

# Introduction

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These are challenging times for journalism. This is one point that everyone is likely to concede before proceeding to declare their personal views on what must be done to set matters right. In the UK, journalists and their critics continue to think through the implications of Lord Justice Leveson's report on the 'culture, practices and ethics of the press,' with little sight of consensus breaking out anytime soon.

As this debate over how best to rein in the scandalous excesses of certain newspapers has unfolded, it is interesting to note how often the press's perceived role as a 'fourth estate' has surfaced as a point of contention. Over the years, this idealised role has routinely served as a form of shorthand to register the conviction that the citizen's right to freedom of speech is best protected by a market-driven, advertising-supported media system. Its advocates tend to be rather passionate in their belief that journalism is charged with a noble mission of providing members of the public with a diverse 'market place of ideas' to both inform and sustain their sense of the world around them. This responsibility places the news media at the centre of public life, namely because they facilitate the formation of public opinion regarding the pressing issues of the day – and thereby make democratic control over governing relations possible. The performance of this democratic imperative is contingent upon the realisation of press freedom as a guiding principle, one jealously safeguarded from any possible impediment associated with power and privilege. In contributing to the 'system of checks and balances,' the news media underwrite a consensual process of surveillance – watchdogs nipping at the heels of the elite – so as to ensure political and corporate interests are held responsive to the shifting dictates of public opinion.

Flash-forward to today, however, and these laudable platitudes about media and civic empowerment – for that is how they resonate to some ears – risk seeming anachronistic. One may point to examples where the news media have succeeded

in afflicting the comfortable while comforting the afflicted, to borrow a dusty phrase, but in the main they tend to be found seriously wanting in their fourth estate obligations. Public criticisms of the deepening income gap between the wealthy few and the vast majority of citizens (the other 99%) have continued to intensify as the global economic crisis grinds on, with state-imposed austerity measures producing severe hardship for many of society's most vulnerable. Social antagonisms, typically receiving scant media attention as concerns in their own right, are no longer hidden in plain sight – the 2011 summer riots in several British cities being a case in point. Many of those declaring their pessimism about whether the fourth estate will ever halt, let alone reverse its slide toward irrelevance contend that corporate journalism is complicit in upholding the very power structures it ostensibly strives to interrogate and challenge. Lofty fourth estate rhetoric about steadfast commitments to fearless reporting notwithstanding, public trust will not be garnered when watchdogs seem content to behave like lapdogs much of the time.

More optimistic appraisals suggest that hope for a reinvigorated fourth estate lies elsewhere, namely with ordinary citizens. More specifically, they point to the emergence of what some commentators are describing as a 'fifth estate,' namely a realm of citizen-centred newsmaking (often labelled 'citizen journalism') actively supplementing – and, in some instances, supplanting – the mainstream news media's role in covering breaking news. Just as the British historian Thomas Macaulay observed in 1828 that 'the gallery in which the reporters sit has become a fourth estate of the realm,' it would appear that ordinary individuals and groups engaged in newsmaking are signalling the potential for a fifth estate to claim its purchase. Digitally-savvy citizens intent on fashioning alternative forms of reporting are actively rewriting the rules of corporate journalism as together they cajole, provoke and inspire news organisations to fulfil their public service commitments. Declarations that the fourth estate is on the brink of collapse are wide of the mark, some insist, when there is such remarkable potential for new, enriched types of collaborative news reporting to flourish in the digital age. The imperatives transforming what counts as journalism – and who can be a journalist – present opportunities for citizen-professional partnerships based upon mutual-respect, quite possibly in

ways that will succeed in democratising the dynamics of media power in the public interest.

It is against this rapidly shifting backdrop, where the normative tenets of the fourth estate ideal are being reimagined anew, that we welcome you to the pages of *Journalism: New Challenges*. Beginning in the next section, we will offer a brief snapshot of its chapters, highlighting the ways in which each strives to encourage a fresh appraisal of the challenges confronting journalism today – and, in so doing, contribute to current discussions about how we may best proceed to improve the quality of news reporting for tomorrow.

