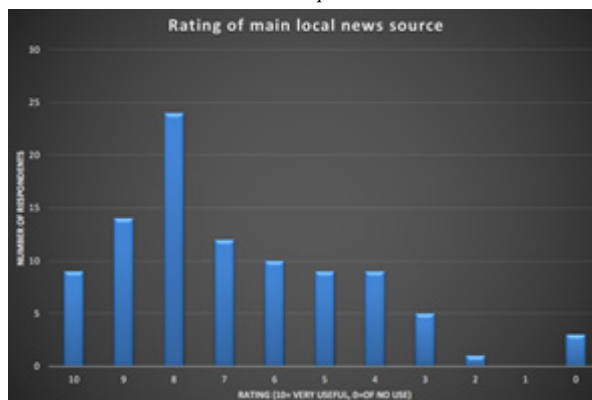
Figure 6: Rating of main local news source

More than a quarter of respondents had only turned to the favoured local news source during the pandemic (Figure 7)

And it seems the pandemic may have led to a slight rise in interest in local news in general as almost 80 per cent of people said they would continue to use the source after the pandemic (Figure 8).
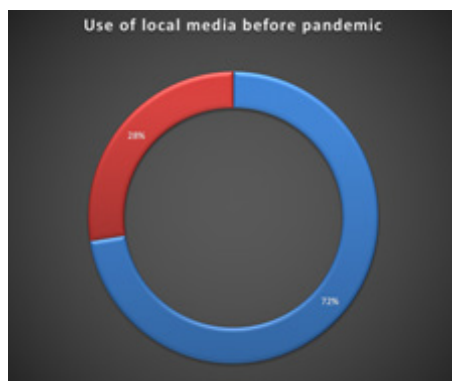
Figure 7: Use of local media before pandemic
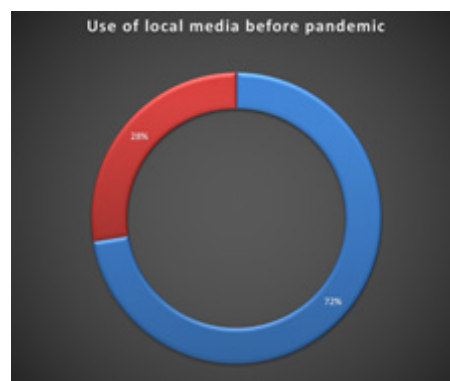
Figure 8: Maintain consumption post-pandemic?

The data provided by the questionnaire helped shape some of the questions asked to a range of editors from local and regional news outlets in online interviews.

Each editor was asked a series of questions relating to their work and opinions around output during the pandemic. It was clear from the interviews that, as expected, the pandemic had a huge impact on working practices for those in newsrooms. All interviewees reported reduced staff in offices. Several described how there was a core team in the office, with the majority of staff working from home. However, two editors worked with a team operating completely remotely, with offices empty.

One editorial team was furloughed, leaving the editor to produce a weekly paper in two and a half days, as he was on furlough for the rest of the week. He admitted this was far from ideal and proved very difficult, but was necessary.

> *'It did seem impossible some weeks, but, if you love journalism like I do and still feel like you are providing a service, even more important during a pandemic, you embrace it.' (Interview 3, 2021).*

Taking the newspaper for which this editor is as an example, and the impact on traditional print output is clear. It was not printed for the first two weeks of lockdown and was solely an online edition during that time.

Working practices had to change and, as one broadcaster said: *'it's rewritten the rule books'* in terms of interacting with contributors or conducting interviews. Because before the first thing you'd do is lean in and gain their

confidence…have a conversation…. make them feel confident about what they're doing. And you can't do that now when microphone is on the end of a long pole' (Interview 1, 2021).

But the change was not limited to broadcasters, with all journalists having to adapt to interviewing online. Whilst this enabled them to carry on including contributors in stories, it could not replicate the face-to-face interviewing relied on in so many situations. (Interview 5, 2021). There seems to have been a rise in interaction between local outlets and their audiences during the pandemic and, whilst this is welcomed by editors, it does bring problems.

'Our greatest challenge is processing the volume of content that we get submitted to us. People are engaging with us more on social media now' (Interview 2, 2021).

But with increased audience engagement and content coming in there was a perceived danger of journalists failing to investigate stories.

'In a busy newsroom, albeit it a virtual newsroom, when people are presented with information there is a tendency just to use it and not question it…and I think that's a possible danger of the environment we have now' (Interview 2, 2021).

Looking at the impact the situation COVID-19 forced on staff, the interviewees all said their teams had reacted well and, on the whole, worked tirelessly to provide a service for their audience. There was a feeling amongst some that they saw journalists appreciating the flexibility working from home offers and, also, an increase in productivity.

'I think we're more productive as a result of working from home and then you don't have as many interruptions to deal with and you can work when you're at your best' (Interview 2, 2021).

There was a general feeling journalists wanted to get back to the office and a more 'normal' way of working as there has been a feeling of isolation.

'No-one got a job in a newsroom because they like the wallpaper. They got a job in a newsroom because they like the people and they like the atmosphere' (Interview 1, 2021).

The interviews showed editors of local news outlets still see their role as providing local news, with it being very much about the community and people's stories. COVID-19 coverage game them the 'opportunity to fight against the belief amongst some that journalists are baddies' (Interview 3, 2021). They want to provide positivity and are seeing a need for that.

'People who promote local journalism and local people…that's the good stuff. That's positive. That means something to people rather than what they see as the problem of the kind of journalistic monolith' (Interview 1, 2021).

Local news is about 'presenting national stories through a local prism' (Interview 4, 2021). And the editors knew readers were looking to them as a place they could trust 'with so much misinformation out there, especially on social media' (Interview 3, 2021).

The local media's role is also to offer some positivity in what are worrying times for their audiences.

'A relentless diet of gloom and fear is not is not a good thing really - either for us as a newspaper or for the community' (Interview 2, 2021).

The Covid-fatigue mentioned by respondents to the survey was recognised by all interviewiees and it was something they were not only mindful of, but were also striving to counteract in their output.

'There was a fatigue. There was an element people wanted an escape in the local press…We needed to strike a balance…but as a journal of record we have to chronicle it' (Interview 3, 2021).

The place of hyperlocal news sites, particularly those on social media, in the media landscape and their relationship with local news outlets is not something on which all editors agree. However, all interviewees agreed they had seen a rise in number and traffic to them during the pandemic.

Some editors felt, while a number of the sites offered a good service, they needed to be approached with caution as they are sometimes 'akin to chatrooms.'

But for some, the term 'hyperlocal' is dangerous as it 'bundles together good, honest small businesses with cowboys' (Interview 3, 2021).

Trust was a common theme, with editors very keen to share their thoughts on the fact that local journalism from media outlets is regulated and provided by trained journalists whereas that is not necessarily the case

with hyperlocal sites and unless, or until they are, they cannot be trusted news sites.

> *'Social media is a dangerous place. They don't face the same legal standards as newspapers and until that's the case, there is a danger audiences are being fed fake news' (Interview 5, 2021).*

And there were mixed thoughts on their relationship with the traditional media. Editors agree their traditional media cannot be hyperlocal and, therefore, cannot offer what some of these sites can. But, for local outlets they can be seen as a threat, taking audience, and becoming the place where the debate is, where people go to with and for their news and information.

Conversely, hyperlocal sites also offer an opportunity to promote the traditional local news outlets' work. Journalists can join groups and develop contacts there. However, there was a feeling amongst some of those interviewed that sometimes some of them get very protective of their 'patch' and do not want 'bigger organisations muscling in' (Interview 1, 2021).

With content being shared on these sites, editors feel much of what is being used on them, has in fact been produced by a local media outlet. This can lead to audiences not being clear really where they are getting their information from. One local newspaper editor called it a 'messy environment' where people might not accurately be reporting where they are getting their news from and suggested that local news outlets need to address issues of branding (Interview 4).

> *'People will see say someone said something or they saw something on Instagram or Facebook or Twitter, where it's actually our content. It is in fact a local newspaper post that they've read and so the information is in fact from that newspaper and not Facebook. It's just branding doesn't always carry through as well as we'd like it to' (Interview 2, 2021).*

There is no doubt the pandemic has impacted on and changed local media output. Whether the change is permanent is a point of discussion amongst editors, with many of them agreeing it has sped up changes that were already about to happen and that there are age-old issues to deal with that 'for some local just isn't interesting.'

- *'There's no circulation area and boundaries have been lost. So where local journalism sits is the problem – where it begins and where it ends.'*

- *'We've got to think differently. We've just got to think of what we might be brilliant at.'*

- *'The pandemic has accelerated the online development and shown how vulnerable the newspaper industry is as sales and advertising collapsed.'*

- *'We were in a tough challenging period where we were pivoting from one platform to another. This pandemic came along and shook everything up. It disrupted us a great deal, but it's also accelerated our path to somewhere we were going anyway.'*

- *They admit there is work to do. For a newspaper that might be around the branding.*

'The brand carries lots of things. It carries the trust that we have and with that trust comes a commercial value. It's the thing we use as leverage to sell advertising' (Interview 2, 2021).

But all those interviewed agree, as they would, that it's worth fighting for. As one of them summed up:

'We're synonymous with community. I think once you've lost local journalism and local accountability… then we are sort of a bit lost because anything could happen' (Interview 1, 2021).

It is clear from the research conducted that local media changed in terms of production methods due to the pandemic, but that did not affect audience numbers adversely. In fact, there seems to have been an increase, albeit slight, in the number of people turning to local media for information. Whether that increase is sustained remains to be seen.

> *'There's a narrative that local journalism is in decline. It's important to say, whilst the platform it's delivered on may be changing, it is booming' (Interview 2, 2021).*

In places the pandemic seems to have sped up changes that were already on the cards for local media output, reflecting audience preferences, rather than informing the changes. Like many businesses, media outlets had to adapt and improvise to continue to provide a service for their customers / audiences. This did come at a cost and the financial implications of the pandemic on local media outlets is an area of further research. So too is the sustainability of hyperlocal news and its ongoing relationship with established local media outlets.

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Searching for a new journalistic lexicon:
The impact of new digital ecosystems on how post-millennials define news

by Ivana Ebel and Bethany Woods, University of Derby

Abstract

As the demands upon technology increase, news outlets are forced to consider innovative ways to capture the attention of audiences. A large proportion of the population admit to accessing news via social media; however, clarification of what qualifies as news has caused some confusion, particularly to post-millennials, and traditional concepts in journalism must be challenged to ensure audiences renew in the upcoming years. This paper explores how post-millennials characterise news and how they ultimately define it. It uses a focus group of post-millennial students, exploring their consumption of news and, overall, identifying how they define news, enabling the formulation of a new journalistic lexicon.

Introduction

There is a false assumption that post-millennials are not interested in news. In fact, amongst the ones born after the year 2000, the consumption of traditional formats of journalistic content such as open television, radio, magazines, newspapers, and web is in decline. What

happens in fact does not suggest the youngsters are disconnected from journalistic contents. In reality, there is a change in the way they define news and in what they recognise as such.

The information overload in a post-truth era plays an important role on the credibility of the content, as social media is turned into the main source of information. In this study, focus groups helped to identify that a new lexicon – permeated by scepticism on the content – is being adopted by post-millennials: words such as points, view-points, information, stories, and aspects – but not limited to these terms – are being used to replace the lexicon news. It shows that the new generation still consume news: they just do not call it that exclusively as such anymore.

More than tailored content to specific audiences, publishers must recognise what is perceived as news, knowing that the values embedded to the concept have themselves changed. This study (restricted to university students) shows a generation with a critical perception of the journalistic content available on social media, for whom the plurality of sources within an article is not enough. They seek for a plurality of versions of the same story to separate reality from fake content. The change reflects an identity construction of a generation that lost the connection between content and authorship, dismantling the scheme where media outlets used to have the truth as a commodity.

Contexts of news consumption

Generational theory defines characteristics which are accepted to belong to specific age groups. In relation to technology, baby boomers (1946-64) consider it as something which may be useful; millennials (1981-1997) believe it is vital for day to day living and with over 90 percent of post-millennials in the UK having social media accounts, it stands to reason that technology is playing even more of a role within the lives of the new generation (Twenge 2006). In 2019, there was a 280 million increase in people using social media taking it to almost half (45 percent) of the world's population (Battisby 2019).

The development of social media and its influences on audiences has become of particular interest in academia in the recent years. Vaidhyanathan (2018) emphasised the dangers of Facebook in relation to politics and how it spreads misinformation; Twenge (2017) also alluded to the internet and smartphones being responsible for the perceived faults of the present generation; to mention some aspects.

Harcup and O'Neill (2017) revisited their original findings into what is defined as news fifteen years on due to the ever changing digital factors. Whilst the aims of the studies are different, the values still play a part in the lexicon used by post-millennials as context is considered a variable in language analysis (Song 2010). However, the lexical preferences used to refer to the news is as of yet to be explored and it is a fundamental piece to understand the way the new generations perceive the news content, because as time progresses, technology is becoming more prevalent with each generation.

For instance, baby boomers feel that the internet is something that is useful unlike millennials who predominantly feel it is vital for today's living (Bucuta, 2015). Despite more than 90 percent of post-millennials in the UK having a social media profile, it must be acknowledged that this is slightly less than that of millennials at 96 percent (Statista 2018). Young adults seem to be consuming less social media than that of their parents (Birkner, 2018).

Despite speculations on its decline (Bell 2019), Facebook still remains one of the most popular social media platforms (Battisby 2019), with post-millennial's citing it as one of the main platforms on which they will initially find out about news. This differs from those who are 65 and over: the average person in that age range, will watch thirty-three minutes of TV news per day; post-millennials, on average watch two minutes per day (Waterson 2019).

Following what happened to the newspapers, the decline in the popularity of TV news has been widely attributed to the developments in social media and the instantaneity of its content and participatory elements, as well as an increase in streaming (Newman 2009a; Waterson 2019). It is estimated that over half of internet users rely on Facebook to access the news (Mitchell et al. 2014) and of these, 78 percent had not logged on with this intention. Evidence has also been found to suggest most users of social media have friends whom will post articles relating to politics (Halberstam and Knight 2016; Waterson 2019) and therefore giving the user access to news they may not have otherwise received.

