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# Journalism Education

**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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# Articles

All papers in the Articles section are peer reviewed and discuss the latest research in journalism and journalism education. These are intended to inform, educate and spark debate and discussion. Please join in this debate by going to [www.journalism-education.org](http://www.journalism-education.org) to have your say and find out what others think.

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## Community as object or action? Reconceptualising the purpose and practices of local media and journalism

By David Baines, Newcastle University and Rachel Matthews, University of Coventry

### Abstract

Corporately-owned local media and journalism are in crisis and solutions are being sought to maintain delivery of trusted local news and information to sustain local democracy. This paper demonstrates that the culture, values and practices of the field have been informed – even determined – by that ownership model and that emergent and established independent local media are questioning and renegotiating journalistic practices and values. But they are hindered by the lack of a conceptual scaffolding which makes sense of the project. This paper argues that the conceptualisation of ‘community’ as object, geographically-located groups sharing symbolic, discursive or kinship ties, has informed the habitus of the field. Furthermore, the focus on journalism’s role in democratic processes has concealed value inherent in wider public benefits which local media facilitate. The paper applies an alternative conceptual lens of

'community' as action, process, practice (Walkerdine and Studdert 2012) to develop a theoretical paradigm which can better inform and explain the transformations local media and journalism are undergoing. The paper tests the efficacy of this reconceptualization by applying it to the analysis of five case studies of successful, innovative, local media organisations undertaken between 2015 and 2020.

**Key words:** community, local media, newspapers, micro-sociality, corporate local media

## Death, community, local media and journalism

**A shopkeeper in a small town in North-East England recounted a moment of acute embarrassment. He'd asked a customer how her husband was, and she responded: 'My husband died last May.'**

He was speaking during a research event on the use of local media and, picking up the thread, another participant said: 'Last Wednesday, I saw a hearse driving down the High Street and I am yet to find out who it is. I can't believe I don't know.' A regional daily newspaper and two local weeklies, all owned by national corporate chains, served the town. But the people at the event had noticed that those papers were carrying far fewer BMDs: birth, marriage and death notices. At the beginning of the conversation everyone had been adamant that in their community of around 2,000 people, word-of-mouth kept everyone up to date with such essential local news. Now there was discomfort round the table. That was in 2010.

More than a decade later, in Hartlepool, a post-industrial town also in North East England, funeral directors had noticed attendance at funerals declining significantly. They attributed this to the steep £150 charge to put a brief announcement in the long-established local evening newspaper the *Hartlepool Mail*<sup>1</sup>. The paper's town centre office had closed, so publishing such a notice also involved telephoning a call centre in the south of England. And circulation had fallen, so death notices no longer reached as many readers as they had done. News of a death now spread more slowly. The founders of a new free newspaper, *Hartlepool Life*, approached all the local funeral directors in advance of its launch.

*'We put them (death notices) in free for a year [...] So they saw immediately the number of people who turned up at funerals. They knew it was working. [...] Then after a year we started to charge them, but even now I think it is £55 plus VAT [...] It has been quiet the last week or two but we are still averaging about £1,000 to £1,200 a week.'* (Hartlepool Life co-proprietor Dirk Van Der Werf: personal interview 2020)

BMDs – Births, Marriages and Deaths - personal, paid-for announcements of an individual's entry into and exit from a community, and major milestones and rites of passage in their lives, are seldom regarded as editorial content – although journalists monitor them for 'newsworthy' information such as the passing of a notable figure. But from the perspective of the wider community, they convey news which relates critically to a sense of belonging, of being part of a community. And the knowledge it affords enables people to take part in the affairs of that community – by attending the funeral, by expressing their sympathy to grieving friends, neighbours, acquaintances.

The local newspaper office on the High Street also plays a part in the lives of communities. As local journalists, the authors experienced the host of tips, issues and enquiries along with the small ads, bills to pay, notices to place which people brought to the front desk of a building open to all. Many of these have closed and these points of personal and public contact and engagement with local media and journalism has been lost, the publications have become invisible in the shared public space and in the consciousness of the local community.

The significance of these observations and reported encounters is that they point to aspects of local and community media and to the range of public benefits that they have a capacity to deliver that reach beyond the journalistic outputs and artefacts. Local media have played multiple roles in building social networks and maintaining connectivity, generating and reinforcing representations of place, community and a sense of belonging. They have created communicative spaces of civic, social and cultural engagement and, by hosting advertising, generated economic activity in a locality – and the social interactions

that are concomitant with much of that activity (Baines 2014, 340). Yet that range of benefits has been largely ignored by researchers, globally and locally, who have tended to focus on the quality and accessibility of the outputs of local journalism: criteria of ‘quality’ being primarily determined by its depth of engagement with local democratic processes.

We are not minimising the importance of local journalism’s fourth-estate or watchdog role. In the UK, as elsewhere, the notion of ‘serving the community’ continues to give value to those who work as journalists in the legacy local newspaper, a position which is still articulated by the industry<sup>2</sup>. And that service is characterised by journalists, by researchers and by policy-makers as the provision of trusted, reliable and accessible news and information.

The crisis in the industry, the decline in local newspaper titles, circulation, revenue and staff, has focused attention on what happens when that trusted local journalism disappears from localities. The encroachment on communities of news deserts (Abernathy 2020) has led researchers to explore what public benefits and services to communities are lost when local news titles closed and they have established correlations between local newspaper circulations, reporting of local government, and voter turnout at elections (Hayes and Lawless 2015; Kübler and Goodman 2018; Rubado and Jennings 2019; Lavender et al 2020). These are factors that can be quantitatively determined and inferences as to causality have been drawn from those correlations and the loss of journalism and information relating to political and civic affairs has been identified as a threat to democratic processes (Howells 2015; Nielsen 2015; Pickard, 2020; Ramsay et al 2017; Abernathy 2020).

It is this threat that has informed much of the media policy debate (for example, Cairncross, 2019). To date, the British Government’s principal policy response to the decline in local newspaper titles, circulation and staff has been to compel the publicly-funded BBC to spend some £8m annually on employing 165 ‘local democracy reporters’ embedded in commercial – predominantly corporate-owned - local newspaper offices to deliver reports on the activities of municipal governments (Clark, 2021).

But the focus of research and policy development on democratic deficits and local news fails to capture the more nuanced, complex, roles of local media and journalism referred to above: that of creating ‘communicative spaces of civic, social and cultural engagement’ ...

The roles local and community media play in supporting and sustaining local communities and building a sense of belonging has attracted comparatively little attention<sup>3</sup>. We argue that people are less likely to be invested in local politics if they are not already invested in their local communities at the level of lived experience.

However, if we are to explore the capacity for local and community media to support and sustain local communities, we need to pay more attention to what we mean by ‘community’. This has tended to be a rather woolly, ill-defined, concept, a ‘feel-good’ term (Rose, 1999), often taken for granted. But it is important because understandings and theorisations of community inform and determine policy, regulation and the provision of public services at national, regional and local levels. Valerie Walkerdine and David Studdert point to two critical theoretical traditions:

*“One of the most important distinctions made is between community as an object and community as action, activity, process. The former is most obvious in sociological work, especially in social capital and communitarianism, whereas community as activity and process is much more common within anthropology and social psychology.” (2012, 2)*

We argue in this paper that the sociological tradition - conceptions of community as object, as an identifiable group, an audience - has critically informed the business model of local media. Taken-for-granted, common-sense, conceptualisations of communities as groups (objects), both allow and account for the commodification of those local audience-communities and their sale to advertisers: “that is the crucial media transaction,” (Tebbutt 2006: 857-858 See also Smythe, 1977 and Caraway, 2011 ). As we shall show, that business model, that conceptualisation of community as object, has in turn informed – in large part determined - the practices and values of local journalists and local journalism. Yet that business model is under stress as advertising migrates to digital platforms controlled by global corporations and long-established audiences fragment. If that model has informed the values and practices of journalism, the solution to the crisis in local journalism is not simply a matter of finding new forms of funding to enable the journalism that developed under the traditional model to endure. The taken-for-granted, seemingly self-evident understandings, the habitus of local journalism, need to be questioned. And local journalists are questioning them. In a recent conversation with one of the authors of this paper, the editor of a large family-owned UK regional newspaper said:



*“We are looking at the long-term sustainability of our journalism and so we are not chasing clicks. We are looking to build subscriptions. But what is a story that will persuade someone to take out a subscription? We are still feeling our way.”*

Clicks are easy to count and quantify; indicative of the number of views that advertisers can expect to land on their product. But this editor was seeking to establish a relationship with the audience – something less easily measured and quantified. If local journalists are asking the audience, the community, to deliver sustainability for local media, rather than relying substantially on advertising revenue, then they need to rethink what benefit can they deliver that the community will consider worth sustaining. Is the primary role of the journalist to deliver ‘good stories’? What is their relationship with their communities? More than a decade ago, Jeff Jarvis suggested that:

*“A key skill of journalism today is learning how to recast the relationship with the public: not just broadcasting news but organising, supporting, curating, even educating people. Part of supporting community journalism is helping community members learn and this, too, is new: journalists have never been terribly generous with their skills (priesthoods never are).” (Jarvis, 2009a)*

Local journalists who are experimenting with subscription models and, more radically, membership models in which ownership of and authority over the direction, tone and content of the journalism is shared with the wider community, are starting to question values and practices that have been self-evident. But the weight of tradition can be hard to shift. That is why it is important to begin with the fundamentals – what do we mean by ‘community’.

In this paper we:

- a) interrogate the characterisation of local and community journalism as a ‘service to the community’;
- b) explore and contrast concepts of community-as-object and community-as-process in relation to the structures, values and practices of local and community media;
- c) apply the latter lens to a series of case studies of emergent or newly transformed enterprises to investigate whether this conceptualisation affords more effective ways to understand and inform the values and practices of local journalism and journalists. We ask whether this approach allows us to better identify public benefits in the facilitation by local and community media of community connectivity, sustainability and a sense of belonging, and whether they can in turn generate business models capable of sustaining local and community media.

Finally, we suggest further directions for research that explores local and community media and journalism from a more community-centric perspective.

## Local media and journalism – community-as-object

Historically, community has been conceived of sociologically in terms of groups of people occupying geographical locations and/or those who might share bonds of kinship, or symbolic and discursive ties. This scholarship is dominated by a systemic vision of community which positions it as something which can admit those people who ascribe to its normative boundaries (see for instance Kasarda and Janowitz 1974). Community is objectified into something to which one can be ‘attached’ or ‘tied’ or ‘assimilated’ and strongly organised around a geographical location; Matthews notes that ‘in practice, the notion of locality is largely aligned to a constructed advertising market which developed in confluence with people living in a local area,’ (2017a, 6), and Aldridge highlights (2003, 492), referencing Anderson (1991 [1983]), that ‘creating an “imagined community” is seen as a market imperative’ by Britain’s local press. The priorities are illustrated by an exchange between a former manager from Gannet<sup>4</sup>, then the US owner of UK newspaper publisher Newsquest, and an editor of one of its titles at a group training session for senior staff:

*A corporate executive asked us, “If you are a Gannett publisher, what is your first priority?” ‘Serve the public; said one of the attendees. “Sounds noble, but no”, said the executive [...]. ‘Make money’, said another. “You’re on the right track, but not quite there”, said the executive. Then he told us the right answer: “Your first priority is to make more money”. (Engel 2009, 58-9).*

The editor who suggested the priority was to deliver a public service was mocked by the corporate executive, although many local journalists discursively construct their professional identities in such terms. The primary legal duty of directors of an incorporated company in jurisdictions such as the UK and USA is to act in the best interests of shareholders<sup>5</sup> and so, the primary motivation of a local paper's remote incorporated owners is to extract revenues from the community. Where ownership remains local, however, resources tend to be recirculated and reinvested within that community. A 2017 study of local newspaper ownership, noted that a family-owned title held its relationship with the community to be a key part of its operating strategy so it maintained four staff photographers as a visible presence to its readers, when corporate titles were relying on user-generated pictures (Matthews, 2017b). The owners in this case were not an incorporated company and not bound by a legal duty to maximise profits. Like the editor seeking subscriptions, referred to above, the organisation was prioritising sustainability over maximising profits – and to do that, it was prioritising the delivery of a public benefit – in order that the community would value that benefit and be willing to sustain the organisation delivering it.

The corporate ownership model, informed by the conceptualisation of community as (commodifiable) object, in turn informs journalism practices and editorial values. Weinhold's study of a corporately-owned small-town US newspaper noted:

*“[J]ournalists negotiated their values and internalized business demands to answer their employers' profit motives. Whether fresh out of school or seasoned veterans ... these journalists strive to do quality work ... The pressures of reporting while meeting newspapers' profit demands seem to intensify reporters' need to condense, and as a result omit, important and illuminating content, and citizens are the losers.” (Weinhold 2008, 484-485).*

To maximise returns, media companies minimise the costs of delivering their services by centralizing and amalgamating processes. More than 30 years ago, Franklin and Murphy noted how this 'mini-max' strategy meant the localism of the corporate local newspaper had become increasingly “illusory” (1991: 195). Since then, this consolidation has continued so that in 2020, in Britain, for example, JPI Media (formerly Johnston Press) restructured its Scottish titles and appointed a single editor for most of those publications<sup>6</sup>. Such changes mean local knowledge is lost, in-depth coverage of local issues is harder to deliver and reporters rely more on content subsidies such as press releases. Town centre offices are closed, advertising services moved to remote call-centres and back-office services such as book-keeping and administration are centralised remotely. The personal and professional networks embedding the local newspaper in the wider community are extinguished, although such networks helped to keep the journalists informed about matters of local concern and provided the wider community with multiple channels to pass on their concerns for possible investigation and publication. The local paper loses visibility in the local public sphere.

Effective commodification of community-as-object also entails the development of processes to categorise groups as either audiences or advertisers, each defined by the revenue stream they deliver. Corporately-owned chains of local newspapers value advertising from big brands that can be carried in multiple titles irrespective of locality. Yet local advertisers (businesses, professionals, social, cultural, charitable organisations) play critical roles in the communities of which they are also members. These processes of commodification entail further categorisation of 'audiences' by income and class into those more or less attractive to particular advertisers. In turn this informs the practices and news values of local journalists so that local newspapers have typically been found to provide poor representation of ethnic minorities and underprivileged communities (Aldridge, 2007, 27; Baines and Chambers 2012). More recently, corporate-owned local media have refined this process by delivering readers individually to advertisers, with news reports selected to reflect their tastes, interests, and prejudices. In May 2023, Reach plc, the owner of a chain of local, regional, and national newspapers and digital news sites across the UK announced that it was using:

*“A new robot-powered personalised news service involving regional titles ... My News Assistant, which uses artificial intelligence to create news feeds tailored to individual readers' interests. The [annual] report said: “Our fully owned ad tech software, Mantis, is enabling us to capture detailed contextual and behavioural data on around three-quarters of our UK audience ... And Mantis can identify the sentiment and emotion attached to the content they read. This is improving our ability to sell digital advertising directly, with data supporting an increasing number of campaign segments and more effective advertising for brands.” (Sharman, 2023, np)*

Local journalists have long constructed their professional identities as community champions – the people who are delivering the “glue holding communities together” (Robertson 2012: 96). But conceptualising communities as objects and the ever more fine-grained subdivision of communities into commodifiable units renders this view untenable and local journalism looks less like ‘community glue’ and more like a set of practices which give rise to division and fragmentation. When these processes of fragmentation reduce the unit of commodification to the individual, local media and journalism fatally compromise their ability to deliver a wider public benefit; serve a community; build social networks and maintain connectivity; generate and reinforce representations of place, community and a sense of belonging; create communicative spaces of civic, social and cultural engagement.

## Local media and journalism - community as practice

We have referred to an alternative and, we suggest, more rewarding conceptualisation of community developed by Studdert (2005) and Studdert and Walkerdine (2016): community as action, activity, process. Community is here conceptualised as a set of processes that can be studied in the real world; it is a relational activity, the act of communing, often through acts of micro-sociality which can be supported by, among other factors, both the products of local media (information, news reports, notices and advertisements etc) and the practices, activities and processes which deliver those products. This approach diverges from conceptions of community as object – a noun – to consider it a verb, embodied in a series of actions: community as something we do. It therefore enables the study of community as a series of linkages and commonalities.

Studdert (2005, 8) contends that research which draws on the sociological tradition of community-as-object, such as Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* (1995), while arising from rightful concerns over the reduction in social cohesion resulting from neo-liberal, global policies, is, nevertheless, at an impasse. By focusing on the individual, it denies the centrality of social existence to the concept of community and removes ideas of plurality and fluidity. This enables the instrumentalisation of community so that it is only judged for what it can deliver, such as Putnam’s emphasis on social capital. From this perspective, social ties are conceived of as a ‘fund’ on which individuals can draw. Instead of conceptualising community as object, Studdert draws on Arendt’s concept of sociality<sup>7</sup> to argue that:

*“... community is never a fixed state, rightly it should be considered a verb not a noun, and it is always the outcome of sociality as an action – be that action or speech – and it is therefore impossible to perform without the presence of other people.” (Studdert 2005: 2).*

Community is plural, active and constantly created – a living thing, and examples might include:

*“... the smile between two strangers who live in the same street, the groups chatting in the supermarket, or at work, at home, or at the school gate. It occurs when fans sing team songs at football matches. It happens in business meetings, at work, in corridors, .... Such sociality surrounds us constantly and eternally.” (Studdert and Walkerdine, 2016, 30-31)*

This concept of micro-sociality, community as a living thing, enables us to study the contribution of local media to community by investigating the extent to which engagement with local media – their people as well as their products – leads to action: the practicing of community. Community as practice, as action, offers a way to consider the roles local and community media play in the relational processes that constitute community – a co-operative beingness. This concept has been applied and tested in relation to the role of local history in community-building as part of the AHRC Connected Communities programme (Studdert and Walkerdine 2016), but not so far to the study of local media.

Our contention is that micro-sociality helps explain *how* local media can contribute to such a sense of belonging. Local newspapers provide opportunities for moments of sociality, of interaction, which generate a sustained sense of communal beingness. When people buy a printed paper, they interact with the shop assistant, or fellow customers; they may call into a local newspaper office to place an ad; tip off a reporter about a story; they may discuss an article with someone sharing a café table. Micro-sociality occurs when someone visits a venue, attends a meeting or event they have read about in the paper; or when an advert prompts them to buy something, apply for a job, volunteer with a charity. When someone places a BMD notice they are enacting community. When reporters, photographers, advertising and circulation staff, delivery drivers and newsagents engage with people, they are doing community. This list is far from an exhaustive list but demonstrates a local newspaper’s capacity to generate instances and processes of sociality.

As we have said, such benefits inherent in sustaining and facilitating processes and practices of community are concealed when we restrict the criteria by which we value local journalism to those of its products – texts – which provide informational or public interest content and when we narrowly define public interest in terms of political engagement. While this is a necessary element of the public benefit that local media and journalism serves, it is not sufficient to encompass the full breadth and depth of that benefit.

If we shift the focus to encompass not simply the products of journalism but the processes of journalism, we begin to see local media and journalism as a set of processes and practices as well as a series of products – articles. Jarvis (2009b) pointed to the value that lies in the processes as much as the products of journalism, in the communitarian, collaborative trajectory which journalism was developing, when he cited Robert Picard characterising journalism as “a body of practices by which information and knowledge is gathered, processed, and conveyed”. Sue Robinson later wrote of Jarvis positioning the article, the product of journalism, “in the center of a series of productive actions — from idea conception to post-publication modification. Neither ownership nor assigned agency could be attached to any of the moving parts.” (2013; 1). The gathering of news - interviewing, discussing, photographing, attending meetings, events, gatherings, maintaining networks of contacts. The distribution of news - collaborative processes of producing websites and liaising with printers and delivery drivers. The funding of news – selling advertisements, meeting readers and viewers and listeners and the shop-owners who sell the papers or host a point for free distribution. These all give rise to instances of connectivity and sociality which constitute doing community. From this perspective, intimate connections between processes of journalism and processes of community begin to become apparent. If we understand community as process, the local media’s function of serving the community becomes embedded within the processes of community. If we see community as object, then that service is framed as the transactional provision of a product to selected group of consumers - as part of a wider transaction involving the commodification of those consumers into tradable resources.

## Methodological approach

The research which led to this paper began in 2016-17 with a small scoping study of a successful long-established family-owned weekly newspaper, the *Teesdale Mercury*, in North East England. This involved interviews with management and editorial staff and focus groups comprised of community members and local businesspeople. This study challenged current perceptions among journalists, researchers and policy-makers that print was obsolete and digital, online local media enterprises offered the only hope for sustainable sources of local media and journalism. The study also indicated that the ways in which the journalists understood and negotiated their relationships with and within their local communities were critically important to the willingness of those communities to support and sustain the enterprises. This informed the theoretical perspectives relating to the conceptualisation of community that were later seen to resonate with Studdert and Walkerdine’s work, and brought to the fore the centrality of the theorisation of community to understandings of local journalism as an organisational field and to the values and practices of local journalists. The authors set out to identify other successful established and emergent small-scale print-led local media enterprises or established ones which were undergoing transformations to see if the conceptualisation of community-as-practice was reflected in the values and practices of the journalists and others involved in them. This research was undertaken in 2016-17 and in the weeks before the first lockdown brought on by the Covid Pandemic in early 2020 and consisted of a series of semi-structured interviews with key actors in each of the organisations. The research was funded by Newcastle University and conducted in full compliance with its ethical standards.