### Section One: New Directions in Journalism

The hacking scandal and subsequent Leveson inquiry have cast a spotlight on many of the challenges facing the news industry. Chief amongst them, some argue, is the steady decline in traditional newsgathering and original reporting over recent years. The combination of a technological revolution, uncertainty over business models, and global recession has created what may be aptly termed *A Perfect Storm*. In this chapter, Stephen Jukes considers how cost cutting and consolidation of ownership are reducing the plurality of the news offering, potentially undermining the ability of journalists to hold authority to account. It is questionable whether the growing volume and diversity of ‘user-generated content’ can compensate for the deficit in traditional reporting; perhaps we are even approaching a watershed, whereby the very nature of journalism will be forever changed. Even if public confidence in the British media can be restored, it seems certain that the uneasy relationship between traditional and citizen media will continue to demand revised conceptions of news and journalism.

In contrast with burgeoning newspaper markets in some Asian countries, several newspapers in North America and Europe are closing shop or reducing their publication cycles in the wake of declining advertising sales and readership. The proliferation of online news – offering free content for readers and cheap advertising for businesses – is a key challenge to newspaper journalism in the digital environment. While some scholars and journalists are ready to say goodbye to print editions in as few as five years, newspapers remain an important part of the

wider news ecology. In *The Future of Newspapers in a Digital Age*, Shelley Thompson reviews several pressing challenges for the field, such as writing locally but publishing globally and finding a successful business model, coming to the fore as newspapers strive to remain a driving force in shaping the public sphere.

The role the international news agencies play in shaping the global flow of news is not always recognised to the extent it should be. These agencies produce a remarkably diverse news provision, covering a dazzling array of news events around the world for their clients – national news organisations, as well as governments and businesses – in ways which, some would say, defines the news agenda. Based in the United States (AP), Britain (Reuters) and France (AFP), the three main agencies have been linked to media imperialism in the eyes of critics, not least for their perceived influence in shutting out alternative, non-Western perspectives from developing countries. In *International News Agencies: Global Eyes that Never Blink*, Phil MacGregor assesses how these organisations have sought to overcome such criticisms, in part by harnessing the power of the internet to expand the range and diversity of their news reportage.

Broadcasters have always been more trusted than their newspaper contemporaries, but the digital age presents challenges to the shibboleth of impartiality. A tradition firmly entrenched in British broadcast journalism from the early days of radio news, impartiality remains a legal requirement in the UK. However, some journalists and academics are currently arguing that it is an out-dated principle in the modern media landscape. They point out radio and television channels offer a diverse spectrum of views, while the online environment is home to an even greater range of opinionated communication. In *Impartiality in the News*, Sue Wallace engages with the debate over the importance and relevance of impartiality as a key concept. She also considers claims that it is more honest and true to be a subjective reporter, and whether audiences are badly served by present journalistic practices. In so doing, she explains why, in her view, the convergence of media - including citizen journalism social media - makes it so important for journalism students and trainees to develop their own public persona.

The changing nature of the audience - against a background of increased choice and debates about the attention span of listeners and viewers – has put the role of current affairs jour-

nalism under intense pressure. Striking a balance between calling politicians and figures of authority to account with in-depth analysis of key contemporary issues while, at the same time, maintaining the interest and engagement of the audience presents a crucial challenge to journalists working for programmes like BBC Radio 4's Analysis and File on Four. Taking a historical perspective on current affairs radio journalism and charting its development from the old BBC tradition of radio 'talks' from the late 1920s, Hugh Chignell's *Current Affairs Radio: Realigning News and Comment* examines the essence of current affairs journalism and asks whether the genre can survive in a 'fast food' and interactive culture.