However, the changing of media consumption behaviours is not necessarily connected to misinformation. In the UK, six out of ten children aged 12-15 years claim to be interested in news and the lack of interest of

40 percent of this specific age group happens because the content "is 'too boring' and that it is 'not relevant for people my age'" (OfCom 2018, 2). But the abandonment of traditional news outlets such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and even the web – 65 percent now use side-door over direct accesses to websites or apps (Newman and Kalogeropoulos 2017) – does not mean less access to news contents. However, it leads journalism to discuss a forceful rebranding on its most traditional output: the news. The journalistic contents are definitely being read but they are not being exclusively called news anymore.

This happens because new technologies are intrinsically connected to new formats of expression (Domingo 2016) and language is an important component of the generational identity. Different age groups use language as a tool to represent themselves and it is not only connected to the meaning of the words itself, but also to a sense of how they relate to the world (Darwin 2016). The same happened to journalism. Reading news can be easily connected to the act of open a print newspaper or a magazine. Watching the news, still means facing non-streaming tv program. But the internet transformed the sector in both ends: how the content is produced, and how it is consumed. Overall, it is still an ongoing process and the next step is to understand how the new generations perceive and identify what is journalism and by creating a common terminology, enabling the news production to reach the post-millennials.

New terminologies

It is impossible to determine the level of consumption and engagement of post-millennials with news contents without overcoming a linguistic barrier. It is evident, as previous discussed, that they received a significant part of the content through social media. It is also notorious that social media has introduced a new jargon to the modern vocabulary. In 2016, post-truth was elected the word of the year, following a sequence of technology related neologism both, in the UK and in the US, including words such as selfie, gif or an emoji (Oxford n.d.).

The creation of new words in digital environments is being largely discussed in different fields of the academia (Glowka et al. 1999; Luo et al. 2018; R. Chen and Wu 2013; Zhiwei 2012). Inside the newsrooms, terms such as timelines, posts, engagement, traffic, user generated content (UGC), search engine optimisation (SEO), hashtags, trending, influence, platforms, applications, memes or emojis are now as commonly used as copy, splash, headline or interviews used to be 30 years ago.

Timelines replaced the frontpages and homepages, and scrolling is the substitute for turning to the next page. In addition, if the print editions and webpages used to be the certain location to find news content, the social media timelines are now uncharted seas, ruled by locked algorithms. The delimitation of what is news, entertainment or marketing content is not clear anymore. This situation requires different strategies to catch the attention of the readers. There is "a historic shift of control from traditional news organisations to the audience themselves" (Newman 2009b, 4).

Other than that, the content authorship become blurred and the connection of a specific information to its original author or media outlet can now be easily lost (Newman and Kalogeropoulos 2017). The social media platforms are getting more credit than the news publishers. The readers can recollect the platform where they accessed a specific content but not the media outlet or the journalist signing it.

News content originally has two undissociated characteristics: first, regarding the non-fictional value and its intrinsic newsworthiness. Second, directly connected to its platform or support: by being broadcasted in news bulletins, by being printed to a newspapers or magazine, by being host by a news website. However, as seen, the social media prevalence plays an important role on removing the authorship and the gatekeeper stamp to what is considered news. Among the information overload, post-millennials are exposed to a wide range of information and they are consuming news content, sometimes, without even noticing. Ebel (2018) defines it as "Hamburger news", where the content is disguised as is the salad within a fast-food chain sandwich.

This lack of identification of what is news interferes directly on the capacity of publishers to reach their audiences. The very own survival of the news outlets is intrinsically connected to its capacity of understanding what the public is consuming in order to get informed. Without understanding the lexicon used by post-millennials as a generational categorisation of the contents, it is impossible to understand how much of the content consumed by them to get informed is, in fact, news.

Methodology

The application of a focus group to identify this lexicon allows the exploration of what is important to post-millennials and the language they use. It also prevents the participants from feeling pressured into reaching a consensus or deciding along with allowing the researcher to observe communication forms (Kitzinger 2005 p57; Llamouttong 2011). Two focus Groups were conducted over a week period. The first focus group (F1) was made up of seven (N=7) post-millennials (five male and two females) who were first year university students. The second focus group (F2) was conducted with six participants (N=6) (five females and one male), also first year students.

F1 participants were gathered from Engineering and Technology subject areas, whereas the participants of F2 were students from Arts, Humanities and Education programmes. The decision to have homogeneous and pre-existing groups was taken, as it was hoped that this would avoid restrictions with regards to openness and sincerity within the discussion (Conradson 2005; Llamoutong 2011; Morgan 1997). Furthermore, given time constraints, the prior familiarity of the post-millennials led to a much quicker group dynamic development (Leask et al. 2001). The need to examine the lexis used in everyday conversations meant pre-existing groups were preferred to that of constructed groups as the purpose was to find a common lexical pattern. If a constructed group was collated as conventionalists advocate, participants although feeling they have less to lose with regards to expressing their opinions, they may not feel comfortable using their usual colloquial language (Kitzinger 2005; Llamputtong 2011; Morgan 1993).

The data gathered during the focus groups was recorded and transcribed by the researcher. This was to build on the researcher's already present familiarity with the social and emotional aspects of the experiment as well as aid the understanding of the data when analysis is underway. A thematic analysis approach was decided upon for this study as this was the most suitable path given the aim: to identify reoccurring lexis (Conradson 2005; Kitzinger 2005; Liamputtong 2011). Although others such as Parker and Tritter (2006) argue that attention should be paid to group dynamics, the aim of this research is predominantly to identify words specifically used by post-millennials when referring to news and therefore, this is not applicable. The thematic approach is also considered the most appropriate for laying the foundations for a qualitative analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006; Liamputtong 2009).

The second phase of analysis used axial coding which focused specifically on the frequency of words used by participants to determine a common lexicon (Minichiello et al. 2008). This part of the study also enabled the researchers to establish an underlying attitude towards the news by post-millennials after grouping the vocabulary into positive, neutral or negative connotations. Although it may be argued connotations are subjective as one word may vary in its meaning when presented to another (Song 2010), by exploring the most simplified definition of the lexis as outlined by the Oxford dictionary and applying it to the context of discussion (news), it was possible to divide the lexicon into positive, negative or neutral categories.

The focus groups were representatives of post-millennials, however, it must be acknowledged that all participants were university students and, for that reason, not reflecting the general population of post-millennials, where only 27.9 percent in England, 26.3 percent in Wales and 28 percent in Northern Ireland were enrolled in Higher Education last year (UCAS 2018). In 2018 it was reported a growing number of teens were preferring to take up apprenticeships rather than go on to higher education (Wylie 2018). However, figures have revealed an increase in young people attending university yearly (Adams 2017; UCAS 2018) demonstrating a fairer representation of post-millennials than first considered.

It is important to recognise that the study was conducted with a small sample size, however generation theory allows to apply a certain degree of behavioural generalisation even if, in this case, restricted to the ones attending higher education programmes. The sample includes participants with origins ranging across the UK to Eastern Europe. As previously discussed, the decision was made to have homogeneous and pre-existing groups to allow for greater fluidity in the conversations at an earlier point in the study. The participants were gathered from the same subject areas so were already familiar with each other, but again, this is where the similarities between members ended.

Results

The conversations between both groups displayed a strong mistrust of the news and its outlets. This was further supported by regular references to articles as points or viewpoints (See Figure 1). Viewpoint is a

word commonly associated with political journalism. It is acknowledged that viewpoints are gathered from a variety of sources and this may sometimes challenge the credibility of a story (Bennett 1996). Park et al (2009) referred to aspects as being areas of reality which producers and editors select to present different tones and styles which results in a bias being evident. In reference to this particular study, participants used this language in a broader sense, applying it to all areas of news and not just that of political leaning. This expression was used when referring to newspapers presenting only one view-point and exploring other articles online for other points. In addition, opinion and aspect were also used, much in the same way as points or viewpoints again implying outlets are not impartial.
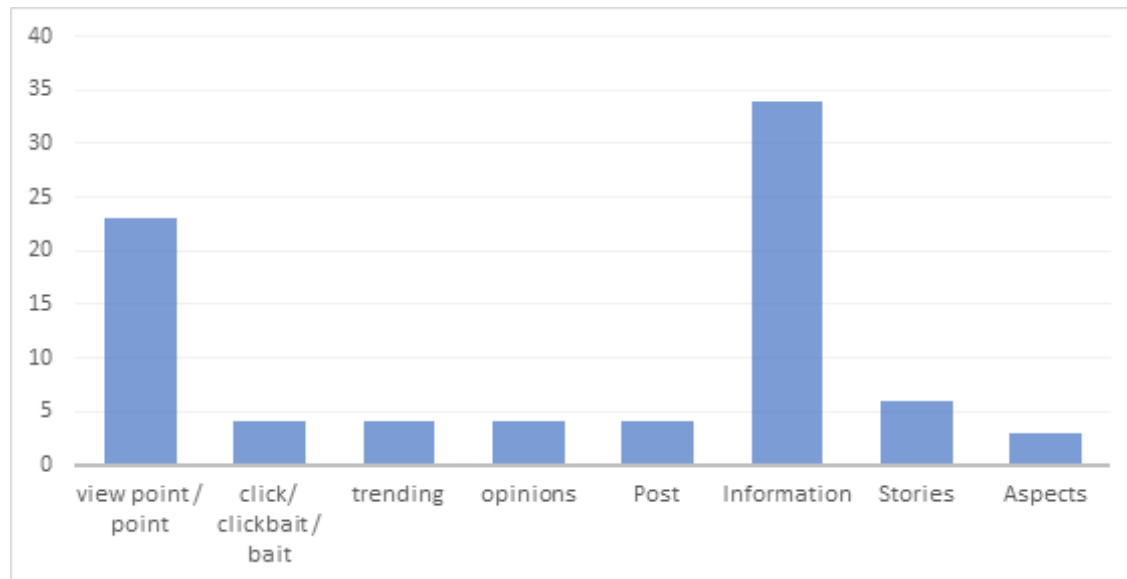

Figure 1: Frequency of lexis used by post-millennials

This finding shows a profound dissociation from the principles of journalism, where traditionally, each story must contemplate its different sides, perspectives and viewpoints. It means offering a fair selection of sources to frame a story (Baden and Tenenboim-Weinblatt 2018). Counterpointing arguments, originally accepted as a praxis to each story, have now achieved a different level of plurality. The trust does not rely immediately in one copy published by one media outlet or journalist, but the counterpointing is established within the scope of the information overload, where the same story is available simultaneously from different media outlets. The pretence neutrality of the media outlets seems to have its importance diluted, as the content is consumed as one viewpoint and not as the established truth.

Post and trending featured in both groups although not as frequently. Post could be considered as neutral as this is simply referring to what has appeared on the participants' newsfeed without them having engaged with it. Trending however is perceived as popular and something which is of interest to others therefore having positive connotations. In this case, it is possible to identify a generalisation of the contents, where the variety of formats or authors lost its characteristics. It can be seen as the ultimate simplification of the convergence process, when different formats originally treated as such (audio, video, pictures, graphics, text) are now blended into a general definition of posts. The prevalence of subjects within the posts categorises as trending.

The lexis stories was used in both groups. As this word is usually used in reference to fiction and given the context of the discussion, implications are that some participants believed publications not to be wholly factual. In fact, in the groups, the use of this specific terminology is connected to its denotation. In a connotative perspective, where stories is adopted as synonym for news, it is possible to grasp a perishable credibility on the newspapers, removing the truth as its only commodity (Williams Jr 2005).

As evidence points to the internet being the most popular outlet for post-millennial news consumption (Waterson 2019), the plurality of platform is also much more difficult to police. There is clear evidence for an accelerated distribution of false news to that of factually correct reports (Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral 2018). This supports the need emphasised by post-millennials within the focus groups, to collect a catalogue of evidence to reach an informed conclusion to publications. In other words, even though stories can be used by post-millennials as a synonym for news, it represents the sort of informative content that is not yet decided

to be trustworthy, factual or even real.

Click-bait and bait were used in relation to some articles. The term click-bait is used in reference to content which has the purpose of enticing audiences to click on a particular link (Y. Chen, Conroy, and Rubin 2015) and can be considered a form of deception. In the context of the study, the language maintained its original definition and was used as a way of portraying their distaste for certain articles. This considered, participants did also confess to only clicking on stories which were of interest to them suggesting this strategy from organisations does work, however as previously discussed, there was still the tendency to explore other agencies. Overall, post-millennials demonstrate a mis-trust of the news and use of this language is perceived to mean they believe news is being sensationalised to attract audiences.

On the other hand, the use of the word information is supposed to have a positive connotation, meaning to present facts to others. This alone was the most commonly used lexis by participants. According to McQuail (2010) audiences receive gratification when receiving information from outlets. This information is considered educational or something of which has enlightened the consumer to something they may have not already been conversant. Contradicting this expectation, further analysis of the language used to surround this word displayed overall negative feelings, with sentences such as "it is not like a piece of information you retain", "I don't think it's a good source of information", and "you are given the information they want you to hear". However, this reveals that post-millennials demonstrated a contempt for the news presented to them and when using the word information it does not imply a direct acceptance of the content.

This critical notion of news trustworthiness can be further witnessed by a division of the lexis used into positive, negative and neutral connotations. The majority of the language used to identify news was negative. The study, however, does cannot offer percentages, as the sample is too small to provide an accurate indication of the sentiment. For instance, information was initially considered a positive vocabulary in relation to journalism, but given the context it was used in this occasion, this previous assumption was discarded. Trending when referring to the popularity and the shareability of the story, although it is seen as a positive. It may be argued that the post-millennials have unconsciously incorporated revised news values outlined by Harcup and O'Neill (2017) such as relevance. However, it does not emphasise the need for accuracy: a core news value.

As digital media is evolving, the trust placed in journalism is waning. Lexicon relating to bias emphasise this: viewpoint, point, opinions, aspects. However, post-millennials were quick to use these terms when relating to newspapers and broadcast journalism too, with no differentiation of sources. This may be due to the amount of choice available now for consumers (Burns 2016). Organisations no longer have the monopoly of the information that circulates on social media and inaccurate reporting can also be responsible for this negative attitude. As previously discussed, social media has been considered dangerous by some, especially when it comes to topics such as politics (Vaidhyanathan 2018). False news has been found to have a further reach than true news and is spread much more quickly (Vosoughi, Roy, and Aral 2018).

