

the Journalist

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Contents

Main feature

16 Taking the long view
Demand for in-depth blogs

News

- 03 Fight for equality at the BBC
Eight out of ten women paid less
- 04 Diversity, more action needed
People at the top are white says Abbott
- 05 Oldham daily resurrected
But Doncaster jobs move out of town
- 06 NUJ backs ethical PR
10 principles for practitioners

Features

- 10 Tough times for college papers
Pressure mounts over cash and content
- 12 A day in the life of...
an agricultural correspondent
- 14 See you in court
Do freelancers need libel insurance?

Regulars

- 09 Viewpoint
- 18 Starting out
- 19 NUJ & Me
- 26 And finally



It's that time of the year again to look back, take stock and look forward. 2017 has been a challenging time for our industry on many levels. The difficulties of job cuts, closures and much less time for journalists to leave their desks and meet the people they write about have continued unabated. Then there is the damaging spread of fake news and the pall it casts over all news reporting.

Accusations of biased journalism have also gained traction especially in the case of Jeremy Corbyn, who was largely and persistently written off by many in the media despite him attracting massive crowds to his public appearances.

But in the face of these problems there have been successes too. Community-based journalism has led to the creation of new titles that are embraced by their readers.

And at its best, journalism remains one of the most varied, stimulating and satisfying ways to make a living. In this edition we see enthusiasm for the profession from Rachel Martin, an agricultural journalist and farmer who writes A Day in the Life of, and from freelance Delhi journalist Will Brown, the author of the Starting Out column.

Wishing you a prosperous and successful 2018.

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Cover picture
Steve Bell



Arts with Attitude
Pages 20-21

Raymond Snoddy
Page 25

Steve Bell
Page 22

Equal pay fight begins for 100 BBC women

The NUJ is taking action to secure equal pay on behalf of more than 100 women at the BBC.

The move comes following a survey by the union that found nearly eight out of 10 women at the corporation believe they are paid less than male counterparts.

Over 78 per cent of respondents to an NUJ survey said they knew or believed that men doing the same or comparative roles got better pay than their female counterparts.

The findings followed the publication by the BBC of the on-air "talent" who earned more than £150,000. The list showed that only a third were women and of the 96 named only 10 were from black or



minority ethnic backgrounds.

The pay disparity came as a great shock to many women journalists who suddenly discovered their male counterpart next to them on the sofa, in the studio or newsroom were earning much more than them, in some cases with less experience.

Recent figures from the Office for National Statistics

show that the gender pay gap for women in their 20s is now five times greater than it was six years ago – rising from 1.1 per cent to 5.5 per cent. They also demonstrate that older women still face greater pay discrimination than workers at the start of their career, with women in their 50s paid on average 18.6 per cent less than their male colleagues.

The BBC's own report of its graded staff, overseen by Sir Patrick Elias, the former Appeal Court judge, concluded that there was "no systemic discrimination against women in the BBC's pay arrangements". The report did not include on-air staff, which is subject to a separate review.

“
Nearly eight out of 10 women at the corporation believe they are paid less than male counterparts
 ”

UNION LOSES PENSIONS LEGAL BATTLE

The union has lost a legal case over pensions against the BBC and is likely to face a bill of about £200,000 for the corporation's legal costs.

The case follows a long-running fight with the BBC over pensions after the organisation tried to encourage staff

to opt out of a final salary pension and cap how much of pay rises could be pensionable. Both the NUJ and Bectu took strike action. Acas, the conciliation service, suggested a compromise on the pensions changes, which was accepted by Bectu but rejected by the NUJ.

The NUJ went on to back John Bradbury, a BBC symphony clarinet player, in a legal challenge to the BBC over pensions. The case went to the High Court, the pensions ombudsman, back to the High Court and then to the Court of Appeal at which Lady Gloster ruled in the BBC's favour.

Mirror NUJ members asked for proof

VEEKAY / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



NUJ journalists trying to re-establish the union at the Daily and Sunday Mirror and Sunday People have been told to "prove" they have a better case for recognition than the rival British Association of Journalists.

Mirror executives including managing editor Aidan McGurran faced questions over why NUJ members were still being denied a voice at the titles during a recent Q&A meeting with staff. One member wanted to know whether it was time for the Mirror, as a Labour-supporting paper, to allow Jeremy Corbyn's own union – the NUJ – back inside the building.

Mr McGurran, a Labour councillor in Basildon, Essex, insisted that the NUJ had "never left the building", despite a long campaign by journalists for union recognition. He said that it was up to the NUJ to "prove" it had more members than the British Association of Journalists.

in brief...

HOPKINS LEAVES THE MAIL ONLINE

Katie Hopkins, the controversial columnist, has left MailOnline after two years writing for the website. The Mail said that her departure was by mutual consent and that her contract was not renewed. The move comes several months after her radio show was axed by LBC.

SUPPORT FOR BBC PERSIAN CAMPAIGN

The International Federation of Journalists executive committee unanimously backed the BBC Persian journalists campaign to stop the targeting, harassment and persecution of journalists and their families by the Iranian authorities.

NEWSQUEST SEEKS ISLE OF WIGHT CUTS

Newsquest has called for voluntary redundancies at the Isle of Wight County Press four months after it bought the title. The publisher described the move as regrettable but part of its plan to ensure that the paper has a sustainable future. The NUJ has urged Newsquest to share its plan with its staff ahead of their decisions on whether to seek redundancy.

BILL TACKLES BOGUS SELF EMPLOYMENT

The NUJ has welcomed publication of a Labour Party bill in Ireland to tackle bogus self-employment contracts. The Protection of Employment (Measures to Counter False Self Employment) Bill 2017 would put all workers on an equal footing where they carry out the same duties, but are not legally designated as 'employees'.

Irish delegate conference, Page 7

ARTS COUNCIL FUNDS FOR NUJ MEMBERS

Northern Ireland's Arts Council has given awards to two NUJ members. Former Cathaoirleach (Chair) of the Irish Executive, Felicity McCall, received funding for an imaginary memoir based on single motherhood in her family. Former MoC in BBC Radio Foyle Freya McClements won funding for a collection of short stories, provisionally entitled 'On The Threshold'.

in brief...

BUZZFEED UK LOST £3 MILLION IN 2016

Buzzfeed is cutting 20 jobs in the UK as part of cuts across its operations. It is expected that up to 100 staff will be affected in the US. BuzzFeed has about 1,700 employees worldwide.

NEW FOOD MAGAZINE GOES ON THE MENU

National Geographic has launched a monthly food magazine. Food, which has 164 pages, had an initial print run of 50,000. It is National Geographic's second spin-off, following Traveller in 2010.

MOJO MAGAZINE HIRES UNCUT EDITOR

John Mulvey, the editor of Uncut, has been appointed editor of Bauer Media's monthly music magazine Mojo. He takes over from Phil Alexander, who went to Wasted Talent as global creative director of Kerrang! and Rock Music Media.

Abbott makes diversity demands

Diane Abbott, the shadow home secretary, said much more work needed to be done to ensure diversity in the media and that black and Asian people were often misrepresented in media coverage.

She was giving the NUJ's Claudia Jones lecture in Westminster as part of Black History Month in October.

Abbott is a former television reporter and press

officer. She became parliament's first black female MP in 1987.

Claudia Jones was a journalist, activist and campaigner and a founder of the Notting Hill Carnival.

Abbott said: "There may be more black and brown faces on the screen these days, but those with power, the people who make all the decisions on which stories are chosen and how they are framed, are

white journalists from privileged backgrounds."

She said the wide use of unpaid internships made it almost impossible for working-class young people to break into the media.

She made several recommendations to make the media fairer and more representative.

- Companies should recruit not only from Oxbridge but also from higher education

colleges with a diverse range of journalism students.

- Journalists needed to organise in unions to fight for fair employment and use their networks and collective action to effect change.

- People of colour should complain to media organisations if unhappy about their portrayal.

- People should use social media to put forward views not in the mainstream media.

NUJ DRIVE AT THE SCOTTISH TUC

The NUJ took two motions to the Scottish TUC black workers' conference, one on the need for diversity in the media, and another on the right

to create and access public spaces for marginalised communities.

Both were agreed and will be addressed by the STUC black workers' committee.

The conference, themed "Educate, Agitate, Organise", brought together delegates from a range of trade unions.

The NUJ's Scottish assistant organiser

Dominic Bascombe presented a workshop on how communities could use forms of media such as zines, podcasts and YouTube.

He also explored monopolistic

ownership in the media, the differences in reporting on issues affecting BME communities in the US and the UK and the intersection of alternative forms of media with traditional outlets.



Freedom of Information does not come cheap

The Campaign for Freedom of Information is the leading independent voice promoting freedom of information in the UK. It defends our right to know and provides FOI training for journalists. But it needs your help to do this work and hold public bodies to account.

Donate today on the CFOI website www.cfoi.org.uk

Oldham daily rises again as Doncaster jobs move

The NUJ has welcomed the return of the Oldham Evening Chronicle after it was bought by a broadcaster following its sudden closure in August with the loss of 49 jobs.

The buyer, local independent radio station Revolution 96.2, also has acquired the rights to a series of monthly sister titles including the Oldham Extra, Saddleworth Extra, Tameside Extra and Dale Times and quarterly magazines Oldham Business Edge, The Knowledge and Primary Knowledge.

The union has been in discussions with Matt Ramsbottom, Revolution 96.2's managing director, and is hopeful for the future of the 169-year-old title.

Chris Morley, northern and Midlands organiser, said: "I welcome the news that the highly respected Oldham Evening Chronicle and associated titles have been bought with the intention of relaunching them.

"The suddenness of the collapse of the Chronicle under previous ownership was traumatic for staff and we as a union are working hard to secure the best for our

members from that collapse.

"Clearly, there was a wealth of journalistic experience and talent that had worked hard for the community that was laid waste at the time."

However, across the Pennines in Doncaster, South Yorkshire, there has been a fresh blow to local journalism with the news that the



Doncaster Free Press will no longer be produced in the town a presence there for more than 90 years.

Owner Johnston Press told journalists they would have to move to an office in Sheffield or work from home. The paper moved to its current office in Printing Office Street only three years ago.

It was previously based in offices at Sunny Bar, its home since it was founded by printer Dickie Crowther in 1925. It was then called the Doncaster Free Press and Courier of Coming Events.

“A wealth of journalistic talent that had worked for the community was laid waste”

in brief...

HARDING TO STAND DOWN FROM THE BBC

James Harding, BBC director of news and current affairs, is standing down at the start of the new year to set up his own news media venture. He joined the BBC in 2013, having left the editor's role at The Times the year before. The BBC has recently received criticism over its coverage of the Scottish Independence referendum, Brexit and Jeremy Corbyn.

JAMES MURDOCH CHAIR OF SKY AGAIN

James Murdoch has been re-elected as chair of Sky despite a shareholder rebellion. Just 51.6 per cent backed him to stay in the top job. Dissenters were concerned there was a potential conflict of interest because of Murdoch's role as chief executive of 21st Century Fox, which is trying to buy Sky in an £11.7 billion deal.

PA TAKES STAKE IN EQUITY NEWS GROUP

The Press Association has taken a stake in a London-based financial news service that wants to expand across Europe. PA and Germany's Deutsche Presse-Agentur have taken a combined eight per cent stake in Alliance News. The group, which was launched in 2013, provides real-time equities news for financial professionals and investors.

PRIMA EDITOR GETS BROADER HEARST JOB

Hearst UK has appointed the executive editor of Prima, Gaby Huddart, to the role of acting group editorial director. She is responsible for lifestyle magazines Prima, Good Housekeeping and Red. Huddart has been executive editor of Prima for four years.