This task of holding figures of authority to account has resulted in a gradual shift over time in the relationship between journalists and politicians. The move towards a more adversarial style of interviewing presents a challenge to the country's institutions: in *Radio Interviews: A Changing Art*, Ceri Thomas debates whether the time has come to re-calibrate the political interview in order to secure continued public support. He considers the role of the radio interview on programmes, such as BBC Radio 4's Today, and - again with an eye to historical perspective - concludes that journalists working in mainstream media should reassess the style and conduct of interviews in order to operate successfully in a radically altered media world.

In contrast with newspapers, magazines remain relatively buoyant in terms of sales, but the rise of online and celebrity sites presents challenges with regard to packaging content and the fragmentation of targeted audiences. With a focus on consumer magazines and their evolving digital model, Emma Scattergood in *The Changing Landscape of Magazine Journalism* assesses the future for features journalists. She considers how magazines endeavour to promote specialised content in a challenging marketplace - including strategies whereby digital brands are cautiously developed alongside more traditional conceptions of magazine journalism in hard copy. Limited resources frequently complicate these ambitions, which means magazine journalists are under constant pressure to be innovative in their efforts to produce human-interest features that are certain to stand out amongst other magazines on crowded shelves.

Blogging and social media's contribution to a realignment of the relationship between journalists and their audiences is

discussed by Einar Thorsen in *Live Blogging and Social Media Curation*. Journalists are facing challenges to preserve traditional standards, such as verification of information and sources, whilst also capitalising on the opportunities afforded by the immediacy, transparency and interactive nature of online communication. Thorsen analyses these issues through two case studies: one focuses on ‘live’ blogging and elections, and a second looks at the role of social media in the Arab Spring. He demonstrates how journalists face new challenges in relation to social media curation, whilst the emergent forms and practices also present a wealth of opportunities.

Familiar notions of ‘the audience’ look rather different on the internet. Our ability to track online audiences using technology creates an unprecedented opportunity to collect real-time data on what users do, and do not do, with news items. This type of information about users has begun to shape editorial decisions and development strategies in newsrooms around the world. In *Online News Audiences: The challenges of web metrics*, An Nguyen reviews this industrial trend and the challenges posed by web metrics to journalism. He argues that these challenges, if not calmly addressed, could deepen an already critical crisis – the dumbing down of news content – and bring newsroom tensions and conflicts to a new height. He contends that journalists need to foster a stronger professional culture so as to bolster their confidence and pride in autonomous news judgement, thereby empowering themselves to resist, wherever necessary, the sentiment of the crowd.

In *The Camera as Witness: The Changing Nature of Photojournalism*, Caitlin Patrick and Stuart Allan contend that the term ‘photojournalism’ is in a state of flux, its meaning being shaped by a myriad of changing factors. The chapter outlines several of the guiding tenets informing professional conceptions of photojournalism from the earliest days of photography, before discussing the rise of digital photojournalism and with it the economic imperatives shaping its professional ethos. Against this backdrop the key challenges affecting photojournalism today are addressed, namely the advent of alternative, citizen-generated types of witnessing. Especially worthy of examination in this context, it is argued, is the ongoing redefinition of photojournalism, particularly where professional and citizen news photographers are forging new, collaborative relation-

ships in the pursuit of important news stories.

## Section 2: The Changing Nature of News Reporting

The Leveson Inquiry has defined a new low in British journalism, sparked by the hacking into the telephone of a murdered schoolgirl. The subsequent revelations of malpractice have been legion. One newspaper has closed as a result and others may yet follow. Journalists and police officers have been arrested and charged, proprietors and politicians implicated. Post-Leveson, time has been called on Fleet Street's "last chance saloon" and in order to survive, the press must improve. In *Truth and the Tabloids*, Adam Lee Potter suggests that only journalists can save journalism, by acknowledging the commercial imperative to give readers what they want whilst accepting an absolute responsibility to give them what they need.