Conclusion

Post-millennials are accessing news, be it mostly via social media or still by the more traditional offline routes. What has become clear from this study, is the overwhelming lack of trust post-millennials have in news outlets and the publications released. The reoccurrence of the theme of bias was prevalent in both focus groups with all participants claiming to explore stories of interest further by accessing several sources. Lexicon such as point and view-point both suggest an assumption of prejudice along with aspects and opinions. The reference to click-bait also suggests an ulterior motive, again adding to this mistrust and suspicion.

Although some post-millennials have claimed a lack of interest in the news, the reference to posts and tweets does imply that they are coming into contact with some content whether that is intentional or not. It also confirms the use of an alternative lexicon to refer to what was traditionally conceptualised as news. This also corroborates the rising emphasis media outlets are placing on the value of a story in relation to its shareability. At the same time, for this digitally savvy generation, the influence on editors by advertisers and metrics is widely acknowledged. Post-millennials are casting shadow on the motives behind articles as well as its credibility.

This study contributes to understand that a new journalistic lexicon is being created. Just the same as it happened inside the newsroom, when the rise of the web changed the production jargon, now the very basic concept of news is being adapted by the new generation. For now, there is not a clear separation of the dif-

ferent contents displayed in a timeline and news content has been pasteurised to the information overload mix. The progression of the syntax used by post-millennials, has clearly outlined the challenges posed for the journalism industry. In an era where clicks equal money, the sensationalising of articles and features is leading to a generation of mistrust, cynicism and suspicion. The very own definition of news is acquiring a new layer of values.

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Developing students' confidence in using data in their journalism

By Chris Frost, Liverpool John Moores University

Abstract

Anyone who has been paying attention over the past two years will be aware of the importance of data. The SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic has often been portrayed in figures, whether with the daily death toll or the imminent collapse of the health service and local hospitals. The wide transmission of misinformation has also often been played out in figures regularly showing a complete ignorance of the use of data.

Journalists, even working for major publishers such as the BBC or national newspapers, are not immune to failings. FullFact.org, the factchecking campaign group, have had their hands full during the pandemic correcting misinformation in newspapers that should (and possibly do) know better. Readers end up ill-informed either because of poor journalism or unethical journalism. Training in some basic statistical skills and the confidence to handle data can only help improve our students' employability, ethics and their journalism.

Introduction

Data in the form of numbers or statistics trouble many students. Would-be journalists who

would never admit to being nervous about interviewing a senior politician or major celebrity have no trouble admitting to being scared of numbers.

Partly this is cultural – it is acceptable to admit you can't hack maths, occasionally even a matter of pride as being confident with figures seems far from fashionable in an era that sees an appearance on a reality TV show as the pinnacle of success.

However, nerdy or not, statistics, business accounts and other forms of number-based news are the day to day bread and butter of much modern news journalism and no journalism student can afford to ignore this. It is, therefore, our task as educators, to ensure they are fully confident with the basics.

Setting out to produce a full course on professional level statistics is unlikely to prove popular with many students, though, so it's important to see what can be reasonably taught in a few sessions, alongside other forms of writing; a few lecture and seminar aimed at giving students confidence building practice and a better understanding of what they should be attempting to do in reporting statistics.

Using data

Numbers are just a form of information and therefore evidence and hold no other mystical powers. It is only when they are combined with other statistics and comparisons are made that some students flounder. Hence the difference between percentages and percentage points often confuses and the different types of average are a mystery to many. Understanding the relative relationships between big and small numbers is another difficulty for all of us. Take money, for instance. Our daily lives tend to be measured in £10 or £20 notes. Even card payments rarely stray into the hundreds of pounds. A grocery till payment of £200 may no longer be rare but for most people it is still a suck-your-teeth moment and when was the last time one of your students made a payment in four figures or more? So how are we supposed to understand payments in millions or even billions?

Good journalism using figures and statistics as data requires a clear understanding of numbers and their relationships and calls for imaginative ways of explaining them to the public that are clear and easy to understand. Graphs, charts and diagrams are tried and tested methods of making statistics clearer but modern technology offers a much wider range of tools with video, audio, animation and even games on hand to explain issues alongside a clearly written text.

Common problems

There are a number of common problems with working with statistics. One identified by several authors of books that I would happily recommend for both lecturers and students is the question "Is this a big number?". Blastland and Dilnot point out that "zeros on the end of a number are often flaunted with bravado to impress or alarm." (2007, p6) The Chivers point out that there's no such thing as a big number "the bigness or otherwise of a number depends entirely on its context." (Chivers and Chivers, 2021, 63).

Big numbers

Governments are fond of offering apparently large sums of money in order to convince us that they take a problem seriously. Telling the public that the government is so concerned about maternity care, for instance, that it is putting an additional £12m into hospitals to improve the service care makes it sound like a lot of money. £12m is a large sum of money for us as individuals, a big lottery win perhaps, but it is small beer for government, covered by a one-off 25p tax on income. We've all lost more than that down the back of the sofa. The reality is that the Office of National Statistics tells us there were 615,557 live births in 2020 (ONS2021a) and so £12m is only £19.49 extra per birth in that year. If the government then points out that that funding is supposed to cover the next ten years of maternity care, then it's now only £1.95 per birth, a miniscule increase hardly likely to buy any significant additional care or equipment.

These are problems of scale and we need to get students to understand this if they are to explain the is-

sues involved to their readers. We've seen the action of scale often during the pandemic. Much was made of the enormous cost of test and trace. The government budgeted £37bn to be spent over the first two years of the pandemic and opponents condemned this huge cost for something that was widely considered to be a failure. However, it was a budget and only a fraction of the money, £5.7bn to November 2020 was spent and that was only expected to rise to £20bn by April 2021. So is this a big number? In government terms, no. To convert to the kind of figures we understand, the original £37bn budget over two years would equate to the typical worker being present with a £640 bill each year for two years. Very unwelcome, certainly but probably not life changing. In reality, of course, it was only half that.

Looking at the government's spending for 2019/20 the track and trace bill was about the same as that for housing, or culture or government administration. (UK Government 2021)

To take another example, according to a Credit Suisse report, the top one percent of households globally own 43 percent, or just under half, of all personal wealth. The bottom 50 percent only own one percent between them. One popular You Tube video also circulating on TikTok shows a novel way to bring this message home by representing the wealth of multi-billionaire Jeff Bezos as rice. Placing one grain of rice on a table as worth $100,000, the common millionaire only had 10 grains whilst Bezos, at $122billion, had a huge bagful of rice (Youtube 2021). Bezos could easily afford the cup of rice needed for his space ambitions whilst most people in the world don't even have one grain of rice. As a piece of journalism explaining inequality around the world it was an excellent demonstration.

Averages

It's difficult to talk about statistics without talking averages but averages are actually one of the most difficult things to imagine. Take average height, for instance. The average height of a man in the UK is five foot nine inches (175.3cm) according to the ONS and an average woman is five foot three inches. If we were to chart all the heights of people in the UK, we would find that the graph is bell shaped, with those averages at the peak. That type of average is called a mean average, the figure given when all values are added together and then divided by the number of values. But it is also the median (the middle figure in a range) and the mode (the most common figure). Men can be up to two foot shorter or two foot taller, but those extremes are very uncommon.

However other types of average are not so easy. The average household income in the UK is one that often vexes politicians. This is because incomes do not follow a bell curve. A total of 2.4m people earn below £10,000pa whilst the top one percent earn 8.3 percent of total incomes according to the ONS. This is what is known as equivalised individual household income, a figure made up of the total earnings of a household and then formulaically allocated to each member of the household to produce an equivalised individual income. (Europa 2021). The ONS chart shown below shows that the mean disposable household income is £36.900. That is the average after totalling all the incomes and dividing by the total number of values. The median income, the true middle point is £29,900 whilst the mode, the most commonly earned amount is £24,000. The mean average is dragged up by a relatively small number of people earning large incomes (ONS 2021b). The chart below ends at £80,000 simply because to add in all incomes would require a very long tail (at least 120 more columns) more than doubling the length of the chart. More than 22,500 households have an income of £674,000 or more, for instance.

Averages can be tricky things and often don't help explain reality. Most people earn less than the mean average and more earn less than the median than earn more. In this case, the mode, or most common number best describes typical UK income, although even then, where you live in the country would be one of several other factors affecting your lifestyle.

Qualifiers

Accuracy is an important element of journalism and leads the list of complaints to editors and regulators. When dealing with figures it is important, as with all journalism, to be clear about what it is one is talking about and only to match like with like when making comparisons.

The data for income above also has some important qualifiers that any report should make clear. First the income specified is income rather than just wages and includes interest and other unearned income.
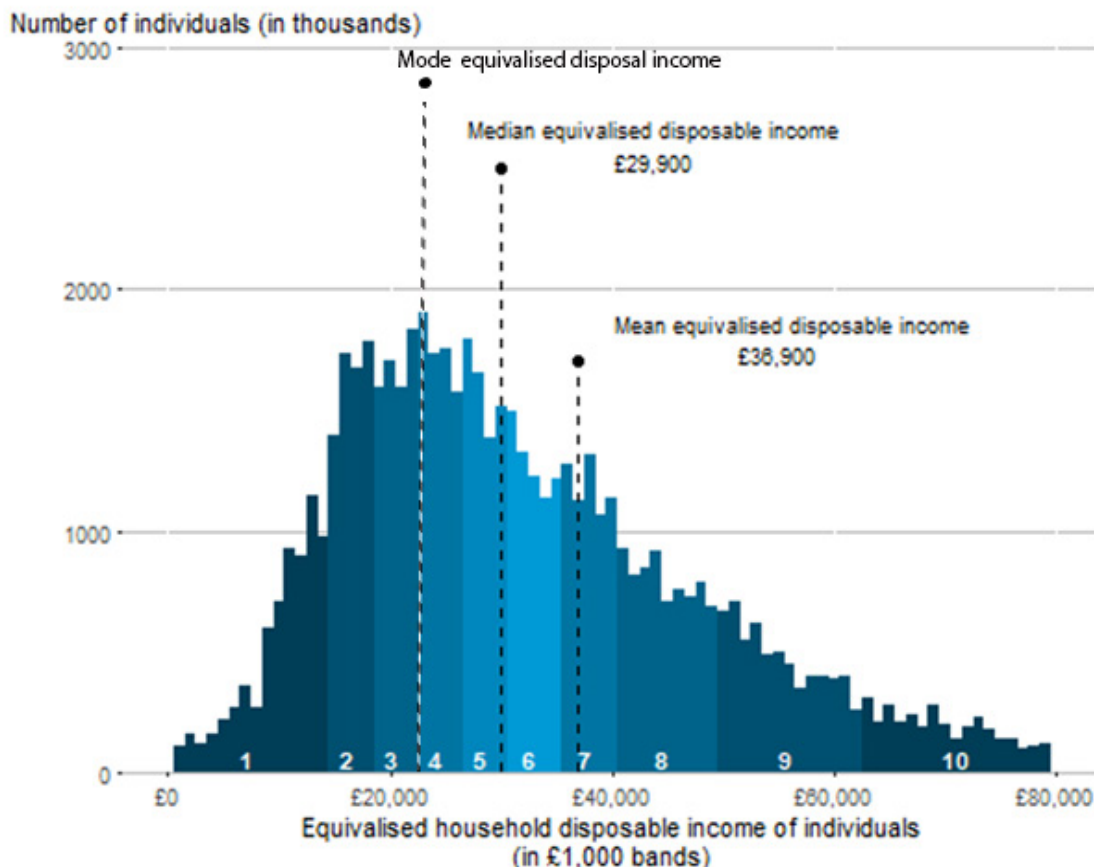
Figure 1: Disposable household incomes in bands of £1,000. (Ibid.)

Secondly, this is equivalised household income; that is all income coming into a household from adults living there whether a single person, a couple or a family with three or more earners formulaically allocated to individuals. A final qualification for this dataset is that it is UK wide. Many sets of figures apply to just England or Scotland or Wales and students need to be reminded to check geographic coverage.

Other issues

There are other statistical difficulties that students struggle with such as dealing with chance, causation v correlation, base rate fallacy, sample sizes and statistical significance that I do not have the space to discuss here, but that are equally important. Students should be advised to read the books recommended below (Blastland and Dilnot and Chivers and Chivers) and listen to the Radio 4 More or Less podcasts that discuss topical items in the news based on figures.

Data sources

Sources of data are important as are sources for anything. Politicians are an important and authoritative source but often play fast and loose with data as do many campaigners. Figures of all sorts are regularly bandied about yet turn out to be nonsense.

FullFact the fact checking web site revealed that during a debate on a private member's Bill about damages for adverse vaccine effects, Sir Christopher Chope, the Conservative MP for Christchurch, made a number

of misleading statements to the House. Introducing the second reading of the Bill Mr Chope talked about the Yellow Card scheme that allows doctors and the public to notify the authorities of potential adverse vaccine effects: "Essentially, what the Yellow Card scheme shows… is that there have been 435 reports of major blood clots and low platelet counts, including 74 deaths. It shows that there have been 767 cases of inflammation of the heart, a condition that is almost unheard of in medicine on a normal day-to-day basis. It shows that there have been some 35,000 reports of menstrual disorder, and there are all sorts of other effects set out in the comprehensive report. Very worryingly, it says that there are 1,632 reports of deaths having taken place shortly after vaccination." Mr Chope went on to say that there were "Hapless families – 10,000 of them or maybe more" who had suffered "real, serious damage".

FullFact said they did not know how Mr Chope reached the figure of 10,000 and he did not respond when contacted. The organisation also pointed out that the Yellow Card scheme was for reporting suspected adverse effects and that the data submitted cannot be used "to reliably say whether or not a condition was directly caused by the vaccine… With the early vaccination rollout concentrated on the most elderly and vulnerable in society, it's sadly unsurprising that there were '1,632 reports of death' (at the time of Mr Chope's claim) shortly after Covid-19 vaccinations—a point the MHRA has also emphasised."

Fullfact are a good source for checking stories and it is worth following them on social media.

Other good sources of data include the Office of National Statistics that carries figures on all aspects of UK life. Statisa.org is another good source of data, although it only allows a few free uses before seeking a subscription, and indexmundi.com carries stats from around the world. Similar organisations exist in a number of countries to give national figures. There are a number of other excellent sources available online.