## Local media enacting community: applying the analytic

The 2016-17 study in the North of England explored how ordinary people living on the newspaper’s circulation area articulated their understandings of community in the context of their lived experience and in relation to their local newspaper. The accounts put great store on maintaining currency with local news and information, knowing who was doing what. But they also involved extensive accounts of personal participation in community events, such as an annual parade and the preparations for it. They spoke of the importance of regular and repeated interactions – incidental occurrences in shops and cafes and purposeful engagements. Demonstrations of care and concern by calling on neighbours; loyalty to local businesses; participating in events organised by numerous clubs and societies. Many such events

and interactions were routinely facilitated by the local paper: through news and notices in its pages, but also by its very existence. One of the business-people recounted explaining to a tourist that the town was busy on Tuesday, because it was publication day, and people in surrounding rural areas made a point of visiting town to buy it and meet friends who were doing the same. Research participants gave accounts of the extensive ways they would interact with the newspaper's staff: editorial and advertising, and at the counter in the newspaper's office which doubled as a bookshop and information centre. The results of this case study indicated that a sense of community, of belonging in a locality, arose more through the performance of community than from the fact of residence in a geographic locality. The reporters placed great weight on face-to-face interactions with readers and sources. While the study was being conducted, the newsroom was moved out of the old town centre office building to a modern suite in a business park about a mile away. But the editor persuaded the board to reverse its decision because he and the reporters were isolated from those readers and sources. A local history group took on the task, voluntarily, of digitising the newspaper's print archive. They met regularly together and with others as part of the long-term project tracing missing issues, working together to build the digital archive and speaking to groups and schools to encourage awareness of it.

The accounts that emerged resonated, on later reflection, with Studdert's argument that:

*"[Community] is always the outcome of sociality as an action – be that action or speech – and it is therefore impossible to perform without the presence of other people. [...] And because it is an outcome of a series of actions community is never an abstraction like 'history' or 'mankind'."* (2005, 2)

The newspaper and its staff were catalysts for, facilitators of and participants in such instances of sociality: the *doing* of community, that fostered a sense of belonging. Irene Costera Meijer, in her 10-year study in the Netherlands into what audiences valued in local journalism, found: "Audience responsiveness and community involvement are suggested as a *conditio sine qua non* for residents to spend money or attention to local news." (Meijer 2020, 364). She discovered audiences wanted local journalism to provide resources which supported the processes and practices of community and generated shared meanings and a sense of belonging. This brief case study in the market town suggested that where local papers were enacting community, the community in turn valued its local paper – and sustained it. Similarly, the board of directors of the family-owned title saw support for the community as essential to its business strategy because it created a virtuous circle which interlinked the health of the paper and the community (Matthews 2017b).

In the years following the onset of the global financial crisis in 2007-8, the decline of legacy local print media had accelerated. Local newspaper groups concentrated on expansion of their digital divisions, policy makers prioritised the digital economy and research in journalism focused on web-based innovations in local news. But following that scoping study, the authors identified other successful local media enterprises around Britain which were prioritising print. The *Bristol Cable* was launched by community activists and social entrepreneurs in 2014 as a 2,000-member cooperative<sup>8</sup>. In 2010 a community group in Jedburgh, in the Scottish Borders, launched monthly news magazine *The Jed Eye* with a Lottery Fund grant and later invited retired regional journalist David Pike to edit it. In August 2016, former Johnston Press editor Jason Marshall launched paid-for weekly *The Hawick Paper* in the Scottish Borders. In March 2017, former Johnston Press employees led by photographer Dirk van der Werff launched free weekly *Hartlepool Life* in North East England. In May 2017, after family-run media company CN Group decided to close the weekly *Eskdale & Liddesdale Advertiser* in Langholm in the Scottish Borders, local people set up Community Interest Company (CIC) Muckle Toon Media to buy it.<sup>9</sup>

Each of these has a different ownership model, but each is owned locally and embedded within a community. All rely primarily or exclusively on local advertising and/or sales or donations for revenue. The *Eskdale & Liddesdale Advertiser* owes its existence to an instance of micro-sociality – a brief encounter in a newsagent shop. Local businessman and philanthropist David Stevenson overheard a conversation lamenting the paper's forthcoming closure (personal interview). And conceived the plan to take it into community ownership. The process of setting up the community interest company was also a communal enterprise as people gathered round the project. *The Jed Eye* owes its existence to a series of such moments inspired by local dissatisfaction with a corporate-owned newspaper. The scene was repeated in Hartlepool where former *Hartlepool Mail* (then JPI Media) colleagues met regularly and bemoaned its growing irrelevance to their community. Each of these ventures arose out of the processes of community to which Studdert and Walkerdine direct our attention, and a consciousness of the need for local media capable of facilitating and sustaining those processes.

The *Advertiser* is funded by sales, advertising and grants which it can access because it is community-owned. Since the case study was conducted it has adopted charitable status, which is possible under Scottish, but not English law. The *Hawick Paper* relies on a traditional sales and advertising model. The *Jed Eye*, launched with a £10,000 grant, is sustained by subscriptions, online and point-of-distribution donations and local advertising revenue. It is also sustained by enthusiastic volunteers depositing it in pubs, cafes, shops, and wherever else people meet, and others writing for it. *Hartlepool Life* and its sister titles are funded completely by advertising and, like *The Jed Eye*, deposited wherever people meet.

Visibility was paramount for each. The *Advertiser* takeover was a full-community affair with a leafletting campaign followed by a town meeting. The *Hawick Paper* started with a leaflet through every door and social media blitz. Marshall said: "It felt as if this momentous thing was going to happen. I am convinced it was the social media that was the key to our success. The first edition sold out and circulation has since risen by eight per cent". Pike, editor of *The JedEye* and a former news editor of regional daily the *Northern Echo*, held weekly surgeries in a town centre café. *Hartlepool Life* and *The Jed Eye* both have pick-up and display points all over their circulation areas. Van de Werf said:

*"We knew the key was visibility. ... In Hartlepool we have over 240 different pick-up points – cafes, shops, hairdressers, anywhere you can think, loads of community hubs, community centres, pubs, clubs, offices, restaurants, bars, everything. Our advertiser, he goes for a morning coffee and a sandwich and Hartlepool Life is there. He pops out at lunch to a different place ... and our paper's there. And he's thinking, bugger me – there's that Hartlepool Life again, And later he pops into the pub or club and the paper's there. He's thinking, 'Bloody hell, this paper's everywhere.' So why would they not want to be in there?"*

Two years after its launch, *Hartlepool Life* took over the town centre office vacated by corporate-owned *Hartlepool Mail*. The *Advertiser* has a High Street office in Langholm. The *Jed Eye* and *Hartlepool Life* rely on people doing community and foster those social interconnections: it is a virtuous circle. The teams build relationships with café, pub and shop-owners as they restock weekly pick-up points. They, as well as the papers, are constantly visible, constantly instigating instances of micro-sociality. For all those people engaged with these projects, the traditional demarcation between community/audience and advertiser has faded: they see local businesses, organisations, institutions services which advertise with them as integral to the processes of community which they are supporting and which in turn sustain them.

Each organisation is led by experienced local and regional journalists but receives a constant flow of submitted content. Pike says of *The Jed Eye*:

*"I have never been so pampered as a journalist ... because there is always an embarrassment of riches at the end of the month. I've got maybe 40 emails a week, from people saying, 'Can we do this?', 'Can we do this?' Just at the moment the Borders Mountain Rescue are asking if they can have a monthly column."*

It has become a tradition for readers on holiday to send back a photograph of *The Jed Eye*. This willingness to share lived experience, deliver a narrative of local lives, through the pages of these publications is a further enactment of community and indicates a strong sense of communal proprietorship.

The journalists are renegotiating news values in the light of that proprietorship. Without using the term, all described their approach to news in a manner that resonates with the emerging tradition of solutions journalism. An avoidance of sensational approaches and a concentration of finding solutions to local problems.

Van de Werf said:

*"What we have done ... is reflect the good that is happening in the community anyway. Ten years of austerity, the people know that the government is not going to help them. They know that the legs have been cut off local government and if communities don't pull together and do it themselves, it ain't going to happen."*

Marshall said:

*"We're always mindful of the people that we're serving not to go over the top it's just too easy to do that these days to try and get a few more clicks or to try and sell a few more copies."*

*We're just not interested. There's stories that never reach the press. Because you know, they're just not for us."*

One advantage corporate organisations hold is the diverse range of skills and expertise spanning editorial; administration and strategic planning; selling advertising; distribution and delivery; IT systems; bookkeeping, fundraising; tax; financial compliance and regulatory issues. These were significant stumbling blocks for the *Eskdale & Liddesdale Advertiser* and *Hartlepool Life*. But the *Advertiser* drew on resources within Stevenson's other enterprises for administration and accounting and another director had a background in local government and strategic planning. Van der Werf said:

*"We were in dire financial straits. Absolutely. I invited my friend, Krime Bouabda, who had just retired and sold three restaurants in town to get involved. After we had talked he said: 'Why didn't you tell me at the beginning? I would have loved to have done this'."*

Marshall at the *Hawick Paper*, although experienced in commercial and editorial roles, recruited a former *Southern Reporter* advertising sales manager, his only full-time employee, who knew the area – and its business community. Their experience demonstrates the importance of both professional and community networks and friendship ties in being able to replicate, from within a local community, organisational resources inherent in corporate models. Much depends on a shared commitment to community, mutuality and a sense of belonging.

## Conclusion – creating the social world

Marshall points to a time when publication day of the *Hawick News* was part of the lived experience of the town:

*"It was a real occasion every Friday when it came out. People had their own little routines, about how they would read the paper. You know, it was a fantastic paper. They would treat themselves to a cake and a cup of coffee. Nowadays, everybody's taking a coffee all the time, but back in the day it was a big thing for coffee and a cake. It's something that kind of kick-started the weekend."* (personal interview)

His description echoes the account above of the day the *Teesdale Mercury* appears and both provide a clear illustration of community as process, as micro-sociality and the capacity of local media to facilitate and sustain those processes.

Studdert argues that in the performance of community, we reconstruct the world as a social world and mark an ontological shift from the privatised self to a social one (2005, 151). Action is not just what I do, but how I appear to others and embodies a space which relates people to each other: a "space of appearance". Digital media exist in a virtual space and have to be sought out. In contrast a constant physical presence was of paramount importance for each of these projects. The *Advertiser* takeover was a full-community affair from the start with a leafleting campaign and town meeting. The *Hawick Paper* started with a leaflet through every door. *Hartlepool Life* and *The Jed Eye* have multiple pick-up and display points. *The Jed Eye's* editor hosts weekly drop-ins in a cafe. The *Advertiser* and *Hartlepool Life* have prominent town-centre offices where people call in. The staff of each title – full-time, part-time and volunteer, engaged in editorial, production, advertising and distribution – are all rooted in their communities and known for their association with the papers. The papers do not simply occupy the social space, they are a part of that "space of appearance" where the performance of community is made visible.

Adopting the conceptual lens of community-as-action, as opposed to object, helps to make transparent and allows us to explore the roles local media play in the processes of community that have hitherto been largely neglected. It draws attention to the people who do local and community media as they perform the multiple processes and practices of media production and makes visible how these processes and practices add to the vast range of instances of sociality which give rise to a sense of communal beingness.

This paper has demonstrated that the public benefits local and community media and journalism deliver do not lie in the journalism and journalistic outputs alone, but also appear in the advertising, administrative, distributive aspects of local media and all the instances of interactions that are necessary to gather the content and generate and distribute it. Looking at local media through the lens of community-as-action enables us better to explore the manner in which local media can facilitate the conduct and enact-

ment of community in a locality. The habit the people of rural Teesdale have formed of gathering on the Mercury's publication day exemplifies this, as do the modes of distribution of *The Jed Eye* and *Hartlepool Life*. As does the information which all the papers carry and which alerts their audiences to matters of local concern, prompting discussion and action, and draws them together. These enterprises are predicated on prioritising visibility, collaboration, interaction: provoking and facilitating engagements with, within and between communities. That dependency on doing community situates local media as integral elements of wider processes of community. The lens also helps us to better understand the processes by which local media open a space of appearance for those activities which constitute community, the people who undertake them and the relationships which give rise to them.

This paper does not seek to diminish the significance of research and policy focused on the quality and quantity of information and journalism available to people; localities well- or ill served in this respect; the consequences for civic engagement of a dearth of such journalism and what might be done to encourage the production and accessibility of trusted journalism. But without a sense of communal belongingness, even trustworthy, accessible, high-quality local journalism is unlikely to gain traction if intended audiences feel that it lacks relevance to them. The lens of community-as-action allows us better to explore how local media contribute – and might better contribute - to developing a sense of belonging and communality that build relevance. How local media and journalism can build and maintain relationships as they enact the processes and practices of producing news and information and doing community.

*The Jed Eye* and *Eskdale & Liddesdale Advertiser*, which belong to their communities and the *Hartlepool Life* and *Hawick Paper* which are deeply embedded in them highlight approaches to local media and journalism which depend on the development and enactment of relationships rather than the instrumental and transactional models which have historically characterised the field and persist in the corporate newspaper chains. Negotiating those relationships has prompted a re-evaluation by the journalists of their values and practices.

Further research is required: particularly in regard to audiences' and communities' relationships with local media. But these findings are significant in terms of policy development and the search for sustainable models of high-quality local journalism. Reader and Hatcher observe in their global review of local news ownership models that "time-honoured [business] models may still be the most sustainable ... where residents (including advertisers) happily support local media" (2020, 205). The five projects interrogated here seem to have communities that are happy to support them.

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## Notes

1 The Hartlepool Mail had announced that it was to publish weekly instead of daily.

2 See for example the annual Journalism Matters campaign run by the News Media Association <https://newsmediauk.org/journalism-matters/>

3 A notable exception is Irene Cotiera Meijer’s 10-year study in the Netherlands into what audiences find valuable in local journalism (Meijer 2020)

4 Gannett Media Company was bought in 2019 by another American company, GateHouse Media, which is owned in turn by the hedge fund New Media Investment Group, for \$1.4 billion.

5 See UK Government advice: ‘Board decisions can only be justified by the best interests of the company, accessed at: <https://companieshouse.blog.gov.uk/2019/02/21/7-duties-of-a-company-director/> November 2, 2020.

6 [Scotsman one of six titles to be overseen by same editor in JPI Media Scotland restructure \(pressgazette.co.uk\)](https://www.pressgazette.co.uk)

[JPI Media was in turn bought by National World in April 2022 for £10.2m](#)

7 Arendt emphasises three things which enable us to reconceive community: the primacy of action over thought, the social nature of existence and the inter-relatedness of experience. Together these reconstruct the world as a social world and mark an ontological shift from the privatised self to a social one.

8 <https://thebristolcable.org/about/>

9 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-south-scotland-39791528>. A series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with critical stakeholders in the four publications ( $n=9$ ), were carried in January and February 2020. All have survived the Covid 19 pandemic.

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# 10 years after – Ipso as the new UK press regulator: a new start or same old?

By Chris Frost, Liverpool John Moores University

## Abstract

The Leveson Inquiry in 2011, held following revelations of widespread phone hacking by the British national press, reported in 2012 with a number of recommendations to update press regulation and spelt the end of the Press Complaints Commission (PCC).

Two years later, the newspaper industry set up the Independent Press Standards Organisation (Ipso) to replace the discredited PCC. The scandal surrounding the press hacking debacle and the move from the PCC to Ipso meant many more people became aware that there was a regulatory body to which they could complain about press standards and the number of complaints rose dramatically.

This paper considers whether the new regulator succeeded in restoring readers' trust by examining how the newspaper industry decided to develop the new regulator and how successful it has been in offering readers the hope of trustworthy newspapers.

The research found that proposals from Leveson to restore that trust have been ignored and that the performance of Ipso as a regulator is unlikely to have been sufficient to restore readers' trust.

**Key words:** Ipso, Leveson, inquiry, readers, complaints, Editors, code

## Introduction

**Press regulation is an important topic about which students of journalism need to learn during their studies into news media and journalism.**

Legislation controls broadcast media to a large extent whilst the print media and its online equivalent has only modest limitations in law around the issues of court coverage, privacy and defamation. Regulation throughout the nineties and early 2000s was in the hands of the Press Complaints Commission (PCC). The PCC had a code of practice agreed by a committee of editors, that was applied to complaints from the public. The Commission adjudicated the complaints and obliged publications to publish the adjudication (see Frost 2016, pp 334-343).

Following the phone hacking scandal in 2011, Prime Minister David Cameron announced on July 20th that there would be a full inquiry into the culture, practices and ethics of the press led by Lord Justice Brian Leveson.

# The Leveson Inquiry

Whilst News International was the only newspaper group against which there was sound evidence at this stage (*The Mirror* later admitted paying off hacking victims in 2014 and cases continue until at least time of publication), Lord Justice Leveson started his work on examining press standards taking evidence from 637 witnesses in person or as written evidence read into the record (Leveson, 2012, p3). The hearings ended July 2012 and Leveson issued his report on November 29, 2012.

Because of the desire to give the press as much freedom as possible, the Leveson Inquiry recommended against any statutory control but said that there should be a serious, voluntary regulator able to provide control over standards and deal effectively with complaints (Ibid. pp32-38). To ensure this regulator was taken seriously and followed the recommendations made by the Inquiry, Leveson recommended that a statutory Press Recognition Panel be set up to examine the work of any regulator and report to parliament. The Panel measures any putative regulator against 29 criteria identified by Leveson and included in a Royal Charter on the Self-regulation of the Press that was agreed by parliament following the Inquiry. The Charter was designed to protect press freedom and the public and ensure any press regulator was independent of both politicians and the industry (Frost, 2016, p303).

The PCC was an early casualty of the inquiry and Baroness Buscombe resigned as its chair to be replaced by Lord David Hunt in October 2011. Hunt was quick to explain that the PCC wasn't the independent self-regulator it had always claimed to be but was simply a complaints handler and one in serious need of reform.

Leveson LJ agreed in his report that the PCC was not a regulator and went on to outline some of the key criticisms of the PCC:

- ▶ The PCC is underfunded and can barely manage complaints handling;
- ▶ It has insufficient resources to initiate its own investigations;
- ▶ It is unable to accept complaints from third parties on a transparent basis;
- ▶ Bodies representing the interests of groups or minorities cannot complain to the PCC;
- ▶ It has to trust that newspapers are properly examining the issues and are not being economical with the truth;
- ▶ In relation to its investigations into phone hacking, it is common ground that it was misled;
- ▶ The lack of a power to fine, even in relation to serious and systemic breaches of the code, has meant that the PCC is not a body whose adjudications have force against the industry. (Leveson 2012, pp1541-1560)

Leveson LJ said in his report that:

*“The PCC is constrained by serious structural deficiencies which limit what it can do... the PCC is far from being an independent body. The lack of universal coverage, most notably after the withdrawal of the Northern and Shell [then the Daily and Sunday Express] titles from the self-regulatory system in January 2011, gave cause for observers and complainants to lose faith in the system.” (Leveson 2012: pp1576-1577)*

His report went on to make a number of recommendations about the structure and constitution of the new regulator. The report recommended:

- ▶ An independent self regulatory body with a Board appointed in a “genuinely open, transparent and independent way, without any influence from industry or Government.”;
- ▶ The code should be owned by the Board;
- ▶ This new code, to be developed by a mix of editors, journalists and the public, would take into account the importance of freedom of speech and the interests of the public;
- ▶ Publishers who joined the new regulator would have to put in place appropriate grievance processes and complaints handling mechanisms;

- ▶ The new board should be able to take complaints from all comers, free of charge;
- ▶ This new board would be able to direct a variety of remedial actions for breaches of standards including the imposition of sanctions including fines of up to £1m;
- ▶ The Board should provide an arbitral process to allow for the resolution of civil legal claims against subscribers that would be fair, quick and inexpensive, inquisitorial and free for complainants to use;
- ▶ To reassure the public that the new regulator is independent and capable of achieving its aims there should be a recognition body set up to ensure the new regulator carries out its role as identified under the law;
- ▶ There should be incentives identified in law for publishers to join a regulator. These could include limits on damages for civil suits. (Ibid, pp1760-1770);

Leveson LJ agreed with virtually every witness to the inquiry that in order to succeed a new regulator would have to have every significant publisher as members.

The key to the whole issue of press regulation, as Leveson LJ described it, is how to ensure there is meaningful regulation that works without legislation that might limit press freedom. Leveson LJ had come up with a scheme that allowed the incorporation of an independent verification body that would have the power to recognise a regulator set up by the industry, according to democratically decided pre-determined specifications. This verification body would not itself regulate the press and would have no power to prevent any publication but would approve a regulator that complied with specifications including one preventing such a regulator from having power to prevent publication. This system was described by Leveson LJ as statutory underpinning; a system that did not require statutory control of press freedom but did guarantee a workable regulator and allowed for a verification panel that could blow the whistle if the regulator failed to do its job properly. Leveson suggested that Ofcom might reasonably take on this role of verification (Ibid. p36).