The relationship of trust between newspaper reporters and their readers, founded on a culture of checking facts and awareness of the law is seen by many journalists as vitally important in an age where the citizen often gets the story first. The judicial and public scrutiny of the press awakened by the Leveson Inquiry threw this relationship of trust into question, the subsequent findings generating a fierce debate over how best to raise journalism's standards. *Irreverence and Independence? The Press post-Leveson* presents a personal view from The Guardian's crime correspondent, Sandra Laville. She casts light on how the Leveson debate has influenced the working lives of responsible journalists; that is to say, those who would never hack a telephone or pay a police source for information.

Even though Leveson's focus was on the press, many would argue that broadcast news organisations have become risk-averse, even 'cowed' as a result of the Inquiry and its fallout. Broadcasters have also faced serious challenges of their own – the BBC, for example, has been damaged by high profile editorial decisions at Newsnight, including the programme's failure to broadcast serious evidence about the alleged paedophile Jimmy Savile, a long-time presenter for several BBC programmes. In *Editorial Leadership in the Newsroom*, Karen Fowler-Watt and Andrew Wilson examine how the BBC is seeking to educate its staff in editorial 'good practice' to avoid such scandals in future. They make the case that every journalist needs to assume leader-

ship responsibilities, whatever their role in the newsroom.

In *Investigative journalism: Secrets, Salience and Storytelling*, Kevin Marsh argues that investigative journalism is a craft in peril. It suffers from pressures – not least financial ones – that constrain what is possible to achieve within changing newsroom cultures, often in detrimental ways. We mind less than we should because we suffer the illusion that we live in a transparent age, made possible by the web and ‘data dumps,’ he argues. In other words, we have come to accept the myth that thanks to citizen and social media, we can do for ourselves what investigative journalists used to do for us. This is dangerous for the public sphere, Marsh contends: without traditional investigative journalism that can disclose and reveal, point out salience and convene the public in large numbers around a compelling narrative, we cannot hold power and authority to account in any meaningful way.

Factors both external to journalism and internal to journalistic practice are reshaping the dynamics of journalists’ interaction with their sources. In *Journalists and Their Sources: The Twin Challenges of Diversity and Verification*, Jamie Matthews considers two sets of issues arising from these changes. First to be explored is the claim made by some researchers that the diversity of perspectives and opinion represented in news has been reduced due to journalists simply passing material on from their sources. The second set of issues revolves around how developments in journalism’s professional practice (e.g., those arising from the emergence of new methods and platforms for sourcing information) are impacting on the process of source verification. The twin challenges of diversity and verification are discussed with reference to journalism’s civic function in educating and engaging people in the issues of the day.

In *News and Public Relation: A Dangerous Relationship*, Kevin Moloney, Dan Jackson and David McQueen examine a controversial and sensitive topic in news journalism: the blurring of the boundaries between news and public relations (PR). This is an age-old concern, of course, but contemporary trends in journalism are bringing simmering tensions to the boil. Underpinning these tensions are divergent views regarding the effects on democracy of the ‘colonisation of the media’ by PR, the process of so-called ‘PR-isation’. This gives journalism three challenges to face: the news industry is in flux as its rival, the

PR industry, grows; unfiltered PR is getting into the news more easily; journalists need to be able to keep news 'PR-lite' so that power abuses in our democracy can be reported with clarity.

The now frequent assertions that political journalism is biased, dumbed down, over-reliant on official sources and increasingly offering subjective commentary rather than impartial information have potentially serious consequences for democratic debate. In *Political Reporting: Enlightening Citizens or Undermining Democracy?*, Darren Lilleker and Mick Temple explore some of the issues surrounding the reporting of British politics, and in particular the media coverage of the 2010 general election, in order to examine challenges to political journalism's democratic role. They conclude that the nature of the relationship between politicians and journalists needs more reportorial independence as well as less mutual suspicion and cynicism. Establishing and maintaining that essential balance is essential for an informed populace, inviting further reflection on how political journalism will have to change to better serve the citizenry.