EX BBC TRUSTEE GOES TO TRINITY MIRROR

Former BBC Trustee Nick Prettejohn has been appointed as the new chair of Trinity Mirror's board of directors. Prettejohn, who is chair of insurance firm Scottish Widows, will join the board as non-executive director in February before he is set to take over as chairman in May.

PAUL LEAVES NUJ AFTER 25 YEARS

Paul Holleran, the NUJ's Scottish organiser, has left the union after more than 25 years in the role.

He has returned to his native Liverpool to work for the GMB.

Holleran specialised in health and safety work and

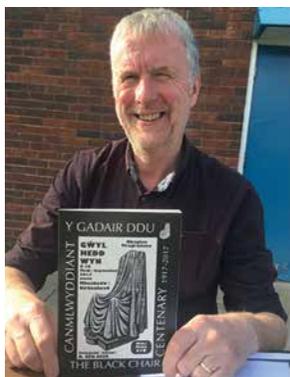
sat on the Scottish Government's umbrella group for mental health and suicide. He led much work on combating stress in the workplace. In addition, he was an active member of the cross-party group on media issues.

Before working for the

NUJ, Paul Holleran was a journalist.

At the GMB, he will be responsible for health and safety and training for north-west England and Ireland.

He is being replaced by John Toner, the union's freelance organiser.



Poetry prize for former FoC Martin

A former FoC at BBC Cymru/Wales has won a bardic chair and £100 at a festival held to commemorate a First World War poet.

Martin Huws won the prize at the Black Chair Festival in Birkenhead for a series of poems about the life and

work of Hedd Wyn (Ellis Humphrey Evans).

Hedd Wyn died after being injured at the Battle of Pilckem Ridge in Belgium six weeks before he was due to win a bardic chair at the National Eisteddfod in Birkenhead in 1917.

Many events have been

held in Wales, England and Belgium to commemorate Hedd Wyn. He died on the same day and in the same battle as Irish poet Francis Ledwidge.

Huws has worked at BBC Cymru/Wales since 1994. He also worked at ITV Cymru and the Western Mail.

in brief...

WSJ ENDS EUROPE AND ASIAN EDITIONS

The Wall Street Journal has stopped publishing its Asian and European editions. The decision came after its owner News Corp reported a loss of \$643 million in its most recent fiscal year, which ended on 30 June. It made a \$235 million profit during the previous year. The Wall Street Journal began publishing the Asian edition in 1976 and the European edition in 1983.

GLAMOUR CUTS DOWN ITS PRINT PRESENCE

The British issue of fashion title Glamour has switched to a digital-first strategy, under which it will print a magazine twice a year and merge its editorial and commercial operations. The magazine was founded in 1939 in the US and was originally called Glamour of Hollywood.

BBC SWITCHES OFF CRIMEWATCH

Crimewatch, one of the BBC's longest-running shows, is being taken off screens after 33 years. The programme, which asks viewers for help to track down criminals, is hosted by Jeremy Vine and Tina Daeley.

IAN KATZ TAKES TOP JOB AT CHANNEL 4

Ian Katz, editor of BBC 2's Newsnight, is to become director of programmes at Channel 4. He replaces Jay Hunt, who has moved to Apple, and will be responsible for commissioning programmes and managing Channel 4's schedule. He edited Newsnight for four years after joining from The Guardian where he was deputy editor.

MOYLAN LEAVES BBC TO JOIN STONEHAVEN

John Moylan, one of the BBC's most senior journalists, has joined Stonehaven, the marketing and public affairs agency, as a director. Moylan has covered business and economics at the BBC for more than 20 years. In the past six years, he was industry correspondent, covering areas such as energy, steel, the automotive industry and the gig economy.

“All too often, PR professionals need strong trade union support to resist the pressure to behave unethically”

NUJ backs principles on ethical practice in PR

The NUJ has backed a declaration on ethical PR by the International Communications Consultancy Organisation.

Phil Morcom, chair of the NUJ public relations and communications industrial council, said: “The NUJ is absolutely committed to ethical journalism in all its forms, including public relations.

“The recent Helsinki Declaration on ethical PR practice is a valuable tool for reminding practitioners of their responsibilities and echoes NUJ guidance.

“It remains clear that all too often PR professionals continue to need strong trade union support to resist the pressure to behave unethically, and the NUJ continues to provide members with that support.”

The International Communications Consultancy Organisation called on the



ICCO
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANCY ORGANISATION

worldwide PR industry to stand by 10 principles of ethical behaviour announced at its global summit in Helsinki.

The Helsinki Declaration stands for the importance of PR work that is ethical and in the public interest; that is truthful and respectful of privacy; that does not cause offence; and that upholds the reputation of the industry.

It has 10 principles. These include working ethically and within the law, observing high professional standards and dealing honestly with employees, colleagues, clients, the media, government and the public.

PR professionals should be open about sponsors.

The principles also warn against creating or spreading fake news or being involved in practices such as “astroturfing” whereby attempts are made to create an impression of widespread support for a policy, individual or product.

The declaration also states that PR professionals should safeguard confidential information about clients, organisations and individuals.

Finally, it notes that PR workers should remember they have a duty to uphold their industry's reputation.

UNION HONOURS FOR TONY AND LINDA

Husband and wife team Tony and Linda Colling – stalwarts of both the Sunderland Echo newspaper and its NUJ chapel – were surrounded by former colleagues as the union awarded them life membership.

Linda is best known as the paper's long-serving women's page writer, and Tony is a photographer for the newspaper.

Their membership has encompassed the 1978-79 Newspaper Society strike, and the 1985 three-month strike



over the implementation of new technology at the Echo and its sister papers owned by the then Portsmouth & Sunderland Newspapers group.

The event was hosted by the Sunderland, Shields and Hartlepool NUJ branch.

Meet the new Solent branch

Portsmouth Branch has officially become Solent Branch – and crossed the Solent strait in the process.

It travelled to the Isle of Wight for the launch meeting – the first NUJ meeting on the island since the 1990s.

The branch's reach had grown and it was no longer

appropriate to name itself after one city.

Ryde was picked as the venue as island colleagues had felt excluded from meetings.

The timing couldn't have been better: in the summer, Newsquest took over the weekly Isle of Wight County Press, after more than 130

years in local hands. The chapel feared this could mean a loss of jobs and independence. There is nearly 100 per cent NUJ membership.

A cake bearing the branch's new logo (made by member Habibur Rahman) was cut by Bill Bradshaw, Deputy FoC at the County Press.

Journalism is devalued when staff are exploited

The concentration of media ownership, bogus self-employment “contracts” and the gender pay gap were the main issues of debate at the recent Biennial Irish Delegate Conference in Dublin under the banner of “Valuing Journalism”.

Irish Secretary Séamus Dooley told delegates that journalism is devalued when workers are exploited.

“Journalism is exploited when the national public service broadcaster seeks volunteers to work for nothing on digital radio. I am delighted to say that we have made significant progress in ending that unacceptable practice at RTÉ. There will be no more unpaid volunteers on digital radio.”

On media ownership, he said: “Journalism is devalued when ownership and control is vested in the hands of the few, and yet again we call on the government to tackle the issue of newspaper



ownership,” he said.

“We have a new Taoiseach – and yes, Leo, we love your new socks. But you know what? If the Taoiseach wants to be different to his predecessor he can forget about the socks – and sock it to the newspaper owners.

“He needs to confront the powerful media interests and bring in legislation.”

Dooley explained that the dangers of the concentration of media ownership affected not just journalists, but it was also a threat to democracy.

“It impacts on terms of employment, it impacts on editorial resources, it impacts

on the value of news and the ability of journalists to do our job.

“It means that there are parts of this country where courts and local authority meetings are no longer covered.”

Dooley also urged an end to the ban on Irish Times contributors on Communicorp programmes including Newstalk and TodayFM. He said: “The action of Communicorp in banning journalists simply because they caused offence, illustrates the danger of the concentration of media ownership.”

MAXWELL

“
We call
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ownership
”

in brief...

GARDA'S FRY PROBE A WASTE OF TIME

The Dublin Freelance Branch noted the farce earlier this year when it emerged Garda time was wasted investigating whether Stephen Fry breached Irish blasphemy laws. The meeting instructed the IEC to participate in any campaign to remove the blasphemy provision from the Irish Constitution as it is contrary to the principles of freedom of expression and religion.

JAIL AND LASHES FOR MILD CRITICISM

The meeting condemned the increasing repression and imprisonment of journalists throughout the world, and sent greetings to Raif Badawi, a blogger imprisoned in Saudi Arabia for mild criticism of the regime, who has received 50 lashes. The Derry & North West Branch called on the Irish Government to protest to the Saudi government.

NON-JOURNALISTS JUMP THE QUEUE

Freelance photographers expressed their frustration and dismay at new restrictions on accreditation for covering GAA matches, and that non-journalists are getting in ahead of them. They called on the IEC to contact Croke Park officials.

FREELANCERS NEED NEW AGREEMENTS

Following the passing of the Competition (Amendment) Act 2017, which removes the anomaly where freelance journalists were prohibited from engaging in collective bargaining, the union was instructed to engage in a campaign for new agreements, since those in place are at least two decades old.

NUJ AWARDS GIVEN TO IRISH 'LIFERS'

Life membership was awarded to Vincent Browne, Patsy McArdle, Raymond Cullen, Michael Hilliard, Hugh Oram, Matthew Kavanagh, Liam O'Connor, Kenneth Kelly, Michael Glynn, Brian Trench, James Rhatigan, Mary Leland, Cathal Mac Coille, Finbarr Coughlan, Geraldine Collins, Ann Cahill, Donal Buckley and Gene Yore.

UNION NEEDS TO EMBRACE CHANGE

The NUJ in Ireland needs to look at structural change so that it can work effectively in the changing media landscape, Irish secretary Seamus Dooley told delegates.

“Our branches are not functioning as they should, and we need to get our act together, and we need to do so with a sense of urgency.”

But he added: “I fully accept the media in Ireland is in

crisis. The decline in our membership is linked to that crisis. We need a commission that examines the future of national and local media, which examines ownership models, examines recruitment and training and the barriers that exist in the promotion of women and minority groups.”

He added: “I hope that when we bring forward proposals for reforming branches that there is not a running back to looking at the past.”

The fight against gender pay gaps

Action to tackle gender pay gaps was debated at the seminar, Mind the Gap: Inequality at Work, chaired by Bláthnaid Ní Chofaigh (pictured) of the Dublin Broadcasting branch.

Esther Lynch of the ETUC

said women work, in effect, 59 days a year for no pay, and returning from pregnancy is when their pay can be most affected.

Norma Prendiville of the Limerick Leader pointed out that the pay gap really kicks in

as women move up the ladder, while Siobhán Holliman of the West of Ireland Branch said women are sometimes paid less than men who are in more junior positions.



MAXWELL

Sitting on stories

Ruth Addicott looks at challenging the culture of payment on publication

I imagine the scenario: your boiler has broken, you call a plumber to fix it, then say: “Thanks – I’ll pay you when I have a bath.”

It wouldn’t happen, but for freelancers chasing payment on publication, it is resoundingly familiar.

When freelancers get a commission, they often have to wait until the story is published before getting paid, which can sometimes take months or even years.

“I never understand how this is legal,” says one journalist. “There is no other industry I can think of where this would be allowed.”

It is routine on nationals and magazines. For every one that pays instantly, another will pay only on publication. It can even vary between sections.

“Six months is common in the lifestyle sections of nationals,” says one contributor.