Leveson recommended that internal governance should include an “adequate” in-house complaint process and annual report to the regulator. That the new regulator should have the power to take complaints from third parties and representative groups particularly about alleged discriminatory treatment of women and minorities and that there should be a system of fines for serious or systemic breaches of standards.

Leveson was also concerned that there should be protections for journalists such as a whistle-blowing mechanism together with protections for the public such as the Board having the power to direct appropriate remedial action for breach of standards and the publication of corrections and apologies including the power to direct the extent and placement of apologies. He was adamant that the Board should not have the power to prevent publication of any material, by anyone, at any time but should have authority to examine issues on its own initiative and have sufficient powers to carry out investigations.

He also recommended that the Board should have the power to impose appropriate and proportionate sanctions, (including financial sanctions up to one percent of turnover with a maximum of £1m), on any subscriber found to be responsible for serious or systemic breaches of the standards code or governance requirements of the body. (Leveson 2012, pp1795-1805)

## A royal charter for the press

Within 24 hours of Leveson issuing his report, David Cameron, who had previously agreed to uphold the report provided it wasn't “bonkers”, said he had “serious misgivings” about any statutory interference with the press claiming that: “For the first time we would have crossed the Rubicon of writing elements of press regulation into law of the land. We should I believe be wary of any legislation that has the potential to infringe free speech and the free press. In this house – which has been the bulwark of democracy for centuries - we should think very, very carefully before crossing this line.” (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/david-cameron-statement-in-response-to-the-leveson-inquiry-report> accessed 29/5/2024)

His view was not shared by either his Liberal/Democrat deputy nor the Labour Party. Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg said:

*“Changing the law is the only way to give us all the assurance that the new regulator isn't just independent for a few months or year, but is independent for good.” Whilst Labour leader Ed Miliband called statutory underpinning the “crucial new guarantee we have never had before.” (www.theguardian.com/media/2012/nov/29/david-cameron-refuses-to-write-press-law accessed 29/5/2024)*

Westminster reached agreement on a Royal Charter on Self-Regulation of the Press after much debate. Although a Leveson-compliant recognition body would have no role in regulating the press and would not be able to influence what was published, merely identifying whether the industry's own regulator was fulfilling those requirements, the publishers felt unable to support such a law and a Royal Charter was seen as a suitable compromise.

However, following the publishers' refusal to support it, despite a majority in parliament, the government attempted to drop the idea. Political pressure from all sides of the house saw its later approval. (Frost, 2016, p302)

The Royal Charter incorporated a Press Recognition Panel and identified from the Leveson Report the requirements for a model regulator. It also sought to maintain independence from government by requiring a two thirds majority of both houses of parliament and the Scottish Parliament for any change. The Publishers felt the constricting hand of proper regulation closing around their more profitable avenues and attacked this new charter claiming it to be an attack on press freedom. (Frost, 2016, p303)

The Royal Charter identified that a new regulator would be independent of government and the industry with no serving editors or MPs on its board, with a new code, agreed by the regulator's board, would have to take into account:

- freedom of speech;
- the interests of the public;
- journalists to protect confidential sources of information;
- the rights of individuals;
- standards of conduct, especially of treatment of other people in the process of obtaining material;
- respect for privacy unless there was a public interest defence;
- accuracy and the need to avoid misrepresentation. (UK Government, 2013)

## A new regulator for the press

The Publishers determined to proceed regardless and started the process of setting up the Ipso to replace the PCC. They made it clear they would not be seeking recognition under the Royal Charter (Ibid.) Meanwhile a small group of campaigners, determined to put the Leveson recommendations as identified in his inquiry report into action, set up an alternative regulator called Impress. Which attracted a few smaller publishers, mainly of local news.

Ipso was launched on September 8, 2014 under the chairmanship of Sir Alan Moses, a former high court judge, with 98% of publishers signing up to the contracts required by the Ipso that bind publishers to uphold the Ipso's rules. *The Guardian*, *Financial Times* and *Independent* group were notable absences and determined to deal directly with complaints. The Press Recognition Panel meanwhile was launched in November 2014 under the chairmanship of Dr David Wolfe.

Following agreement of the draft Royal Charter in March the Government got agreement to the Crime and Courts Act 2013. This was amended at the last minute to include clauses aimed at offering incentives to join a recognised press regulator (ibid.)

Section 34, which came into effect in November 2015, introduced a scheme of exemplary damages for newspapers (relevant publishers) not members of a recognised self-regulatory body. A recognized regulator, according to the Charter, would have an arbitration scheme that would allow a complainant to seek cheap and fast redress, so Section 34 only applies where:

- the defendant in a civil suit for libel or privacy is a relevant publisher, and;
- the claim is related to the publication of news-related material, and;

- the defendant is found liable in respect of the claim.

In addition to the threat of exemplary damages the Crime and Courts Act Section 40 deals with costs (often a major part of the expense of a civil action) and said that where a claim was made against a publisher regarding news-related material, and the defendant was found liable in respect of the claim then if the defendant was a member of an approved regulator, the court should not normally award costs against the defendant. However, if the defendant was not a member of an approved regulator (but is eligible for membership), the court must award costs against the defendant unless satisfied that:

(a) the issues raised by the claim could not have been resolved by using an arbitration scheme of the regulator, or

(b) it is just and equitable in all the circumstances of the case to make a different award of costs or make no award of costs.

So, if a publisher was a member of an approved regulator the court **must not** normally award costs but if the defendant **was not** a member of an approved regulator the court **must** award costs unless the arbitrator could not have resolved the issues or it is just and equitable to make a different award. This would have provided a publisher some protection from cost awards if it was a member of a recognised regulator and followed procedure, but very limited protection if it was not.

The Government did not put Section 40 into operation as it did with the other sections, once a recognised regulator (Impress) was in place. The attempt to pressure publishers to join a recognised regulator incensed the publishers and they lobbied the government strongly not to enact that section. Finally the government rescinded Section 40 in the Media Act 2024 and in doing so, delivered its manifesto commitment, claiming that if commenced, S40 could have a chilling effect on freedom of the press. This is largely based on the approach taken by the publishers' association, the News Media Association (NMA). The NMA had claimed in May 2023 that S40 would force publishers to pay both sides' costs in any court actions, win or lose; that this would amount to state licensing of newspapers and be an undemocratic attack on free speech that would have a chilling effect on reporting of matters of public interest. However, its key concern seemed to be that:

*“Not a single national, regional or local newspaper or magazine of any significance is willing, as a matter of principle, to sign up to any regulator recognised under the Royal Charter apparatus. No reputable independent publisher will be cowed into submitting to statutory press regulation, however arms-length it may appear to be. (<https://newsmediauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023.05.17-Media-Bill-Time-to-Repeal-Section-40-of-the-Crime-and-Courts-Act.pdf> accessed 28/5/2024)*

The various publishers, unsurprisingly, would prefer to continue as they had always done. Several, including *the Guardian*, *Financial Times* and *the Independent* preferred to become self regulating whilst a number of small, usually online publishers signed up to the PRP recognised Impress without apparently running into the problems feared by the big publishers.

Opposing the introduction of Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 The NMA claimed that Ipso had fundamentally changed the media regulatory landscape over the past few years:

*“The media regulatory landscape has fundamentally changed since Section 40 was introduced. Publishers and editors have faced up to their responsibilities. The Press Complaints Commission was disbanded. A tough new regulator, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (“Ipso”), was established in 2014, with real powers based in civil law allowing it to extract real penalties including £1 million fines for the most serious breaches of the Editors’ Code.4 11.*

*Ipso has also brought about a transformation in the internal complaints handling procedures at all newspaper companies.” (Ibid.)*

The NMA presents no evidence for this claim, nor has Ipso presented evidence for a similar claim. Circulations of national newspapers continue to fall by around 10 to 15 percent per year and the reductions are often even greater for many regional papers averaging 20 percent ([www.pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/media\\_metrics/regional-abcs-first-half-2023/](http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/media-audience-and-business-data/media_metrics/regional-abcs-first-half-2023/) accessed 29/5/2024). Online editions are growing readership as consumers switch from print to online, but the numbers of key publications such as *The Sun*, *The Times* and *the Telegraph* have been kept private since 2020.



The NMA claims that Ipso is a “tough new regulator” with real powers to extract real penalties but these powers have never been used and the Ipso has never investigated a systemic or serious breach and its monitoring is very limited. The only penalty it has ever issues is a requirement to publish an adjudication.

Claims for a tough new regulator have a number of critics. Ramsay and Barnett in their 2021 examination of the performance of Ipso identify how Ipso was:

*“designed to perform the function of a complaints handler rather than a genuine industry regulator, much like its discredited predecessor the Press Complaints Commission (PCC). It was therefore never intended, nor is it able, to operate according to the clear principles for effective and independent self-regulation laid down by Lord Justice Leveson.”* ([www.camri.ac.uk/blog/2021/06/23/ipso-regulator-or-complaints-handler](http://www.camri.ac.uk/blog/2021/06/23/ipso-regulator-or-complaints-handler) accessed 20/5/2024)

Talking about future legislation they go on to say that:

*these initiatives will seek to protect certain journalistic privileges by reference to regulatory bodies that purport to implement codes of practice. Those bodies will effectively be interpreted as guarantors of professional journalistic standards. It is clear from this study that Ipso is not in a position to fulfil this regulatory responsibility... As long as Ipso chooses to remain outside the framework of independent scrutiny, there can be no assurance that it acts as a genuinely independent arbiter of professional standards. Both the British public and working journalists deserve regulation that is effective without inhibiting a free press, is genuinely independent, and commands public respect; future public policy interventions must take account of the continuing determination of the industry to avoid proper scrutiny and accountability.”* (*Ibid.*)

Ipso is entirely bound by the Editors’ Code and the structure of Ipso as set up by the industry, which constituted it and funds it. A recent review of Ipso’s governance management and processes ([www.ipso.co.uk/media/2434/ipso-report-2022-final-digital11r.pdf](http://www.ipso.co.uk/media/2434/ipso-report-2022-final-digital11r.pdf) p8 accessed 1/5/2024) by Sir Bill Jeffrey, found constraints in the governance structure but concluded that Ipso was operating independently with no signs of improper influence by the industry on complaints decisions (*Ibid.*) This is undoubtedly the case, but then there would be no need to try to influence decision making if the constraints applied through governance structures could do that job to the benefit of those most likely to want to wield influence.

Additionally, Leveson and many others have been critical of the Editors’ Code. Leveson decided to leave that to the new regulator but when setting up Ipso, its industry founders decided that the Code should remain in the hands of editors, with the addition of just one or two lay members.

Leveson had also been critical of the structure of the PCC, the predecessor of Ipso, identifying it as lacking the powers and sanctions to do an effective job and to which membership was, in any case, entirely optional. Leveson proposed a system of rewards and penalties to encourage membership of a new regulator.

Ipso’s founding group of publishers has consistently opposed that system (see above) and made changes to Ipso that significantly amended the proposed structure from recommendations made by Leveson in his 2012 report that said a regulator:

*‘should have the power to impose appropriate and proportionate sanctions (including financial sanctions of up to 1% turnover with a maximum of £1m) on any subscriber found to be responsible for serious or systemic breaches of the standards code or governance requirements of the body.’* (*Leveson 2012, 1805*)

This was amended to “serious **and** systematic” a much tougher hurdle to jump meaning that no publication has yet even been investigated, never mind found to be in breach, so Ipso has yet to sanction or fine any publication despite several major stories over the past 10 years, coverage of which has been severely criticised in subsequent national inquiries. So how does Ipso perform as a regulator? Is there any evidence that it is a better regulator than the PCC; is there any evidence that it is an acceptable regulator in its own right as called for by Leveson.?

## Research data: upheld complaints

Since neither Ipso nor the NMA have presented any evidence to support their claim that Ipso is a tough regulator, other methods must be used. There seem to be two potential approaches:

- a) Survey readers and the public at large to see if they have identified an improvement in press standards.
- b) Examine the regulatory performance of Ipso to see if there is any evidence of improvement from the PCC and if this offers an improvement in standards.

Whilst qualitative evidence of the sort suggested in option (a) has its place, it is difficult to see how this could be usefully applied here. The questions required in such a survey would either need to be too technical or require answers that would be too subjective to be meaningful. Instead it was decided to examine Ipso's performance in detail.

Ipso publishes all of its adjudications since inception as well as details of received complaints on its website. A database of all these complaints has been maintained by the author since 2014. This involves transcribing data from the Ipso website to the database every few weeks identifying complainants, publications complained of, the Editors' Code clause complained of and whether the complainants was upheld and which code clauses were deemed to be breached and any penalties.

This allows a close examination of the performance of Ipso in its adjudications including the numbers of complaints upheld and on which Editors' Code clauses. Table one below shows the number of complaints, those upheld in total and by clause.

To the end of April 2024, only a few months short of its tenth year, Ipso had adjudicated 2,426 of approximately 180,000 complaints (the total number of complaints in 2023 is unlikely to be known until the annual report is published in the autumn of 2024 but the average is around 14,000pa). These adjudicated complaints covered 4,392 separate code of practice clause breaches (many of the complaints covered several different clauses). For instance, a clause might concern accuracy, privacy breaches, intrusion, and children. Ipso upheld 614 of these complaints and resolved a further 558. Of those complaints upheld, 484 concerned accuracy, 40 concerned privacy and 34 concerned harassment, intrusion, children, reporting of crime and discrimination. Only 90 of the upheld complaints concerned code clauses other than accuracy. The UK either has a press to be proud of or a regulator that is simply not up to the job. Although Ipso has more teeth than its predecessor, the PCC, it has yet to use any of them other than a requirement to publish a correction or adjudication.

Ipso has the power to monitor standards and it does do this having considered 86 cases of complaints, several of them issuing monitoring advice in code areas where there are no or only one or two upheld complaints (Frost, 2024: p28). It also has the power to investigate and fine newspapers up to a million pounds where it has serious concerns about a member publication, but Ipso changed Leveson's advice from serious **or** systemic breaches of the editor's code to serious **and** systemic (Ramsay and Barnett nett 2021: 6). An almost impossible hurdle making investigation highly unlikely and so it is no surprise that no such investigation has happened.

## Press performance

Ipso has 1,972 members at time of writing covering publications and websites as diverse as *Runners World*, *Butterfly Conversation*, *Shrewsbury Chronicle*, *Yorkshire Post*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Times*. ([www.ipso.co.uk/media/2434/ipso-report-2022-final-digital11r.pdf](http://www.ipso.co.uk/media/2434/ipso-report-2022-final-digital11r.pdf) Accessed 29/4/2024)

Of these papers 46 are national dailies (21), Sundays (13) or their websites (12). Regional dailies, Sundays and websites number 86, whilst there are 703 magazines of various kinds and 1,128 local weekly papers and websites.

Ipso claims in its annual report 2021 that:

*“Unsurprisingly, the publications with the highest circulation and readerships received the most complaints. Interestingly though, considering the large amount of content produced by these newspapers on a daily basis, the number of articles complained about are comparatively low.”*

# Total Ipso adjudications by type

*From Sept 2014 to April 25, 2024*

Total complaints made up to end of 2022: 148.631		Total upheld:	614	25.3%	
Complaints adjudicated by Ipso to April 25, 2024: 2,426		Upheld as offered:	305	12.6%	
Total alleged code breaches in complaints: 4,392		Upheld with corr/adj:	309	12.7%	
		Resolved:	558	23.0%	
	Total clause type complained of	Percentage of total complaints	Total of full complaints upheld	Percentage complaints upheld	Specific code clause upheld
Accuracy*:	2,138	88.1	573	26.8	484
Privacy:	733	30.2	158	21.6	40
Harassment:	309	12.7	54	17.5	3
Intrusion:	278	11.5	57	20.5	8
Suicide:	28	1.2	3	10.7	2
Children:	127	5.2	22	17.3	11
Children sex cases:	25	1.0	9	36.0	3
Hospitals:	12	0.5	1	8.3	0
Reporting of crime:	112	4.6	20	17.9	9
Listening devices:	143	5.9	23	16.1	0
Victim of sexual assault:	39	1.6	21	0.0	9
Discrimination:	186	7.7	45	24.2	3
Financial journalism:	8	0.3	1	12.5	0
Confidential sources:	39	1.6	5	12.8	1
Payments to witnesses:	6	0.2	3	50.0	0
Payments to criminals:	8	0.3	3	37.5	1

NOTE: many complaints cover several different clauses of the Editors' Code, of which only one out of several might be upheld so the percentage of complaints may total more than 100.

\* Accuracy includes right of reply, which was listed as a separate clause 2 until Jan 2016. No ne of that clause 2 was ever upheld.

**Table 1: Total adjudications by Editors' Code clause**

Two claims for which they present no real evidence. Whilst it may well be true that highly contentious stories are more likely to raise a large number of complaints from a wide audience, Ipso only ever deals with one complainant and it is as likely to get a complaint about a story that allegedly breaches the Editor's code from a publication with a very small circulation as from one with a large circulation. Indeed it is probably arguable that a small publication with a specialist readership that allegedly breaches the code is far more likely to attract a complaint from someone upset by a story in a magazine that directly concerns a profession or hobby in which they have a reputation or a local paper that covers where they live than a story that mentions them in a national paper. It is certainly true that some national papers and their websites produce a lot of copy, but so do many regional newspapers.

The suggestion that the number of complaints is comparatively low is entirely a matter of subjective viewpoint. The Ipso makes it clear that they should not be the first point of complaint and that concerned readers should approach the publications editor first so the complaints Ipso receives have already been rejected, possibly after considerable correspondence, by the publication concerned and only then do complainants turn to Ipso. It's telling that many of the national newspapers have high resolution rates either through Ipso or directly with the publication after contacting Ipso. Anecdotally, it seems, the *Daily Mail* and *Mail Online* are particularly prone to make early offers of resolution to complainants that they then need to reject as unacceptable. Further resolution offers may then be made that are either finally accepted or require Ipso to consider adjudication. This is difficult to quantify as Ipso do not comment on their negotiations between complainants and publications and the observation is based solely on comments made to the author from several complainants and consideration of the statistics. The *Daily Mail* in 2022, for instance, had 184 articles involved in 312 complaints of which 287 were rejected, eight were not pursued, seven were resolved. Only two of the complaints were fully or partially upheld by Ipso and eight were not upheld. The *Mail Online* had 515 articles involved in complaints of which one was upheld. (Ipso, 2023, p16)

## Complaints details

Breaking the complaints down by type of publication is interesting as identified above. Table two below makes it clear that the national press is by far the biggest recipient of complaints despite being the smallest group by publication. Ipso receive 1,420 complaints concerning national publications and upheld 351 (24.7 per cent) of them. Magazines have a higher upheld rate of 33.6 percent, quite possibly because they receive so few complaints (only 107 across 703 such publications) and are less used to dealing with them. Newspapers average 24 to 27 percent. A league table of complaints to publications supports this as shown by table three below. Virtually all the publications in the top 30 are national newspapers with the exception of *the Jewish Chronicle*, *The Belfast Telegraph*, *Sunday Life*, *Sunday Mail*, *The Spectator*, *Metro.co.uk*, *Liverpoolecho.co.uk* and *the JC.com*.

The majority of the members of Ipso are small publications, often run by companies who produce a magazine to support a lifestyle such as *Slimming World* or *ThisisAnfield.com* or an industry, for instance *Housebuilder* or *Vet Times*. Very few of these produce complaints to Ipso (see table four below). There are exceptions. *The Jewish Chronicle* had 25 complaints as of April 2024, 13 of which were upheld and 17 complaints to its website *thejc.com*, five of which were upheld. The political magazine *The Spectator* had 17 complaints, five upheld with five about its website *spectator.co.uk* none of which were upheld. 21 other magazines received complaints but only nine of them had complaints upheld and only two had as many as two upheld. Two additional magazine websites had a single complaint upheld each.

Local publications are the most numerous publications with 708 weekly papers and 419 websites totaling 1,127 publications. There are too many to realistically list here and so Table five (below) is limited to publications with three complaints or more of which at least one has been upheld. There are 86 regional dailies (see table six), Sundays and websites who are members of Ipso. 54 of those have received complaints (59.3%) but only 33 of them had complaints upheld against them.

All the London-based nationals have upheld complaints (see table seven) but it is notable that their Scottish counterparts receive and have upheld far fewer complaints.