Crosschecking data

Checking sources can be time consuming and, with looming deadlines, it can often seem easier to take information on trust.

A Guardian story reporting the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in 2020, claimed that Jupiter was at its closest to Earth at only 886,000km away. In fact the figure should have been 886million km. It is another problem of large numbers. There were sufficient zeros in the given number for the sub not to notice that it should have been one thousand times larger. Had those editing the column in the Guardian (it was removed very shortly after publication) remembered a basic pub quiz statistic they may have considered that our moon is already about half that distance from earth.

By learning a few basic numerical facts, a journalist can often check whether something is plausible or how big or small it is very quickly. Knowing that the Moon is typically around 240,000 miles or 430,000km from the earth, it would be easy to spot that someone had got the distance to Jupiter wrong. If one needs to know the precise distance at any time, then there is always Google. Knowing such basic data also has the added advantage of always being a good pub quiz winner.

So, the population of the UK is around 70million. Births in 2020 were as few as 615,557 and people start to die in significant numbers from their mid sixties, meaning a cohort of 85 year olds is as small as 265,000 but there are almost 940,000 55-year-olds and that means we can say that there are approximately 800,000 people in each year cohort from birth until 60. How many schoolchildren are there? There are 10 cohorts from 5 to 15, so 10x800,000=8m. In fact,according to ONS, there are 8.26m in that age group. Close enough to allow the use the 800k cohort as a rule of thumb guide.

The population of the USA is just under five times as many (329m), India is four times the size of the USA at 1.35bn and China a little larger at 1.44bn. Knowing basic, rounded, figures such as these can often prevent making silly mathematical errors.

Other easily remembered numbers around economics, population and geography are always useful.

Confidence building

Students' confidence can be built by developing exercises or assessments that use statistics. Developing such exercises is not hard but does require reasonable control of data sources. It is tempting to use current stories for such exercises and the ready availability of data from the pandemic makes that a serious candi-

date. Figures of cases, deaths and hospitalisations are published daily in newspapers and more detailed stats are available on the Government's Covid Dashboard (https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk). Asking students to find a news story from that data is good practice and can help them build confidence in reading and understanding statistics. The dashboard gives daily figures and access to past figures for cases, vaccinations, deaths and healthcare. This can make a useful early start to statistical stories. The data gathering and presentation is already done for you.

The dashboard can be used as a both a teaching aid and resource. The charts (as below) allow for discussion about interpretation and questions can be asked. For instance, why does the data dip every few days only to rise again three days later? A quick look soon confirms that cases fall on Fridays and drop further over the weekend, only to rise again, often dramatically, on Monday. We can perhaps suggest that people feel it more important to confirm infection when they need to attend work and risk infecting others rather than when they are relaxing at home with their family. Or maybe some of the testing laboratories only report their daily data on a Monday. I think we can discount the idea that the virus takes the weekend off.
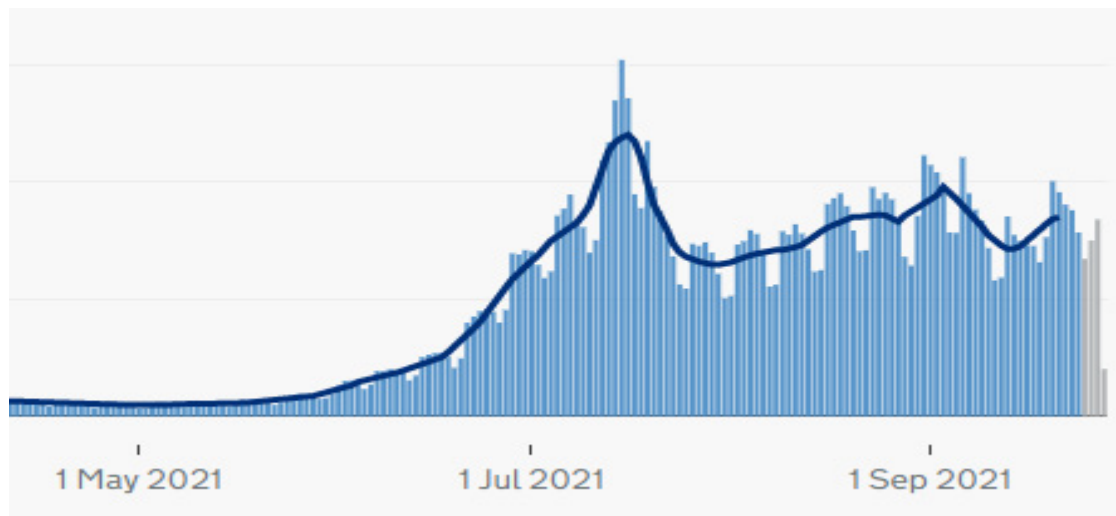
Figure 2: Tracking positive Covid tests (Coronavirus 2021)

The site allows for geographic investigation, great for local papers but also for pointing out that some areas are far more affected than others. Wales, the Midlands, Cumbria and the Scottish Borders were particularly badly hit compared to the South of England at the time of writing.

Vaccination figures can be closely examined. Are the anti-vaxxers having a significant effect or are they just a small group given way too much publicity as social outliers often are? Hospitals and healthcare are an additional area that can be examined. How is vaccination affecting hospitalisation, for instance? NHS England publishes data for daily hospital admissions by age band (NHS England 2021) This shows figures for admissions to hospitals in England up to Sept 2, 2021 at time of writing. For the last ten days average admission was:

Age	Avg number	Per year cohort (avg number divided by cohort size)
0-5	8	1.6
6-17	7	0.6
18-64	178	3.8
65-84	112	5.8
85+	37	Cohort size reduction too dramatic to be meaningful

Table 1: Hospital admissions in England during 2021

Interestingly the admission numbers for 6-17 year olds, which had started to climb through August, started to fall noticeably during September. This might be attributable to the start of the vaccination programme for those aged 16+ and the later programme for 12-16 year olds. Certainly the data shows that the large disparity seen between the older and younger age groups in admissions the previous autumn had been largely banished by the vaccine programme. Admissions for those under 18 remained fairly steady throughout 2021 but admissions for over 18s fell steadily as the vaccine programme progressed.

Media regulation data

Although the Covid data provides an excellent set of exercises in statistics stories, these rely heavily on data gathered and provided by official sources. The sources are reliable, if often some days old, but none-the-less have been collected by someone else. For an exercise that takes data in a much rawer form and also allows students to examine issues of journalism I would suggest asking them to research complaints made about newspapers or broadcasters. This means looking at the websites of the different regulators such as Ofcom, the Independent Press Standards Organisation or Impress. Ofcom puts out regular bulletins about complaints and these are useful in themselves for guiding students in the use of the Ofcom broadcast code. But it is probably easier to manage the data that comes from IPSO in that there is less of it.

The rulings section of IPSO's website (see https:// www.ipso.co.uk/rulings-and-resolution-statements) allows access to all the adjudicated complaints listed in an index that gives details of the publication, the complainant, the code provisions concerned and the outcome. This index then allows access to the full adjudication.

The index allows filters to be used to limit the time, search for a particular complainant or publication or to limit by code provision. This allows some ability to search for particular categories of data. However, the search filters are particularly clumsy and the date filters reset to the most up to date time period between each filter setting change. The index probably works well for the occasional searcher of a specific complaint, but as a regular user of this index in my research, it is incredibly frustrating. Whatever the reason though, for its structure, it is possible for students to gather information on IPSO's performance at the same time as learning about why the public complains and what concerns them most.

It is also possible to download IPSO's annual reports (IPSO 2021). These contain data about the number of complaints and how they were handled. IPSO no longer publishes full details about which code provisions are most complained about.

This can make a useful exercise. IPSO gives the data to allow examination of such questions as "which publication is most complained about?" and "which code provision attracts the most complaints?". These questions can be limited to a particular year so that you can make the workload easier. In 2020, IPSO dealt with 30,126 complaints and enquiries and investigated 496 of them, adjudicating 292, so there is a substantial workload in just one year. Earlier years have fewer complaints; 2015 for instance had only 12,278 inquiries, investigated 307 and adjudicated 243.

The two lots of data, that in the annual reports and that in the rulings pages can of course be combined to evaluate IPSOs work and performance.

Data manipulation

Having gathered the data they require, students often seek advice on how to store and manipulate the data.

The simplest method is to store it on a checksheet, but this is not the most flexible of systems and few students would consider not using a computer. A checklist on a computer in Word is probably the easiest method with a table set up that either allows figures to be updated as information is added or that automatically totals data as it is added.

Better still is a spreadsheet, something with which most students are familiar that allows data to be inserted and totalled and comparisons to be made as required.

Best of all is a database, such as Microsoft's Access that allows the data to be entered into a table, item by item and then allows reports to be produced, extracting the appropriate data as required. However, this requires some experience and expertise with Access that few students (and possible few tutors) will have. Whilst students with an aptitude and a future requirement to gather data might find it useful to become proficient with Access, it is probably not worth the time required to expect other students to use it so I would recommend sticking to Excel as the usual source of data collection.

Once a data method is set up then it is simply a matter of entering data. Because of the clumsiness of the IPSO website, this can be a frustrating process and I would recommend keeping exercises short. For instance, seeking out which publication has the most complaints upheld over the lifetime of IPSO would require filtering by the full range of dates of IPSO's existence for each publication in turn with all the upheld adjudication options turned on. It is a laborious process so to help out, here is the league table of the top 10 to July 2021. Complaints upheld drop dramatically for subsequent publications.

Articles

IPSO Complaint totals

Newspaper	total complaints	Uph off	Uph corr/adj	resolved	U/h as %	Reject
Mail online	163	12	13	74	15	61
The Sun	115	17	12	28	25	58
The Times	106	15	10	19	24	62
Daily Mail	96	12	4	33	17	48
The Daily Telegraph	76	8	10	18	24	39
Express.co.uk	75	21	9	23	40	23
mirror.co.uk	69	9	5	16	20	38
The Sunday Times	53	11	5	12	30	24
Daily Express	53	12	7	7	36	27
Daily Record	52	7	5	12	23	27

Figure 3: IPSO complaint totals

Asking students to discover which code clauses are most often breached is another relatively easy use of the IPSO website. Again for your guidance, here are the figures to July 2021.

Total IPSO adjudications by type
02-Oct-21

Total individual complaints against a newspaper:	2023	
Total of all code categories of complaint made:	3481	

Total upheld:	449	22.2 %
Uph as offered by member:	256	12.7 %
Uph with correction/adjudication:	193	9.5 %
Resolved:	505	25.0 %

	Total complaints	Total as percentage of all complaints	Percentage of total upheld	percentage of category upheld
Accuracy:	1729	85.5	413.0	23.9
Privacy:	681	33.7	111.0	16.3
Harassment:	260	12.9	49.0	18.8
Intrusion:	202	10.0	29.0	14.4
Children:	122	6.0	17.0	13.9
Children sex cases:	13	0.6	5.0	38.5
Hospitals:	12	0.6	0.0	0.0
Payments to criminal:	6	0.3	0.0	0.0
Listening devices:	88	4.3	10.0	11.4
Victim of sexual assault:	34	1.7	13.0	0.0
Financial journalism:	5	0.2	1.0	20.0
Confidential sources:	32	1.6	9.0	28.1
Discrimination:	152	7.5	30.0	19.7
Payments to witnesses:	4	0.2	0.0	0.0
Suicide:	29	1.4	3.0	10.3
Reporting of crime:	6	5.5	20.0	17.9

Note: many individual complaints cover several clauses of the code hence the percentage of complaints may not total 100.

Figure 4: Complaints made against each code provision.

Articles

Conclusion

Anyone interested in ethical news reporting understands the importance of being able to question politicians, scientists and other professionals about statistics they use in their work. Reporting stories based on statistics or using statistics extensively and accurately requires journalists to be able to query, manage, manipulate and report statistics and other data accurately and fairly to properly inform readers.

But many students are nervous of dealing with figures, they found maths confusing at school and have not had a comfortable management of figures inculcated into their working methods. What is being laid out here is not a maths course, but an attempt to help develop that feeling for accuracy and the clear identification of what the stats are really telling us that sets the standard for the good journalist.

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Post Brexit, post pandemic: reframing public administration teaching for journalism students

By Kate Ironside, Northampton University

Introduction

Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic are Public Administration stories of historic significance. They have served as a trenchant reminder of the importance of this core element of the journalism curriculum.

As long as the purposes of journalism continues to include the duties to inform audiences of issues that affect them (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007), to hold power to account (Thurman at al., 2012) and to get the best obtainable version of the truth (Bernstein, quoted in Teicholz, 2019), then Public Administration will remain an essential part of journalism education.

Despite this, the subject is coming under pressure on journalism courses in higher education in the UK. On some courses, there is a trend to cut the number of credits devoted to Public Administration or make it an optional module or worse, to cut it from the curriculum completely. Elsewhere, whilst some do first-class work, others deliver the module in broadly the same fashion that it was delivered 35 years ago.

It is time to reassert the critical importance of Public Administration education for journalism students and, in the wake of both Brexit and the pandemic, reshape the way in which it is taught.

The following observations and proposals draw on 26 years of reporting public administration stories, 13 years of teaching the topic and seven years as an accreditation inspector and external examiner, scrutinising the documentation of courses across the UK, accredited by all three of the accrediting bodies and none, and upon conversations with staff and students to whom I offer my sincere thanks.

The context

Public Administration is one of the very oldest parts of the journalism curriculum. A form of Public Administration, then labelled Politics, was part of the very first short-lived university course in 1919. When industry training was first formalised under the National Council for the Training of Journalists in 1951, Public Administration was a compulsory part of the curriculum for trainees. As journalism training and education transitioned to higher education, a process that began tentatively in 1970 before gathering pace in the 1990s, Public Administration was a part of the curriculum that effortlessly made the switch to academia.

This century, journalism education in the United Kingdom has undergone substantial further change, driven both by transformations within industry as well as within higher education itself. Courses have multiplied and contracted. They have moved from single to multiplatform teaching. Content has been significantly revised. Academics have embraced new approaches to pedagogy while simultaneously semesterising or desemesterising according to prevailing academic fashion.