Reasons for delays can stem from pagination, with news-led pieces taking precedence. As freelancers are told stories are “on the list”, a kill fee does not apply and, with commissioning editors’ hands often tied, chasing can be fruitless.

One freelance waited two years for payment from a glossy. Another waited two years for a high-profile weekly. They were both paid in full once the articles appeared. Another freelance, owed £700 by a Sunday supplement, cut her losses and gave up chasing altogether.

Some have struggled to pay childcare bills; others have had to borrow from family and survive on credit.

“It has got worse in recent years. On a few occasions, I’ve not been able to buy food,” says one freelance.

“It’s a serious problem because we have bills to pay. If we have no idea when the money will come in, how can we budget? You feel you’re being exploited – you, a small sole trader and them, a big international media

company that is turning over millions.”

It doesn’t happen just in the UK. One freelance writing for a newspaper in the Middle East is owed £2,000 for articles “on hold”.

“There needs to be more awareness among editors about how this affects journalists. If each editor behaves this way, you can be owed thousands,” says another.

So why not take the story elsewhere?

Freelancers say they cannot afford to turn work down, especially bylined stories for nationals. Younger journalists are particularly vulnerable.

“The argument ‘if you don’t like it, don’t take the commission’ assumes there is a mountain of work to choose from,” says one.

Aside from being unable to sell second and third rights, there is often further work involved. Additional checks are routine and, a year down the line, stories can change or interviewees no longer want to be involved.

Mike Cherry, national chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses, says the late payments culture is “a real concern” and the recent appointment of a small business commissioner is a “golden opportunity” for the government to end “supply chain bullying”.

NUJ freelance organiser John Toner describes the practice as “outrageous”.

“There is no reason why publishers cannot pay within 30 days of receipt of invoice,” he says.

The NUJ helps freelancers apply late payment charges but, if payment upon publication has been agreed, these cannot be applied. In addition, freelancers fear being blacklisted.

So what can be done?

“We have approached publishers over the years and asked that they reconsider this policy, but they either ignore us or refuse. We need the government to introduce legislation. We are lobbying through the TUC at

national level, and through the EFJ at European level,” says Toner.

He urges members to contact their MPs and get a commitment from them to support or introduce new legislation.

Responding to freelancers who claim it’s “up to the union” to do more, he says: “This is a false dichotomy – ‘the union’ and the members are not separate things. The NUJ is lobbying hard for change, but members do have to be involved.”

In the absence of a law, one option is for freelancers to try to persuade a publisher to negotiate.

“It is difficult to do this without being identified, but if enough freelancers working for a particular publisher were prepared to act collectively, then the publisher would have to listen,” he says.

The issue is that freelancers are reluctant to speak out.

“You risk ruining your relationship with your editor, even though all you want is to be paid,” says one.

If freelancers did speak up and the NUJ did draft an agreement, the question is: would publishers sign it?

// You risk ruining your relationship with your editor, even though all you want is to be paid



Young people are not as they are portrayed, says **Mickey Carroll**

Why we can't afford to ignore the young

We've voted every year for the past four years. Every time a vote is announced, it is the same story. We scramble to think of interesting ways to cover the campaign and inevitably end up at the local school. We shoot vox pops of surprisingly engaged children holding mock elections. We ask 10-year-olds with toothy grins whether they prefer Labour or the Conservatives. We write pithy lines about how we wish the rest of the country was like these young people, taking an interest in politics and getting involved. Then we don't talk to another child again, or at least until the next vote comes along.

Young people are on the frontline of political decisions. They bear the brunt of education cuts, anti-terror initiatives, changes to online privacy laws. They are a big part of our political landscape but when was the last time you interviewed a young person?

Right now, there are 14 million under-18s in the UK. In four years' time, 1.5 million of them will be able to vote. That is 1.5 million people who are unknowns. We have no idea which party they could support or even which side of the political spectrum they sit on. We can't rely on them voting like their parents anymore – young people are developing their political personas online, away from the dinner table. They tend to support online movements and single issues, rather than politicians and political parties. If we ignore young people's opinions, we're not going to know what is coming at the next election... again. The mainstream media has been caught out at every vote recently. Don't be surprised again.

“ Why would a teenager be a loyal reader if the only time you talk about their age group is to call them smart-phone zombies? ”

Ignoring them means we don't get their perspective or know which way they lean, but it also means we're out of touch. We don't understand what young people are like today. A Demos report said the most common attributes secondary school teachers used when talking about young people were 'caring', 'enthusiastic' and 'hard-working'. The words most commonly associated in the media were 'binge-drinking', 'yobs', and 'crime'. There is such a clear disparity between how young people are, and how the media represents them. And, the worst thing is, young people have noticed. 84 per cent of them feel misrepresented by the media and that leads to over half of them not engaging in their community. We have to take responsibility for the fact we're ignoring a section of society and it is harming them.

We're also doing ourselves out of a job by misrepresenting young people. We all know the state of the industry; people are being laid off as circulation figures decline, newsrooms are turning to user-generated content to cut costs and headlines are only as good as the shares they get on Twitter. It makes no sense to alienate the people your job will soon rely on. Why would a student share or like a story if they don't see how it is relevant to them? Why would a teenager be a loyal reader if the only time you talk about their age-group is to call them smart-phone zombies? The industry is in a rocky position and we can't afford to ignore the people who will keep us going.

Luckily, this is all easy to change. Talking to young people can seem daunting. Where do you find them,

how do you get permission, will they even know what you're talking about? But there are people who will help. I work for The Economist Educational Foundation and I want you to talk to our young people. Ask if we can put you in touch with the right young person. Talk to Headliners, to Shoutout UK. Talk to London Youth or #IWill who all want the young to be better represented.

So next time you're writing a story, think of the under-18s who could be affected. Our industry and their futures rely on it.

Mickey Carroll is content editor for the Economist Educational Foundation



For all the latest news from the NUJ go to www.nuj.org.uk

Tough times for college papers

Student media faces pressure over budgets and content, says **Susannah Keogh**

For many young people, student newspapers are their introduction to the world of journalism. When I arrived at the University of Exeter three years ago, joining its independent student newspaper not only gave me a community full of like-minded people and kickstarted my coffee addiction but also provided me with valuable skills and experience.

Student newspapers have evolved into a training ground, offering a chance to chase stories and create a newspaper alongside studies. To edit a paper when you're at university is a life-changing experience that sparks a love of journalism.

But this once-in-a-lifetime experience is becoming far from guaranteed. Student newspapers across the country are facing increasing pressure to cut their budgets and, in some cases, pressure from the university or union over their content.

Members of the editorial body of student newspapers are unpaid, except a few where the position of editor is held by a paid sabbatical officer. Essentially, editors are volunteers, juggling making a fortnightly or monthly print issue and managing online output alongside their degree studies. It's a challenging yet fun experience, full of the highs and lows you'd experience in a "real" newspaper. As editor, I carried out investigations on everything from anti-Semitism at the university, to the experiences of sexual harassment and assault victims and the scandal of the student union shop forgetting to remove the tampon tax – I admit "scandal" might just be over-egging that one a bit.

In my last year, my tenure was marred by meetings over the budget and how we could cut costs. We were lucky, though, in that we were independent from our university and that, when it really mattered, our students' union would always fight our corner. Others are not so lucky.

Abbie Llewelyn was managing director of York Vision in 2016, one of the University of York's two student newspapers,

where she was responsible for the paper's finance. Despite winning more awards than any other student newspaper in the country, York Vision was still hit by budget problems.

"When I was elected I inherited about £3,500 of debt," Llewelyn says. "Our students' union doesn't give nearly enough money for the paper to survive. We kept being told we weren't allowed to print because the paper would get into more debt."

Like many student papers, York Vision had to find advertising revenue. It also turned to a crowdfunding website, YuStart. It raised almost £2,000 and was able to continue publishing, with the remainder of the debt erased through a combination of advertising and an annual block grant from the university.

"This has been a problem since Vision's inception. There's never enough money and it's so incredibly stressful trying to put together a newspaper and also have to worry about whether we even have the money to print," says Llewelyn.

"It's like we're always doomed to be on the brink of closure."

York Vision is far from the only student publication to turn to crowdfunding. When students at Falmouth University set up a paper last year, the Anchor, they also had to crowdfund. However, they did not raise enough, so were forced to axe their monthly print edition.

University student newspapers are fortunate in having a captive audience and, if they are distributed on campus, that's a huge footfall. In large university towns, companies such as Dominos and local nightclubs are keen to place advertisements.

Reliant on advertising and money from their union or university, student newspapers can struggle. If their pick-up



Joshua Hackett was the student media coordinator at Westminster University

wanes, it's easy for those holding the purse strings to justify cutting circulation – or axing the print editions.

For those having to implement these cuts, there are some benefits. Joshua Hackett was the student media coordinator at the University of Westminster's students' union from May 2016 until recently, where he supervised cost cutting.

"I feel like student media needs to be true to the real world if it's going to help people get jobs," Hackett says.

"I tried to run Westminster like a start-up, building interest in the digital side of things – websites, data and apps. Those are the skills in demand these days, and it has the benefit of being cheaper than sticking to newsprint."

Worryingly, for some student newspapers, budget cuts aren't the only threat they have to contend with.

Rebecca Pinnington, a former editor of UCL student newspaper Pi, hit the national headlines last year after the university threatened to revoke her degree if she published any more details about their finances.

Now a national journalist, Pinnington told *The Journalist* that her experience showed her "how easy it is for universities to intimidate student journalists".

"I knew instinctively that UCL shouldn't be able to throw anyone out of university for disclosing important information. But, when even the students' union was encouraging me to comply or risk expulsion, it was difficult to believe anything else."

"One of the many difficulties faced by student journalists is knowing their rights and knowing that actually, they do have the power to stand up to direct intimidation when it surfaces."

Ongoing financial threats have forced some student newspapers to take a wholly new direction – and found, to their surprise, that they are not just surviving but thriving.

Matt Soloman, editor of the *Anchor*, said of its ending its print presence: "Printing monthly was kind of restricting because

Rebecca Pinnington former editor of UCL student newspaper Pi



we'd have to prep the edition and then send it to the students' union for approval at least a week before, so some stories risked becoming outdated. It's given us a lot more flexibility over our content and it's a good to make use of multimedia."

If student newspapers are to survive, it is vital that they embrace print alongside online, and seek various sources of revenue. The publications that thrive will be those who fight for their print edition while maximising their online output.

Journalists who started out on university papers

Many of today's top hacks got their start on student newspapers across the country. Here are just a few ...

• **Jeremy Paxman - editor of Varsity, University of Cambridge**

The broadcaster edited Cambridge's independent student newspaper alongside his English degree.

• **Jeremy Vine - editor of Palatinat, Durham University**

Vine juggled editing Palatinat along with hosting a weekly radio show and an English degree.

• **Hadley Freeman, editor of Cherwell, University of Oxford**

Freeman edited Cherwell in her final year at the university, before going on to spend eight years on the Guardian's fashion desk. She is now an award-winning columnist for the paper.



• **Amol Rajan, editor of Varsity, University of Cambridge**

The former editor of the *Independent* and now media correspondent for the BBC, edited Varsity. Oly Duff, editor of the *i*, headed

Varsity shortly before Rajan.

• **Heidi Blake, editor of Nouse, University of York**

Blake, now UK investigations editor for BuzzFeed, was awarded student reporter of the year and best feature writer in the Guardian's student media awards for her work on Nouse. She then joined the *Telegraph* as a graduate reporter.

• **Luke Harding, editor of Cherwell, University of Oxford**

Harding, the Guardian's foreign correspondent and author of *The Snowden*

Files, juggled editing Cherwell with his English degree at University College.