All journalists have to engage with social media, but arguably nowhere more so than in sports reporting. In *Social Media and Sports Journalism*, Louise Matthews and Daniel Anwar focus on the use of Twitter by football journalists, considering its effects on traditional news practice. Interviews with national and international football journalists reveal how Twitter has affected the way in which they report the news, and why it is now considered to be an essential tool for sports reporters. As well as reporting, it has other uses, including driving audience trends, increasing audience recognition and loyalty by establishing a profile or brand, and allowing effective audience interaction with journalists to inform and feedback on reporting. Alongside this, key academic concepts such as gate-keeping are outlined, suggesting that the use of social media is redefining what counts as good practice.

A perceived crisis of public trust has prompted journalists to scrutinise themselves and their craft, but a landscape of job cuts, changing working practices and the inexorable rise of social media have created an atmosphere of insecurity. In *Journalism as a Profession – Careers and Expectations*, Vanessa Edwards looks at how the working lives of journalists have been changed dramatically and with great speed – gone is the concept of a career for

life, when a journalist trained with a news organisation and retired with a company pension forty years later. Short term contracts and freelance portfolios are now the order of the day: this presents challenges to a new generation of trainee journalists as well as to the news organisations seeking to develop reporting teams and to nurture editorial responsibility.

Freelance journalism is facing a serious challenge: there isn't enough work to go around. With ever-growing numbers of freelancers – some through choice, more through necessity – there is a surfeit of journalists willing to supply quality news reporting in a market that doesn't appear to have sufficient demand to generate the revenue to support it. So the challenges for any freelancer are simple: where is the work, where is the money and where is the future? In *Entrepreneurial Journalism: The Life of the Freelance*, Mary Evans explores the industry from the perspective of freelancers and those who would employ them, as well as taking an overview of a sector both besieged by – and finding salvation within – advances in new media.

### Section 3: Debates and Controversies in Journalism

In *News and Free Speech*, Barry Richards argues that the key challenge to the freedom of journalism in liberal democracies is not from the threat of censorship by an overbearing state, although state censorship remains in force, but from several other threats to freedom of speech. These come from commercial interests, from constraining tendencies within journalism itself, and perhaps most disturbingly from vigilantes who threaten violence to demand that certain things are not said. Meeting this challenge requires journalists to know what drives these threats, and how to respond to them. Therein lies a major difficulty, that of how to resolve the classic liberal dilemma: what do we do when freedom of speech threatens harm to others?

The emergence of celebrity culture and modern journalism is the focus of *Navigating the Stars: the Challenges and Opportunities of Celebrity Journalism*. Nathan Farrell looks at the relationships between the organisations of societies and the types of famous people found in those societies and uses this as a means of arguing that celebrity journalism has much to tell us about contemporary culture. This chapter unpacks concepts such as 'tabloidization' and 'democratainment' and uses

them to assess the democratic potential of celebrity journalism through its capacity to open up political debate to greater sections of the populace. However, Farrell also highlights some of the challenges this creates for journalists, namely: the limits to the democratic potential of celebrity journalism in a market dominated journalist profession, the ‘celebritisation’ of hard news (that is, the increasing framing of hard news stories in terms of celebrity), and the challenges to objectivity in relation to the competition between media outlets for access and celebrity exclusives.

In *News Documentary and Advocacy Journalism*, Mathew Charles examines how alternative models of journalism are emerging to counter the news values associated with the so-called mainstream media – that is, news values that are increasingly criticised for serving only the interests of the political and economic elite. In particular, he looks at advocacy journalism, which focuses on a shift away from objectivity towards the arguably more ethical practice of attachment. What happens, he asks, when the ostensibly neutral, detached reporter, positioned outside of events in order to report only facts, finds him- or herself so immersed in a story that they are transformed into a campaigner calling for real social change?