Amidst this welter of change, academics have had relatively little time to reflect on Public Administration modules. The existence of Government, at least, has been one mercifully unchanging constant in this convulsing landscape. Furthermore, for many courses, the Public Administration element of the curriculum

and often its assessments have been determined by the accrediting bodies. None of these factors mean academics should not reflect deeply about this important part of the curriculum, its objectives and its delivery.

The issues

While there are some excellent Public Administration lecturers inspiring students, there are three areas of concern.

The first, highlighted by the research into Public Administration pedagogy, is students' reluctance to embrace the topic and their struggles in mastering it.

Ingham (2011, p4) argues students find the subject "dry and certainly not sexy or appealing." Clark and Jones (2017, p224) refer to the "dreaded module" with a "daunting" syllabus that is "more difficult than that other great journalistic leveller, learning shorthand." In a competitive marketplace, where student attainment and satisfaction are important measurements of a course's success, this is a matter of concern.

To boost engagement and attainment, Ingham (2011) argues the value of reflective, interrogative blogs while Clark and Jones (2017) favour lecturer enthusiasm, careful building block elements, effective hooks, debates in seminars and a focus on tutorials. Nevertheless, the core problem they highlight, that Public Administration is a module that students find dull and difficult, remains. The correct response to this is to ask: "So how are we teaching this wrong?"

Unfortunately, the response, on a minority of courses, has merely been to minimise the problem by cutting the number of credits devoted to Public Administration or making the topic optional or worse erasing it from the curriculum completely. I have been told: "We want to only teach the sexy stuff", "It's politics, it's boring", "Students don't like it", "It's not what students want to study."

The problem has been compounded by the rebranding of Public Administration as Public Affairs. In the last two years, three otherwise interesting, non-accredited courses have informed me that they teach Public Affairs because they teach the definition of the public interest and the Freedom of Information Act. This is a fundamental misunderstanding.

Whatever we may choose to call the topic for student consumption – and there are some innovative module names out there - it is essential that we as academics revert, between ourselves, to calling a spade, a spade. This paper therefore deliberately refers to Public Administration.

This minority trend to squeeze, optionalise or cut Public Administration is disturbing. It has reached a point where it is important to push back and reassert the fundamental importance of Public Administration to the curriculum. But we need to go further.

The majority continue to teach Public Administration and to give it due weight. The common module size is 20 credits with some delivering 30 credits. However, while there is some innovative practice, the teaching schedules and assessments are too often indistinguishable, bar the addition of devolution, from those I was taught as a student at City University 35 years ago.

Whilst there are some good reasons for a degree of continuity, there are poor reasons as well. As the UK progresses into what is hopefully the final phase of the pandemic and settles down into its Brexit future, the very least that both academics and the accrediting bodies should be asking about Public Administration is: are we getting it right?

Any review of Public Administration teaching needs to be mindful not just of the quality of student learning but also of the implications that major industry changes have had for Public Administration reporting. These are:

1. **Digital Newsgathering:** A vast amount of official documentation is now available at just a few clicks of a mouse, opening up rich seams for newsgathering that were not available as easily 35 years ago. Students need to be taught how to extract stories from such documentation, a task that should be pursued in both Public Administration and Newswriting classes.

2. **The Digital Contact:** Where once journalists formed contacts through face to face meetings, social media has provided valuable opportunities to form useful contacts online. Students need learn about digital contacts in Newsgathering classes and to be encouraged to start building their digital contacts, so useful for Public Administration stories, from the start of their studies.

3. **Audience engagement:** News organisations face stiff competition for the attention of their audi-

ences, especially the young. This underlines the importance of powerful, effective storytelling. Yet too often, students faced with a Public Administration story, revert to stiff, stilted formal language. The same problem exists in their court reporting. In both Newswriting and Public Administration classes, students need to be taught how to deliver Public Administration stories in a compelling manner that focuses on what matters. If they bore their audiences, they fail their audiences.

Reframing public administration modules

Let us start with the shared objective of both courses and accrediting bodies: to produce graduates who can work as competent junior journalists.

The vast majority of courses, regardless of platform, prepare graduates for general news.

There is a minority suite of specialist courses, of which sport is pre-eminent. It is possible, especially for sport, to deliver a Public Administration module tailored entirely to that specialism. However, the majority of institutions that teach both general news and specialist journalism, deliver Public Administration as a shared module so this paper will continue to focus on a general news objective, but with periodic sport twists.

Having established the core objective – to produce graduates who can work as competent junior journalists – the next question to ask is how should a Public Administration module contribute to that objective?

This is where the reframing begins. The primary objective of a Public Administration module is emphatically not to teach students either politics or structures of power. Journalism courses are not here to train future civil servants or politicians, even though there are notable examples, not least the current Prime Minister Boris Johnson, of journalists subsequently moving into politics.

The primary objective of the module should be to produce specialists in stories: junior journalists who will be able report the major Public Administration related stories that employers and audiences want.

The module is actually the students' gateway to some of the biggest stories of the day, of the week or of their careers. It is an opportunity to showcase superb journalism and multi-task on learning outcomes, examining powerful writing and effective packages, explainers and documentary techniques. When Public Administration is taught through the prism of compelling stories and first-class journalism, student engagement is not a problem.

In order to ensure the module achieves the objective of teaching effective Public Administration related storytelling, we then need to ask:

What are the major Public Administration related stories that employers and audiences will want and need?

What knowledge and skills do students therefore need to learn?

And finally, how much can be squeezed into one module and what might have to go elsewhere?

The stories

The choice of stories is crucial. These should shape teaching schedules and assessments. The stories will serve as the principle hook that Clark & Jones (2017, p229) describe as "phenomenally important" when it comes to securing engagement.

The stories have two other important functions. They demonstrate to students the profound relevance of what they are studying and show them exactly how journalists navigate the Public Administration maze to get front page or top-of-the-bulletin stories.

In choosing the stories, module tutors therefore need to apply to their teaching schedules the concepts of news values and public interest that we teach elsewhere in the curriculum.

The focus should be on profound Public Administration-related dilemmas or major failures - stories that would lead the news not simply provide a nib or mid-bulletin presenter read. The more compelling the story, the more engaged the students will be. The more engaged they are, the better they will learn.

There are broadly two categories of major Public Administration story:

First there are the perennials, most notably those involving the emergency services. There is a utilitarian

argument to be made, from an industry perspective, to open every Public Administration module with the police, fire and ambulance services. Although tempting, it doesn't work from a pedagogic basis. Core building blocks need to be put in place first but it underlines the importance of these services. Police are often taught. Fire and ambulance much less. Students need to understand all three.

The other important type of perennial stories are those involving abuse, neglect, mal practice or poor practice, particularly but not exclusively in the fields of child protection, adult social care and health care. These are stories of immense public interest that go to the heart of the journalistic responsibility to hold power to account. These are stories journalists never forget reporting. It is critical that student journalists are taught how to do these properly.

The second category of major Public Administration stories are the long-term stories and dilemmas, issues that are likely to run for at least the opening decade of our graduates' careers. Most will be still running when our graduates retire.

Here tutors have to make some tough, strategic decisions, driven by news values and module size. It is not possible to teach everything. There is also the latitude to play to staff and students' strengths and interests.

The pool of stories to choose from includes the future of the NHS, educational attainment, poverty, provision of housing, adult social care, effectiveness of the justice system, immigration, the monarchy, foreign policy & defence challenges. Colleagues will have their own suggestions.

Two important contenders for inclusion are climate change and the possible break-up of the United Kingdom.

Climate change is the perfect vehicle for a case study in policy-making whilst also providing the valuable opportunity to demonstrate methods and structures of international co-operation. At least one course currently delivers this as a themed newsday. Properly prepared, that is a valuable approach.

The break-up of the UK may not happen but there is cross party consensus, at the highest level, that there is a serious risk that it might. The current construct of the UK is barely 100 years old and it is not a given that it will continue. Post Brexit, the strains are particularly acute. Should Scotland go, rupturing a union that has lasted more than 300 years, the ramifications will be far deeper than Brexit. Should Northern Ireland go, there will be bloodshed.

What is certain is that the debate about the future path of devolution, like that of climate change, will run through our graduates' careers. For their audience's sake, they need to understand both.

Inevitably it is not possible to teach everything. There will hard choices to make about what to leave out. Some of the teaching schedules that cross my desk devote an entire week's worth of learning, plus an essay topic, to House of Lords reform. Why? How often do we expect our junior journalists to report House of Lords reform? I was a lobby correspondent for 13 years, I reported the only substantive reform of the House of Lords during our lifetimes, and even I didn't report the House of Lords that much.

This is not to say the House of Lords should not be taught. Of course it should but, in an already brimming module, it is a tight 20 minutes during a building block session on the UK Parliament. Students need to know what the House of Lords does, how (occasionally) to use it, why it is a democratic nonsense and why reform is so glacially slow. Having established those important foundations, we can leave the rest to continuous professional development.

This now opens up a hole in the teaching schedule that could be devoted to a Public Administration story which junior journalists are far more likely to report. One obvious candidate might be flooding. Who is responsible for flood defences? Who pays for them? How do public policy decisions exacerbate and mitigate flooding? How do the emergency services, local authorities and government agencies work together during flooding? What is the role of governments, parliaments and councils in supporting those affected by flooding?

From the perspective of an editor, which junior journalist is of more use to the audience: the one who knows how to report flooding or the one who can write features about House of Lords reform?

Knowledge and skills

Having established the stories, we then need to identify the knowledge and skills students need to report those stories effectively.

There are four: Structures of power. Context. The ability to gut official documents. Critical analysis.

Articles

Structures of power

Knowledge of structures of power is essential for effective reporting. Students need to know where to direct their questions, who holds information and where power lies.

Inevitably there will be building block sessions on core structures that cut across multiple story areas. These typically include UK Government and Parliament and local government.

Not all courses based in England focus as strongly as they should on devolution. I have on several occasions been told: "Devolution doesn't apply to our students, we're in England." Even if we put aside the possible break-up of the UK, this approach fails to appreciate the sheer impact of devolution on people's lives. This has been graphically demonstrated by the pandemic when four different administrations were enforcing four different sets of rules in four different parts of the UK. Journalists who failed to understand those distinctions would have fundamentally failed their audiences. Everyone needs to teach devolution.

Some courses do not teach the structures of public services. This is a mistake. Public services generate many stories that audiences both want and need. To report those stories effectively, students need to know where power lies within those services, how it is held to account, how the service is delivered, how is it funded, who monitors standards and who handles complaints. They must also understand that structures frequently change.

Finally, students need to join up the dots. Governments, watchdogs, local authorities and public services do not operate as silos. Major stories often involve multiple organisations and institutions. As the award-winning health journalist Shaun Lintern said: "You have got to know the organisations and you have got to know how they fit in with each other" (European Health Journalism, undated).

Let us take a child protection failure, one of those tragic perennials of journalism. There is a set list of individuals and organisations who reporters should contact when there is a dead child in the morgue. Each one could generate fresh information and important follow-ups.

On mainland Britain these will include:

The most senior politicians with executive power on the relevant council and the most senior councillors with scrutiny or opposition roles.

The council's director of children's services. Plus, if possible, the social workers monitoring the child. Failing that, the social workers' representative body.

The child protection standards watchdog. Reporters should check that watchdog's previous reports on the council. Is this one struggling to deliver good levels of child protection or one with glowing previous reports?

Journalists need to repeat the process for the relevant police force, looking for the most senior officer, most senior politicians with oversight and the standards watchdog.

They should then repeat for relevant NHS bodies and school if they are involved in the story.

Nationally, dependent on location, journalists should be contacting:

- The relevant local MP/MSP/MS;
- The relevant national government minister;
- The opposition shadow minister ;
- The relevant national parliamentary committee.

This is a list that can be learned by rote, very much a form of learning needed to pass the National Council for the Training of Journalists' public affairs examinations as Clark and Jones (2017) eloquently outline but rote learning is shallow learning.

It is far more effective to teach recurring public administration issues through the prism of actual stories, examining what goes wrong and demonstrating how journalists have used the structures to report the story and how they have developed new angles and follow-ups.

In the case of child protection, there are, sadly, plenty of stories to choose from. The death of Peter Connelly, better known as Baby P, is particularly useful, not least because the reforms needed to prevent his death had already been identified and supposedly implemented following the Laming report (2003) into the death of Victoria Climbie, a case so horrific that it led to UK-wide rethink on child protection strategies.

Students are left aghast at the scale of failures, made all the worse by the final realisation that the council which failed Baby P was the same one which had failed little Victoria. It is not a story that students forget.

In their mounting disbelief, they are engaged, gripped by the unfolding saga and following the journalists through the maze of local and national government, police and NHS structures as news organisations reported this unfolding major story. In process the students learn how to join the dots. They are therefore better prepared for when they too will have to report a child protection failure.

For a guide to the Baby P story, please refer to Chapter 6 Child Protection in Reporting Power (Ironside, 2020) free download here: https://bjtc.org.uk/e-publications

Context

Next students need context. Structures without context are meaningless.

Context may be subject specific: for example, why will child protection structures always sometimes fail? Context can involve demographics, so important to housing, planning, the NHS, education, adult social care and more.

Context can involve history. The debates about the future of devolution or the NHS or the unfolding ramifications of Brexit cannot be understood without mastering the past. The background to these are explained in Chapters 2-4, Chapter 10 and Chapter 14 in Reporting Power (Ironside, 2020) free download here: https://bjtc.org.uk/e-publications

And crucially, context includes funding. Students need to understand not just the structure of budgets but their context. They should be taught the ramifications of the global economic crash of 2008 and the consequences of spending decisions that followed. Why? Because the stories generated over the last decade from the spending decisions taken in the wake of the banking crash provide the most useful potential indicator of the stories likely to be generated over the coming decade as a result of the economic shock of the pandemic. The background to budgets, with an examination of the impact of both the global crash and the pandemic, can be found in Chapter 12 in Reporting Power (Ironside, 2020) free download here: https://bjtc.org.uk/e-publications

A case study helps underline the importance of spending decisions. Mindful of students' classes on court reporting and the value of multi-tasking on learning outcomes, it is useful to take the courts of England & Wales as a case study in government spending decisions. It is a topic that can be taught either in a Public Administration module or a Law module. The tale of the strains on the judicial system is a powerful story that has led to award-winning journalism (Mayhew, 2019).