• **George Osborne, editor of Isis, University of Oxford**

Osborne edited Isis magazine while at Oxford – producing a controversial issue about hemp, which was partially printed on cannabis paper.

• **Jay Rayner, editor of Leeds Student**

Rayner edited the University of Leeds' student newspaper, now called *The Gryphon*. Its alumni also include Daily Mail editor Paul Dacre.

a day in the life of

an agricultural journalist

24
HOURS

They say it takes all sorts to make a world – and they're right. The thought of watching a box set on the telly with a glass of wine bores the pants off me.

I'd much rather be feeding the calves, driving about on the skid-steer mobile loader, checking the heifers or milking our lovely cows.

I've lived on a farm all my life. Some of my earliest memories are of helping dad and granny – as soon as I could walk, I was pottering around the yard in kid-sized wellies and not a lot has changed since then.

Farming is the type of job you wouldn't do if you didn't love it. You're there for all of the best moments but also all of the hardest moments you face as animal lovers and business owners.

When there's an awkward calving or a cow hurts herself, you feel as emotionally invested in helping her as a nurse does with a patient. I think farmers need almost a maternal instinct towards their herd or flock to know how to help.

The modern farmer is a book-keeper, vet, salesman and buyer – and that's before you've even fed the calves, cleaned out the sheds or milked the cows.

My day job as a journalist couldn't be more different. Sometimes it's a business meeting in the city centre, or sitting in an office rushing to write copy and meet deadlines – and, of course, readers can be a little more vocal than the cows.

Before I started my job as northern correspondent for farming news site AgriLand, I was working for a daily newspaper in Belfast city centre.

I enjoyed the buzz of the job and it opened up the world of writing about artisan food businesses to me. My role also involved general news reporting and chasing whatever the big story of the day was, so it brought a lot of variety too.

The pace was very fast, and the standard was

Don't put your feet up – put your wellies on, says journalist and dairy farmer **Rachel Martin**

high. It was an incredible way to learn and gave me a lot of confidence for developing my career.

When I tell my friends where I'm working now they invariably smile and tell me that it's the perfect job for me – and they're right.

I am thankful every day that I am able to incorporate the two things I love – reporting and farming – into my role as an agricultural journalist and that the two work so well together.

Journalism satisfies my nosy itch – if someone's doing something different or better, I want to know about what they're doing and why. With my personal experience, I'm able to ask the questions farmers want the answers to.

For me, it's an excuse to be nosy and to find out about the latest agricultural innovations and report back to our readers. If I notice something that impresses or surprises me, I can be sure my readers will want to know about it too.

I love the close-knit community in the countryside. I'm used to the farmhouse where people are always coming and going – even now, one of my favourite parts of the job is getting out to events and talking to farmers.

When you sit down and chat with a group of country folk, you'll not be long realising they are great story-tellers with a wicked sense of humour – not all of which can be repeated in print.

One of my favourite tales is about a farmer from Co Down who allowed his so-called friends and neighbours to pay up to £100 to rip strips of hot wax off his chest after a dare in a pub got out of hand.

It wasn't too far from where I live so I took my camera and went down for a night's entertainment. The whole village must have turned out; the night was a great success and it raised thousands of pounds for charity.

The story was picked up both in Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Best of all, it highlighted some of the human side of what goes on down on the farm – something that can be hard to get across in the mainstream media.

It can be hard finding time between jobs, which is why it helps that my job is also my favourite hobby. However, don't get me wrong – if it wasn't for my wonderful family, there would either be a very angry editor or a herd of very hungry cows.

In the last few weeks alone, I have travelled to Kildare, Strabane, Banbridge, Mullingar, Donegal and Finland so my mum, dad and sister Heather are well



used to picking up the slack.

We all chip in when something comes up, but between press trips abroad and meetings down in Dublin, it's me who's away more than the rest of the family put together.

Ultimately, I put the day job first, but the flexibility in what I do and the unsociable hours I work as a journalist support my lifestyle.

I love working for a news outlet right on the frontier of a new era of reporting. All our journalists are given extensive training in social media, SEO and style, even if they have experience in these areas.

We don't see the web as an excuse to lower quality and take our standards very seriously. I think that's what will make the difference in getting ahead in this new age of news.

Our readers are a mixture of the young and old. The young naturally will flock to anything digital so, when my dad started reading AgriLand every day, I knew it was a news outlet worth taking seriously.

Farmers aren't slow to tell you if you're wrong so you can never squeeze anything past them.

I'm conscious I'm writing about "a day in the life" but in truth I don't have a daily routine.

I try to get out of the office as much as possible. Typical outings could be anything from a cattle sale to an economics briefing, a farm walk, a tour of a food processing factory or an agricultural show.

Last month, I found myself out in the busiest field in Ireland for four days co-presenting our live coverage of the National Ploughing Championships, Europe's largest agricultural show. I love that in the crazy world of journalism you could end up literally anywhere – and it's no different in agricultural news.

I love farming, particularly with livestock, but have little experience inside a tractor cab. I spent the two weeks leading up to the show mulling over when to tell my boss I didn't know a thing about ploughing. The show is the flagship for farming in Ireland and is attended by around 300,000 people so I knew it would be important.

Luckily, despite its name, ploughing is just one of hundreds of things to see and the week was a complete success. Our live content from

the "ploughing" has been viewed more than 325,000 times so far.

On one of the days, we opened the live show with "tractor karaoke" at the young farmers' stand.

I was singing my heart out in the tractor with rural youth organisation Macra na Feirme president James Healy and my colleague Sarah Delaney – but we didn't realise until after that the mics hadn't picked up the backing music!

I've still a lot to learn, but I'm sure having fun doing it. Would I ever do anything else? I don't think I could.

Rachel Martin is northern correspondent for farming news site AgriLand

News harvest

AgriLand was founded just over four years ago but has quickly become the largest farming news publisher on the island of Ireland.

More than 300,000 people read the site every month and its news app is the most downloaded farming app in Ireland – there have been 80,000 downloads to date.

AgriLand employs 16 staff, including 12 journalists at its Dublin headquarters.

The firm's founder and managing director, Cormac Farrelly, explains how he came up with the idea to take farming news online.

He says: "Having grown up on a farm and

AgriLand
IRELAND'S LARGEST FARMING NEWS PORTAL

with a background in media, I saw that the agricultural industry had been left behind by the digital revolution.

"AgriLand is run by a team of people who are themselves farmers – it's farmers providing a service for farmers.

"Our aim is to inform farmers, but we don't tell them how to farm – we just keep them informed with the things they should be aware of to help them run their businesses.

"We are conscious that farmers should be as interested in what's happening outside their farm gate as inside the farm gate.

"Arguably, what happens outside their farming enterprises has the biggest impact on their bottom line."



See you in court?

Do freelances need to take out libel cover? wonders **Simon Creasey**

Business may be booming for messrs Sue, Grabbit & Runne at the moment and some of the richest pickings for the fictitious law firm regularly name-checked by Private Eye is being provided by journalists.

There have been a number of high-profile libel cases in the US. Sabrina Rubin Erdely, the freelance writer behind Rolling Stone's rape on campus scandal, is being sued for millions of dollars by a several parties who were mentioned in her story. Fox News host Eric Boiling is suing freelance journalist Yashar Ali for \$50 million over allegations that he sent lewd messages to female colleagues.

This is not happening just in America. In the UK over the past couple of years, libel actions have been lodged against freelance journalists and bloggers, by a wide range of different claimants, including MPs.

It begs the question: given how high the stakes are, should freelance writers consider taking out their own libel insurance cover?

It's difficult to be sure how many freelance journalists have libel cover. However, anecdotal evidence from media law experts suggests numbers are fairly low. I conducted a very quick and crude straw poll of a group of experienced freelance journalists. One writer, who does a lot of work for national newspapers, said: "I have all sorts of cover – professional indemnity and public liability – and I think libel is included too." The others said they had no libel insurance cover and had never considered taking it out. "I don't have it – mainly as I assume (almost certainly wrongly) the responsibility lies with the publication," responded one freelance.

Sadly his assumption – as he correctly guessed – is wrong. Although the majority of reputable publishers would back a freelance who has undertaken a solid piece of reporting, unless you have a specific agreement in place with a publisher that relieves you of your legal liabilities, you are legally liable for the work you produce. So, if you make a mistake, you could be sued.

"Usually in the UK, a libel action will be against the publisher and, if the freelance is named by the claimant in the writ, I guess the publisher will usually take the freelance under its wing as regards fighting the action or paying up to completely settle the action. Unless the freelance has so annoyed the publisher that he or she is left 'swinging in the wind' – for example, if the settlement deal excludes the

freelancer who therefore remains in the firing line of the writ," says one media law expert.

Publishers are not obliged to offer legal or indeed libel insurance support to freelances and a lot of smaller publishing houses don't take out libel insurance cover for their own staff as it can be costly. They might balk at covering a publication's own legal expenses – and any resulting financial settlement to the claimant – in addition to those of a freelance.

Of course the best form of defence to any libel action is to do your job properly in the first place. As a media lawyer for one of the UK's leading law firms says: "If you act responsibly – ie you check your facts and get your comments from trusted sources – you can protect yourself to a very large extent."

Many freelance journalists report on subjects where the chances of someone pursuing them for libel is extremely low so in all likelihood they would never require insurance cover.

As David Banks, a journalist and media law trainer who has co-written editions of McNae's Essential Law for Journalists, points out: "I think people only need it if they are publishing risky stories on a platform that does not take on the libel risk itself and indemnify them. It really does depend on the nature of their story whether they think they need it."

However, sometimes seemingly innocuous statements or articles in obscure publications can come back to haunt people – and you can still be sued for libel even if your story is 100 per cent watertight.

This is why Mark Hanna, a senior tutor at the University of Sheffield's Department of Journalism Studies who has also co-written editions of McNae's, thinks "freelances should insure themselves against all potential liabilities, and should check out what the NUJ offers its members in this respect".

Do you need an insurance policy?

Firstly consider your potential exposure.

If the bulk of your work is copywriting or straightforward feature writing for reputable contract publishing or business to business magazines, it's highly unlikely that you will need libel insurance cover – although there are exceptions. The libel risk would be relatively low and most publishers would step in to defend reporters where there is a defensible case.

However, if you're an

investigative reporter, or you work for national newspapers or popular websites, it might be worth buying cover.

Another issue to consider is contracts. Some may stipulate you need professional indemnity, public liability and libel insurance cover in place and, if you don't, you could be in breach of contract.

Journalists should also consider what obligations – if any – they might have under the general data protection regulations, which come into force

next year, in terms of data breaches and notification.

If you decide that you do need cover, in addition to taking out a bespoke libel insurance policy for journalists, the best form of protection against the threat of libel action is abiding by the NUJ's code of conduct and producing work of a high professional standard.

As a media lawyer for a large UK firm points out: "If you write something that you know is untrue, then your insurers will walk away. However, if you write something in good faith that's been well reported, then your insurers will step up and defend the allegation."

There are a number of insurance brokers in the market who offer libel cover to journalists. Imaging Insurance has been the appointed broker for the NUJ for more than a decade and it offers members a discounted policy.

“Premiums start at just under £37 a month, including the insurance premium tax levied by the government, and can be paid as an interest-free direct debit over 12 months,” says divisional director Martin Swann. “This entry level cost includes professional indemnity (PI) cover for up to £100,000, public liability cover of up to £1 million and extends to include a whole host of exposures, including but not limited to breach of contract, privacy, intellectual property and data protection obligations.”

He adds that the policy is written on a “cost in addition basis” so the costs incurred when defending an allegation are insured separately and don’t eat into the cover you have to pay for losses and awards in the event of a successful claim.