## Complaints totals by publication category

Number of complaints: 2426 upheld total: 614 % upheld: 25.31%

**Local** Complaints: 630 upheld in category: 153 % upheld: 24.29%

**Website** Number of complaints: 231 upheld in type: 58 % upheld: 25.11%

**Weekly** Number of complaints: 399 upheld in type: 95 % upheld: 23.81%

**Magazine** Complaints: 107 upheld in category: 36 % upheld: 33.64%

**Magazine** Number of complaints: 80 upheld in type: 30 % upheld: 37.50%

**Website** Number of complaints: 27 upheld in type: 6 % upheld: 22.22%

**National** Complaints: 1420 upheld in category: 351 % upheld: 24.72%

**Daily** Number of complaints: 673 upheld in type: 156 % upheld: 23.18%

**Sunday** Number of complaints: 219 upheld in type: 51 % upheld: 23.29%

**Website** Number of complaints: 528 upheld in type: 144 % upheld: 27.27%

**Regional** Complaints: 269 upheld in category: 74 % upheld: 27.51%

**Daily** Number of complaints: 247 upheld in type: 68 % upheld: 27.53%

**Website** Number of complaints: 22 upheld in type: 6 % upheld: 27.27%

Table 2: Complaints by publication type

## League table of complaints to Ipso by publication

Sept 2014 to April 25, 2024

Newspaper	total complaints	total uph	U/h as %	Uph off	Uph corr/adj	resolved	Reject
Mail online	197	43	22	18	25	76	78
The Times	118	26	22	14	12	21	71
DailyMail	111	16	14	13	3	35	60
The Sun	107	31	29	15	16	23	53
The DailyTelegraph	101	29	29	9	20	16	56
Express.co.uk	83	37	45	26	11	19	27
mirror.co.uk	70	16	23	9	7	18	36
The SundayTimes	64	18	28	11	7	12	34
Thesun.co.uk	62	13	21	6	7	27	22
The Mail on Sunday	50	11	22	4	7	8	31
DailyRecord	49	10	20	6	4	12	27
DailyExpress	46	15	33	8	7	6	26
DailyMirror	43	9	21	3	6	6	28
metro.co.uk	39	9	23	5	4	13	17
The SundayTelegraph	33	2	6	2	0	7	24
Telegraph.co.uk	30	6	20	3	3	9	15
The Scottish Sun	27	6	22	3	3	6	15
The Jewish Chronicle	25	13	52	5	8	4	8
SundayLife	24	7	29	5	2	1	16
DailyStar.co.uk	23	8	35	4	4	7	8
Dailyrecord.co.uk	20	6	30	1	5	4	10
SundayMirror	20	4	20	0	4	2	14
The Herald	19	4	21	3	1	3	12
Liverpooecho.co.uk	18	6	33	3	3	3	9
The Belfast Telegraph	18	5	28	3	2	3	10
thejc.com	17	5	29	1	4	3	9
Daily Star	17	5	29	3	2	4	8
The Spectator	17	5	29	3	2	1	11
Sunday Mail	16	3	19	1	2	4	9
The Sun on Sunday	16	2	13	1	1	4	10
Manchester Evening News	15	5	33	4	1	1	9
The Argus (Brighton)	14	3	21	0	3	3	8
Liverpool Echo (Daily and Extra)	14	4	29	4	0	3	7
Thetimes.co.uk	13	4	31	3	1	2	7
DailyStar on Sunday	13	6	46	4	2	3	4
Birminghammail.co.uk	13	5	38	4	1	4	4
Metro	13	4	31	2	2	3	6
Hull Daily Mail	13	5	38	0	5	3	5
The National	12	2	17	2	0	3	7

\* "Uph off" means complaint upheld with requirement to publish offered correction; "uph corr/adj" means upheld with requirement to publish an instructed correction or adjudication. Upheld is sum of the two.

**Table 3: League table of complaints**

## Magazine

Magazine	Total no of Publications: 24					
	No of comp	Upheld (as offered /correction)			Resolved	Rejected
Tatler	1	0	0	0	0	1
PC Format	1	0	0	0	0	1
Bella	1	0	0	0	0	1
Event Magazine	1	0	0	0	0	1
Wired	1	0	0	0	1	0
Pick Me Up	1	0	0	0	0	1
Reveal	1	0	0	0	1	0
Now	1	0	0	0	0	1
Northern Woman	1	0	0	0	0	1
The Times Literary Supplement	1	0	0	0	0	1
Chat	1	0	0	0	0	1
Best	1	1	1	0	0	0
The Forester	1	1	0	1	0	0
New!	1	1	1	0	0	0
OK!	1	1	0	1	0	0
Woman's Own	1	1	0	1	0	0
Woman	2	0	0	0	0	2
Real People	2	1	1	0	0	1
Asian Image	2	2	1	1	0	0
New European	3	1	0	1	2	0
Take a Break	3	1	1	0	1	1
That's Life!	10	2	1	1	5	3
The Spectator	17	5	3	2	1	11
The Jewish Chronicle	25	13	5	8	4	8
website	Total no of Publications: 5					
	No of comp	Upheld (as offered /correction)			Resolved	Rejected
am-online.com	1	0	0	0	0	1
ok.co.uk	2	0	0	0	2	0
Press Gazette	2	1	1	0	0	1
spectator.co.uk	5	0	0	0	1	4
thejc.com	17	5	1	4	3	9

**Table 4: Magazine publication complaints**

## Local

Website	Total no of Publications: 88					
	No of comp	Upheld (as offered /correction)			Resolved	Rejected
lancashiretelegraph.co.uk	3	1	0	1	1	1
cornwalllive.com	3	1	1	0	1	1
stokesentinel.co.uk	4	0	0	0	2	2
derbytelegraph.co.uk	4	0	0	0	1	3
Wales Online	4	1	1	0	0	3
chroniclelive.co.uk	5	1	0	1	3	1
oxfordmail.co.uk	5	3	0	3	1	1
Kent online	6	0	0	0	2	4
mylondon.news	6	2	0	2	2	2
kentlive.news	6	2	1	1	1	3
lancs.live	6	3	2	1	1	2
edinburghlive.co.uk	8	5	2	3	2	1
walesonline.co.uk	10	3	2	1	0	7
Liverpoolecho.co.uk	18	6	3	3	3	9
metro.co.uk	39	9	5	4	13	17
<b>weekly</b>	Total no of Publications: 213					
	No of comp	Upheld (as offered /correction)			Resolved	Rejected
Huddersfield Daily Examiner	3	2	0	2	0	1
Sunday Mercury	3	2	2	0	0	1
The Press (York)	3	3	3	0	0	0
Leicester Mercury	4	0	0	0	1	3
The Irish News	4	0	0	0	1	3
Wisbech Standard	4	1	0	1	0	3
Witney Gazette	4	1	1	0	0	3
Thurrock independent	4	1	0	1	0	3
Aryshire Post	4	2	2	0	0	2
The Gazette	4	2	1	1	0	2
Ardrossan & Saltcoats Herald	4	2	1	1	0	2
The Plymouth Herald	5	0	0	0	3	2
Bucks Free Press	5	0	0	0	1	4
Lincolnshire Echo	5	1	0	1	1	3
Barnsley Chronicle	5	1	1	0	1	3
Sunday Post	5	2	1	1	1	2
The Courier	5	3	2	1	1	1
South Wales Argus	6	1	0	1	3	2
The Worcester News	7	0	0	0	2	5
Sunday World	9	4	1	3	3	2
Metro	13	4	2	2	3	6
Sunday Mail	16	3	1	2	4	9
Sunday Life	24	7	5	2	1	16

**Table 5: Local publications**



## Regional

Daily	Total no of Publications: 49				Resolved	Rejected
	No of comp	Upheld (as offered /correction)				
North West Evening Mail	1	0	0	0	0	1
News & Star	1	0	0	0	0	1
Daily Gazette (Colchester)	1	0	0	0	1	0
Nuneaton News	1	0	0	0	1	0
Peterborough Telegraph	1	0	0	0	1	0
Plymouth Herald	1	0	0	0	0	1
The Newsletter (Belfast)	1	0	0	0	1	0
The Leader	1	0	0	0	1	0
Hartlepool Mail	1	0	0	0	0	1
Evening News and Star	1	0	0	0	0	1
Norwich Evening News	1	1	1	0	0	0
The Bolton News	2	0	0	0	1	1
Shropshire Star (daily editions:	2	0	0	0	0	2
Jersey Evening Post	2	0	0	0	0	2
Dorset Echo	2	0	0	0	1	1
Blackpool Gazette	2	1	0	1	0	1
South Wales Evening Post	2	1	0	1	1	0
Paisley Daily Express	2	2	0	2	0	0
Lancashire Evening Post	2	2	0	2	0	0
Irish News	3	0	0	0	0	3
South Wales Echo	3	2	0	2	0	1
Greenock Telegraph	3	2	0	2	0	1
Lancashire Telegraph	4	1	0	1	1	2
Telegraph and Argus	5	0	0	0	2	3
Belfast Telegraph	5	1	1	0	0	4
Nottingham Post	5	1	1	0	0	4
Swindon Advertiser	5	1	1	0	0	4
Southern Daily Echo	5	1	1	0	1	3
Oxford Mail	5	2	2	0	1	2
Evening Times	5	2	1	1	2	1
Grimsby Telegraph	6	0	0	0	0	6
Express & Star (daily editions: (	6	1	0	1	0	5
Evening Chronicle (Newcastle)	6	1	0	1	0	5
Daily Post (East & West)	6	2	2	0	1	3
The Sentinel	6	3	2	1	0	3
Edinburgh Evening News	6	3	2	1	0	3
Press & Journal	6	4	2	2	1	1
Evening Telegraph	7	0	0	0	1	6
Bournemouth Echo	7	1	0	1	2	4
Coventry Telegraph	7	2	2	0	2	3
Yorkshire Evening Post	7	2	0	2	2	3
The Northern Echo	7	3	1	2	0	4
Birmingham Mail	10	2	1	1	2	7
Bristol Post	11	2	2	0	2	7
Hull Daily Mail	13	5	0	5	3	5
The Argus (Brighton)	14	3	0	3	3	8
Liverpool Echo (Daily and Extra	14	4	4	0	3	7
Manchester Evening News	15	5	4	1	1	9
The Belfast Telegraph	18	5	3	2	3	10
website	Total no of Publications: 5				Resolved	Rejected
	No of comp	Upheld (as offered /correction)				
eveningtimes.co.uk	1	0	0	0	0	1
Dailyecho.co.uk	1	0	0	0	0	1
Thenorthernecho.co.uk	2	0	0	0	1	1
manchestereveningnews.co.uk	5	1	1	0	1	3
Birminghammail.co.uk	13	5	4	1	4	4

**Table 6: Regional publication complaints**

## National

Daily	Total no of Publications: 16					
	No of comp	Upheld (as offered /correction)			Resolved	Rejected
Daily Star of Scotland	1	0	0	0	1	0
The Times Scotland	2	0	0	0	0	2
Scottish Daily Express	2	1	1	0	1	0
Scottish Daily Mail	6	1	0	1	0	5
The Scotsman	12	1	1	0	3	8
The National	12	2	2	0	3	7
Daily Star	17	5	3	2	4	8
The Herald	19	4	3	1	3	12
The Scottish Sun	27	6	3	3	6	15
Daily Mirror	43	9	3	6	6	28
Daily Express	46	15	8	7	6	26
Daily Record	49	10	6	4	12	27
The Daily Telegraph	101	29	9	20	16	56
The Sun	107	31	15	16	23	53
Daily Mail	111	16	13	3	35	60
The Times	118	26	14	12	21	71
Sunday	Total no of Publications: 14					
	No of comp	Upheld (as offered /correction)			Resolved	Rejected
The Sunday Times Magazine	1	0	0	0	0	1
The Scottish Sun on Sunday	1	0	0	0	0	1
The Sunday Times Scotland	1	0	0	0	0	1
The Herald on Sunday	1	1	0	1	0	0
Scottish Sunday Express	2	0	0	0	0	2
Scottish Mail on Sunday	3	1	0	1	0	2
Sunday People	6	3	2	1	0	3
Sunday Express	8	3	1	2	3	2
Daily Star on Sunday	13	6	4	2	3	4
The Sun on Sunday	16	2	1	1	4	10
Sunday Mirror	20	4	0	4	2	14
The Sunday Telegraph	33	2	2	0	7	24
The Mail on Sunday	50	11	4	7	8	31
The Sunday Times	64	18	11	7	12	34
Website	Total no of Publications: 15					
	No of comp	Upheld (as offered /correction)			Resolved	Rejected
thenational.scot	1	0	0	0	0	1
Scotsman.com	1	0	0	0	1	0
nationalworld.com	1	0	0	0	0	1
thestar.co.uk	2	0	0	0	2	0
thesundaytimes.co.uk	4	0	0	0	2	2
thescottishsun.co.uk	10	7	4	3	1	2
Dailymirror.co.uk	11	4	1	3	3	4
Thetimes.co.uk	13	4	3	1	2	7
Dailyrecord.co.uk	20	6	1	5	4	10
DailyStar.co.uk	23	8	4	4	7	8
Telegraph.co.uk	30	6	3	3	9	15
Thesun.co.uk	62	13	6	7	27	22
mirror.co.uk	70	16	9	7	18	36
Express.co.uk	83	37	26	11	19	27
Mail online	197	43	18	25	76	78

Table 7: National publication complaints

### *Accuracy complaints upheld*

<b>Category:</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>114</b>
<i>Type:</i>	website	45
<i>Type:</i>	Weekly	69
<b>Category:</b>	<b>Magazine</b>	<b>32</b>
<i>Type:</i>	Magazine	26
<i>Type:</i>	Website	6
<b>Category:</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>282</b>
<i>Type:</i>	Daily	130
<i>Type:</i>	Sunday	40
<i>Type:</i>	Website	112
<b>Category:</b>	<b>Regional</b>	<b>56</b>
<i>Type:</i>	Daily	52
<i>Type:</i>	Website	4
<b>Total accuracy element upheld:</b>		<b>484</b>

Table 8: Accuracy complaints upheld

### *Privacy complaints upheld*

<b>Category:</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Type:</i>	website	5
<i>Type:</i>	Weekly	8
<b>Category:</b>	<b>Magazine</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Type:</i>	Magazine	2
<b>Category:</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>18</b>
<i>Type:</i>	Daily	8
<i>Type:</i>	Sunday	3
<i>Type:</i>	Website	7
<b>Category:</b>	<b>Regional</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Type:</i>	Daily	7
<b>Total privacy element upheld:</b>		<b>40</b>

Table 9: privacy complaints upheld

### *Children complaints upheld*

<b>Category:</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Type:</i>	Website	6
<i>Type:</i>	Weekly	1
<b>Category:</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Type:</i>	Daily	1
<i>Type:</i>	Sunday	1
<i>Type:</i>	Website	1
<b>Category:</b>	<b>Regional</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Type:</i>	Daily	1
<b>Total accuracy element upheld:</b>		<b>11</b>

Table 10: Children complaints upheld

### *Intrusion complaints upheld*

<b>Category:</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>4</b>
<i>Type:</i>	Weekly	4
<b>Category:</b>	<b>Regional</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Type:</i>	Daily	1
<b>Total intrusion element upheld:</b>		<b>5</b>

Table 11: Intrusion complaints upheld

### *Discrimination comps upheld*

<b>Category:</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Type:</i>	Daily	2
<b>Category:</b>	<b>Regional</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Type:</i>	Daily	1
<b>Total discrimination element upheld:</b>		<b>3</b>

Table 12: Discrimination complaints upheld

### *Harassment comps upheld*

<b>Category:</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Type:</i>	Daily	2
<i>Type:</i>	Website	1
<b>Total harassment element upheld:</b>		<b>3</b>

Table 13: Harassment complaints upheld

## Upheld complaints by type of publication

The clauses of the Editors' Code most often breached and that cause complainers the most aggravation are: accuracy, privacy, intrusion, harassment, stories involving children and discrimination. Accuracy is by the far the most common cause of complaint at 88 percent with 2,138 complaints of which 484 were upheld. The nationals are by far the most likely to commit this breach having 58.3 percent of all upheld accuracy complaints mainly by the dailies and websites. As can be seen in tables seven and eight above, it is the London-based nationals that produce the majority of these complaints, especially the popular tabloids.

Local newspapers come second but with only 114 publications found to have breached the accuracy out of 630 complaints spanning 1,127 local newspapers and websites, the ratio is much lower at making up 18.1 percent. Only nine publications have more than two complaints upheld.

Regionals have a similar record with 52 upheld accuracy complaints spread across 90 publications. Only six publications have more than two upheld and none have more than five.

Magazines perform the best with only 36 upheld accuracy complaints spread over only 16 publications breaching the accuracy clause of the 701 publications in this group. Here again it is a handful of publications that top the league with more than three upheld each: *The Spectator*, *The Jewish Chronicle* and *thejc.com*.

Privacy is the second most complained of section of the code raising 737 complaints, 158 of which were upheld but only 40 for the privacy breach. Nationals lead the way again with 18 upheld complaints followed closely by local papers at 13, regionals seven and magazines at two. The *Daily Mail* with three upheld complaints and the *Mail Online* with six lead the publications in this code breach (see table nine). The *Lancashire Evening Post*, *Sunday World*, *The Times* and *the Sunday Times* were all found to have breached the code twice. All other publications were in breach only once.

Complaints involving children (table ten) are relatively rare with only 127 complaints alleging a breach of clause six. 22 of these complaints were upheld in part, only 11 concerning clause six (children). Seven of these were in local papers and three in nationals. Two of the local paper complaints concerned court reports of cases involving children, one concerned pictures and report of a schoolgirl knocked down outside school, also an intrusion complaint (see table 11). Three of the local complaints and two of the nationals concerned the same story about parents flying to Pakistan to find their children in hospital. The regional complaint complaints are interesting. There are a total of 278 complaints that include a complaint about intrusion into grief and shock where the editors' code requires that "enquiries and approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively." Of these, 118 concerned national publications, 112 local publications, 38 regionals and nine magazines. Only five of these were upheld concerning the intrusion element, 4 against local papers (*Sunday World*, *Gravesend News Shopper*, *Lincolnshire Echo* and *Derby Telegraph*) and one against a regional paper, *The Lancashire Evening Post*. One concerned pictures and report of a schoolgirl knocked down outside school, a second concerned a former IRA chief fighting Covid-19, two concerned reports of suicide inquests and the fifth concerned naming a local woman, killed in a terrorist attack in Tunisia, before the family was notified.

There were only three complaints upheld out of 309 complaints that concerned alleged harassment (table 13), all against national newspapers: *The Sun*, *the Scottish Sun* and *the Mail Online*. Similarly, discrimination triggered 185 complaints but only three were upheld. Local publications attracted 48 complaints in this category, nationals 107, magazines 8 and regionals 22. Out of the 185, only three were upheld. Two of them against *the Sun*, one concerning the Jeremy Clarkson column attacking the Duchess of York and the other concerning a story about Labour's first transgender candidate. The other complaint against the *Brighton Argus* concerned a court case about a disabled man found with child pornography.

## Discussion

There is very little evidence to be found in the complaints data from Ipso to show that it is a significant improvement on the work of the PCC and that it has somehow managed to drastically improve standards of journalism.

Out of 2,426 complaints to the end of April 2024 only 614 complaints (25.3 percent) were upheld. Accuracy continues to be the main source of complaints for Ipso as it was for the PCC with 484 (88.1 percent) of all complaints alleging that the story somehow misrepresented the truth. A further 40 (7.2percent) complaints involve privacy and 47 (8.5percent) deal with everything else including intru-

sion, harassment, discrimination, reporting children, reporting crime (witnesses, victims, criminals), reporting suicide, clandestine devices, confidential sources and hospitals.

The last ten years of criticism about the press and the Leveson inquiry has clearly raised public awareness of a complaints procedure and so Ipso receives a large number of complaints, far greater than the PCC, and it is fair to point out that many of them have little to do with the journalism and that therefore many do not prove to be any kind of test of the Editors' Code. However, at least 240 a year, on average, do show prima facie breaches of the code. This reduces to 50 or so a year being upheld averaging 44 concerning accuracy, four about privacy and five concerning everything else. This compares with upheld rates for Ipso's predecessor, the PCC (Frost, 2016: p339) which received far fewer complaints but adjudicated an average of 30 to 40 a year with about half of those upheld. Over its 23 years of operation the number of complaints rose from under 2,000pa to 12,763 in its final year but its adjudications fell from 67 to 21. Over the first five years of its operations, the PCC adjudicated on average 75.2 cases upholding 34 but in its final five years despite a massive rise in complaints it adjudicated on average 28.5 upholding 15.4 (Ibid.) Whilst Ipso adjudicates significantly more complaints it does not uphold, relatively, that many more.

Most of the additional complaints Ipso receives seem to be about accuracy. The number it deals with is much higher than was the case with the PCC when 73.6% of the complaints received and 55.9% of the cases they adjudicated concerned accuracy.

Ipso is supposed to be a more robust regulator than the PCC, which was dismissed by nearly all at the Leveson Inquiry as simply a complaints handler. The number of complaints Ipso upholds are on a par with the PCC, relative to the increased number of complaints it receives. This increase in complaints could be evidence of a fall in standards but could also be easily explained by the increased awareness of the new regulator. Ipso has not introduced any of the measures Leveson recommended to encourage publications to join a recognised regulator and penalise those that refused, nor has Ipso yet uses its powers to investigate and, if necessary, penalise errant publications with significant fines.

The problem with this, of course, is that without encouragements to join, publications are unlikely to remain members of a regulator that is seen as able and likely to penalise those that cross the line, particularly if the penalty for such digression is financial as well as reputational.

Ipso and its supporting publishers claim that Ipso is doing an excellent job and all publications are behaving to very high standards since the Leveson Inquiry. Getting rid of the PCC has turned things around, they claim. It seems more likely that:

- (a) Ipso, like the PCC before it, is flawed and is unable to carry out its remit because its structure and code are deficient;
- (b) The industry that set up Ipso has done its best to ensure that the regulator does not have the powers it needs to truly regulate a free press.