Before the pandemic struck, the Law Society (2019) was warning that the criminal justice system was "at absolute breaking point," the former President of the Supreme Court Lord Neuberger predicted a breakdown in the rule of law if politicians didn't change course (Scottish Legal News, 2019) while in his annual report the head of the police standards watchdog, Sir Tom Winsor warned the wider criminal justice system was both "dysfunctional and defective" (HMICFRS, 2019, p13). The pandemic has only exacerbated matters.

Understanding the context of the resourcing of courts will help student journalists make sense of some of the events they will witness in court. It is also a source of stories for them. The problems are likely to take years to reverse. The background to the courts crisis is explained in Chapter 13 in Reporting Power (Ironside, 2020) free download here: https://bjtc.org.uk/e-publications

The ability to gut official documents

One great advantage of the digital era is the amount of official documentation that is now readily available online. These are an immense source of stories. The ability to gut official documents is an important one to be taught in both Public Administration and Newswriting classes. It requires an understanding of both structures and context and is best taught through the prism of stories.

It is important to start with straightforward material. Just as it is a mistake to launch students' direct engagement with public administration structures by taking them, unprepared, to a potentially dry and unintelligible council meeting, so too should students not initially be handed a particularly jargon-ridden document.

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (Jay, 2014) is a useful starting point. Students should have the story explained and can look at The Times' journalism on the topic. Then

they can turn to the Jay report. The pdf is 159 pages long. Ask students to write a short news story from the report. Direct them first to the table of contents and ask them where they should focus their attention, given the clock is ticking to deadline. The answer is the crisp Executive Summary, just two pages long. It's all they need. Instruct them to only choose quotes that are written in plain English that they and their readers would understand.

From there, students can progress, through the prism of powerful stories, to more complex documents. All the examples below have been successfully tackled by Level 4 students in Semester 1.

The Hillsborough Football Disaster provides the tragic prism through which students can dissect four parliamentary statements by Home Secretaries (Hurd 1989, Waddington 1990, Straw 1998, May 2016), the Taylor report (1990), the Culture Secretary Andy Burnham's address at Anfield on the 20th anniversary of the disaster (LFC-TV, 2009) and the Hillsborough Independent Panel report (2012).

The Mid-Staffs Hospital scandal can be examined first through the prism of campaigners' websites and powerful journalism and then, once students have grasped the issues, through watchdog reports, parliamentary statements and the Mid-Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry report of 2013. Not all sources have to be text-based. The video of the press conference by Inquiry chair Robert Francis (Hayes Collins Media, 2013) provides a valuable test of students' ability to take effective notes and pick key quotes whilst also underlining the importance of punctuality. Francis doesn't wait for latecomers.

The dry topic of council finance can be enlivened, especially for sports journalism students, by the tale of the Cobblers' missing millions, a story of a multi-million pound loan a council made to a football club. Most of the money subsequently vanished, leaving a stadium incomplete, fans furious and plans to regenerate a rundown area of Northampton in tatters. Having covered the basics, read the investigative journalism by BBC journalists Matt Precey and Julian Sturdy (BBC, 2018), sports journalism students have then plunged with relish on a KPMG (undated) council audit report to spot where things went wrong from the council perspective.

Grenfell is a powerful conduit through which to teach housing. Students who have watched the video obtained by Sky News (2017) of firefighters' first glimpse of the blazing Grenfell Tower and clips from the press conference held by the bereaved (BBC, 2019) and who have examined the Scottish response to the Irvine fire of 1999 and the English response to the Lakanal fire of 2009, will then prove adept at gutting Building A Safer Future: The Independent Review of Building Regulations & Fire Safety (Hackitt, 2018) and subsequent Government statements on housing.

Critical analysis

As students recognise the assorted roles and responsibilities of Public Administration bodies, absorb the context and learn to gut official sources, they should also develop their skills of critical analysis. Does a politician's assertion actually stand scrutiny? If a watchdog has given an organisation at the centre of a scandal a good report does that mean the scandal is a one-off failing or that the watchdog is a poor watchdog?

This critical analysis should be demonstrated both in class discussion and within assessments. These tend to be essays or examinations, although some courses have commendable practical portfolios. Those assessing through essays tend to focus on themes such as Prime Ministerial powers, the powers of the legislature or diversity in representation, all commendable subjects.

It is worth considering, however, asking students to analyse the responses of governments, parliaments and public services to specific major Public Administration dilemmas or failures such as those listed above. In order to deliver, students would need to understand structures and context. In preparation for the essay, they should read their textbooks and then the extensive journalism on the topic in question. However, in the essay itself, students should only be permitted to quote from official documents that journalists would use such as inquiry reports, parliamentary transcripts, audit reports and press releases.

An essay on Prime Ministerial power should perhaps focus on the prorogation of Parliament in autumn 2019. Students should be confined to quoting from the Supreme Court judgment that this was unlawful, the many lively Hansard exchanges, think-tank commentaries, the Conservative Party manifesto of 2019 and subsequent review of the judicial review process led by the Ministry of Justice.

The learning outcomes of such essays should require students to demonstrate an understanding of structures, the ability to gut official sources and the ability to critically analyse those sources.

Conclusion

Public Administration should not be a problem module. It is a module that general news journalists and indeed sports journalists need to master to ensure that they can properly tell the powerful Public Administration related stories that audiences and employers want and need.

To be most effective, it should be taught through the prism of stories. Engaged students can then see how journalists use Public Administration structures, they can absorb context and become skilled in dissecting official sources. This will endow them with skills needed to tell Public Administration stories effectively. As ITV Wales' Programme & Digital Editor Louise Elliott (2021) tweeted: "General news reporters are specialists. They cover anything, anywhere at any time. That is a superpower." An effective knowledge of how to turn Public Administration events into compelling stories is part of that superpower. Equipping students with that knowledge is a prime duty of journalism courses.

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The disappearing newsroom and the backpack journalist: challenges and opportunities

By Deborah Wilson David, Nottingham Trent University

Over the summer vacation, whilst trying to take a much-needed break, journalism educators were multi-scenario planning for the 2021-22 academic year. No matter which higher education institution, the main consideration was what the 'new normal' was likely to be.

There were plans being put together for 100% on campus teaching, 100% online, and all possibilities and variations in between – including the widely detested hybrid delivery class.

Common sense dictated, as we faced the coronavirus becoming a permanent fixture in one form or another, that we would be looking at a greater proportion of remote operation with working from home widely accepted as a necessary part of the educator's week. But for courses which involve production teaching as a significant part of the curriculum, and specialist facility usage an integral characteristic of delivery, how important is it to get the students into our campus newsrooms?

The last 18 months have seen a rapid and creative evolution in the remote delivery of practice-based teaching, continuing to recreate the industry environment wherever possible and appropriate, giving our students that real-life feel of the newsroom operation and replicating professional practice.

However, we know students have a real hunger to work together in newsrooms, and in radio and tv studios, and having the opportunity to resume at least some of that in-person activity from 8 March this year was well received.

No return to the comfort zone

There was an understandable temptation, as workplaces were reopening, for some journalism educators to want to return to their comfort zone; the 'old' normal and fully resume in-person, newsroom-based teaching. The pandemic has forced the speed and direction of change in journalism practice. It is clear, and employers and accreditation bodies concur with this, that the future for journalism is hybrid working, and to avoid embracing that poses the risk that journalism education will lag behind current and rapidly evolving professional practice. The essence of the vocational element of journalism education is that it should mirror professional practice so we can effectively prepare practitioners for the workplace, but also anticipate the future of the news industries and produce reflective, creative, and skilled journalists who can compete for jobs that do not yet exist.

Developments in technology have meant that an entire news operation, in terms of newsgathering and news delivery for both broadcast and non-broadcast organisations, can work remotely with less use needed of in-situ facilities. Our industry partners all tell us they are not using newsrooms and studio complexes in the same way as they did pre-Covid and some of that new way of working is likely to continue. One told me, referring to what is the likely scenario for the BBC: "We think that around 60% of colleagues in local TV and radio will gradually move to hybrid working – largely based at home with occasional travel to the office."[1]

This echoes the moves in office working, where despite some vacillation between plans for extensive work from home post-Covid, and the subsequent drive to bring office workers back to their workplace, the consensus appears to have settled between these parameters with most offices retaining some element of working from home.[2]

1   Personal communication with Kevin Stanley, NUJ Secondee, BBC National and Regions. 7 September 2021
2   Numerous reports, including this in the Financial Times from September 6 2021: "UK employers plot return of office workers" https://www.ft.com/content/83740583-7717-4aa3-babf-d880bccb1c85 and this from the Press Association in the Guardian, 28 Au-

In my own region, the East Midlands, Reach has closed newsrooms as part of its plans to have many of its journalists working remotely. Lincoln has closed, Derby is following, and then Leicester. The Nottingham Post, whilst at the time of writing is still to reopen post pandemic, remains one of Reach's regional 'hubs'**3** but has plans for a reduced occupancy with journalists on a rota, booking their days in the newsroom in advance. Last year JPIMedia announced plans for the closure of 11 of its newspaper offices, citing staff preferences for increased home working. JPIMedia chief executive David King also acknowledged the benefits to the business: "Aligning agile working with the review of our property portfolio will help us to better sustain jobs and titles for the longer term".**4**

Move to increased regionalisation

In local media there was already a move towards increased regionalisation to cut costs, in terms of both staffing and overheads, in local radio, newspapers and regional television news.

The shrinking footprint of newsrooms and studios is not completely new, some was already happening pre-pandemic and not just at the local level. In 2012 - 2013 the BBC combined its three main network newsrooms in London: Bush House, home to the BBC World Service newsroom, was vacated in 2012, then the news operation in Television Centre left the west of London in 2013. They were combined with the BBC's radio news operation in New Broadcasting House, which now is home to the newsroom which serves all BBC News across all their radio and all TV networks.

BBC Local Radio stations closed many of their district studios in 2012, with the announcement about the remaining 20 last year saying these small regional, and usually unstaffed, satellite sites were no longer needed: "… the huge leaps forward in mobile technology and connectivity make an office with an ISDN line an expensive anomaly."**5** Commercial local radio has also been closing studios following increased mergers and buyouts in recent years to construct de facto networks by groups such as Global and Bauer Radio.**6**

Over the years I was at the University of Lincoln I watched the Lincolnshire Echo diminish from a daily publication with its own printing presses, to a smaller building, then a smaller office, and now it has no office at all.

The Nottingham Post still has a newsroom and offices for the commercial teams to work from, but they need to provide space for journalists from elsewhere in the region coming in albeit on a rationed basis. One news editor told me they would be surprised to see any newspaper offices in the region in five years' time.

From a business perspective it could be fair to say that with constrained budgets, these savings on buildings and overheads, may help protect or even create more journalists' jobs. Indeed Newsquest, Reach and JPIMedia have all been recruiting in recent months.**7** Meanwhile the hyperlocal news platform, Nub News, which is a network of news websites launched in September 2018 and now serves more than 60 towns in the UK, have employed over 30 journalists and they plan to take on at least 30 more in the next 12 months.**8** But they have no newsrooms.

Mike Sassi, formerly editor of the Nottingham Post until 2019, is Nub News' recently appointed editorial director.**9** Speaking to me before he was appointed to this role, Sassi said that Karl Hancock, Nub News founder and chief executive, does acknowledge there are problems in not having a newsroom, specifically: "… the difficulties of building a team, training staff and establishing a brand."**10** However he explained that Hancock is not intending to establish newsrooms, that he believes local news should be embedded in its area, and written and published on patch, and if he set up newsrooms they would have to be regional which would go against what he was trying to achieve with local news.

There are many ways of working in journalism and the media that can be easily facilitated without a

gust 2020: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/aug/28/media-blitz-to-get-workers-back-to-offices-amid-pandemic

3   See Tobitt, C (2021) "Reach closed most of its newsrooms …" https://pressgazette.co.uk/most-reach-journalists-work-home-after-covid-19-mail-online-prepares-return-newsroom/

4   https://www.prolificnorth.co.uk/news/publishing-news/2020/06/jpimedia-close-11-local-offices

5   Martin, R (2020) "BBC to close remaining local radio district offices." https://radiotoday.co.uk/2020/05/bbc-to-close-remaining-local-radio-district-offices/ The BBC's official announcement can be found here: www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-52543152

6   See Linford, P (2019) "100 jobs at risk and studios set to close in huge local radio shake-up" www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2019/news/100-jobs-at-risk-and-studios-set-to-close-in-huge-local-radio-shake-up/

7   See https://medium.com/behind-local-news-uk/jpimedia-to-launch-in-8-new-cities-as-part-of-digital-expansion-672e1c33655f

8   https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/nub-news-platform-profile/

9   More at www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2021/news/former-regional-daily-editor-to-take-charge-of-hyperlocal-network/

10   Personal communication with Mike Sassi, Honorary Visiting Professor Nottingham Trent University. 22 June 2021

newsroom or studio complex. Podcasting, for example, can be produced in makeshift home facilities at minimal cost. Most newsgathering technologies are cheap and portable. Radio stations can be run from a spare bedroom with remote input from their news teams, indeed that has been happening during lockdown with one East Midlands community radio station, Siren Radio, based at the University of Lincoln, winning a Radio Television Digital News Association Regional (International) Edward R Murrow Award for News Documentary whilst doing so.[11] Meanwhile a new online radio station, believed to be the first UK station established without any central studio facility, was launched in February 2021.[12]

Immersed in the community

In terms of journalism's important democratic role, those reporters stationed in areas which do not have a newsroom per se have no choice but to be immersed in the communities they serve. These 'backpack journalists' may be better able to serve their communities, build relationships, encourage a greater range of voices, and thus enhance democracy, particularly at the local level.

But most journalists feel they benefit from working physically alongside colleagues, that the environment is conducive to generating and developing ideas, sharing expertise on background, context, and contacts. And some predict that journalism will be the poorer for the closures of newsrooms.[13]

Nottingham Trent University benefits from a close partnership with the city's local television station, Notts TV. They won the most recent contract to host Nottinghamshire's Local Democracy Reporters. When the station advertised for the posts, they emphasised not just their city centre location but also the working environment; a workstation, a phone, excellent IT services, their own on-site café. The attraction of being able to work in a newsroom and get a coffee with colleagues, things we once could take for granted, were part of the package that enticed the three successful candidates. Journalists are social creatures and like to work in newsrooms.