According to Swann, one of the main benefits of having PI cover is the protection it provides for defending an allegation of libel.

“We deal with a number of PI claims each year for clients within the media industry and have seen a number of examples in recent years where the initial allegation against our client has been unfounded or spurious,” he says.

The reasons NUJ members buy this cover vary. Swann says one noticeable trend he has recently detected is a growing number of members are taking cover as a result of contracts



People only need cover if they are publishing risky stories on a platform that does not take on the libel risk itself. It really does depend on the nature of the story



or retainers they have with publications.

“The move towards requiring indemnities from freelancers and subcontractors is something we are seeing across the whole media industry and not just for writers as companies look to pass their liabilities,” adds Swann.

“We would suggest that there are a number of freelance members who may not be aware of their need to carry cover to satisfy their contractual obligations. These contractual indemnities could include areas like breach of Intellectual property rights, data protection, breach of confidentiality and cyber risks.”

Thankfully, for the vast majority of freelance journalists, being pursued for damages under libel laws is never going to be an issue. And, even for those who occasionally walk the tightrope and report on issues where that risk is high, the chances of a claimant pursuing an individual reporter is remote.

“Most journalists are not worth suing as the ability of the claimant to obtain substantial damages is limited,” says Banks. “That is not to say freelancers don’t get sued – sometimes they do. But large publishers are easier and more lucrative to sue.”

The libel risk to most UK freelance writers is low but, given the substantial legal costs associated with defending an action in court in addition to the hefty financial settlements successful claimants can be awarded, journalists have to ask themselves whether not having libel insurance cover is a risk worth taking.

BRAIN LIGHT / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



Taking the lon

Short is not necessarily sweet for blogs, with longer pieces especially popular for complex issues, says **Susan Fenton**

Conventional wisdom has it that journalistic writing should be concise because readers have short attention spans. Does this apply to blogs as well as conventional reporting?

It seems not. The trend is very much towards longer articles, according to Phil Chamberlain, head of the school of film and journalism at the University of the West of England. He says: "People fell out of love with long-form reporting for a while but it's coming back into vogue. They have always relished in-depth storytelling – look at how many people binge watch TV series. Particularly in political blogging, there's a desire for rich, well-informed long-form content."

Chamberlain points to research carried out last year by web design company Orbit Media Studios. This found the average blog post length was 1,054 words in 2016, a 19 per cent rise on the previous year. Far fewer posts were 500 words or shorter, and far more were 2,000 words or more. The longer the post, the more likely bloggers were to get "strong results".

Andrew Sparrow, political correspondent and live blogger at The Guardian, is one aficionado of long-form posts. "An important discovery for me – which went against conventional thinking – was that as long as you write well and show good

judgment, there will be people who want to read about your subject at length," he says. "In blogs, journalists can explain and give a level of analysis you don't get from newspapers."

Meanwhile, more time is being spent on writing a post. The average blog post takes three hours 16 minutes to write, according to the Orbit report – a 26 per cent increase since the previous year. More bloggers now publish weekly or monthly and fewer post daily or several times a week.

The use of images and video is also increasing, says the report. "There are high expectations of quality and of content," says Chamberlain. "Readers expect to see pictures, video feeds, podcasts or maybe links to interviews on SoundCloud. The multimedia approach helps journalists to set their blogs apart from others that are just standard diary entries."

The sheer number of blogs makes it impossible to estimate how many there are, says Chamberlain. He thinks most journalists will try blogging at some point as it's a natural activity for writers. It also gives them the chance to raise their professional profile, to tell a story or to express opinions.

But he adds: "The difficult thing for journalists is getting away from the idea that everyone will be interested in what you have to say. Your opinions alone are not enough to sustain interest. You need to think about what people will be interested in, and try to create a reputation as an authority in a subject."

Former national newspaper journalist and BBC presenter Robin Lustig, who started his politics and current affairs blog, Lustig's Letter, when he was at the BBC, agrees there is a need to impart knowledge but adds he is now "far more

Top tips for creating a good blog

- **Develop a subject specialism** so that your readers see you as an authority. Give them extra value by linking to other sources and statistics on the subject.

- **Pick topics that people** will be interested in reading about and debating. If you're stuck for a topical subject when writing a post, try using an editorial calendar to find ideas.

- **Try to be interesting** and entertaining, and have an original outlook, so people enjoy reading what you write.

- **Always be fair** and accurate. Make the effort to see both sides of a story; your opinion alone is probably not enough to sustain readers' interest.

- **Encourage readers to comment** then engage with them. Their comments can add a new dimension

to the subject you're writing about.

- **Publish when you post a blog** on social media. This drives traffic and encourages people to comment who might not bother registering to comment on a blog.

- **Posts that feature pictures** and videos tend to be the most popular.

- **Guest blogging** (find another blogger who covers a related subject)

can help both parties to increase their readership.

- **Some bloggers make money** through selling e-books or by using affiliate links (such as Amazon's) and tools like AdSense to benefit from clicks and purchases made by readers.

- **Include a link to your blog** on your CV so employers can check out your writing style.

- **Use keywords and tags** so people looking for information on a subject can find you more easily.

- **Analyse your analytics** to find out which kind of posts are most popular.

g view

opinionated” than when he was bound by impartiality guidelines. For example, he has referred to the “hypocrisy, dishonesty and cowardice” of some British politicians and the “unadulterated gibberish” talked by Donald Trump.

Lustig, who was named independent blogger of the year by Comment Awards in 2014, says the biggest response he ever received was to a blog attacking Russell Brand. “To have any value, a blog has to have a point of view,” he says. “The more extreme the views, the more feedback you get and the more impact you make.”

Andrew Sparrow agrees the best blogs are those that have a “voice”. He says: “Part of the attraction for many journalists is that, in a blog, your own commentary becomes acceptable in a way that it would not be in conventional journalism.”

That, he points out, raises issues of impartiality. “My role involves more editorialising than conventional news journalism will allow. I make judgments to help the reader understand what’s going on and why, what significance it has and whether it matters. My benchmark is: is it accurate and fair? I say: ‘Here’s what I think and here’s what other people think – sift through the facts and opinions and make your own mind up.’”

Sparrow says live blogging is a useful skill. “It suits people who are confident about writing and making news judgments fairly quickly, and who are comfortable with the increasing amount of noise and the volume of material to monitor. It would not suit someone who likes to spend a lot of time thinking before they write.”

Another high-profile political blogger is Paul Staines, who started the Guido Fawkes blog in 2004 and was once described by The Telegraph as “the journalistic equivalent of an arsonist”. Staines sees the site as a platform for his political views, which he once likened to “Thatcher on drugs”.

Staines, who initially tried to conceal his identity, has had “a few controversial moments”,

Blog links:

Guido Fawkes:

www.order-order.com

Andrew Sparrow:

www.theguardian.com/politics/series/politics-live-with-andrew-sparrow

Robin Lustig:

www.lustigletter.blogspot.co.uk

Jaci Stephen:

www.lanotsoconfidential.blogspot.co.uk

William Gallagher:

www.williamgallagher.com

not least injunctions and libel actions. He says: “I didn’t come to Westminster to make friends – you just have to go on your instinct and not worry about what people think.”

But Staines thinks that, in general, bloggers shouldn’t write about their opinions. “It gives them a bit of therapy and an opportunity to vent but no one cares what they think.”

Former Radio Times writer and Doctor Who scriptwriter William Gallagher, who has led blogging workshops for NUJ members, agrees: “A blog should reflect the writer’s personality, but it will become egotistical if it is only about you. Blogging about ‘my life as a wonderful creative soul and what I ate this morning’ is just digital narcissism and can become tedious.”

TV critic Jaci Stephen, who blogs about her “nomadic, transatlantic existence” in the UK and in the US, begs to differ. “It’s all about me, me, me,” she admits, laughing. “I think everyone should be as fascinated about me as I am about myself.”

Her long-running blog, LA Not So Confidential, humorously explores cultural differences, such as the Americans’ reputed difficulty in understanding irony. She notes: “They are very literal minded and you have to spell things out. But I’m never rude. My style is self-deprecatory: I’m a Welsh woman abroad – look at how I screw my life and relationships up.”

Successful bloggers say reader engagement on social media is valuable, especially through Twitter. “Twitter is the dominant forum in politics, the main echo chamber,” says Staines, gets thousands of comments a day.

Sparrow, who get about 5,000 comments a day, agrees. “I feel much more connected to what readers are thinking than I used to on newspapers because the blog structure makes you feel part of a conversation. On newspapers, apart from the odd letter, you had no idea what readers thought.”



Starting Out

As a new freelance in Delhi, **Will Brown** found himself investigating sex trafficking



The tracks hummed and a whirlwind of colour piled into the train. A thousand bodies pushed, shoved and sweated their way onto the carriage. Over the hubbub, the intercom announced that this was the 18-hour express service from New Delhi to the capital of Bengal, Kolkata.

A few hours into the journey, the Guardian's correspondent called me on a shaky line. I had to go to one of the largest red-light districts in Asia and investigate how sex trafficking networks were being affected by the Indian government's sudden decision to take 86 per cent of the country's currency out of circulation.

I looked up from the call and saw a small sign on the carriage door telling me to look out for trafficked children on the train. I felt a sharp knot in my stomach – this was real.

Several months before, I'd gone AWOL in New Delhi. I left my British Council graduate teaching job in one of the capital's manic sub-cities and, with no real journalism experience, I'd headed into town to be a freelancer.

By sheer coincidence, I'd met two picnicking French journalists in a park. They'd inspired me to leave my job and, several weeks later, I moved in with them. I had the bottom end of a graduate's overdraft and no contacts.

Delhi may be one of the largest cities in the world, but fortunately expat Delhi is no bigger than a small village. Once you meet one minor alcoholic diplomat, it's only a matter of time until you meet them all. And somehow, armed with a few student bylines from The Times, I managed to

blag and chance my way into the city's highest cultural circles.

I'd read that to get established, a new freelancer should throw themselves at absolutely everything. So, I arranged a tour around the "Eton of India". I tried to sneak into a park infected with bird flu. I tried and failed to write travel pieces about the Punjab. I even climbed into a dump truck to get to the top of one of Delhi's mountainous, burning waste dumps.

Freelancing, I quickly learned, is probably 90 per cent boredom and failure. Of course, determination is key. For every article I had published, I must have had five ideas and sent 25 pitches. For my efforts I'd get twenty-four rejections.

One day I met a social worker in Delhi's main red-light district, GB Road. I got lost looking for her and a pimp standing outside one of the brothels offered me a session with a young girl.

There are around 3,500 women and girls on GB Road and NGOs say 97 per cent are victims of trafficking. They're a small but centrally located slice of the horror that is India's 18 million modern slavery crisis. Hundreds of children go missing every day. Many are sold into forced labour, but young skin sells well in a sexually repressed country and many are sold into forced sex work.

I began to cover sex trafficking in depth. But the Indian girls were neither "British" enough for UK editors nor "Trump" enough for American ones.

But the horrific stories of families selling their daughters and continuous rape stuck in my mind like a burning rock.

I kept going into red-light districts and talking to women and activists. I kept pitching, writing and networking. After two months, I'd built up a strong base of contacts and The Guardian and the BBC wanted to see what I could get them in Kolkata.

Then I moved on to Mumbai and Southern India to do more research. I worked on the issue for the Guardian, VICE News, News Deeply, the Spectator and Marie Claire, and even researched a prospective project to film the rescue of underage girls for the BBC.