There are not too many people outside of the offices of Ipso and many newspaper editors' offices who believe that the printed media in the UK is doing a trustworthy job and delivering high standards. A 2023 Yougov poll put the FT as the most trustworthy with a net score of 30+ (40percent trusting against 10 percent distrusting) with the Guardian coming second at +16. Neither of these papers is regulated by Ipso. Most other national papers have negative scores with *The Express on* -31, *The Daily Mail* and *The Mirror on* -47 and *the Sun* on -53. ([https:// yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/45744-which-media-outlets-do-britons-trust-2023](https://yougov.co.uk/politics/articles/45744-which-media-outlets-do-britons-trust-2023) accessed 30/5/2024).

The survey only covers national press and broadcasting but it is probably reasonable to suppose that the national daily press is the least trusted. The *BBC*, *ITV* and *Channel 4* are in the top four with *the FT*. Very few magazines are the subject of complaints and only a handful have more than one upheld complaint against them, the *Jewish Chronicle* and the *Spectator* being the exceptions. The same is largely true of local and regional newspapers with the majority having no complaints against them and only a small number having more than one upheld. Regional newspapers, with their daily circulation, tend to have more, with four having more than three complaints upheld against them. The *Liverpool Echo* has four upheld and the *Hull Daily Mail*, the *Manchester Evening News*, *The Belfast Telegraph* and *Birminghammail.com* each have five.

Comparatively, *Mail Online* had 199 complaints by April 25, 2024 of which 44 were upheld and 77 resolved, whilst *the Times*, *Daily Mail*, *The Sun* and *the Daily Telegraph* all had more than 100 each (101 to

118) with 26 to 31 upheld, except for *the Daily Mail*, which had 16 upheld. These papers also had a high number of complaints resolved. 21 for *the Times*, 24 for *The Sun* and 16 for the *Daily Telegraph*. *The Daily Mail* had 35 resolved.

Two reviews of the regulator (The Jeffrey review being the latest, reporting in 2023) have found that Ipso was operating independently, in that its decisions about specific complaints were not subject to any significant external influences. Sir Bill Jeffrey did raise the question of when Ipso would decide to launch a standards investigation. His report also recommended that Ipso take responsibility for the Editors' Code of Practice. The 2022 annual report noted that:

*"While Sir Bill found "constraints" due to governance structures, he ultimately concluded that Ipso was "operating independently" and that there was "no sign of improper influence by the industry on complaints decisions, or that decisions were taken in other than an impartial way"*

The review also consulted a random sample of complainants. The annual report said that:

*"He noted most complainants found Ipso staff "helpful and professional", and the decision making process "fair, even if the outcome was not what they were seeking"."* (Ipso, 2022:p10)

Jeffrey found that Ipso, as an organisation, was operating independently with no sign of improper influence by the industry on complaints decisions. This seems to back up the views of many critics that the problem is not Ipso, which has a determined staff and does its best to deliver to the code of practice. The problem is that the structures within which Ipso is obliged to work and the code that it has to apply are both flawed sufficiently to prevent Ipso doing the job required of it by parliament and the public. The penalties it can levy against erring publications are in practice limited to a correction. Ipso says it cannot insist on apologies. The Leveson Inquiry recommendations, designed to give a recognised regulator some power but also independence, were by-passed and changes made to weaken them. Ipso is funded by the Regulatory Funding Company, an organisation set up by the news publishing media. It also convenes the Editors' Code of Practice Committee. It is a limited liability company with nine directors drawn from regional newspapers, national newspapers and magazines.

Ipso itself was devised and constituted by the industry and presented as the industry's plan for a new regulator as just one of several diversions from Leveson's recommendations. In an assessment by the Media Standards Trust of Ipso in 2019 it found that after five years of operation it satisfied only 13 of 38 Leveson recommendations and failed to satisfy 25 (Ramsey and Barnett, 2021, p31). Further crucial parts of Leveson's recommendations were ignored including the trigger for a standards investigation raising the threshold to "serious **and** systemic". This has led to there being no standards investigations or use of the penalties such as fines. A further problem area, identified by Leveson and a number of others is the Editor's Code of Practice.

## Code critique

The Editors' Code is often touted by national newspaper editors and their supporters as being an entirely sound, virtually faultless code merely requiring the occasional update and an ideal tool for Ipso to adjudicate against. This is partly because it came in for little criticism at the Leveson Inquiry. However, the Leveson inquiry was not enthusiastic about the Code then used by the PCC. Leveson felt that it was for the regulator to deal with the Code rather than the inquiry and in his recommendations called for a new Code to be agreed by the board of the new regulator. He pointed out, whilst discussing misogyny and other discrimination issues:

*'Those representing women's and minority groups would be entitled to retort that if the Code as currently worded creates the kind of legalistic difficulties which have just been outlined, then the solution is a straightforward one: simply amend the Code. The force of this point is noted, but it should be considered in depth by any future regulator, rather than by this Inquiry.'* (Leveson, 2012, p661)

This is not the place for a detailed critique of the Code. However, a quick glance will show some of the major failings.

As identified above, 88.2 percent of complaint are about accuracy but only about 22.7 percent of such complaints are upheld. How can it be possible that more than 2,000 people think there is a significant inaccuracy in a story yet fewer than a quarter of these are upheld, bearing in mind Ipso has already decided there is a prima facie breach of the code?

The first thing to remember is the different standards of complainers and the code. Complainants are no doubt thinking “this is not true.” Or that it “misrepresents me”. But that is not the standard being applied. Truth and accuracy are very different, but the Code does not even seek accuracy it says:

*The Press must take care not to publish inaccurate, misleading or distorted information or images, including headlines not supported by the text.*

Failing to be inaccurate is a long way from being accurate and certainly a long way from being truthful, reasonable or fair. In a court case a deceitful claim might be made by a witness. The law requires a correct report of such a case so such deceit must be reported accurately even though the reporter cannot, and should not, confirm its veracity. However, the code doesn't even simply require that this is reported accurately. It shouldn't be inaccurate and even this is not the code's standard. The code also requires that the publication should have taken care not to publish inaccurate information. If the complainant cannot prove that the publication lacked care both in the initial report and the edited version and any headline then there is no breach. Merely publishing an inaccuracy is not against the code if the publication took care not to publish such an inaccuracy. The only part of the code that pays proper attention to accuracy and fairness – another important concept – is in the final part of clause one:

*A publication must report fairly and accurately the outcome of an action for defamation to which it has been a party, unless an agreed settlement states otherwise, or an agreed statement is published.*

So the only time an Ipso publication must report accurately and fairly is when it has been sued and is reporting the outcome.

Other clauses also have issues. Discrimination for instance is one that's drawn considerable criticism from a range of sources. Clause 12 instructs that:

*i) The press must avoid prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual's race, colour, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability.*

*ii) Details of an individual's race, colour, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental illness or disability must be avoided unless genuinely relevant to the story. (www.ipso.co.uk accessed 5/5/24)*

Both clauses talk about individuals, whereas much of what offends readers is broad condemnation or categorising of specific groups rather than individuals. Both racism and misogyny, for instance, are often aimed at groups rather than specific individuals. This used to be compounded by a requirement for all complaints to be made by the individual concerned. However, Ipso will now take a complaint from a representative group and so one or two discrimination complaints have been accepted from representative groups. However, it is worth noting that there were, back in the PCC days, large numbers of complaints submitted by representative groups about discrimination, all of which were rejected. Groups concerned with these issues now tend to complain under accuracy, rather than discrimination with mixed results.

Privacy and intrusion are probably the most significant elements of the code and yet very few complaints are upheld about those clauses – 40 concerning privacy and five about intrusion. Fewer than half the privacy complaints upheld and only one of the intrusions were committed by national publications. Bearing in mind that the nationals rely heavily on reporting the lives of celebrities from different social strata, why are they not complained of more often? Part of the answer seems to be that celebrities can pay and prefer to take the case to court. This suggests that the additional exposure caused by complaining to Ipso to simply get, at best, a positive adjudication published by the offender is not seen as worth the effort. Better to go to court, set a significant precedent for the future and possibly get some level of damages.

Since the passing of the Human Rights Act 1998 the courts have been used much more to pursue privacy restraint and cases have significantly changed approaches to reporting of privacy matters. Some very recent ones that have changed coverage of criminal investigations and other privacy matters include:

**ZXC v Bloomberg** found that a person **can** have a reasonable expectation of privacy with regard to a criminal investigation before a charge is brought or an arrest is made. This is a significant change to what journalists can report made without parliament being involved. Bloomberg's appeal was unsuccessful and an award of £25,000 damages was confirmed. ([www.supremecourt.uk/cases/uksc-2020-0122.htm](http://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/uksc-2020-0122.htm) accessed 28/5/2024)

**CRV v Associated Newspapers.** The *Mail Online* reported the arrest of a man for being connected with Manchester Arena suicide bomber Salman Abedi. The Mail Online failed to remove the article after the claimants' release and also published his name with an alternative spelling, address and other identifiable details. The article was taken down following a letter of claim. The claimant was successful and awarded £83,000 as he had a reasonable expectation of privacy when his arrest was reported. ([www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/damages-payout-arena-bombing-1949941](http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/damages-payout-arena-bombing-1949941) accessed 28/5/2024)

**The Duchess of Sussex v Associated Newspapers** was a very significant case in 2021. Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, won her application for summary judgment against the *Mail On Sunday* after it published a letter to her from her father. Associated appealed but the case was dismissed. ([www.5rb.com/case/duchess-of-sussex-v-associated-news-ltd](http://www.5rb.com/case/duchess-of-sussex-v-associated-news-ltd) accessed 28/5/2024)

Other cases have been taken to court in the last few years, with mixed results (See Frost, 2019 for examples), but it is clear that those most likely to have their privacy invaded are using their wealth to protect their privacy through the courts rather than Ipso. This leads to the wealthy being able to protect their privacy in the courts whilst those of lesser means either grin and bear it or risk further exposure to get a meaningless adjudication published in the offending publication.

So the code is also a cause for concern and sits alongside the structure that Ipso must use to judge complaints as lacking. Whilst its application by Ipso may be entirely appropriate, the structure within which it must apply it and the code itself, neither of which Ipso can change, means it is struggling to affect standards.

## Conclusion

Ipso is an organisation that deals swiftly and effectively with complaints it receives within its structures as developed by the industry and using the code that has been handed down to it with a few minor amendments over the past couple of years. Examining its performance as identified above, it is clear that the structures and the code are a serious impediment to acceptable regulation. It is also clear that this is a deliberate choice by the industry going against the advice of the Leveson Inquiry and the clear will of parliament to strengthen press regulation.

Ipso upholds a very small number of the complaints made and most of those concern alleged inaccuracy. Upheld complaints are penalised by the publication of a correction or adjudication in the offending newspaper on a page agreed by Ipso and often to text previously offered by the publication. Complaints about privacy, harassment and intrusion are rarely upheld, possibly because so few are made. Ipso is unable to do anything about them other than continue to add upset to the complainant as newspapers try to manoeuvre the minimum resolution possible.

These are useful lessons to teach students on courses of journalism. Students need to know about various codes of practice, including Ipso as this is probably the regulator that those working in print or online are most likely to come into contact with. They need to understand the code and its potential failings and have a good understanding of the parts of the code that are most likely to cause complaint. Examining and discussing the performance of Ipso and its members is a good way of getting students to understand the importance of high journalistic standards and the potential areas of complaint. Discussing how such standards can be improved within the industry and what changes might be made to the code offer useful seminar discussions and oblige the students to consider why standards in journalism matter.

Standards are important in any market and journalism is no different. It is clear that national newspapers in particular are not prepared to apply the standards Leveson recommended and that this is to the detriment of the reputation of UK journalism. Students need to understand this and consider the importance of trustworthy journalism in a media world that is flooded with conspiracy theories and misinformation.



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# Reaching readers matters: What *The Junction's* analytics reveal about digital audiences and the way we should teach journalism

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## Abstract

Reaching online news audiences depends on the vagaries of proprietorial and opaque algorithms that control information flows. Understanding the tools that measure where and how content is delivered is crucial to improving the reach of news. To contribute to debates about how to best teach journalism in the algorithmic age, this article analyses the three most-read articles on *The Junction* – a publication that showcases the best university student journalism from Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia – to learn how journalism programs can better prepare students for professional practice today. The article asserts that because of the fundamental importance of search engine optimisation and analytic metrics, university journalism programs should integrate these skills early in their courses. However, as the three articles also demonstrate, understanding analytics alone is not the only means to success, as each story has distinct properties which helped them achieve wide readership, including strong and unique news values and persuasive and engaging storytelling: qualities all journalism programs should continue to prioritise in their pedagogy.

## Keywords

digital journalism, journalism education, algorithms, SEO metrics, readability, news values

## Introduction

**As journalists are now encouraged to think about how they reach audiences online and sustain their attention, university journalism programs are obliged to bring these considerations to the forefront of their curriculum. It is no longer enough to equip graduates with the craft skills of researching, writing and production because deploying those alone does not guarantee editorial content is widely consumed.**

Today, students must understand how to attract, engage, and retain online audiences to improve the

reach of their work, and also because online metrics play a key role in many newsrooms, from content selection to hiring and promotion decisions (Christin, 2020). Understanding such analytics is, therefore, also a key skill required of journalism program teaching staff. This has been a challenge for journalism programs, which many have accepted and some have excelled at addressing. But it is also an evolving area in which there's always more to learn about platforms and tools, and how search engine optimisation analysis and audience analytics are used to measure the ways audiences connect and engage with journalistic content.

This article starts with the premise that improving how journalists reach audiences should be a primary consideration in journalism pedagogy, while recognizing that these skills are not always easy to attain, let alone teach. In some cases, the authors suspect, those doing the teaching are learning at least some of these skills from their students, which can either be interpreted as evidence of a healthy intergenerational learning exchange or as an indication that academic staff need to update and broaden their skills.

We, the authors, take that idea further by analysing the three most popular articles written by Australian journalism students on *The Junction* online publication to learn more about reaching audiences and online search. These students, with some assistance from their academic mentors, have used different approaches in crafting their articles to attract and hold their audiences. Collectively, these stories suggest lessons that can improve the way journalism is taught today.

*The Junction* is a news website which showcases university student journalism from Australia, New Zealand, the Pacific and Indonesia. It is wholly owned by the Journalism Education and Research Association of Australia. Its editorial organisation has a decentralised structure which allows key journalism teaching staff, designated as campus editors, at each university to publish their students' content directly to the site. *The Junction* has an editorial board, comprising several members from different universities, which sets priorities, determines projects, fosters innovation, and encourages students and staff from across the sector to work together to produce impactful and creative reportage. *The Junction* is designed to improve the experience of learning journalism skills, while serving a civic good as a publisher of public interest reporting. *The Junction* also allows universities to publish content independently, free from the commercial constraints sometimes imposed by mainstream publications.

*The Junction's* editorial board has sought to increase the website's audience, partly by improving the search engine optimisation (SEO) of the site. The board employed consultants to improve the structural integrity of the website to support 'findability' by web search engines. To improve indexing, the site imposed greater discipline with naming conventions and the removal of broken links. It developed audience reach by increasing social media posts, creating a downloadable app and installing a push notification icon to allow readers to request content notifications. Despite this, most traffic to *The Junction* comes from search engines. The board provided resources for the network of campus editors, as well as training in SEO principles in the publication workflow. SEO is a term that describes a wide range of strategies to improve a website's ranking and visibility in search engine results and encompasses both technical and editorial considerations (Giomelakis and Veglis, 2015). One of the resources for campus editors was the suite of data analytic tools used by School Newspapers Online (SNO), the WordPress platform that hosts and supports the website and associated app. Another resource is Yoast's Premium News WordPress Plugin (Yoast, 2023c), which allows those uploading stories to perform SEO 'health checks' on content before publication. Yoast is a company providing plugins (modules of software) that can be added to websites to encourage effective SEO practices. This is important information for everyone involved in the preparation of site content, especially campus editors and students uploading editorial material.

As SEO is a broad field, this article focuses on the teaching of journalism and journalism production in the algorithmic age. To this end, the authors – *The Junction* editor Andrew Dodd, former deputy editor Jeanti St Clair and site coordinator Kayt Davies – pose the following research questions:

RQ 1: What do the most popular stories on The Junction suggest about attracting audiences?

RQ 2: What can we learn about teaching journalism from Google data and Yoast SEO analytics?

RQ3: How can journalism courses teach students about reaching audiences in the era of algorithm-mediated distribution?

## Literature review

The shift to digital sources for news has all but eclipsed traditional media delivery channels. By 2022, less than 5 percent of Australian news audience were consuming print news exclusively (Roy Morgan

2022), instead turning online for their primary sources of news. By 2023, reports examining Australian digital news consumption showed between 49 percent (Park et al., 2023) and 71 percent (Newman et al., 2023) of survey participants were using online news, including social media sources, to stay informed.

With such significant online news audiences, it is inevitable that algorithms play an increasingly important role in delivering news to audiences. According to the *Digital News Report: Australia 2023*, while 27 percent of surveyed participants nominated online news, a further 22 percent nominated social media as their main source of news (Park et al. 2023). The algorithms that drive audiences to news websites are proprietary knowledge, carefully guarded by the search and social media companies that own them. However, even without access to those ever-shifting algorithmic codes, it is useful to make distinctions between how audiences connect with content.

When considering online news consumption, the Pew Research Center (2020) identified three key routes which brought audiences to news: direct engagement with news publications (via apps, emails or push notifications); algorithm-driven engagement via social media, and deliberate engagement via search. The 2021 Reuters Digital News report, which addressed the issue of engagement in depth, found that 25 percent of survey participants named direct engagement, 26 percent named social media, and 25 percent named search engines as their means for finding news online (Newman et al. 2021). These distinctions have value to publications because each readership pathway requires different strategies to maximise engagement. To boost direct engagement, publications can advertise their products. To increase social media spread, editorial attention needs to be paid to the whims of the social media algorithms (Peterson-Salahuddin and Diakopoulos 2020). To maximise delivery via search, SEO is relevant (Ulloa and Kacperski 2023), with online search dominated by Google holding around 85 percent of market share (Bianchi 2023).

Given that algorithms are trade secrets, attempts to boost results involve following advice from grey literature sources ranging from the search engines themselves to consultants and users touting a wide array of tips, hacks and products. Google's SEO Starter Guide makes it clear that a first SEO priority for online publication is facilitating search engines to *crawl* and *index* your site (Google 2023e: n.pag). This structural work involves ensuring menus are logical, and URL links in site content are functional and take users to pages they claim to link to. Further, helping Google (and other search engines) to *understand the content* is the second SEO priority. Search engines aim to provide users with the most relevant answers to the questions they ask. Google (2023d: n.pag) explains search algorithms consider "many factors and signals, including the words of your query, relevance and usability of pages, expertise of sources, and your location and settings" with the "weight applied to each factor varies depending on the nature of your query". It also says "freshness of the content" – its date of publication – is weighted more heavily in "answering queries about current news topics than it does about dictionary definitions" (2023d: n.pag). *Usability of pages* is a key concept in this quote. According to Yoast (2023b), this relates to user experience, a term sometimes shortened to UX. Yoast's SEO plugin encourages practices that boost user experience. UX is an important editorial consideration because search engines want to provide not only the best result for a search query, but the best experience, so websites which are technically and structurally efficient will be prioritised in searches (Hallebeek 2022). Additionally, the readability of the textual content is a key element of UX, as effective readability is important for connecting not only the human reader, but the search engine as well (Yoast 2023a). Yoast provides advice about readability in its SEO-plugin-in. Previously, it used the Flesch reading ease score, but replaced it with a "word complexity assessment" in 2022, which provides "actionable" recommendations to generally reduce word complexity to broaden accessibility (Toonen 2022). Hartley (2016) argues that the Flesch score is out-of-date, does not assess words in context and that different computer-based iterations of the test provide divergent results. The Yoast word complexity assessment uses a model that can "discern between complex and non-complex words, based on the word length and how common they are" and regards a word as complex if it is longer than seven characters, does not appear in the top 5000 most frequently used words and does not begin with a capital letter (Toonen 2002: n.pag). It is important to note that Yoast does not guarantee SEO success and many copywriters and SEO specialists warn against chasing 'green lights' (Doyle 2019; Lang 2023). In addition, our analysis of case-studied articles reveals Yoast's recommended practices are, at times, counter to the practice of clear and concise presentation of news content. The good news for journalism educators is that UX as a concept is relatively easy to explain and products, like Yoast, exist to provide training in how algorithmic and human engagement can be enhanced with effective UX design.