The British press play a vital role in contextualising and re-contextualising important discourses of the day to its readers. In *Moral Panics: Reconsidering Journalism’s Responsibilities*, Ann Luce looks at what happens when these discourses are blown out of proportion and create a moral panic. The chapter begins by introducing criminologist Stanley Cohen’s theory of moral panics and folk devils before turning to consider some of the most notorious moral panics in British press history. It then proceeds to examine a recent case study of press reporting of suicide through this lens, showing the reasons why responsible journalism will take every step necessary to avoid creating moral panics.

Natural disaster, accidental death, hospital-centred stories, suicide, sexual assault and murder all dominate front pages and TV running orders. Most journalists - and not just those specialists who concentrate on reporting war and human rights issues - will cover trauma at some stage in their careers. However, the standard journalism training paradigm leans towards developing skills appropriate to political and life-style report-

ing, and thus has little to say on the reporting and emotional skills needed when covering human tragedy - the most challenging area of journalism. In *The Trauma Factor: Reporting on Violence and Tragedy*, Gavin Rees examines the latest developments in trauma research and the implications it has for professional ethics and journalists seeking to work more effectively with sources and colleagues affected by trauma.

In *News Storytelling in a Digital Landscape*, Vin Ray asks what effect the internet is having on long-form journalism. Can narrative storytelling survive the onslaught of byte-size data and the perception of diminishing attention spans? In response, this chapter looks at how the evolution of a number of new multimedia publishers is developing long-form narrative non-fiction. Still, Ray asks, is there a demand for this kind of journalism in an age of 'snacking'? Even if the demand exists, is there a business model that could sustain it? In thinking through the implications of these and related concerns, this chapter proceeds to look at how these new publishers are turning conventional models on their heads and, in doing so, creating good reasons for cautious optimism.

The internet has given journalists the opportunity to interact with readers and hold real-time conversations. Journalism conceived of as a conversation, rather than a lecture, raises important issues about how and why journalists should respond to online comments about their reporting. What should journalists do when they are criticized - fairly, or otherwise - about how they covered a story? Being part of the conversation is not always a positive experience. In *You Talking to Me? Journalists and the Big Conversation*, Liisa Rohumaa looks at the challenges faced by journalists and offers some practical insights into how they can respond to feedback, stay relevant to readers, make contacts and develop their role in online communities.

Time-worn conventions of journalism call for wars to be reported in an objective fashion. Still, issues such as patriotism, national interest, censorship and propaganda severely complicate even the attempt to be scrupulously objective. Consequently, much of the reportage from war zones presents a narrative that is mostly state-led - as much partial as partisan, projecting the enemy as the perpetrator of violence - and, more often than not, likely to exacerbate the conflict. Now there is a growing acceptance that conventional war reporting, with its

stress on objectivity, needs a rethink, and that a more creative and conflict-sensitive approach is needed. After examining the challenges faced by war correspondents, Chindu Sreedharan's *War and Peace Journalism* makes the case for peace journalism as a viable alternative. He argues that unlike conventional approaches, it supports a richer and more complete understanding of conflict situations.

The emergence of pressing and complex issues that cross national boundaries has highlighted the interdependence between the global, the national and the local. As the ways in which we consume and produce news are changing, traditional notions of "foreign reportage" are being revisited. In *Global News, Global Challenges*, Roman Gerodimos argues that if journalists are to continue to fulfil their roles and responsibilities in the 21st century global public sphere, new forms and formats of storytelling and reportage will have to be developed in order to respond to the emergence of 'global news'.

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Our very warm welcome to *Journalism: New Challenges*. We hope you will find the discussions unfolding on its pages to be of interest. As will be apparent from this Introduction's overview, each of its chapters revolves around a particular challenge to journalism that is of pressing significance. In identifying and critically assessing its features, it is our contributors' shared intention to encourage fresh ways of engaging with thorny questions – new and longstanding – from distinctive vantage points. To assist in this effort, you will find at the end of each chapter a set of 'Challenging Questions' to explore as you develop your own perspective, as well as a list of 'Recommended Reading' to help push the conversation onwards. May you discover much here that stimulates your thinking and, with luck, prompts you to participate in lively debate about the future of journalism.