The implications for journalism education are similarly contradictory and complex. No matter what we tell our students about replicating industry practice, that professional practice will be increasingly hybrid, they want to work together face to face and in-person. Having no newsrooms could make journalism programmes a less popular study option, and we know the student choice of institution is often at least partly influenced by the facilities provided as part of their course.

But in accepting that many future journalists will have to be more agile, remote and mobile, workers, we are better able to prepare students for that future. Rather than fetishizing the facilities we may be able to focus more on the journalism praxis; the editorial processes, ethical decision-making, the theoretical analysis of journalism. We could increase the emphasis on developing the students' confidence, resilience, their self-motivation, prepare them to be flexible and innovative in their working, to be more creative practitioners and entrepreneurial freelancers, to develop and nurture good contacts and engagement with the community/ies they serve.

Newsrooms - ultimate, informal training

Newsrooms are the ultimate, informal, training environment. Those of us who remember our early careers in journalism will remember how we learned from the experienced hacks we worked alongside. The newsroom culture could be brutal, it could be sexist, but you knew there were seasoned journalism on hand from whom you could learn, who would mentor you. Student journalists learn constantly from those around them. It's one of the reasons why we work so hard to place our students in their newsrooms. They're fabulous for building your network, generating and developing your ideas, and learning your trade.

As those local newsrooms disappear, we know placements can continue remotely and we know there will be other opportunities elsewhere, but there will be fewer of them. If we want our students to work alongside professional journalists, and newsrooms are disappearing, then we should be inviting those professional journalists to come and work in our newsrooms alongside our students. We should develop the nature of our collaboration with industry partners as their working environment changes.

11   Personal communication with Andrew David, Siren Radio's Managing Editor, September 2021.
12   See https://www.ibc.org/trends/how-we-built-it-boom-radios-home-broadcasting-setup/7326.article
13   See Blackhurst, C (2021) https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/death-of-newsroom-means-end-of-journalism/

In 2014 I took a research trip to the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University, in the US. News organisations base themselves within the School, including Arizona PBS and the Society of American Business Editors and Writers. Whilst most UK journalism education providers do not have the same resources as the Cronkite School, the advantages of integrating the professional with the educational environment could be explored. At least one university has already welcomed BBC local radio onto their campus and more will follow. But whilst some of the groundwork may have been done already, the pre-pandemic financial pressures along with the additional strains faced over the last 18 months have accelerated thinking and this seems to be the time to look at these collaborations and consider them as part of our reality in journalism education in the UK. Although the shrinking and disappearing newsrooms are a challenge we may, by offering our support to professional journalists and news organisations, provide an enhanced learning experience for our students.

The global pandemic has forced the speed and direction of change, and we are already finding that large newsrooms, and associated studio complexes where relevant, do not fulfil the same functions they once did.

Developments in technology have meant that an entire news operation, in terms of newsgathering and news delivery for both broadcast and non-broadcast organisations, can work remotely with fewer in-situ facilities needed.

With more journalists working from home or on the road, rather than being based in a newsroom, we all are considering the challenges and exploring the opportunities. We want to mirror current professional practice so we can produce ready-made practitioners, but also anticipate the unpredictable future of the news industries and prepare our students as best we can for that uncertain future. Where there is room, if we are able to welcome professional journalists into our facilities and offer them a space to work, we can do so in exchange for some level of formal or informal mentoring. In this way we can offer students the opportunity to work alongside professional journalists on a regular basis and together with our industry partners strengthen the sustainability of local news.

Books

The books 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 or promoted, please contact Tor on tor.clark@leicester.ac.uk or ajejournal@gmail.com

Fake news, sport and literary genius - read all about it!

Welcome to the latest Journalism education reviews section, which features and eclectic but useful mix of new texts which we think will be of interest to Journalism students and their tutor.

Professor Richard Lance Keeble of Lincoln University is a stalwart of the AJE and well known for his scholarship of our practice, of ethical journalism but also of George Orwell. He has two relatively recent books out distilling much of his scholarship on Orwell. These are reviewed by another eminent Orwell scholar, Professor Robert Colls of De Montfort University and formerly of the University of Leicester, who finds much to admire in Keeble's work while also debating several of its contentions. A great read for scholars of Orwell, and journalism generally.

Professor Jonathan Baker, formerly of BBC News and the University of Essex, has produced a worthy follow-up to 2007's *NCTJ Essential Reporting*, which should find its way to the top of every practical Journalism course's reading list, according to its reviewer.

Sport is an essential part of any Journalism programme, so a useful new text by Tom Bradshaw and Daragh Minogue is praised by Joseph Andrew Smith of the University of Leicester.

And finally – keeping up the Lincoln and Leicester links in this reviews section – Professor Brian Winston of Lincoln University and his son Matthew Winston of the University of Leicester have collaborated successfully on a long-overdue book examining fake news. Here is a topic on every Journalism course's discussion schedule, but not often covered at length in one place. Professor Chris Frost of Liverpool John Moores University recommends it to Journalism students and staff.

So you don't necessarily have to have a connection with a UK university beginning with L to appear in the Journalism Education reviews section, but on this occasion it seems to have been an unintended prerequisite.

If I was a tabloid sub-editor I might even suggest this has been one L of a reviews section. Happy reading.

As always, if you are producing a book AJE members and their students will find interesting and useful let us know. We are also always very keen to find reviewers for new Journalism books, so please do let us know by emailing tor.clark@leicester.ac.uk

The Roots of Fake News: Objecting to Objective Journalism by Brian Winston and Matthew Winston

Review by Professor Chris Frost, Liverpool John Moores University

If controversy in journalism is what you are looking for then a book that discusses objectivity in journalism is probably the best place to find it.

Journalism has long been attacked for a variety of sins: gossip-mongering, intruding into people's lives simply to make a profit, distorting the facts and scapegoating whichever celebrity has fallen out of fashion. Many of these attacks are justified but some are not and no-one would claim journalism and journalists are without sin.

But the rise of the internet and with it the explosion of fake news that has flourished there, has given back-bedroom keyboard warriors free rein to peddle whatever froth or nonsense they wish. Of course many of these new 'citizen' journalists are no worse (although rarely much better) than their professional competitors. Free speech and a free media allows them as much right to put their view of the world in front of the public as anyone else and, as father-and-son academic authors Brian, professor of journalism at Lincoln, and Matthew Winston, of the University of Leicester, show, they do it for precisely the same reason as the traditional press barons, editors and journalists – to make money, to influence people, to inform, or to simply express their own views, prejudices and hatreds.

The Roots of Fake News digs deep into the past to explain that despite our horror at the range and depth of today's internet-bound fake news, it is doing little that has not been done before. The book contrasts, for instance, the medieval blood libel accusations that did so much to stoke anti-Jewish sentiments down the years with the modern-day Pizzagate conspiracy theory that helped some Trump supporters at least confirm their antipathy to Hilary Clinton.

This intelligent book goes beyond the common, but unhelpful discussions about the meaning of fake news and how to deal with it that range from the stricter regulation beloved of one-party states to having some kind of 'truth' verification system. The Winstons' main thesis is journalism itself is to blame and its own attempts to clean up its act at the start of the last century were themselves the roots of the problem.

The Winstons identify the belief by journalists of the pursuit of objectivity as a central tenet of news journalism to be the cause of the fall into fake news. By claiming to be in pursuit not just of truth, but objective truth, when journalism is usually clearly anything but, we have allowed others to claim similar attributes when they either similarly fail or don't really make the attempt at all.

Not only is objectivity impossible to achieve, something most 21st century journalists and journalism teachers accept, even if grudgingly, it is not even desirable, the authors claim.

To show the problem is one of perception by journalist themselves, the Winstons start with another favourite claim that journalism is a profession. That is not the same as saying journalists behave professionally – getting the job done, being reliable and so on. The Winstons use Jay Rosen writing in his 1999 *What Are Journalists For* to identify how many journalists think of themselves as professionals, comparing them with scientists and lawyers. "But journalism is like most honoured professions in other ways… If a professional is one who hears a calling in the opportunity for a career, then most journalists consider themselves professionals."

But do journalists think of themselves as professionals? The Winstons examine scientists, lawyers and philosophers to compare their attempts to separate fact from guesswork, fiction and untruth and finds, unsurprisingly, that journalists are not able to compare their efforts at information gathering with the practices of trained, regulated and peer-reviewed professionals. Journalism is a trade that has a number of motivations of which truth-seeking is an often overlooked, but not perhaps unwanted, part.

For the Winstons, journalism is not and never should be considered objective. "The only way to cut off the head of the [fake news] dragon," they say, "is to move society's understanding on news past the myth of objectivity to the point where pointing at an item of news coverage and saying 'this is an example of unbiased journalism' is generally, and correctly, understood to be ridiculous." (p201)

The authors assert that the 200-year-old ideology of partisan, subjective journalism makes a lot more sense than the 'objective' journalism that is claimed to have replaced it.

This robust and trenchant argument for the reality of journalism is an intelligent examination of the methods used by true professions to be able to replicate, confirm, challenge or cross examine their findings or witnesses. It produces a clear and convincing argument for a reality that many have come to pass over the past 30 years but it is presented in a way that is happy to hold its head up high and support subjective journalism for what it is – the reality of all that is ever best about seeking the truth through journalism.

To quote a meme doing the rounds on Twitter: "Patient: Doctor, when will this pandemic end. Doctor: I don't know, I'm not a journalist."

The Roots of Fake News: Objecting to Objective Journalism by Brian Winston and Matthew Winston, published by Routledge, 2021, pp211 £34.99, ISBN: 978-0-367-14546-0

Journalism Beyond Orwell: A Collection of Essays by Richard Lance Keeble

George Orwell, the Secret State and the Making of Nineteen Eighty-Four by Richard Lance Keeble

Review by Professor Robert Colls, De Montfort University, Leicester

Richard Keeble is Professor of Journalism at Lincoln University and a regular contributor to George Orwell Studies. From 2013 to 2020 he was chairman of the Orwell Society. In these two books, each a collection of previously published pieces, he comes to praise the great man but also, bit by bit and right up to the chin, bury him.

Journalism Beyond Orwell finds its theme in what Keeble calls 'activist' journalism, by which he means being political in the way that he is political. Reporting from a right-wing, or a conservative, or a politically-resistant point of view, one gets the feeling, would not be acceptable to the professor. Pacificism, socialism, anti-racism, 'immediacy, clarity, [and a] sense of urgency', on the other hand, are what he wants from his hacks and although for the most part Keeble himself writes in a mild academicspeak (eg 'Orwell and the silencing role of the dominant consensus'), to be fair, he is also capable of writing in his own words with the clarity he commends.

The problem is he has such a pinched sense of what constitutes activist journalism, that when he does come across a great journalist in action, he can't see what they are because he is too busy lamenting what they are not. Thus, he takes Lynn Barber to task for not asking the former government minister and diarist Alan Clark about his 'politics' even though everybody knew what they were (bastardised Tory), and even though she was too busy skewering Clark as a 'little boy passing for grown up' to ask about such paltry things as his opinions. When you are shown a schoolboy standing in government ministers' gumboots, what more needs to be said? Or, indeed, when The Beverly Sisters come sashaying down the stairs on their way to be interviewed in the bar singing 'How Much Is That Doggie in the Window?' what more could you possibly want to be said? Barber writes as she pleases and you take what you get. 'Peck. Peck. Peck. It was like being nibbled to death by gerbils'.

Now be honest. Who would you rather be locked in room 101 with? Roy Greenslade droning about newspapers as 'playthings of MI5' (a quote Keeble repeats three times), or the Demon Barber being nibbled to death by three senior pop singers?

Richard Keeble has spent his academic career admiring a man who felt compelled to write against imperialism and capitalism and militarism – and this is what he thinks makes a good journalist. The notion that his students might start out writing independently about what is in front of their noses, and work from there, never quite comes out.

The problem is compounded in *Orwell and the Secret State*. Given his call for young activist-journalists to get up and fight the secret state, Keeble makes the case that our hero worked for it.

In March 1949 Orwell gave British Intelligence a list of 38 names of writers whom he believed could not be trusted to defend the reputation and interests of the United Kingdom. He called these people 'crypto-communists, fellow-travellers or [those] inclined that way'. In July 2003, following disclosures by *The Guardian*, the list was released to the public, and it would be fair to say news that George was a snitch did not go down well on the Left. Worse, Keeble tells us this was not a one-off but is 'best seen as consistent with those of a man already caught up for a number of years with intelligence'.

Keeble's evidence for this, such as it is, rests first on Orwell's friendship with David Astor and Malcolm Muggeridge, two well-connected men about town who, during the war and maybe after it, worked for MI5 and MI6, and second on Orwell's acquaintance with a clutch of people known to have secret service functions. They include Robert Conquest and Celia Kirwan (IRD), AJ Ayer (SIS), Harold Acton (SHAEF), and Ernest Hemingway (OSS). While working in Paris early in 1945 for Astor's *Observer*, it appears Orwell might have attended a conference of Allied intelligence and European resistance groups. Hemingway remembered Orwell visiting him in his Paris hotel room at this time and telling him that he feared for his life.

What can we make of the charges? The list is well documented. Orwell took the names from another older, longer list as a favour to Celia Kirwan. He did not spend time compiling it or touting it. She asked him to do it and he obliged. In 1942 he had compiled a list of those who he thought would go over to Hitler if the Nazis invaded and there were plenty other lists as well – old songs, best books, getting the shopping. Whatever other motives he had for making the 1949 list was consistent with his implacable hostility to Soviet subversion and shows not only that he supported Attlee's Labour government (which was looking for support) but that he meant it.

As for friends and acquaintances, all we can say is that Keeble's evidence is speculative and circumstantial. Orwell was a private man capable of keeping secrets. He may, in 1945, have done more than report for *The Observer*. This was a time of intense intelligence activity on all sides, especially in Paris, and intellectuals were being canvassed as advisors and analysts. It's pretty clear, for instance, that Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone De Beauvoir, Arthur Koestler (Kirwan's brother-in-law), Richard Gibson, Richard Wright, Julia Kristeva and others were in the mix, and it's not impossible that Orwell was too.