An issue that may have hindered the adoption of UX training by journalism courses has been newsroom resistance to the principle of SEO-driven decision-making (Dick 2011). More recently, however, there has been wider uptake in newsrooms. Giomelakis et al (2019) reported that many leading online

media outlets, including *The Daily Mail*, *Guardian*, *Los Angeles Times* and *Daily Telegraph*, employed SEO specialists, and the BBC was training journalists in basic SEO skills. In his 2011 study of newsroom practices including interviews with newsroom SEO staff, Dick wrote that where SEO advice on editorial and style conventions was resisted, newsrooms were losing website traffic, but this was “broadly considered a price worth paying ... to preserve the brand, and maintain the news values of the profession” (2011: 475). Christin, in her 2020 study of American and French newsrooms, notes a lingering newsroom tension in how the value or success of journalistic content is measured in the online news space, and suggests it demonstrates “an acute sense of conflict” (Christin 2020: 6) between an editorial mode of evaluation, which considers “original reporting, fact-checking and innovative angles” and the metrics-driven evaluation of news content, which is “click-based” and concerned with popularity (Christin 2020: 5)

These studies raise the question of whether SEO can remain at odds with news values and the Fourth Estate model of journalism, and, with syndication platforms like Google News and Apple News playing an increasingly important role in news distribution (Nguyen 2019), whether newsrooms and university journalism programs can afford to minimise the application of SEO principles and its emerging cousin Google/Apple News Optimisation (Venkat 2023). CUNY Professor Jeff Jarvis (2017) summed up the dismay journalists have felt about basing story choices on metrics, saying that turning to cats and Kardashians “depleted the seed corn that is our trust and brand”. More recently, he noted that the demise of BuzzFeed in 2023, which embraced metric-driven news choices, was an illustration of the dangers of making ‘chasing traffic’ a newsroom’s primary goal (Jarvis 2023). Vice News, another digital youth-oriented news site, and its music site Pitchfork Media, have since closed their standalone websites (Al Jazerra, 2024) BuzzFeed’s founding editor Ben Smith said the site’s closure marked “the end of the marriage between social media and news” (Purtrill, 2024). It was a marriage about a decade old, that had flourished and reshaped the news business, but then turned sour as arguments about revenue streams turned into parliamentary interventions and measures, such as Australia’s News Media Bargaining Code (ibid). Facebook’s reaction was to lose interest in news publication; a shift that has further entrenched publishers’ interests in direct engagement, that unshackles publications from the whims of social media platforms (Newman et al, 2021). It is important to note though, that while the heady days of BuzzFeed’s clickbait-infused news are over, that search engines still deliver significant volumes of traffic to news websites, and that Google’s Universal Analytics’ detailed accounts are promoted to news site managers as valuable tools in building “sustainable digital business” (Google News Initiative, n.d.). Despite this, many newsrooms are operating with a split focus between both a traditional news values-driven editorial mode and a metrics-driven one (Christin 2020).

An understanding of the concept of news values is considered fundamental to journalism practice, yet there is no one core set that is held as dominant. One of the foundational textbooks used in Australian university journalism programs (*The Daily Miracle/News As it Happens*), by authors, Conley and Lamble (2006), and later Lamble (2016), has presented Masterton’s (1992) list of eight news values: Impact, Conflict, Timeliness, Proximity, Prominence, Currency, Human Interest, and the Unusual. However, other theorists have proposed that, in order to adapt to the digital age, such lists should be revised. Caple and Bednarek’s (2013) assessment suggested the inclusion of Topicality, but we argue this can largely be equated to Masterton’s (1992) news values of Currency and Proximity. Harcup and O’Neil’s (2017) updated list includes Exclusivity, Conflict, Audio Visuals, Shareability, and Drama. These complement the old list that featured Bad News, Surprise, Entertainment, Relevance, Follow-up, the Power Elite, Celebrity, Good News, Magnitude, and News Organization’s Agenda (p. 13). For Harcup and O’Neill, news values continue to operate as selection criteria, as being “intrinsic” (2017: 1483) in events, “inherent” (2017: 1483) in news stories, and they contend that “potential news stories must generally satisfy one and preferably more of [these] requirements to be selected” (2017: 1482). An omission from these lists is a category describing the value of a Fresh Perspective, which could be defined as a new perspective on an issue, based on who is telling the story and the sources used. Harcup and O’Neill’s news value of Exclusivity suggested stories generated by news organisations’ initiative as “the result of interviews, letters, investigations, surveys, polls, and so on” (2017: 1482), despite the general understanding that exclusive stories result from the author having preferential access to information or to the subject of their story. A wider definition of an Exclusive, or inclusion of both Exclusivity and Freshness into a category called, perhaps, Originality, could include stories about issues that few others choose to write about. Advocates of more socially useful forms of journalism, such as peace, civic, solutions and constructive journalism have argued that news values, used as news selection criteria in newsrooms, need to take social value into account. They have called for higher value to be placed on stories that are

public, solution, future and action-oriented, and that counter a bias towards negativity in the news (Hermans and Drok 2018). Such a value could be called Constructiveness.

Improving SEO results involves so many possible factors, including interactions with unknowns in the applied algorithms, that many writers have pondered whether it is an art or a science (Petre, Duffy and Hund 2019; Chen 2023). Most agree though that success is an iterative process involving trial and error, tests and evaluations. Therefore, in order to take the next steps in improving the SEO of the student journalism published on *The Junction*, and university-based news websites, it is important to look in detail at some of the stories that have performed best in terms of web traffic, and to consider whether the things that those articles did well represent a strong application of news values (and which ones), and/or whether they applied effective UX and SEO practice.

## Methodology

We undertook an indepth analysis of the content and the SEO strategies of the three most popular articles published on *The Junction* between 1 October 2018 and 31 October 2022. This date range is based on the date of publication of the oldest article, and ends at the time we commenced our research. The top three, ranked in order of page impressions are:

1. *Golden Key: Worth joining or a waste of money?*
2. *How Tinder girls are making a fortune*
3. *COVID-19 tough on long-distance relationships*

Attracting and holding an audience to a website is a key objective for any newsroom. Through this study, it is possible to assess a range of factors that may affect the popularity of stories. These factors include both content and technical considerations. The former relates to editorial material, news values, story structure and UX and SEO strategies, while the technical considerations relate to the functioning and structure of the website. We focus our content analysis of the articles on how the headlines, page structure and journalistic content might attract audiences and generate traction, as well as how the content employs key SEO and UX strategies, including readability.

We are also interested in metrics relating to audience acquisition and engagement with content. In the discussion section, we explore the interaction between editorial material and SEO practices in our case-studied articles. Each case study includes a data snapshot of the story from the date of its publication to 31 October 2022.

## Google Analytics metrics

As the bulk of *The Junction's* organic traffic is derived from Google, we use Google Universal Analytics to conduct our data analysis on each story (Google 2023a). While Google switched to Google Analytics 4 (GA4) in mid 2023, this analysis covers October 1, 2018 to October 31, 2022, which is covered by Google's Universal Analytics (UA) framework, and can provide the historical data relevant to this analysis. As such, we count *Unique Page Views* as a measure of audience acquisition at the story page level because most of our audience comes via search engines to the student's article. We use *Average Session Duration* as a measure of audience engagement. We do not include data on *Bounce* rates because the metric, when measured with Universal Analytics, is less informative (Google 2023e). Additionally, *The Junction* has a very high number of single-page users and we are not assessing how many pages users might visit during a session. We are also interested in the search terms which visitors use on Google to find the articles.

## Key news values

We have assessed each article against a set of news values. Drawing on Masterton (1992); Caple and Bednarek (2013); Brighton and Foy (2007); Harcup and O'Neill (2017); and Hermans and Drok (2018), we have used impact, conflict, timeliness, proximity, prominence, currency/topicality, human interest, the unusual, relevance, exclusivity, and constructiveness.

## SEO strategies

In our discussion, we briefly describe the technical dimensions of each story but focus on the editorial content so that we might then assess how the content and technical considerations might interact to affect each story's popularity.

Page	Page Views	Unique Page Views	Avg. Time on Page	Entrances	Bounce Rate	% Exit	Page Value
	549,877 % of Total: 100.00% (549,877)	486,223 % of Total: 100.00% (486,223)	00:02:14 Avg for View: 00:02:14 (0.00%)	410,593 % of Total: 100.00% (410,593)	89.00% Avg for View: 89.00% (0.00%)	74.67% Avg for View: 74.67% (0.00%)	US\$0.00 % of Total: 0.00% (US\$0.00)
1. /2018/10/01/golden-key-worth-joining-or-a-waste-of-money/	127,902 (23.26%)	121,885 (25.07%)	00:08:11	121,806 (29.67%)	95.35%	94.97%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
2. /	41,039 (7.46%)	27,932 (5.74%)	00:01:34	23,700 (5.77%)	43.66%	36.63%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
3. /2019/04/23/how-tinder-girls-are-making-a-fortune/	27,872 (5.07%)	26,530 (5.46%)	00:07:28	26,481 (6.45%)	95.22%	94.73%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
4. /2020/09/15/covid-19-tough-on-long-distance-relationships/	14,741 (2.68%)	14,199 (2.92%)	00:07:19	14,184 (3.45%)	96.39%	96.02%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
5. /2019/03/19/the-elite-of-the-elite-trying-to-become-a-n-sas-soldier/	11,781 (2.14%)	11,275 (2.32%)	00:07:11	11,250 (2.74%)	95.87%	95.20%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
6. /2020/11/23/adelaide-the-worlds-meth-capital/	10,133 (1.84%)	9,660 (1.99%)	00:04:48	9,615 (2.34%)	95.50%	94.68%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
7. /universities/	4,127 (0.75%)	3,093 (0.64%)	00:00:43	393 (0.10%)	49.87%	17.98%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
8. /about/	4,083 (0.74%)	3,542 (0.73%)	00:01:37	819 (0.20%)	58.24%	45.60%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
9. /2020/11/04/toughen-up-mate-the-harmful-effects-of-toxic-masculinity-on-australian-men/	3,653 (0.66%)	3,313 (0.68%)	00:05:19	3,265 (0.80%)	90.47%	89.02%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)
10. /2019/04/10/18-things-you-dont-know-or-have-forgetten-about-peter-dutton/	3,221 (0.59%)	3,080 (0.63%)	00:04:28	3,061 (0.75%)	95.62%	94.94%	US\$0.00 (0.00%)

**Table: Key metrics from Google Analytics of most popular pages on The Junction between October 1, 2018 and October 31, 2022.**

## Case study 1: Golden Key

**Headline:** Golden Key: Worth joining or a waste of money?

**Author:** Krystle Richardson

**University:** Deakin University

**Date published:** October 1, 2018

**Link:** <https://junctionjournalism.com/2018/10/01/golden-key-worth-joining-or-a-waste-of-money>

**Search engine excerpt:** Golden Key is the world's largest collegiate honor society. Membership into the Society is by invitation only and applies to the top 15% of ...

**Queries:** 108 of the top 400 search engine queries on The Junction related to 'Golden Key'. Of the top 100, 53 related to Golden Key, of top 50, there were 31 mentions, of the 20, there were 15. Of the top 10, there were 8 mentions.

### Key Metrics

This table, found in each of the case studies, outlines the article's key metrics. *Total Users* and *Unique Page Views* measure audience acquisition, while *Average Session Duration* demonstrates audience engagement.

Timeframe	1/10/2018 - 31/10/2022
Unique Page Views	121,885
Average Session Duration	00:08:11

### News value

The article's news value hinges on the prominence of a global brand – Golden Key – and the perennial timeliness of the reported information. It also can be seen to have impact, timeliness, currency, relevance: On any day, a soon-to-graduate student could receive a letter from Golden Key, and would have questions about the organisation and whether it offers value-for-money. As an explainer, it sets out to answer frequently asked questions about the Golden Key society.

## Story analysis

Krystle Richardson's article investigates the Golden Key Society, self-described as "the world's largest collegiate honour society for graduate and undergraduate students" (Golden Key, n.d). The target audience is people about to graduate from a university degree course and have received a membership offer from Golden Key.

The structure of this 'explainer' methodically answers the most common search and discussion board queries about the value and legitimacy of Golden Key. Richardson opens with a first-person voice direct address, which reads as if she has a clairvoyant view of the reader's mind and why they clicked on the search engine link to the article. Further, the article uses a conversational, pop culture-inflected voice to engage readers.

This is the most successful article for *The Junction*. At the time of writing, it was the second search result when you enter 'Golden Key' into Google search, appearing after <https://goldenkey.org/> (Google, 2023b) ahead of the related wikipedia page. It is the only visible news article on the topic on the first page of search results. While the article was also published on Deakin University's Dscribe website (<https://www.dscribe.net.au/2018/10/02/golden-key-worth-joining-or-waste-of-money/>) a day after it was published on *The Junction*, that webpage only appears towards the end of page 4 of search results. We note this is a significant difference in positioning for the same article, but without access to SEO settings of the Dscribe page and website, we cannot make suggestions as to why this might be the case.

Richardson's article is lengthy at 4120 words and includes a keyword cloud graphic, detailing the main queries about the legitimacy of Golden Key as found on social media forums, and images and embedded videos from Golden Key and other sources. Richardson transparently takes the reader through her investigative process and grounds her research in data and insider interviews. Sub-headings support reader engagement through a mix of key queries relating to Golden Key legitimacy, which Richardson uncovered in her research. Further, questions posed in second-person voice in the later part of the article encourage the reader to feel they are part of the investigation.

## Headline, meta description, and article structure

As search engines are essentially question answering algorithms (Google 2023e), this headline is composed as a two-pronged question which forward references newsworthy content and audience relevance (Lagerwerf and Govaert 2021) and helps convert the search result into an active user. It is arguable that the article is, in part, successful because it sets out to answer questions, beginning with the headline. The article then delivers on its headline's offer and is structured into sets of questions and answers. However, the article's meta description, which appears as the excerpt on the Google search result, does not reveal the article's content; it only states what the Golden Key society is in a truncated statement. This could be rewritten to indicate the investigative nature, relevance and information value of Richardson's article.

## SEO and readability

Technically, this article has cohesive and working internal and external links, which appeal to web crawlers looking for relevance and accurate content. The article makes excellent use of relevant <h2> header tags that demonstrate a change in sub-topic and relationships between parent and child content, guide the reader through the article, and indicate to web crawlers that this story has a content structure that supports reading flow and suggests importance of information. It is published on *The Junction* website which has an SEO-optimised website structure and undergoes annual maintenance to ensure technical integrity of the sitemap.

The Yoast SEO report, available via *The Junction*'s content management system (CMS), rates each page according to a traffic light system: green for aspects that are executed well, orange for elements that need improvement and red for those considered SEO problems. Yoast nominates nine aspects the Golden Key page does well, including use of outbound and internal links and images. The focus keyphrase is distributed throughout the text. It has a page title and SEO title with appropriate width to ensure it is not truncated in search results. Yoast praises the article's text length, as longer articles provide Google with more information with which to determine relevance. It notes the page has an <h1> heading, a technical requirements for effective SEO performance, and an SEO title, which is also known as the HTML title tag or the snippet. The SEO title appears in search engine results and the post title on the page itself. SEO title width ensures the search engine does not cut the visual display of the title. This width is device dependent, so it is important to ensure that the SEO title width is not clipped when viewed on a mobile phone screen.





The Junction

junctionjournalism.com › 2018 › 10 › 01 › golden-key-w

## Golden Key: Worth joining or a waste of money? - The Junction

Oct 1, 2018 – Please provide a meta description by editing the snippet below. If you don't, Google will try to find a relevant part of your post to show in the search results.



### Image 1: Displays missing meta description in mobile presentation. Source: Yoast SEO Premium

Yoast notes five key problems and two areas for SEO improvement, most of which relate to the application of the focus keyword or keyphrase in key elements of the article's SEO structure. However, another significant lack in the article's SEO practice is the absence of a meta description. The meta description is a sentence that summarises the article's content, like the standfirst on a news website's homepage, and appears in search results. Without the meta description, the search engine pulls in what it considers a relevant part of the article to display. Here, Google selects a quote in the article drawn from Golden Key's own website, but truncates it: "Golden Key is the world's largest collegiate honor society. Membership into the Society is by invitation only and applies to the top 15% of ..." (Google 2023b: n.pag). The sentence that appears also lacks the article's nominated key word or phrase "Golden Key allegations investigated" (Richardson 2018: n.pag). Yoast recommends that the keyphrase or its synonyms also appear in the first paragraph, in the SEO title, in <h2> and <h3> sub-headings, and in the story slug. Additionally, image alt attributes should contain at least half the words in the keyphrase. This article requires attention to its application of its focus keyphrase in all these areas. Additionally, the key phrase was not used within the article text. For an article of its word-length, Yoast recommends that the keyphrase appear 11 times. It is likely that the focus keyphrase was chosen and applied in the later publication stage and was not considered throughout the writing process.

For readability, Richardson's Golden Key article is rated by Yoast as green, or good. However, it is worth stressing that the recommendations of word complexity, sentence and paragraph length can be taken as advice and not acted upon. If the audience is, for example, an academic cohort of professors, then complexity may be expected and necessary. Yoast notes other aspects of readability, including variety in consecutive sentences and use of transition words and this article does well in both. Sentence length is another key measure of readability, as search engines favour easy-to-comprehend writing. Yoast sets a limit for the number of sentences that exceed a blunt measure of 20 words. If more than 25 percent of sentences are longer, writers are advised to shorten them (van de Rakt 2020). The Golden Key article is given the red light with 30.6 percent of sentences containing more than 20 words. In a separate measure, Yoast notes one paragraph runs over the recommended length of 150 words. The highlighted paragraph comes in at 160 words, considerably longer than the single-sentence paragraphs of 20-25 words generally promoted in university news writing classes. Again, application of house style may be required on both these measures, rather than strictly following Yoast's recommendations.

The Yoast readability index reinforces university news writing classes, which stress the importance of active news writing structures. However, Yoast red lights this article for its extensive use of the passive voice. It reports 19 percent of sentences are passive, in excess of its recommended maximum of 10 percent. The final problematic area for this article, according to Yoast, is insufficient distribution of sub-headings. It recommends inserting subheadings every 250-350 words. Seven sections run longer than 300 words without subheadings. While use of subheadings does not improve a page's SEO result, it does improve its readability, and this influences how long people spend on a page. Search engines can lower a page's search ranking if it has a high bounce rate, that is if people land and leave after reading only that page (Toonen 2023).

## Case study 2: Tinder Girls

**Headline:** How Tinder girls are making a fortune

**Author:** Jack Morgan

**University:** Deakin University

**Date published:** 23 April, 2019

**Link:** <https://junctionjournalism.com/2019/04/23/how-tinder-girls-are-making-a-fortune/>

**Search engine excerpt:** Nykayla says she earns \$1500 a week on average from Snapchat alone. That's about \$40,000 in less than a year of being in the business.

**Queries:** 'Tinder girls' does not appear as a search query in the Junction data.

### Key metrics

Timeframe	23/4/2019 - 31/10/2022
Unique Page Views	26,530
Average Session Duration	00:07:28

### News value

Morgan's insightful profile delivers a fresh perspective about two prominent and commonly used social media brands, Tinder, Snapchat and other online sites, to generate income from sexting intimate images and videos, and through intimate conversation with paying clients. The story has substantial human interest.

### Story analysis

Jack Morgan's feature article explores his subject matter by revealing the experiences of two women and one client. The story of Nykayla is particularly in-depth. 'Kate', the second case study, is referenced as a small-scale operator who has not ventured as far as Nykayla. The final source is Rick, a client of Nykayla's, and he provides insight into how a client finds value in her services. The article's voice is conversational and reflects the spoken language of people in their late-teens to early 20s. Morgan slips into first person voice to inject his opinion about the ethics of the young women's practices, but generally avoids making moral arguments about the sex-related work undertaken by the women although he appears sceptical about its economic value to their clients.

### Headline, meta description, and article structure

Both the headline, lead and linking paragraphs encourage readers into the story. The headline is click-worthy featuring both superlativeness ('making a fortune') and forward referencing the content in the article (Lagerwerf and Govaert 2021). The article's meta description, which appears as the excerpt on the Google search result, neatly summarises the subject matter by describing the article's protagonist, Nykayla and her financial success in using Tinder. The article opens with a succinct and provocative anecdote about the article's protagonist, Nykayla. This is followed by a bridge that introduces the engaged narrator, Jack Morgan, before returning to explain how Nykayla runs her business. There is no bigger picture or context-setting in the article to show how extensive these practices might be across Snapchat and Tinder, aside from iterating the community guidelines of these platforms. Hence, the article remains narratively intimate and focussed on the women's experiences, challenges, and the social risks and trolling they face, as well as the ethics of the women's practices. The close focus on the participants offers readers a deep dive into the world of social media-based sex-related work and it is likely this behind-the-scenes view helps to sustain readership.

### SEO and readability analysis

Yoast's Premium SEO analysis identifies two main issues with the SEO performance of this article; the absence of a focus keyphrase and a meta description. The latter means search engines will attempt to

represent the article topic by excerpting a passage from the page. Yoast recommends content creators conduct research on which search terms a story's potential audience uses before creating content, noting "their search terms are your keywords" (van de Rakt 2022: n.pag). Tinder turns up in search queries on Google when something disrupts its 'usual' status as a dating app and moves it to the 'unusual' such as a 'Tinder rapist' and a 'Tinder swindler'. 'Tinder girls' does not appear as a search query in the Junction data.

Yoast further notes that the Tinder Girls article has no topically relevant alt text on its images. Google's guidelines for improving SEO on images includes using descriptive alt text that relates to the image content, as well as using descriptive image file names (Google 2023c). This not only supports accessibility of an article's images, but enhances the overall SEO performance of a page. The article is said to score well on a range of other SEO elements including the inclusion of outbound links, images, a title and internal links. The internal links are the titles and urls of five other story pages on *The Junction* website. It is also greenlighted for its textual length at 1260 words and the width of its SEO title.