But, after several months researching sex trafficking across the country, I was completely burnt out. Only a fraction of the stories I researched were published and I felt that I'd failed many of the people I'd spoken to.

I flew home. But, after a month trying to eke out an existence in London, I decided I couldn't leave it there. I needed to go back but this time with the proper skills and training.

Freelancing in India is the hardest thing I've ever done. But it's also made me more determined than ever to report on the world's untold stories.

“ After months of researching sex trafficking, I was burnt out. Only a fraction of the stories were published and I felt I'd failed many of the people I'd spoken to

@_will_brown

What made you become a journalist?

A sense of outrage. Council and government “speak”, the exponential rise of the press office and “news management”.

What other job might you have done/have you done?

Manual jobs as a lad from the markets to a railway freight porter. I became an actor after studying at RADA. [Nigel played Terry Duckworth in Coronation Street] After falling out of love with acting, I did a master's degree in international relations.

When did you join the NUJ and why?

In 2006 to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the law as a newsgatherer.

Are many of your friends in the union?

I hope the time comes when I will have a lot of friends in the union ... Too many young journalists are not members, which is of concern.

What's been your best moment in your career?

Being nominated for a Royal Television Society award for The Regeneration Game – a BBC documentary I wrote and presented on housing market renewal.

What is the worst place you've ever worked in?

I've not worked anywhere that completely sucked. But, as a freelance, maintaining good relations with media organisations is always challenging. The trickiest locations have been in Donbass in Ukraine, and the Turkish/Syrian border.

And the best?

The BBC 5 Live Investigates and File on 4 teams are well organised and have a great attitude towards work flow and news gathering.



NUJ & Me

Nigel Pivaro is a freelance journalist and a former actor



What advice would you give someone starting in journalism?

The same as I used to give those starting in acting – have another occupation to fall back on. That said, create a wide network of contacts and hold on to them. Get away from the internet (which like wine is a good servant but a poor master) and get into the real world. If there is more to a story, never take no for an answer – keep digging.

Who is your biggest hero?

No heroes really but I hugely respect Salmaan Taseer, a Pakistani state governor who tried to defend a Christian facing blasphemy charges and was murdered for his efforts.

And villain?

Mao Zedong, Pol Pot, Stalin, Hitler – the usual suspects who have caused great suffering on a grand scale with intent.

Which six people would you invite to a dinner party?

Woody Allen, John Cooper Clarke, Lee Harvey Oswald, Helen of Troy, Henry Kissinger and Eva Peron.

What was your earliest political thought?

Why did they have to shoot President Kennedy? (I was three and three quarters)

What are your hopes for journalism?

That people are convinced of the necessity of in-depth news, with analysis and at least a binary approach. That the internet and social media will be put back in their places as subservient to personal contact.

And fears?

That journalism will be subsumed by convenience news, worthless beyond the headline and intro and that true journalism may be limited to specialist titles at which only the connected or rich will find a gig.

How would you like to be remembered?

Accurately!

arts with attitude

Some of the best things to see and do with a bit of political bite

For listings email: arts@NUJ.org.uk

Book

A call to take heed of the past



'I never expected to be a writer': Tim Lezard talks to nonagenarian publishing sensation Harry Leslie Smith

Harry Leslie Smith, 94-year-old author, Guardian contributor and Twitter troll-basher, has just published his fifth book.

Don't Let My Past Be Your Future is a moving account of his life growing up in Yorkshire during the Great Depression.

"Plunging into what was a deeply unpleasant period of my life was painful for me because - as any writer will tell you - your mind, emotions, whole personality become enmeshed in what you write," he tells Arts with Attitude. "It dogs you as you write it and then follows you afterwards, lingering in your imagination."

Smith was late to the writing game, although he read a lot as a child in his local library and tried his hand at poetry during the Second World War.

"I started writing as a means of self preservation. I was in my 80s, knew my days were getting shorter and decided that I needed to

document what I had experienced. When I younger I knew I could never become a writer because my education was spotty as I'd been put to work as a child labourer at the age of seven and left school to work full time as a grocer's assistant at 14.

"I hope my books act as a political reminder to people that the past is always going to repeat itself unless we correct its mistakes."

He's working on a new project, travelling from Turkey into Greece, up through the Balkans and into Italy, Spain, Germany and France to document the refugee crisis which, he says, is more serious than the one at the end of the Second World War.

"That I'm willing to spend the last years of my life breaking bread with refugees to help end this preventable suffering - this will be my greatest undertaking," he says. "If we don't tackle the refugee crisis and soon, war will soon follow that will be as catastrophic as the one I experienced against Hitler."

He finds it bewildering he's become a media celebrity - "I'm too old to let it get to my head" - but enjoys sparring on Twitter, saying: "It's me, and only me, who tweets from my account, and I can only assume some trolls try to claim it's not because they don't like my message of socialism and a fair deal for all."

Smith tweets at @HarrysLastStand. You can donate to his new book at www.gofundme.com/harrys-last-stand-tour



by **Tim Lezard**

Film

Manchester Keeps On Dancing The Doom Doc

A couple of musical films for you this month: both based in northern cities, but featuring very different genres. Manchester Keeps On Dancing looks at how house music arrived in Manchester from Chicago in the 1980s, through to the Acid House explosion of 1988. Doom

Doc, created on a shoestring budget of £2,500, focuses on Sheffield's links to heavy metal, exploring drug use, mental health and gentrification with the help of former Black Sabbath drummer Bill Ward and members of Conan, Crowbar and Primitive Man.

www.mcrkeepson.com
<http://thedomdoc.com>

Happy End

And a treat from Michael Haneke. The award-winning director of Amour, The White Ribbon and Hidden returns with a drama about a well-off French family living in a bourgeois bubble in northern France, oblivious to the human misery unfolding in migrant camps around Calais, a few miles from their home. Perhaps I should send Harry Leslie Smith round to have a word.

[@HappyEndFilm](https://twitter.com/HappyEndFilm)

Music

The Selector and The Beat Touring UK in December

A Christmas present from the past as two 2-tone legends tour together at the end of the month, with a bonus Belfast gig in March. The Beat,

probably best known for Mirror In the Bathroom, are touring with Pauline Black's The Selector, of On My Radio fame. Mixing punk, ska and reggae, their music addressed the social and political issues in the early Thatcher years, giving a voice to disaffected youth across the racial divide. Pauline is as political as ever, as her band's new album, Daylight, testifies.

<http://theselector.net>



Wolf Alice Touring Europe in January

If you like combining overseas city breaks

with gigs, why not pop across the Channel to see Jeremy Corbyn's new favourite band, Wolf Alice? Not "favourite" in a "Gordon Brown/Arctic Monkeys" way, but in a "You backed me in the general election/I'll back you in the charts" way. Who mentioned anything about Brexit?
<http://wolfalice.co.uk>

Comedy

Sophie Hagen

Touring the UK in January

The London-based Dane has appeared on BBC television, Channel 4 and Comedy Central. Now she embarks on a UK tour to talk about her psychopathic grandfather's funeral, even though he's not dead yet. I wonder if he'll turn up at any of the shows?
www.sophiehagen.com



Jonathan Pie: Back to the Studio Touring the UK from February

Political satirist and frustrated news reporter Jonathan Pie's unguarded off-camera rants were one of the internet sensations of

the general election, viewed by millions worldwide. Now the old-style leftie, bought to life by actor Tom Walker, hits the comedy circuit with a new show. Occasionally mistaken for a genuine journalist, Pie pokes fun at our profession. Sometimes, he's a little bit too close for comfort.

www.jonathanpie.com

Lucy Porter

Touring the UK in February

Comedian, occasional actor and City AM columnist (she also writes for Cook Vegetarian Monthly and Mother & Baby) Lucy Porter hits the road in February with her latest Edinburgh Fringe show, Choose Your Battles. At a time when it's easy to be irritated, Lucy uses her experiences to help you decide which battles are worth fighting.

www.lucyporter.co.uk

Theatre

Hamilton

Victoria Palace Theatre, London, until June

They say no publicity is bad publicity, so, when Donald Trump attacked the cast of Hamilton on Twitter, it did no harm to the hip-hop musical about the West Indies immigrant who became George Washington's right-hand man. Trump's vice-president Mike Pence was booed when he took his seat on Broadway and, when the curtain fell, the cast returned to the stage to tell him: "We are the diverse Americans anxious you will not protect us." Catch the show while you can.

www.hamiltonthemusical.co.uk



Book review

Fleet Street stories in a tale of two killers

Two years ago Austin, Texas lecturer **Kate Dawson** appeared in *The Journalist* for former hacks who worked around Fleet Street in the early 1950s.

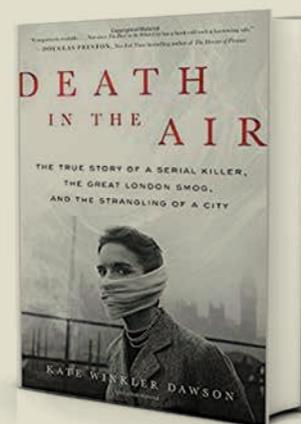
She was researching a book, *Death in the Air*, the intersecting stories of two killers – the Great Smog of 1952 that was responsible for the deaths of some 12,000 people in London and the notorious serial killer John Reginald Christie who used the fog to cloak his crimes.

Phyllis Oberman, who was an 18-year-old reporter working on the fringes of Fleet Street during that period, replied.

The two met in London, and Oberman showed Dawson around her old haunts, including the journalists' church St Bride's, the Wig and Pen Club, the Cheshire Cheese, El Vino's, the Kardomah cafe and the Daily Express building, which was known as the Black Lubyanka.

Oberman also advised on journalist terms and practices, receiving a credit in the book.

She told Arts with Attitude: "I had fun trawling through my memories but I wonder how well I did my job as an informant. Maybe other old Fleet Street hacks will find errors in the book that I did not pick up."



<http://tinyurl.com/ya9x8e9t>

Glengarry Glen Ross

Playhouse Theatre, London, until February

Christian Slater takes the lead in David Mamet's tale of lies, corruption and greed. Set in Chicago with cut-throat salesmen – "close the deal and you've earned yourself a Cadillac; lose the deal and you're f****ed" – it returns to

the West End for the first time in 10 years with a cast including Kris Marshall, Robert Glenister and Don Warrington.

www.playhousetheatre.london.com

Festival

Dublin Bowie Festival
Venues across Dublin, January 5-10

Two years after the death of David Bowie, the dancing, singing, partying

festival returns to more than a dozen venues across Dublin. With film and documentary screenings, debates and discussions, literary, fine art and fashion events, quizzes, a BowieOke and, of course, music, fans can pay their own tribute to the Thin White Duke.

dublinbowiefestival.ie



opening of Amgueddfa Cymru's first gallery dedicated to the art, he displays some of the 700 images from the 20th and

21st centuries from his private collection including work by Henri Cartier-Bresson, Eve Arnold, Sergio Larrain and Bill Brandt.

<https://museum.wales/cardiff/>

Safer Steps: The Work of the HALO Trust

National War Museum, Edinburgh, until March 4

Celebrating the work of the world's largest humanitarian mine clearance organisation, this exhibition explores the lifesaving work of this major Scottish charity through personal testimony, photography and objects.

www.nms.ac.uk/national-war-museum/

Exhibition

Swaps: Photographs from the David Hurn Collection

National Museum Cardiff until 11 March

Throughout his career as a documentary photographer and member of Magnum Photos, David Hurn has been an avid collector of photography. Now, to mark the

to spike the stories. The Times joined forces with the Washington Post to fight for the right to publish.

What happens next is revealed in this new Steven Spielberg-directed film *The Post* starring Meryl Streep as the country's first female newspaper publisher and Tom Hanks as its hard-driving editor.