However, although some of his very brusque and off-hand information was based on personal acquaintance, nearly all of it was freely available in the public domain. JB Priestley, for instance, often seen as a complete innocent in such matters, made no secret of his high regard for the Russian people and the Soviet Union. He wrote in praise of its arts and letters when it had been murdering its artists and writers for years. Orwell, Astor, Muggeridge, Camus, Koestler, Conquest and Ayer made no secret of their anti-Communism. If Hitler was the enemy, they never accepted the official line that Stalin was the friend, although plenty did and some betrayed their country to prove it.

If Orwell was a spook, he was more spooked against than spooky. Special Branch had taken an active interest in him since his first trip to Paris in 1929. Code name CX/12650/1988/ 8 Captain Miller of Scotland Yard reported how 'he spends his time reading various newspapers'. Right up to his death in 1950, Orwell was watched by Special Branch and others – in Uxbridge and in Hayes, in Hampstead and in Wigan, in Barcelona and Huesca where he was spied on by both sides, in his time at the BBC and working for *Tribune* newspaper during the war, and after it when he was seriously ill in Scotland and then in Gloucestershire. It was from a sanitorium bed that he handed Celia the list. It's not impossible that at that very moment, MI6 were spying on themselves spying on him.

Chapter 3 is the typescript of an interview by the author with David Astor (very brisk). Chapter 7 balances charges of misogyny with some mention of some very strong women who were his friends (and lovers). Chapter 8 makes a nice case for his sense of humour (very droll). Chapter 11 claims to find 'insights' in Alex Woloch's book *Or Orwell* (but forgets to say what they are). Orwell's friend was Brenda Salkeld not Salkend.

Mixed bag, but budding journos can't go far wrong in their war on cliché if they keep Orwell in their hard drive. And many will have Richard Lance Keeble to thank for first introductions.

Robert Colls is author of George Orwell. English Rebel (Oxford University Press 2013)

Journalism Beyond Orwell: A Collection of Essays by Richard Lance Keeble published by Routledge, 2020, pp206, ISBN 9780367333553 *£34.99*

George Orwell, the Secret State and the Making of Nineteen Eighty-Four by Richard Lance Keeble, published by Abramis, 2020, pp182 ISBN 9781845497613 £14.95

Sports Journalism: The State of Play by Tom Bradshaw and Daragh Minogue

Review by Joseph Andrew Smith, University of Leicester

Tom Bradshaw and Daragh Minogue's wide-ranging *Sports Journalism: The State of Play* **(2020) is an excellent addition to the journalism education canon.**

A prescient contribution, it is not so much a technical manual instructing readers how to write a match report or construct a news story, but rather offers a number of excellent analytical chapters focussing on the likes of nationalism and politics, the history of sports journalism, the relationship one must nurture with sports communications personnel, public relations staff and media management – particularly important in the contemporary sports media landscape – media law, diversity (race and representation, sports reporting and gender, and disability representation) and an intriguing final chapter touching on the future of sports journalism: the 'Big Data' revolution.

The authors are accessible in voice and present to the reader experiences from a range of current sports media professionals, all of whom are operating in high-profile roles throughout the industry and who offer invaluable advice, otherwise unobtainable to the student. Scattered here and there within topic discussions are case studies where working professionals are quoted at length – these are particularly insightful – with the whole experience offering a qualitative 'feel' for the industry which students of the discipline will find very helpful.

The authors do well to emphasise the relentlessness of working in the contemporary sports media. To be a sports journalist is certainly no longer 'professional loafing', as cricket analyst Simon Hughes's tongue-in-cheek summation of the profession from 2006 proffered. Bradshaw and Minogue use Hughes's comment as a base from which to jump into a discussion of the rise of the digital in sports journalism during the book's first chapter – the mid-2000s marking the transitionary period between analogue and digital forms of the profession.

Anecdotally, I remember, when studying for a degree in sports journalism in 2010, being told by my tutor – a national newspaper journalist and prominent voice in his sport – that being a sports journalist involved 'lots of downtime, mixed with periods of great intensity'. A journalist whose prominent years were in the 1990s, he was handing down wisdom right on the cusp of the social media revolution in sports journalism, which I experienced professionally almost immediately, and found to be precisely the opposite to the advice he gave. Bradshaw and Minogue's observation that the 'rhythm of sports journalists' working life can be relentless in the digital era – with phones buzzing with notifications, and with social media feeds updating all the time, it can be hard to switch off' (2020: 21) will be particularly relatable to current professionals. It is important that the challenges which today come along with what is otherwise such an attractive career are clearly outlined for budding professionals.

Of course, the culture industry comprises the interweaving, interplaying tripartite of text, producer and audience. Existing scholarship focuses heavily on the former two terms – the technicalities of writing like a journalist and the journalist's position as a textual producer. Bradshaw and Minogue place more emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of the journalist – which, to a degree, does stand their work apart – however it also contributes to the continued absence of the role of the audience in journalism education. This is perhaps a little harsh as a criticism – no work can cover *everything* – however the impact of fannish productivity on the professional realm is ever-increasing (as Bradshaw and Minogue note themselves). Content creators really ought to have a good idea about the motivations of the audience for whom their work is being catered, why outlets may cover the same story from different angles, and appreciate the place of fan-created outlets like AFTV (formerly ArsenalFan TV), which earlier in the year was, according to *Forbes*,

'on the brink of hitting a billion overall views, which is about twice as many as Arsenal's official club account', in the wider mediascape.

This should not, however, take away from an impressive work, which will help any student reading the book to gain a deeper appreciation of the responsibilities of the sports reporter. Sports journalism, it is fair to suggest, is a topic which is often underestimated by its students; there is more to the profession than simply describing and relaying to the reader sporting action from the pitch. The ability to appreciate, for example, that societal inequalities of various kinds are often reflected in the sports object is a feature of the work of the profession's very best (see the writing of Jonathan Liew, The *Guardian's* multi-award winning, and current SJA Awards Sports Writer of the Year). The greatest strength of Bradshaw and Minogue's work is to highlight this.

Sports Journalism: The State of Play (2020) by Tom Bradshaw and Daragh Minogue, published by Routledge, 2020, pp202 ISBN 9781138583528 £32.99

Essential Journalism: The NCTJ Guide for Trainee Journalists by Jonathan Baker

Review by Tor Clark, University of Leicester

Every old hack always remembers who taught them their key journalism skills, either on the job or on their pre-entry or block release courses. For many, especially from the north-east, that was Jon Smith at Darlington College.

As an editor, I used to enjoy driving up to Darlington to visit my trainees on his course and catch up with him. His wisdom and judgement of the trainee's capabilities were both always impressive and his company delightful.

In 2007 Smith distilled his collected wisdom about the reporter's craft into an NCTJ-backed text *Essential Reporting*, which myself and I suspect all other university Journalism course leaders immediately put at the top of our reporting modules' reading lists.

Now the NCTJ has seen fit to update Smith's work and commissioned Jonathan Baker, founding Professor of Journalism at the University of Essex after a distinguished career in national journalism, particularly at the BBC, to write a successor text for our times.

And happily Baker's *Essential Journalism: The NCTJ Guide for Trainee Journalists* (Routledge, 2021) pays full tribute to the predecessor Smith text from the outset, while noting how much journalism has changed in the 14 years since its original publication.

Baker has produced a worthy successor, covering not only the basics Smith had highlighted but also significantly widening the scope, which to some extent is acknowledged in the use of the word 'journalism' rather than 'reporting' in the title, a useful nudge that being a journalists now involves so much more than taking an accurate shorthand note and writing up a punchy story to a set deadline.

This is a weighty tome, at 451 pages, even in paperback format, but makes an attempt to really cover the whole context of being a journalist that the eager trainee would need to know.

The first part sets the scene and positions the journalist in a changing landscape of news and the ethics around it, which has never been more important or prominent.

The second section is, pleasingly, all about 'stories', which Sky News' Alex Crawford in his preface, remembers the legendary trainer Walter Greenwood demanding of his charges at the TRN training centre in Newcastle. Baker focuses on finding stories as well as just telling them – a vital journalistic skills in an era of so much recycled digital content.

Baker then takes the trainees through the various platforms they will be expected to master very quickly, another development since 2007, when a print reporter could happily ignore the section on broadcast skills. Today's trainee must have skills to report in every medium and Baker offer a useful introduction to all.

Finally, Baker picks out specialist beats to describe, including the feature writer, court reporter and politi-

cal reporter. It is excellent to see covering politics being featured here alongside the threatened but very specialist craft of the court reporter.

This book must have been an immense undertaking for Baker, filled as it is with examples and helpful comments from seasoned and often well-known journalists. It is also divided up into exceptionally well-organised sections, allowing the reader to get to exactly the guidance they need.

This book went straight to the top of my Journalism programme's reading list because it offers everything the modern aspiring journalist needs – apart from sport – between one set of covers. My only criticism – and this is beyond Baker's control – was that the institutional ebook version was very expensive at almost £500, meaning we were forced to order hard copies for our university library instead, which rather defeats the object of a book which has to focus so much on the digital world, especially in these times of increased digital access to materials.

So all credit to Jonathan Baker for this immense effort of scholarship and industry knowledge, which I hope will be very well used by a new generation of trainee journalists.

In his acknowledgements, Baker says of Jon Smith: "…so much of Smith's wisdom, common sense and explanations of the basics of good, accurate, ethical journalism remain highly relevant and applicable today." This book is a worthy, updated successor.

Essential Journalism: The NCTJ Guide for Trainee Journalists by Jonathan Baker, published by Routledge, 2021, pp451, ISBN 9780367645892 £32.99 (PB) £29.69 (ebook).

Style guide

Please provide a title and an abstract and author details together with a 50-70 word biography for each author on a separate sheet to allow for anonymization. This sheet will be separated from the article before being sent to referees so please put the title only at the start of the article.

- Sub-heads should be in bold
- Second order sub-heads should be in bold italic
- Please use single quotation marks (double quotation marks for a quote within a quote)
- Indent long quotes of two lines or more.
- Please do not use the enter button to insert space between paragraphs or headings.
- Use percent not % as in '12 percent' not '12%'.
- All illustrations, tables and figures should be sent separately as attached JPGs. Clearly label approximately where they should be placed with "put fig 1 here", "Put table 1" etc.

Citations and bibliographic references should be in Harvard style.

Part I: Citations

Place references in your work in the following order: Name, Date: page number(s)

For example,

1. Directly quoting an author

It is sometimes forgotten that 'English is one of the most flexible and expressive languages in the world' (Hicks, 1993, p.1)

He goes on to say, 'In brief, the reigning media consensus has been characterised either as overly liberal or leftist or as conservative, depending on the view of the critic' (McQuail, 1992, pp.255-6).

2. Indirectly quoting an author (where you sum up what is being stated in your own words). This must be grammatically correct, as well as accurate.

E.g.: Hargreaves (2003, p.47) believes that Henry Hetherington's populist journalistic techniques, employed by him in the 1830s, were the basis of tabloid journalism.

3. Referring broadly to ideas you have read in a publication (not to a specific point/quote). You don't need to cite page number in this case. E.g.: Franklin (1997) has highlighted the effects and reasons for so-called dumbing down in the media.

4. If the same person is referred to immediately after a previous citation, you can use ibid.

5. If there are more than two authors, you can use et al.

Part II: Bibliographic References

A list of Bibliographic References is required at the end. Please provide the FULL name of the author (including first name) and provide references in alphabetical order of surname. With an author who has written a number of books and articles that have been cited, list them all separately, with the most recent first (see Manning).

Examples of how to present Bibliographic references for Journalism Education are given below. **Please include forenames, not just initials.**

Bibliographic references

Franklin, Bob (2003) 'A Good Day to Bury Bad News?': Journalists, Sources and the Packaging of Politics in Simon Cottle (Ed.), News, Public Relations Power, London: Sage pp. 45-61

Hall, Stuart, Critcher, Chas, Jefferson Tony, Clarke John, and Roberts, Brian (1978) Policing the Crisis. Mugging, the State and Law and Order. London: Macmillan

Harcup, Tony (2004) in Susan Pape and Sue Featherstone (2006) Feature Writing, London: Sage.

The next edition of
Journalism Education

The next edition of *Journalism Education* **is planned for Christmas and will be a guest edition edited by Gita Bamezi and Raties Altaf. They are still able to take paper submissions, so see https://ajeuk.org/call-for-papers-special-issue-of-journalism-education-theme-science-journalism-in-the-world-education-and-practice/ for details. But please hurry, the deadline closes very soon!**

The journal editors are always happy to see new papers submitted either for full referee or as a shorter un-refereed Comment and Criticism essays. Experienced researchers are very welcome to submit papers about journalism education or about journalism as it affects students or lecturers. However, *Journalism Education* was started by the AJE with less experienced researchers in mind and was structured to give members new to research a place to publish, where their lack of experience would not be held against them. The editioral policy is to give a helping hand to new academic authors who may be highly experienced writers, but less experienced in academic research. We want to publish the best papers and cutting edge research about journalism education but we believe we have to work closely with less experienced academics to help them get their paper into a publishable form. In order to facilitate that, please don't be afraid to contact the editors to discuss ideas and proposals. We will be happy to advise over what would work, and how to go about it and to make suggestions for improvements in paper proposals. Of course even experienced researchers find such discussions useful! You can get in touch at AJEjournal@gmail.com.

Academic papers to be submitted to referees

Papers should be between 6,000 and 8,000 words and involve some aspect of journalism education, teaching, research or pedagogy. The pandemic obliged much innovative teaching and new study methods, many of which add to students' experience and are more than a simple necessity during periods of lockdown. These experiences deserve a wider audience. We also welcome papers that have followed your favoured area of research.

Papers should be produced to the style on the previous page. Please read this style carefully to avoid leaving the editors with annoying tasks such as removing double spacing or tracking down reference forenames that become very irksome when dealing with a number of papers!

Illustrations whether pictures, tables or figures should be sent on a separate sheet either in Word or as JPGs with their position in the article clearly marked. And please, a final plea from a weary editor, check those references!

Essays, comment pieces or criticisms of published work

Journalism Education welcomes essays commenting on, criticising or describing innovative teaching practice, research methods, or scholarly debate on issues of journalism that crop up in your teaching. Debate and discussion is a key method of advancing good practice and is particularly important for an academic field that often welcomes experienced practitioners to become academic practitioners in mid career. Essays can be of any length from 1,000 words upwards. Please follow the style advice.

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Submission deadline for the next issue is November 19, 2021.

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