The article's readability analysis is less glowing. While it is praised for its paragraph and sentence length, other key qualities of clear news-style writing are considered lacking. The article exceeds the 10 percent limit for passive sentences, by 3.8 percent. Around 25 percent of the article's sentences contain transition words and three sentences begin with the same word ('And'), although these appear in a block of quotation. The article has the required number of subheadings, but these are not picked up in the readability analysis because they are formatted as bolded paragraph text instead of <h2> subheadings. Although formatted incorrectly, these subheadings break up the density of text and improve the reading experience.

### Case study 3: Covid

**Headline:** Covid-19 tough on long distance relationships

**Author:** Madison Coskerie

**University:** University of Newcastle

**Date published:** 15 September, 2020

**Link:** <https://junctionjournalism.com/2020/09/15/covid-19-tough-on-long-distance-relationships/>

**Search engine excerpt:** The coronavirus travel ban has put an end to reunions for couples in long distance relationships that are currently facing indefinite separation ...

**Search engine queries:** only three relating to Covid's impact on long distance relationships appear in The Junction's top 1000 search queries.

#### Key metrics

Timeframe	15/9/2020 - 31/10/2022
Unique Page Views	14,199
Average Session Duration	07:19

#### News value

The story deals with the Covid-19 pandemic – perhaps the most talked-about issue of its time – displaying clear topicality (timeliness, currency). It addresses aspects of the human condition (human interest) and focuses on something that affects people deeply and broadly (impact). As a piece of constructive journalism, the article offers practical advice, rather than merely exposing the plight or pain of its subjects, in order to help readers feel less alone and more supported (relevance) (Mast et al. 2019).

#### Story analysis

This is a global story, but also a very human one. Through a series of case studies, its main focus, or key angle, is the difficulties faced by long-distance couples facing prolonged separation during the Covid

pandemic. It encourages readers to connect with the issues through the people who are enduring separation. The piece reveals the fears and psychological stresses people face, particularly those coping with long periods of isolation. It demonstrates the universality of this experience by featuring personal stories of people in many corners of the world who are separated from partners. It provides expert commentary about long distance relationships and practical advice on how to cope with the craving for connection known as “skin hunger”. It appeals to audiences on different levels, as a discrete topic within the world’s biggest current news story, and as a series of personal anecdotes, which speak to – and about – the very people who are likely to be searching online for support.

### Headline, meta description, and article structure

The headline directly and accurately states what the story is about. It makes clear that the article focuses on one aspect of the pandemic. This angle – the pandemic’s impact on long distance relationships – had been under-reported by other publications. The headline suggests new information, but not breaking news. It pitches to audiences who may be interested in exploring a new dimension of the pandemic. The article delivers on the promise of the headline. The meta description, as found on Google search, displays the article’s first sentence, which is in the form of a summary lead.

### SEO and readability analysis

The story rates poorly in five ways, according to Yoast’s SEO Premium analysis. It lacks both inbound and outbound links, as well as a focus key phrase and a meta description. Its images also lack alt attributes that reflect the topic of [the] text. All of these problems are easy to rectify, as the story’s analytics make clear. The SEO analysis applauds the range of images, the length of the text, the fact that it has a title, and that the title isn’t too long.

According to Yoast’s readability index, the article rates poorly in three areas and well in three others. It reveals that 21 per cent of the article’s sentences are written in the passive voice, over double the recommended level of 10 per cent. It criticises the fact that 40.4 percent of the story’s sentences are too long and recommends shortening some sentences to reach the desired 25 percent level. The analysis also notes that there are no subheadings in the story, despite it being a lengthy piece. On the positive side, the readability analysis positively recognises there is sufficient variety in sentence structure, none of the paragraphs are too long, and the article uses plenty of transition words.

## Case Studies Discussion

The Golden Key article is clearly an outlier in terms of reach, attracting an outstanding 121,885 unique page views (UPVs), nearly five times that of the second case study, *Tinder Girls*, which was, admittedly, published seven months later but attracted a considerably smaller audience (26,530 UPVs). The popularity of the Golden Key story is highlighted even further when its reach is compared to the third most popular story, on Covid relationships (14,199 UPVs). The principal reason for this can be found in the perennial demand for information on Golden Key and the article’s promise to answer the very questions a curious audience is asking. In other words, the content is not only in high demand, but the writer knows her audience’s needs and is committed to addressing them. She approached this explainer methodically, backgrounding the issues thoroughly and providing balanced, accurate and clear journalism.

In one sense, the Golden Key article shares important attributes with the other case studies, which should each be considered highly successful in their own right. All of the articles take the audience behind the scenes into a world that is not well-explained or explored by mainstream media. Each article’s principal value is that they provide new content that audiences probably would not find elsewhere. The case studies show that student journalists are not forced to conform to one structure or one set of news values to achieve success. Each story demonstrates that the best form (or structure) is the one that follows the article’s function. Whereas the Golden Key article has a question-answer form, the Covid and *Tinder Girls* stories take a case study approach. All work well to deliver their content and engage their audience.

This underscores the importance of the angle and news values of the story when it comes to audience reach. The story angles explored here present something new and fresh to the reader, deliver on the promise of their respective headlines and have opening paragraphs that accurately convey what the articles are about. But, these case studies also demonstrate just how vital it is to get SEO presentation right, and there is ample evidence that more attention to best practice SEO principles could help grow readership. For instance, the Golden Key article uses its narrative structure by applying relevant header tags

throughout to suggest the importance of information to the search bots and support reading flow for humans. This is an SEO-friendly strategy. However, the three articles studied have scope for improving their internal structure and meta data with search engines in mind. Each story is missing at least some SEO elements. For example, the Tinder piece lacks a focus keyphrase, a meta description and alt-text in images. The good news is that these limitations can be easily identified and fixed. Journalism educators could focus on some of these common omissions and errors to increase the reach of their students' stories. Journalism pedagogy could stress the importance of integrating and selecting keyphrases in news writing practice, and doing so early in the process of researching and writing a news story – perhaps as early as the selection of a story's angle and news value. This might entail researching key relevant search terms for the news report topic at the stage of planning.

The case studies do not definitively prove that improving SEO and readability strategies increases the size of an audience, but it is reasonable to interpret that greater attention to simple strategies could have drawn even more readers to the stories. These strategies do not replace good story selection, deep original research and reporting that is inspired by curiosity. However, they do help more people to benefit from that journalism.

## Conclusion

This article studied the most popular stories on *The Junction* to learn how they attracted audiences. It analysed Google data and Yoast SEO and readability analytics to understand those stories and to gauge whether they provide insights about journalism pedagogy, particularly relating to not only core journalism skills of news and feature writing, but also to the application of sound SEO and readability practices. The case studies both confirm what is commonly known – and widely taught – within journalism programs and suggest new approaches for teaching journalism, particularly how audience metrics and SEO considerations can be integrated in curricula to increase potential audiences of student-produced journalism.

News values remain key to attracting audiences to a story, in that unless a topic has news value, potential audiences will not query search engines about that topic in the first place. It is crucial students develop a sophisticated understanding of audiences and news value. The studied articles all showed an understanding of news value and topicality. They demonstrated that niche stories can find large audiences because they focus on issues that have a significant impact, albeit for relatively small groups. The average session durations for each article – ranging between 07:19 and 8:11 (minutes:seconds) – suggest audiences value fresh inquiry, and clear, concise and accurate writing. But news values and engaging or eye-catching story topics are no longer enough to ensure a story's success. Journalists must now harness SEO strategies to succeed, meaning university journalism programs are obliged to better understand analytics in order to teach students what is needed for industry practice.

Our analysis demonstrates the value of considering SEO practice in the earliest planning stages of story research. The Golden Key article clearly followed this strategy by investigating key search queries as found in discussion forums about the Golden Key Society and developed its narrative from there. Its frequent appearance in *The Junction's* search queries supports this supposition. Integrating SEO planning and research into assessment tasks and rubrics will ensure that analytics are brought into the core of subject curriculum and student focus.

Journalism subjects necessarily teach all stages of news production and scaffold students from guided news writing and production exercises to self-directed journalism projects. *The Junction* provides an opportunity to publish the best of these. However, journalism programs generally prioritise research, interviewing, writing and editing over publishing because these are considered foundational, and, it is worth acknowledging, curricula are full and course time is limited. If publishing and SEO are not given significant focus in curriculum, we will find these crowded out of class schedules, particularly where SEO metrics are not the speciality of teaching staff.

Journalism courses can teach students to successfully publish in the era of algorithm-mediated distribution by centralising skill development in SEO concepts and metrics analysis early in a degree. Teaching these things ought not be to the exclusion of teaching about writing. Rather they should be taught in tandem, coupling lessons about effective newswriting with lessons about achieving better publishing outcomes online. Yoast has a free online academy, and universities associated with *The Junction* can utilise the SEO Premium News plug-in to teach students how to write content that appeals to both human readers and search engines. Good SEO practice is good writing. SEO becomes part of the toolkit in developing a journalist's news sense, and students would benefit from being introduced to such practices in the first year of a degree. From there, *The Junction*, and other university online publications, can provide

journalism programs with a mentored environment for students to apply their SEO and algorithm-mediated publication skills.

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# Comment & Criticism

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## Reflections and insights from PG pandemic delivery in Scotland

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### Abstract

Journalism education and modular delivery has seen significant shifts and changes with curricular trends, technological influence and institutional led reform impacting media pedagogy over the last 20 years. Educators have altered their approaches from in person delivery and written exams, to portfolio assessments, to pre-recorded and remote video assignments. However, it was the influence of the covid-19 pandemic in spring 2020 that altered how and where we teach and led to wider changes during a much shorter amount of time than had been seen previously.

This piece of research draws on written student feedback from the delivery of a practical MA broadcast journalism module at the beginning, during and after the pandemic coupled with reflections from the module leader. The article points particular attention to the influence of industry partners and the author's own professional media practice as influencing the changes in how the module evolved each year of academic delivery. This study also examines relevant literature and provides recommendations for educators delivering on practical media courses with a focus on graduate destinations and employability.

**Keywords-** Pedagogy, Journalism Education, Remote Learning, Digital Poverty, Communication Studies.

## Introduction

**Upon first being informed in early March 2020 that we would have to remain off campus, initially for 3 weeks I approached several national broadcasters in Scotland to explore and understand how they were pivoting during the covid crisis.**

Bauer Media UK accepted my request to join their radio newsroom for a week at the beginning of lockdown to receive bulletin editor training and guidance while the pandemic restrictions were creating confusion and panic in wider society. A growing body of work has since emerged surrounding higher education and the impact of the pandemic including from an Australian study by Doidge and Doyle (2022). Their research points to the risks and concerns surrounding non-STEM subjects during the beginning of covid-19 with many education leaders not seeing humanities courses as being worthy of support due to concerns over post-pandemic employment pathways.

Through exploring the aforementioned industry relationship, I was able to gain inside insights into how to alter our teaching model to best represent then emerging industry practices surrounding remote broadcasting and virtual newsrooms. Building on this I held a group session with my current MA cohort at the time and we reflected on their learning journey to date while openly evaluating their current skillsets and technical abilities. Through this approach I was able to isolate what the students would need in order to be trained and educated from home, including using bespoke hardware and software to support their off campus learning with in person delivery no longer an option. The importance of this time for media education and impact of technology is further echoed in the work of Nyarko and Serwornoo (2022) who explain the shift from brick-and-mortar teaching to remote and virtual needs. Their work points to the expectations for educators to take ownership and make key decisions. What was apparent at this point was how I could not wait for others within the institution to take the lead but instead had to isolate what industry was doing and in turn incorporate key elements of that into MA delivery within days of the first lockdown announcement.

Further to this, new workflows and access to relevant learning material would need to be created to support student cohorts. To remove major disruption to the student experience I requested remote Adobe software licences for all students to allow them to remain at home during this early stage of the pandemic. Building on this I took control of my own CPD and retrained on Adobe creative suite maximising online tutorials at night-time to then be able to support student and collegiate learning across all software which already included Final Cut, Avid and Audacity.

Due to my concern about also contracting the virus during these first few weeks of the pandemic and not thus being able to support fellow employees, I created an online repository using YouTube, Microsoft Teams and Moodle, containing tutorial videos that presented walk through guides to provide self-training resources for colleagues and students who could use them at home along with their new Adobe Licenses. The first few weeks of lockdown were ones of great worry, and this was reflected in the turbulence in HE including what was required with the practical MA module in question. I had to take a course that was delivered in person on campus since the 1990s and move it to Microsoft Teams, changing the software, the outputs and the expectations for staff and students. The emotional impact of the early stages of the pandemic on university education led to anxiety amongst student bodies in many institutions, Karalasis and Rakou (2020) have found that this did reduce in the months after March 2020, but student bodies remained worried about their ability to complete studies and were worried about graduating in 2020.

## Early pandemic problems and solutions

What became obvious during these initial weeks of spring 2020 was first how quickly the media industry was changing and secondly how newer challenges were presenting themselves from the student body, echoing the work of Quandt and Wahl-Jorgensen (2021). One of these included digital poverty and with that came the need to support students with laptop rentals as well as address social and ethical dilemmas surrounding gathering content from home instead of from the university learning spaces. Harper (2023) refers to how libraries and institutions pivoted to loan schemes to help students who not only couldn't access computers but were also impacted due to furlough financially restricting them from affording personal devices during the covid-19 pandemic in the UK. In addition, a third factor I observed while working at a widening access institution was the backlog in orders of IT and computer equipment due to travel limitations and logistics. All of these factors limited student experiences and created a discernible inequality within student bodies.

In order to try to foresee potential issues and challenges, closer alignment with our specialised digital learning technologists as well as media library team provided support to the journalism teaching team and others, which I felt was necessary as programme leader during this tumultuous period. During this frenetic first month or two of the pandemic I continued to engage with the media industry both with reporters and editors at broadcast and digital outlets, while adjusting assessment needs to support the new modular delivery which would be online and from home but also in line with curricular expectations.

Open communication channels for student groups and educators were an area I focused on more throughout 2020, especially as in person feedback, including over the shoulder support and advice couldn't be provided in a classroom setting.

Anonymous feedback was presented by the MA module attendees in the summer of 2020 and helped shape and form delivery which remained remote again in autumn 2020. Some of the MA student feedback is included here.

*"Practical elements so far have been good but more detailed communication between me, and lecturers could be more frequent".*

*"More of the pitching stories"*

*"Fantastic teachers working under very difficult circumstances".*

*"Lecturers clearly experts in their field and always available for feedback and guidance - definitely improved under their guidance".*

It was clear the students understood the need for open dialogue and discourse and appreciated being able to help shape the course delivery as it remained in a full remote capacity for a new cohort of students from September to December of 2020.

Deborah Wilson, the external examiner for this Broadcast Journalism Training Council (BJTC) accredited MA in Broadcast Journalism further refers to the impact of the feedback in her external examiner report,

*"The feedback as always is well considered, thorough, and supports students through the work they still have to come in their course of study".*

To demonstrate a calm, effective and supportive approach during these first 18 months of the lockdown. I upskilled at every opportunity from WordPress and CMS to SEO and used this information and new media knowledge gained from the National Union of Journalists (NUJ) and ITV Zoom and Google Hangout training courses to be a reassuring and able presence to address student and staff needs.

Added to this was the need to foster a new remote newsroom community that had not existed previously to encourage student participation and inclusion. This was done through a combination of Microsoft Teams drop in spaces and an upgrading of uwsnewsroom.com and with support from within my division I was able to design, build and curate a new media website to support staff to help get student content outwardly facing on a professional web platform.

Through remaining available, skilled, and approachable to both staff and students, the MA cohort swiftly adjusted to the new remote learning cycle in a supported and controlled way during an otherwise unsettled period.

What also became evident was the need for more sustained in-depth video and written feedback via Microsoft Teams and by adding drop-in sessions, student bodies and class groups could sustain a social

outlet and remove the fear of isolation. I also created a digital Teams space where students could relay their concerns to staff which allowed more open communication for both parties to make everyone feel included in addressing any extra learning concerns. It also alleviated pressure on individual staff inboxes as the drop in digital space issues could be dealt with by the group of educators in a supportive manner on Microsoft Teams versus isolated solo correspondences.

The second MA covid cohort, who undertook the module in autumn 2020 reinforced the views of the first group that we were providing a positive remote learning experience:

‘Good to be set practical tasks - Provided feedback’.

‘Being fun and interactive and really responsive to student enquiries with subjective feedback’.

‘The helpfulness of all the staff’

My aims during this time were not only to provide supportive and effective remote teaching, learning and assessment but I also felt it was paramount to still engage the students with fresh views and insights and therefore created an international guest series with expert speakers who were also isolating at home, they included media leaders from CNN and PA and other global outlets. This gave the students reassurance and insights from professional practice workplaces they aspired to be in that we were all in this challenging time together.

Coupled with this it also took some added pressure off fellow media lecturers who could use the time to focus on grading and cross marking while the guest speakers engaged the student groups and therefore reduce staff burnout. Drawing on our alumni network played a big role here with so many of them working journalists who were also restricted at home.

## Evolving and progressing pedagogy through the pandemic

To retain graduate attributes and employment pathways I held a series of one on one sessions with industry partners in early 2020 and again in January 2021 about remote work experience options for our students. In some instances, the option to send students into some form of work experience was rejected but by being able to evidence the body of audio, video, and multimedia work I had helped the students create from home via our new remote media space, many industry employers felt encouraged by our student body and took them on in remote capacities during the pandemic. The focus on learning by doing (Gibbs, 1988) (Kolb, 1984) despite the pandemic restrictions was a methodology that was infused in the class groups and informed pedagogy.

Through this there was minimal disruption to the class learning journey and reduced issues pertaining to other assessment and module needs. These remote work experience shifts with both digital, print and radio outlets also provided me with an opportunity to reflect and enhance remote delivery through receiving student and employer feedback to create what was to then become a hybrid pedagogy approach once some pandemic restrictions lifted in later months.

Once again, this 2021-2022 MA class was surveyed to gain insights into how to progress and support learning. The students appreciated the focus on editing and production skills and also how they could still engage with suitable work-related learning and multimedia placement pathways:

*‘The technical sessions worked well’.*

*‘The opportunities provided were exceptional, and I have consistently felt pushed in my work’.*

All MA cohorts received robust and enhanced teaching during Covid-19 due to the swiftness and agility of pivoting delivery and supporting staff and this was reflected not only in their module evaluations but also in the employment and graduate roles of the student bodies during and after Covid-19 (Nyarko and Serwornoo, 2022). The graduating classes could evidence a body of work that other university graduates couldn't from similar practical postgraduate courses which during 2020 and 2021 hadn't provided any practical journalism output or any relevant work experience. Deuze (2019) had explained prior to the pandemic the importance of multimedia and digital content production and fortunately for the class this did not stop despite the challenges presented by covid.

One significant shift in the delivery of teaching was the creation of a production journalist role on campus to remove the need for students to be onsite. The technical role was taken by a graduate of the insti-

tution who was limited with employment options during the pandemic and meant that cloud-based broadcast options and pathways to receive audio newswire materials from Burli Radio software and IRN could still get to students and therefore they could create on the hour broadcast outputs relying on Zoom, Teams and Google Drive. This workaround allowed students to remain abreast of news topics and engage with radio scripting while creating industry standard output in the same vein and workflow as regional and national radio stations. In, addition, it took pressure and expectation off teaching staff to be on campus or travel beyond their permitted lockdown borders, which in Scotland at the time was county by county, as the production journalist in question was based within a few miles of the campus.

When it came to applying for graduate roles, the MA students in question had such a body of multimedia material that other cohorts hadn't and in some cases some journalists in the newsroom they were applying to hadn't attained that they were not only industry ready but ahead of the expectations from some employers (Quandt and Wahl-Jorgensen, 2021). In learning that studio access was not an option I had created a virtual remote pathway using cloud services and social networks coupled with MS Teams and Zoom platforms to still deliver Live and As Live audio and video outputs.

All of this outward facing journalism content was available for prospective employers to engage with via WordPress, Wix, Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and Soundcloud platforms. This not only was exploratory for the student body but also for me as the lecturer leading it and allowed for us to grow and develop our own workflow which led to high student pass rates and module satisfaction.

In addition to supporting students and staff during this time I in turn harnessed some of my own creative practice skills and solo shot and produced a covid secure international TV documentary for CBS television stations in America in 2021. The documentary explored the links between the Scottish Highlands and the bible belt of America with the final piece entitled the *Scotch-Irish Songs of the South*, <https://www.wdef.com/scots-irish-songs-south/>. It became a learning tool I could draw on both for my student cohorts and one to be utilised as a practical real-world demonstration of a pandemic mobile and remote video production in the journalism and media space.

Due to the success of the remote newsroom teaching approaches and the TV documentary I was asked to present a series of guest lectures for other institutions in the UK and overseas including at Nottingham Trent University and Glasgow University and being selected as the keynote speaker at several conferences. Through this I was able to demonstrate the importance of having close industry relationships at times of crisis while being able to support fellow educators and in turn showcase the importance of staff remaining digitally savvy and skilled. This allows educators to be in positions to impact virtual and remote pedagogy and to enhance and drive student learning. These remote sessions and conferences allowed me to gain further peer review feedback and incorporate that into my delivery and the modular approach in the months after some of the pandemic restrictions lifted. An interesting take away from these sessions was the number of teaching and technical staff who joined the guest lecture series, and, in many instances, they were the ones asking the most questions to in turn shape their courses and delivery accordingly.