The Post is released in the UK in January.

Spotlight: film

Press fights gag over Vietnam

As the Vietnam War dragged on, a team of US Defense Department analysts in 1967 prepared a highly classified study of the country's political and military involvement in the conflict. Among its most damning findings were suggestions that Harry S Truman, Dwight D Eisenhower, John F

Kennedy and Lyndon B Johnson had misled the public about the US's involvement in the war.

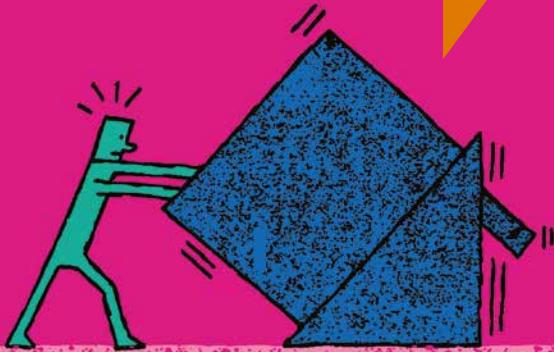
The report was leaked to the New York Times, which in 1971 published a series of scathing stories that further undermined public support for the war. The government did not take this lying down, and obtained an injunction

Books

The Way It Was

Long-standing NUJ member David Lewis has published *The Way It Was: A Pictorial History of Britain in the 'Sixties*. It contains more than 200 of his photographs taken during the early part of his career in Fleet Street and Paris. David says that the images, which appeared in some of the world's most prestigious publications, will transport you back to the era of flower power and the birth of the computer age.

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Tenants misunderstand how the media works

Some points on negative coverage of council estate tenants, though not specifically about Grenfell.

Social landlords themselves have done much to worsen the image of their tenants since I was a 1950s kid on Hereford council estates. Stats from back then show 10 per cent of social tenants were unemployed, which fits my recollection of hard-working families, but half a century later only 10 per cent were employed, probably due to social landlords' preference for guaranteed rent via council benefits.

It's also a question of tenants' perceptions. I once went on a suicide "death knock" of a young woman who went out of a 10th-storey window. The husband, a local postie, seemed a decent guy bewildered by events, but he startled me by saying my paper didn't like postmen. The only thing we'd done on posties was a court case involving a lad who had left much mail undelivered over three months. No way could we not have covered that case. But it led to decent, hard-working local posties believing we were prejudiced against them.

Our duty has to be to report fully and fairly, but that's not always understood by people who are not used to being in the headlines.

Terry Wardle
Worcester

£30
prize
letter

media's treatment of council tenants, was particularly interesting. My only quibble: isn't media a plural noun?

Other features – Alan Jones on life as an industrial correspondent, Robin Whitlock on the Bristol scene, Barrie Clement's NUJ Q&A and other regular columns, as well as your obituaries page – are also compelling reading.

On a personal note, I was delighted at the possibility of the biennial delegate meeting and other union conferences returning to Blackpool, as that was where, back in the 1960s, I first appeared on the platform. I followed Paul Foot on the subject of victimisation and floated down the steps after my two minutes, convinced of my future as an inspirational speaker. These hopes were dashed when a fellow delegate who had been making notes informed me: "You said 'umm' 200 times." So are the mighty fallen.

Jane Hammond,
Life member

twitter feed

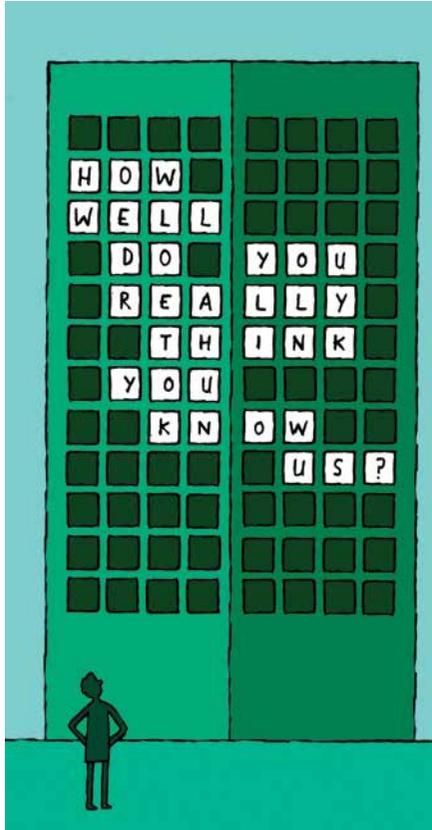
Tweet us your feedback:
@mschrisbuckley

DSamir Jeraj
(@sajeraj)
10/10/2017, 14:45
Powerful front cover from the @NUJofficial magazine

KathMiddleditch
(@KathMiddleditch)
10/10/2017, 16:19

@louisetickle @NUJofficial @seethrujustice Very thought provoking. I can't see how more transparency is a bad thing, just v tricky

Simon Sapper
(@simonsapper)
12/10/2017, 18:32
Must-read by @kath_grant on the demonisation of #SocialHousing



Why the choice of cover?

"It's hard to find positive and non-stereotypical portrayals of people who live in social housing."

That being the case, can The Journalist (October-November) explain the reasoning behind its choice of front-page picture?

Daisy Fox
Merseyside

The purpose of the photo was to illustrate the theme of the feature and to show little has changed over the years.

Christine Buckley, Editor

Heath investigation raises ethical questions for NUJ

The furore over the investigation into allegations of child sexual abuse by Sir Edward Heath raises an important ethical issue. While journalists must

hold public bodies to account, there is also an overwhelming requirement not to prejudice an ongoing police investigation or a trial.

Wiltshire Police were leading a national investigation across multiple force areas in the normal way. This unleashed a barrage of criticism from vested interests including Heath's friends, family and political associates that was published in the media before the investigation had even reported. The police responded with unprecedented criticism of the media, stressing that they must be able to "carry out investigations with complete independence without commentary which threatens to undermine the process".

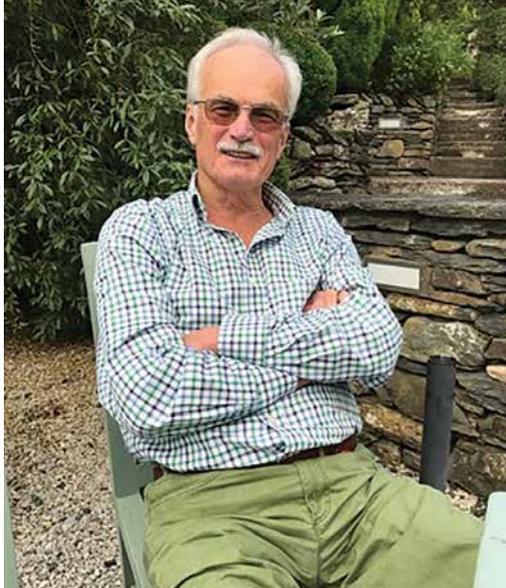
Often publicity is helpful to an investigation, but sometimes it can be damaging. I think the NUJ should

examine the media coverage of Operation Conifer and consider adding to the code of ethics: "13. Do nothing that will prejudice an ongoing police investigation, or a trial."

Tim Hicks
Citizen Journalist,
North Yorks Enquirer

Much compelling reading in the last Journalist

Congratulations on a sparkling Journalist for October/November 2017. Your nibs on what's happening in journalism worldwide are informative and succinct. The bylined articles on how Gordon Rayner, Ryan Parry and Simon Smith wrote their way to success should encourage young readers – including perhaps student members. The hard-hitting cover story, on the



Tim Jones

Born just after the end of the Second World War, Tim Jones was an early pioneer of public sector press and PR and led the NUJ's Public Relations & Communications Industrial Council as chair and vice-chair for many years.

He was a staunch trade unionist and community activist who could always be relied upon to roll up his sleeves and eagerly get to work on behalf of members.

Tim blazed what is now a familiar trail from local newspaper journalism – in Worcester and Oxford – to become the first information officer at Nottingham's Trent Polytechnic before developing and managing Nottingham City Council's successful press and PR team from 1989 to 2002.

In later years, he settled with his wife, Rachel, in Northumberland and became a stalwart of the NUJ's Newcastle branch while freelancing.

Although diagnosed with heart failure seven years ago, he rarely missed a branch meeting.

Tim represented disabled members on the union's Public Relations & Communications Industrial Council. Its current chair Phil Morcom said: "It was a consistent pleasure to be in his company."

As well as his wife, Rachel, and daughters Lucy and Tamsin, Tim had three grandchildren and one granddog.

Nic Mitchell



John Holland

A photographer who worked for the Manchester Evening News (MEN) from 1963 to 1996 has died in hospital in Harwich, Essex. John Holland had developed bone marrow myeloma, a type of cancer, in later life and shortly before he died on 4 September, he was diagnosed with lung cancer. He was 84.

John started in a traditional way as a messenger at Kemsley Newspapers in 1948. After doing his national service in the Royal Engineers, he went into Kemsley Studio darkrooms as a junior and was apprenticed as a photo printer. He freelanced as a photographer while doing this before going on the road as a staff photographer with the Evening Chronicle in March 1958. He became deputy picture editor in January 1961.

The Evening Chronicle folded in July 1963 and John was transferred to the MEN, where he remained until taking a redundancy package with three colleagues in April 1996.

He was awarded the MBE that same year for his work in road safety.

John and his wife Marie lived for many years in Romiley and later Marple in Cheshire before moving to Harwich where his wife's family lived. John leaves Marie and their children Douglas and Susan as well as grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Bill Batchelor



Seamus Kelters

Seamus Kelters, assistant editor of BBC Newsline in Northern Ireland, has died aged 54 from cancer.

Seamus was an influential journalist, storyteller and NUJ chapel activist who enjoyed cross-community respect as a public service broadcaster par excellence.

With David McKittrick, he was the co-author of *Lost Lives*, the critically acclaimed reference book documenting every death directly caused by the Troubles. The book, which covered more than 3,000 people killed in the conflict, took more than 10 years to produce. Few people could match Seamus for his knowledge of Northern Ireland politics.

Seamus started working at the BBC in the early 1990s as a broadcast journalist and worked on many programmes, including *Spotlight*, and *Hearts and Minds*.

He had begun his journalistic career with the *Irish News*. He was a skilled investigative journalist and is remembered for his dogged coverage of the wrongful convictions of the Birmingham Six.

Among the mourners at Seamus' funeral in Belfast were Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams and BBC journalist-turned-nun Martina Purdy.

He is survived by his wife Camilla and two sons Brendan and Michael.

Raymond Snoddy warns against well-intentioned campaigns

Beware, the freedom of the press is at stake

We live in a world of instant pop-up campaigns and daily petitions floating to prominence on the rising tide of social media.

Some are useful, others deeply damaging – from the best of intentions.

Stop Funding Hate, which targets newspapers it does not like such as the Daily Mail, The Sun and the Daily Express, was launched less than 18 months ago. Online crowd-funding produced a war chest of more than £100,000 and a launch video was viewed no less than 6 million times. As a result a powerful campaign to persuade major companies to pull their advertising from the “offending” newspapers was born.

The campaign has drawn initial blood. Paperchase has issued a grovelling apology for running a promotion with the Daily Mail and Stop Funding Hate has apparently influenced the advertising policies of companies such as Specsavers, Lego, Plusnet and The Body Shop.

The initial temptation is to give Stop Funding Hate two cheers for their attempts to hit the soft advertising underbelly of such resolutely right-wing papers.

After all the Daily Mail called senior judges Enemies of the People and more recently 15 Conservative MPs who oppose writing an EU departure date into law were denounced as “collaborators.” And all three titles have been guilty of running dozens, and in some cases hundreds, of anti-immigrant stories over the years.

Increasingly it looks as if the three targeted titles, all of them cheerleaders

for departure from the EU, helped persuade their readers to vote against their own financial interests.

It would therefore be tempting to support the aims of Stop Funding Hate – tempting but profoundly mistaken.

If important principles are at stake – and they clearly are – then those principles include the rule of law, the survival of representative democracy and the freedom of the press, a freedom that allows for a raucous and tasteless press within that law. There should also be an associated freedom that advertisers should be able to advertise, or not, in publications of their choice without being hectored.

The Stop Funding Hate founder Richard Wilson let the cat out of the bag on Newsnight when he declared: “I think the end point for us is a media that does the job we want it to.”

Wilson did continue that the “job” was to work in the public interest and treat people fairly. The problem is that Wilson is not only self-appointed but it is not clear why his definitions of the public interest or fairness should be accepted as universal.

Wilson has started his attack with three papers. Is that the end of it or should the Daily Telegraph be added to the list for describing the 15 Tory MPs as “mutineers”, an approach that former minister Anna Soubry believed provoked 13 death threats.

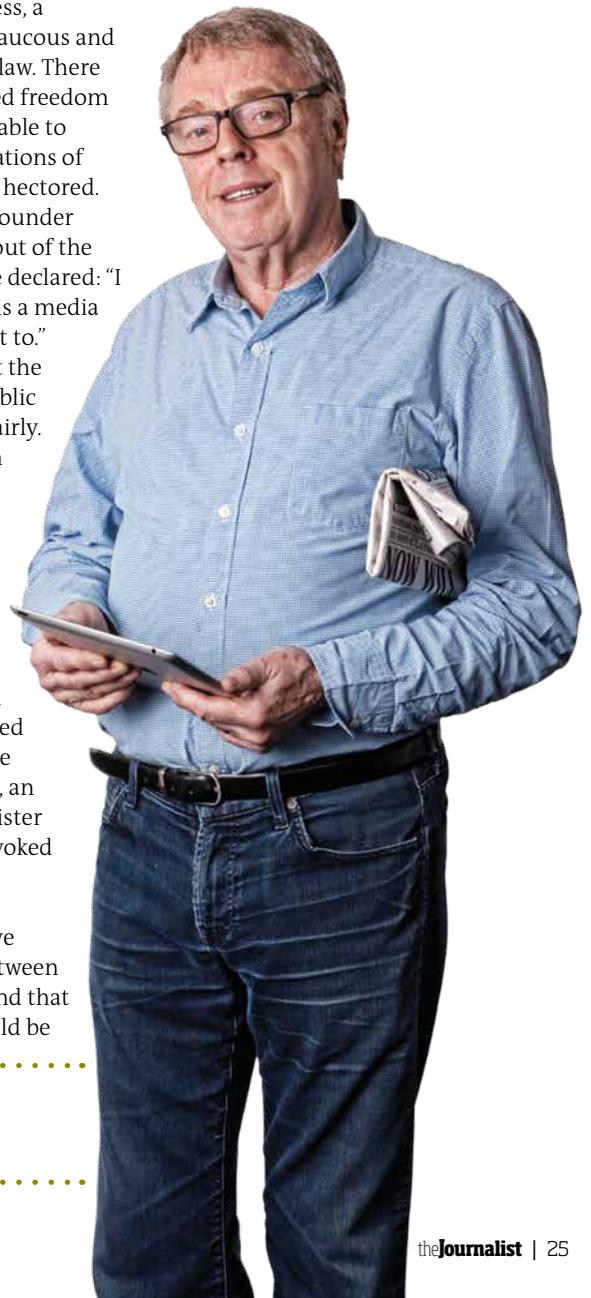
Historically, with few exceptions, advertisers have accepted the difference between editorial and advertising and that it is a distinction that should be

maintained. It should also apply to companies’ right to advertise in chosen papers irrespective of editorial content.

Luckily the newspaper and advertising industries have united against this plausible but pernicious attack. As John Lewis, one of the targeted companies put it: “Withdrawing advertising on the basis of editorial coverage would be inconsistent with our democratic principles which include freedom of speech and remaining apolitical.”

Stop Funding Hate should redirect its efforts to improve editorial standards rather than trying to undermine press viability, which already faces challenges aplenty.

//
Stop Funding Hate has apparently influenced the advertising policies of companies such as Specsavers, Lego, Plusnet and The Body Shop
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 For the latest updates from Raymond Snoddy on Twitter follow @raymondsnoddy

The sensitive art of writing an obituary

Chris Proctor no longer wants the gig

I was 22 when I decided I wanted to write obits for a living. It was a major change of heart because up to that point I had scorned them, believing they were irrelevant to me as they were about people who had died.

My opinion changed the day I was stuck in an airport in South America. I had nothing to read and the shops surrounding the waiting area were devoid of anything in English. Nothing. Nada.

For me, a combination of no reading matter and a long wait in an airport is a definition of utter hell. I'd have read anything.

I proved this by perusing pages of *El Mercurio*, a paper not only loathsome but also written in a language I didn't understand. But at least it was reading. Even physical page turning and print examination, even when the words are incomprehensible, is better than nothing.

After a few hours my eyes alighted upon a human with an English language newspaper on the other side of the disinfected acreage. It wasn't a real paper – it was a US effort – but at least it was written in (a form of) English. I scurried over and parked up next to the fellow, an archetypal businessman, and I begged. Could I have some of his paper? Any bit would do. Had he finished any pages? Could I watch him read?

He was of taciturn demeanour, relenting only when it was obvious I was unbalanced. Wordless, he pulled two pages from his periodical and, looking the other way, passed them to me. It seems surprising now but, in that moment, I loved him.

One page was obituaries. I knew none of the deceased but, in my condition, it mattered not. I devoured each entry with a gentleman's relish.

Yes, my assessments may have been coloured by my reading-deprived state. But I felt these words were the ultimate pinnacle of both literature and reportage.

They were condensed short stories that could be savoured then expanded upon: each provided the bare bones of a gripping tale I could invent for myself. Their form was classically perfect, containing a beginning, a middle and an end.

Every one was a potted social history. I came to know more about these people than I did my work colleagues. I was acquainted with their place and date of birth, their old schools and who they had worked for. I knew their interests and outlook on life, the names of their spouses and offspring. I knew intimate details of their physical condition before they featured on the obit page.

I was determined to become an obituary writer on a national. It is a measure of my relentless ambition and single-minded drive that I didn't. But I once met a bloke at a party who did obits for the *Independent*.

This was a fortuitous encounter as I happened to be engaged in a slurred discussion about whether Greta Garbo was dead. Now we had an expert to hand. Was the great actress still with us?

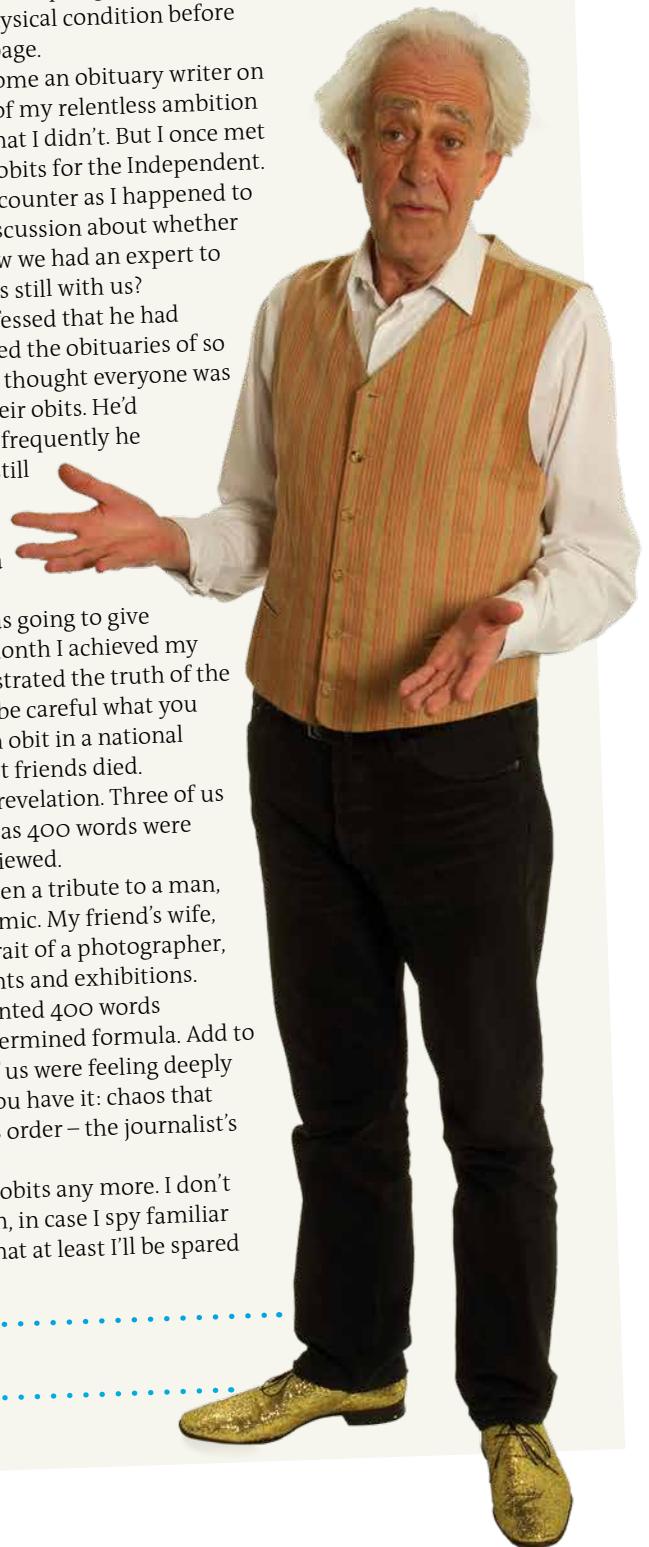
He had no idea. He confessed that he had written, edited and updated the obituaries of so many people that he now thought everyone was dead. I mean, he'd read their obits. He'd updated *Her Majesty's* so frequently he couldn't believe she was still on postage stamps.

Eventually I lost my fervour for obit writing, a state that coincided with my realisation no one was going to give me a job. But then last month I achieved my ambition, which demonstrated the truth of the maxim that you should be careful what you wish for. I got to write an obit in a national because one of my oldest friends died.

The experience was a revelation. Three of us pulled in different ways as 400 words were bartered, edited and reviewed.

I realised that I'd written a tribute to a man, not an obit for an academic. My friend's wife, an artist, wanted a portrait of a photographer, not a list of appointments and exhibitions. And the obits editor wanted 400 words conforming to a predetermined formula. Add to this the fact that two of us were feeling deeply emotional, and there you have it: chaos that ground its way towards order – the journalist's skill in a nutshell.

I don't want to write obits any more. I don't even want to read them, in case I spy familiar names. It's a comfort that at least I'll be spared my own.



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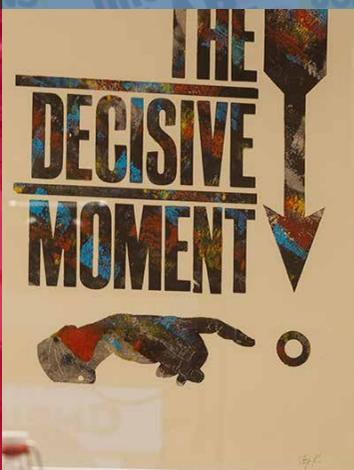


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