This time throughout 2020 and 2021 while of great social instability offered me a chance to bring my own experiences and resources into an emerging teaching space and support students and colleagues during their own challenging period. Since restrictions have been lifted, good practice from this time has been incorporated and emerged into teaching and assessment moving forward (Garcia-Aviles, 2021). This creates a hybrid learning experience for students that draws on VLE, Remote Newsrooms, Online Newsroom scenarios and in person workshops and lectures. Part of this legacy has also been the employment and graduate successes of both covid graduating classes who have enjoyed professional media careers and in turn have fed back into student delivery by offering work placements and job opportunities to current student groups through to 2023.

## The current blended approach

Scotland was one of the last developed world countries to remove all pandemic related restrictions and with the course not running in 2022 the first cohort undertaking an on-campus delivery were the class of 2023-2024. The module has not returned to a full onsite focus but instead has retained some of the key elements that made it effective during lockdown. These include remote news days, remote broadcasting, reliance on digital media creation and social media news days, video story pitching and of course the importance of feedback. With the module concluding in December 2023 some of the anonymous MA student feedback is evidenced below:

“Practice, practice and practice”

“The radio aspect of the module”

“Emulating a newsroom environment was effective in getting me into the right mindset, so that was good”.

“Learned about online stories, radio bulletin and content gathering”.

Mirroring newsrooms across Scotland many of the editorial meetings are now done via Zoom and Teams with technology once again shaping pedagogy and assessment.

The removal of radio studio limitations has been enabled by a greater focus on mobile audio and video solutions. These include the use of Rodecasters (proprietary all in one production consoles for podcasts) for bulletin production and recording allowing students to be taught off campus and at active news and sporting events, further enhancing the student experience. In addition to this the broadcast anywhere approach of radio stations has been enabled by remote newsroom software including Myriad. The in-browser system can be accessed via Google Chrome and enables students to script and compile radio news material off campus and with industry focused technology.

While radio stations have changed their output and workflows it is also in video capturing where the MA students need to excel. This has led to zoom recording workshops which involve focus on framing and lighting to support remote video capturing. To augment remote interviewing, mobile journalism kits have been upgraded with Rode wireless microphones to encourage off campus content gathering and production skills. Supporting this is Adobe Rush for mobile devices which allows students the freedom to edit on the go and away from geographical or infrastructure limitations.

To enhance their learning journey visiting broadcast and digital news editors have supported their assessment cycle both in person and remotely to contribute to making the learning experience as real world as possible in preparation for work experience pathways and graduate employment.

Throughout the pandemic I continued to run industry and recruiting events with hiring editors and graduates of the MA course contributing to panel discussions through streaming platforms. While these have returned to on campus the creation of a robust LinkedIn alumni group during lockdown which I curate, now provides a digital as well as in person network for current MA students to share and apply for roles and to get extra feedback and input on their portfolios of multimedia content.

In addition, a shift away from pure journalism skills teaching to transferrable ones has come to the fore in light of the cost-of-living crisis. With fewer traditional broadcast journalism roles available in Scotland and growing sectors in public relations and inhouse sports club media roles, the module has embraced an assessment strategy that deploys a mixed approach. It involves on campus radio sessions, off campus content gathering events and remote multimedia and social media news days that allow students a wider array of social media platforms to evidence their work supporting the views of Neto, et al (2021) surrounding digital journalism expectations.

	Domestic MA Broadcast Journalism Stu- dents	International MA Broadcast Journalism Students	Media Related Em- ployment prior to MA studies	Media Related Employment upon completion of the module
2019-2020	2	5	3	7
2020-2021	6	2	3	5
2021-2022	3	3	2	3
2023-2024	6	9	1	5

**Table 1: Cohort numbers**

Despite issues pertaining to Brexit, fallout from the pandemic and conflict in Ukraine and Israel, international recruitment has remained reasonably strong for this MA course with primarily domestic students excelling with employment pathways upon modular completion.

This in turn has led to a concentration on employability attributes with workshops which support students from both home and abroad, these take a look at the importance of media demo reels, cv writing workshops, website design, tailored work experience pathways and use of individual journalism digital portfolios to augment the student module outputs that are published to branded university sites and channels.

One area that has returned to in person has been studio tours and Q and A sessions at media houses, Global Radio and STV have both met with students from the module in 2023 and have given the cohorts in person support. This was something which was absent during the pandemic with employees of these media outlets also at home and unable to demonstrate the workflows and dynamics of their newsroom. These tours and on-site sessions are also more impactful for networking with many graduate students keen to explore freelance media employment while undertaking studies due to the cost-of-living crisis that is impacting large groups of people in the west and central belt of Scotland (Broadbent, 2023).

Over the three months of delivery for this same module in autumn 2023, 20 percent was conducted remotely via Zoom, 30 percent was provided off campus at industry sites and media press conferences and 50 percent was provided through in class on campus sessions. This blended approach to teaching augmented with an array of online resources and tutorials has allowed students to tailor their learning journey and have variety across where and how they gain broadcast and digital skills and enhance their learning.

The assessment approach over a five-day week in early December 2023 also took a blended approach with radio news days conducted on campus but with the option for mobile production including using Myriad News Anywhere, smartphones, tablets, laptops, app recording, Rødecasters and Zoom interviewing. The multimedia news days were all conducted remotely drawing on Zoom, VLE and WordPress as well focused one-to-one video feedback. Finally, the last day of their news week was conducted as press conferences at a sports facility in Glasgow with in-person interviewing for social media channels, vertical outputs and evidence of mobile editing.

The assessment days were all supported by the module leader and a team of experienced editors and educators, with safety and security now a key focus for journalism educators (Murphy, 2020). The students were given consistent deadlines and expectations to evidence rounded and robust portfolios that demonstrate their skillsets and journalistic attributes in a post-pandemic news environment.

## Conclusions and recommendations

I feel this reflection shows the importance of remaining adaptable in higher education. From the MA module journey which started on campus in January 2020 to pivoting to remote delivery in March 2020 to remain remote in 2020 and 2021 and return to a blended approach in September 2023. Educators need to demonstrate an array of attributes including leadership, versatility, and creativity (Schindler, 2011), all of which can be enhanced through their own professional practice to support and develop effective student learning and support fellow educators.

Lecturers who are module leaders can take control and show impetus during challenging times to alter teaching, assessment, feedback and enhance student mentorship. Professional development is also vital as institutions expect more from lecturers and a focus on upskilling and retraining needs to be given priority by line managers.

Throughout the module journey student communication went from being a lecturer in a classroom to two-way communication across digital platforms and returned to a mix of both. Taking on board student needs, demands and expectations allowed for the module to develop and also demonstrated that student views were valued at a time of great instability and change.

The success of the graduates and current MA students in gaining media employment has led to increased numbers enrolling and more input from alumni into current teaching. Through drawing on students past and present and exposing their work and our teaching approaches to media industry leaders, educators, accrediting bodies and news editors has allowed a rigid radio module to become a remote digital newsroom experience with outputs across video, audio, and social media channels that has attracted 41,000 views from digital audiences.

The old adage of build it and they will come rings true here but what also remains pertinent is after building you should keep up the repairs and maintenance so that modules and courses are as prepared as they can be to weather any storm.

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# Reviews

The reviews pages are edited by Sean Dodson. If you have a book you would like to review or have recently read a new book we should know about please get in touch. Also if you have recently had a book published and would like to see it reviewed, please contact Sean on [s.dodson@leedsbeckett.ac.uk](mailto:s.dodson@leedsbeckett.ac.uk)

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**A Practical Guide to Digital Reporting and Publishing (4<sup>th</sup> Edition) 2019, Mark Briggs, Sage**

**Mark Briggs has been writing about and implementing digital reporting for many years. He is a journalist, author and former lecturer, who has held digital leadership roles within television and newspapers.**

Now in its fourth edition, *Journalism Next*, was first published in 2009. It seems an age away considering the growth in digital media and the consequences and effects the technology has had on journalism since then.

It was not the first book to explore the developing worlds of digital and social media journalism and it certainly was not the last. There were plenty of people writing about digital media from the mid-nineties and back then the technology really was new and the question was, What next for journalism? *Journalism Online* (2002) by Mike Ward is a case in point. Much of what he wrote about, content creation and designing journalism online is still relevant. Like Briggs, he introduced HTML to those that knew nothing about it and gave good advice about organising content and engaging users. But his book, like those by other early writers on the developing technology, came at a time before the huge boom in social media. It was the convergence of smart phones, apps and social media sites, which transformed the way people were communicating and what they were saying.

That is where *Journalism Next* comes in. From the outset it has tried to combine the *how to* with the *why?* The latest edition is no different. Its 320 pages are packed with information about digital journalism and advice on how to do it. It is so wide ranging, that the content has been divided into three main units: The first, Basics, explains the internet, how it works, and how readers can produce their own websites. It explores the evolution of blogs and blogging, social media platforms such as Twitter (now known as X). Readers are offered an insight into crowdsourcing, User Generated Content (UGC), and mobile journalism. Unit Two looks at multimedia. It covers areas including, the use of video and audio by journalists, with practical guides on how to get the right shot and voiceovers. These are all skills any broadcast journalism degree will go into in far more detail, and which are much more readily picked-up through practice than reading a textbook. Unit Three looks at data journalism, offering advice on how to organise and analyse data. It also provides an insight into measuring audience engagement, getting the best from search engines through Search Engine Organisation (SEO).

Who is this book for? On the one hand, there are parts which any teenager already has a firm grasp of, social media platforms, how to connect and create content. They live their lives online and probably do not need lecturers in their mature years telling them all about it. On the other, there is plenty here for the novice or for students who are required to dig deeper into various aspects of their subjects.

It may be that *Journalism Next* has a specifically North American leaning, with emphasis on journalists who *must* do everything from writing news pieces, to providing video, social media content and

running their blog while trying to fine tune their websites SEO. That may be the case for some here in the UK, but I would not have thought the majority of journalists. In many larger organisations, including the BBC and ITV, journalist may be providing content across platforms, they may blog or Tweet, but it's very unlikely they will be doing that as well as filming and editing while at the same time running the webpages and going live online. Most journalists and journalism students do not need to be proficient with every skill outlined between the covers of this book.

It is on the reading list of some of the journalism modules at my university. But then again so are many of the other, similar texts. *Journalism Next* is in good company both on reading lists and the shelves in my office. It sits alongside Bradshaw (2018), Hill and Bradshaw (2019), Filak (2020), Adoranto (2022) and Gitner (2023).

We are left with the question, What next for *Journalism Next*? Perhaps it is fine just as it is. An overview of the various ways digital and social media can be used, is being used and may be used by journalists. Perhaps the latest addition will shed some light on directions for future editions. *The Journalist's Toolbox A Guide to Digital Reporting and AI* (Reilly 2024). Will it cover much of the common ground as all the other books here? Highly likely. I've not opened it yet, but it has AI in the title and *Journalism Next* (2019) only gives a brief mention of the technological force which has come to dominate current thinking about journalism as both practice and theory. The University of Pennsylvania in the United States has recently announced it will begin teaching an undergraduate degree focused on AI, the first Ivy League College to do so. There are already some journalism and AI courses here in the UK, and as they develop, we'll see a raft of new textbooks offering their insights into the latest technology to influence journalism.

**Journalism Next, Matt Briggs, published by Sage 368 page. ISBN 978-1483356853, RRP £31.99**

**Review by Dr Kester Demmar, is Journalism Programme Director at the University of Leicester. He had a long career as a television journalist working for both ITV and the BBC before moving into academia.**

**Dynamics of Media Writing: Adapt and Connect (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) 2022, Vincent F. Filak (Sage); Dynamics of Media Editing 2020, Vincent F. Filak (Sage)**

**Transferable skills are a much talked about tenet of journalism education.**

Even the most celebrated journalism departments only manage to get a fraction of their students into jobs in the traditional media. Social media, digital marketing and PR have long been destinations for journalism students -- and so the problem for journalism educators is how much of their curriculums need to be dedicated to the other media destinations.

Vincent F. Filak, a professor of journalism at Wisconsin-Oshkosh clearly thinks that the answer is -- quite a lot. For while the Dynamics of Media Writing is a journalism handbook in all but name, it is clearly marketed at media students more broadly. About half of the book is dedicated to straight journalism, with the remainder given over to sections on blogging and social media as well as the the "marketing media" of PR and advertising.

The book is written in a clear style with lots of bite-sized box-outs and activity suggestions to make this a useful manual that rarely lectures the reader. The book tries to show how skills learned in one discipline e.g. news writing can be repurposed for another e.g. PR.

The book is very American -- there are no references to UK newspapers or even the BBC let alone any foreign language media -- and its chapters on law will have only cursory interest to those outside the US. As a journalism how-to guide it is an insightful and at times energetic manual that could be useful for a course that shares traditional journalism with the wider media industries.

*Dynamics of Media Editing*, its sister title also written by Filak, attempts to do much the same for editors (that is of the written word) rather than writers. Similarly, US-focussed the book encourages "audience-centricity" as if understanding the reader was something whizzy and new.

The main focus of the book remains print journalism with sections on headline writing, picture captions and the use of infographics, as well as chapters on grammar and photography.

Again the law chapter is based on the first amendment of the US Constitution, but there is an expanded ethics section that takes in Kant's categorical imperative and JS Mill's On Liberty, as well as more recent concepts such as pluralism. There are some glaring omissions. No reference is made toward the voluntary codes of practice and conduct that are widely followed by journalists and other media professionals and are a key part of journalism education in the UK.

Like its sister title the book suffers somewhat from being too adaptable -- at times it's a handy introduction to the work of editors -- an update on Celia Friend and Don Challenger's *Contemporary Editing* -- but its sections on social media and advertising give the impression as being added on, rather than integrated into the book proper. There is a case for student advertisers to study Kant, it just isn't explicitly expressed here. Both books would be suitable for a wide range of communication degrees that wish to use journalism as a side order rather than the main dish. "Pure" journalism courses have more specific books on the menu that remain better suited to our UK media diet, however stodgy that may be.

**Dynamics of Media Writing: Adapt and Connect (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), Vincent F. Flak, published by Sage, 2022, 304 pages. ISBN 978-1544385686; RRP £103**

**Dynamics of Media Editing, Vincent F. Flak, published by Sage, 2020, 250 pages. ISBN 978-1506379135**

**Review by Sean Dodson, the PG course director of Journalism and PR at Leeds Beckett University.**

# Welcome

**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.**

## Editors

### **Prof. Chris Frost, Liverpool John Moores University**

**Chris Frost is emeritus professor of Journalism at Liverpool John Moores University and has been a journalist, editor and journalism educator for nearly 50 years, working in newspapers before moving into the academy.**

He is a former Chair of the Association for Journalism Education in UK and Ireland. He is a former president of the NUJ and still sits on the union's National Executive Council and chairs the union's Ethics Council. He is a former member of the UK Press Council.

Chris has authored several books, including *Journalism Ethics and Regulation*, 4th edition (2016) and *Privacy and the News Media and Reporting for Journalists*, 2nd edition (2010) – as well as many book chapters and academic papers mainly concerning journalism ethics and regulation.

He has been a consultant or visiting professor in much of Eastern Europe, China, Malaysia, India, South East Asia, and Africa.



### **Dr. Lada T. Price, University of Sheffield**

**Dr Lada Trifonova Price is a Senior Lecturer in Journalism at the Department of Journalism Studies, University of Sheffield, UK.**

Her current research focuses on challenges to media freedom and journalistic practice in Eastern and Southern European democracies, as well as examining physical and psychological threats to safety of journalists.

She has published several papers on journalism practice in fragile democracies, ex-

amining a range of threats to press freedom, censorship and self-censorship, ethical challenges, and media corruption.

She is the editor of the *Routledge Companion to Journalism Ethics* published in 2021 and just edited a special journal issue on trauma literacy in global journalism education and practice for the *Journalism, Media & Communication Educator* published in June 2023



### **Book editor - Sean Dodson**

**Sean Dodson is the course director for the postgraduate Journalism and Public Relations program at Leeds Beckett University.**

Before this role, he worked as a staff journalist at *The Guardian* and contributed to various international publications like the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Melbourne Age*, and *South China Morning Post*, among others. He has also written for newspapers and magazines such as *Wired Magazine*, *Design Week*, *The Big Issue* and *Dazed and Confused*.

His academic work focusses on the ethics of digital journalism. His ongoing research project aims to gauge the extent of influence that traditional media wields over the news agenda in the realm of social media.

Sean holds the position of a senior fellow at the Higher Education Academy and has served as a judge for the Orwell Prize, which is the most prestigious award for political writing in the UK.



# The next edition of Journalism Education

The next edition of Journalism Education will be a special edition, guest edited by Elisabeth Eide, Professor of Journalism Studies at Oslo Metropolitan University and Risto Kunelius, Professor of Journalism at the University of Tampere, Finland. It is due in spring 2024 and looks to be an exciting edition.

The editors will be aiming to publish the following edition in the autumn. The journal editors are always happy to see new papers submitted either for full referee or as a shorter unrefereed 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 will not be held against them.

The editorial 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 and training 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](mailto:AJEjournal@gmail.com).

## Academic papers to be submitted to referees

Papers should be between 5,000 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, and these experiences deserve a wider audience. We also welcome papers that have followed your favoured area of research.

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 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.

## Book reviews or promotions

Book reviews are always useful in informing us of what has recently been published and giving careful guidance about why it might be useful. Similarly, if you are due to or have recently had a book published, write to us and tell our readership about it. Publishing a new book is a big deal for any author and it's important that people know that it is out there and available. Telling us about it will allow us to put it in our new books section, keeping other members up to date with the latest publication.

Our books editor, Sean Dodson will be pleased to hear from you. Reviews of appropriate books should be approximately 600 words. We do not accept unsolicited reviews of books, but are always grateful to be given the opportunity to consider a review proposal. Please contact Sean Dodson, the reviews editor, if you wish to submit a review. All book reviews should include author, title, ISBN number, publisher, number of pages and price.

## Guest editing

If you are considering running a conference on some aspect of journalism in the near future then why not contact us to discuss the possibility of guest editing a future edition with articles from conference speakers?

We welcome guest editions where journalism lecturers and researchers are able to expand on their special interest either by inviting colleagues to produce papers to a particular theme or by organising a conference and inviting colleagues to submit paper ideas.

Guest editors are responsible for identifying potential authors, inviting them to contribute, finding referees for their papers and then submitting the final version to the Journalism Education team. The team will then pull the journal together and send PDFs back to authors and editors for a final check before publishing.

This is an excellent way to spread your academic wings by making contact with authors and referees, assessing papers and deciding what is publishable and steering the research profile of journalism for at least one issue.

## Talk to the editors

You can talk to the editors by emailing [AJEjournal@gmail.com](mailto:AJEjournal@gmail.com) with your proposals, ideas, or finished papers. We look forward to hearing from you. Our next issue is due in summer 2024.

The deadline for articles and papers for following editions is Sept 25, 2024 but material sent earlier would be appreciated as would an early notification of intention to submit. Articles should be submitted to the editors at [ajejournal@gmail.com](mailto:ajejournal@gmail.com) together with a 100-150 word abstract. Comment and criticism articles can be more polemic and do not require an abstract.

## Presentation and submission:

Articles should be produced in Word format, double spaced and set in Times New Roman 12pt with the minimum of formatting. Please do not press the “enter” button to put a double space between paragraphs and do not use specialist templates. Referencing should be in standard Harvard form with citations in the form: (Simmons 1955: 404) whilst notes should be set as footnotes. References should put the publication title in italic with authors’ name in the form: Jones, Brian (2004).

Please include a short (100w) biography as a separate document.

All tables and figures should be produced separately either at the end of the article or in a separate file. Each should be clearly labelled Table 1:..... Table 2:..... Fig. 1:.... Fig. 2: etc and a note inserted in the text identifying approximately where it should be placed.

## Copyright:

Authors should confirm they have cleared all copyrighted work for publication and agree that they will indemnify the editors against claims for defamation, copyright infringement or plagiarism. All authors will be asked to sign a contract confirming this.

## Process:

Papers are sent to at least two referees for comment. On return your paper will be accepted, accepted following editing as identified by the referees or refused. Comment and criticism pieces and book reviews will be decided by the editors but may be accepted on the basis that they are edited as identified.

## Proofs:

Once accepted, authors are expected to return proofs within 72 hours of receipt.

# Style guide

Please provide a title and an abstract and author details together with a 50-100 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;

All illustrations, tables and figures should be sent separately either at the end of the MS Word file or as attached JPGs. Clearly label approximately where they should be placed with fig 1, 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 names of all authors (including first name initial) 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

Bibliographic references

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

Hall, S, Critcher, C, Jefferson T, Clarke J, and Roberts, B (1978) *Policing the Crisis. Mugging, the State and Law and Order*. London: Macmillan

Harcup, T (2004) in Pape, S and Featherstone, S (2006) *Feature Writing*, London: Sage

# Journalism Education

## The Journal of the Association for Journalism Education

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