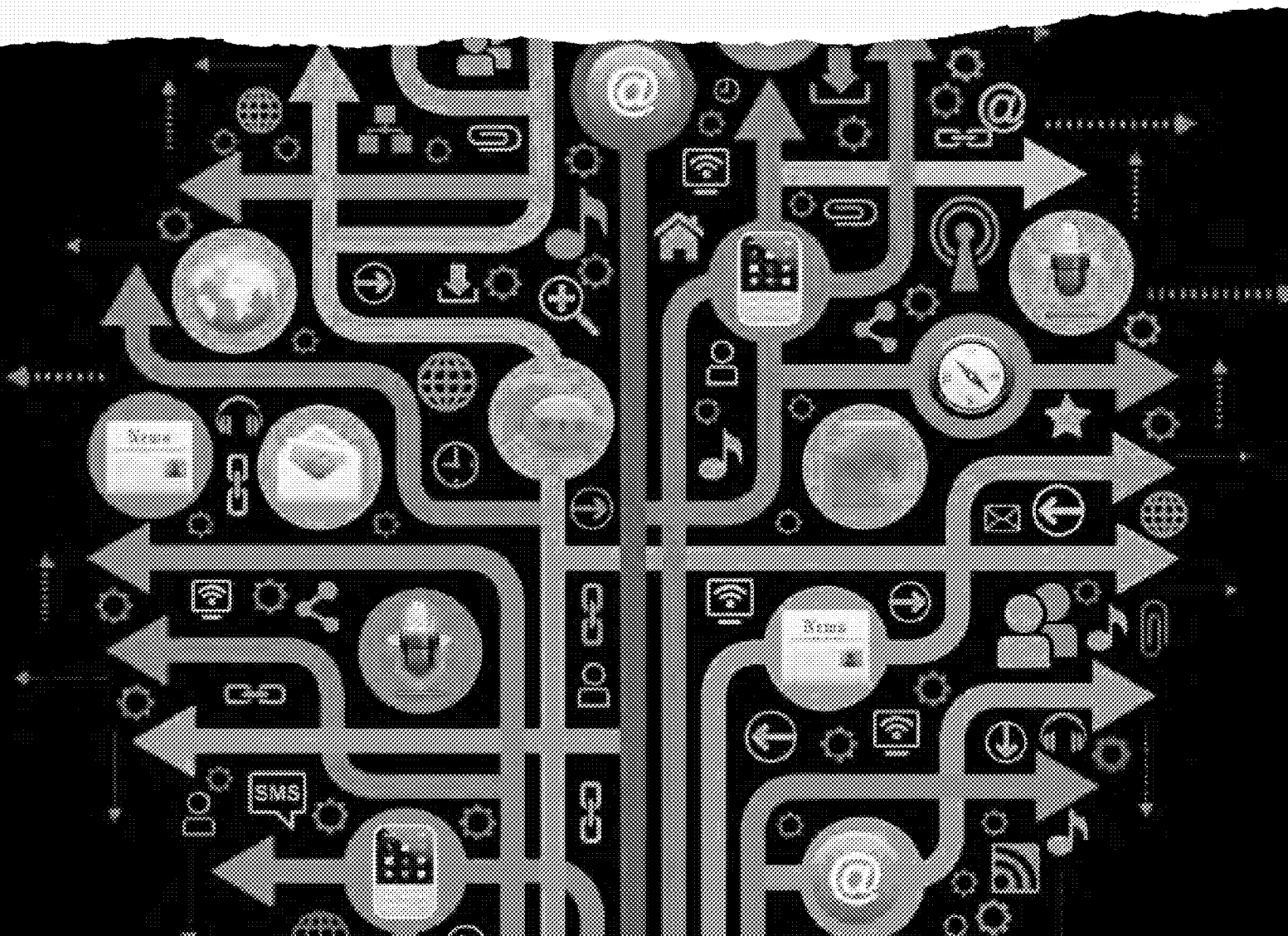


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CHANGING MINDS • CHANGING LIVES



Better Journalism

in the Digital Age

Blair Jenkins

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CHANGING MINDS • CHANGING LIVES

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Blair Jenkins OBE is a Fellow of the Carnegie UK Trust and one of the most experienced figures in Scottish media. He has been Director of Broadcasting at Scottish Television and Head of News and Current Affairs at both STV and BBC Scotland. From 1998 to 2003 he was Chairman of BAFTA in Scotland and he has also been a member of the Royal Television Society's steering group on current affairs.

Blair started his career at the Evening Express in Aberdeen and was Young Journalist of the Year in the Scottish Press Awards before joining BBC News in London in 1980. He moved to Scottish Television in 1986 and became Head of News and Current Affairs in 1990. Four years later he joined the main board of STV as Director of Broadcasting and he was also a member of the Broadcasting Board of the ITV network. He was Head of News and Current Affairs at BBC Scotland from 2000 to 2006.

In 2008 he chaired the independent Scottish Broadcasting Commission set up by the Scottish Government to make recommendations on the future of the industry, and from September 2010 to January 2011 he chaired the Scottish Digital Network Panel which examined funding models for the proposed new Scottish public service broadcaster.

In 2010 Blair was appointed an OBE for services to broadcasting. He is Visiting Professor of Journalism at Strathclyde University and a Governor of Glasgow School of Art.

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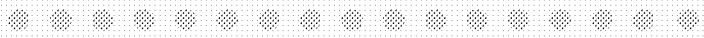
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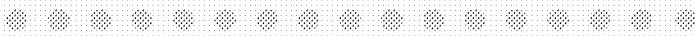
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Foreword



In February 2010 the Carnegie UK Trust appointed Blair Jenkins as a 'Carnegie Fellow' to investigate how better news media can be delivered in the digital age.

When we began this work, we thought that one of our first tasks would be to persuade a wide array of politicians, policy makers, practitioners and civil society organisations that this was a major public policy issue, worthy of serious attention and consideration.

However, the phone hacking crisis and the subsequent Leveson Inquiry have placed the debates about the future of news media in the UK firmly in the public and political spotlight. It is important to make the voicemail interception scandal a turning point for journalism in the UK. The task is to convert a low point for the industry into an opportunity for improvement and reform. There has been a significant loss of public trust in news organisations, which is why a new culture of integrity and transparency within the media and a restoration of that trust are so important.

The Carnegie UK Trust believes there are a range of important issues to be addressed in the provision and consumption of good journalism around the UK. These issues relate to funding, training and ethics, as well as the regulatory issues primarily being considered by Lord Justice Leveson. We wish to encourage wider and deeper public engagement with these matters and this paper is intended to set out some basic principles and to provoke further discussion and debate. The Trust is convinced that robust and reliable news media are essential for an informed democracy and healthy society.

This belief formed an important strand in our 2010 report on the future of civil society in the UK and Ireland, *Making Good Society*. That report argued for greater engagement by civil society organisations and citizens more generally with the conduct and content of news media. Meanwhile, in September 2011 we published a new discussion paper on the future regulation of the press – examining the key questions and options and encouraging citizens and civil society organisations to make an informed and substantial contribution to the debate.

The Trust wishes to have a positive influence on the policy outcomes during the consultation period leading up to the new Communications Act later in this UK Parliament. An additional – and just as important – objective is to help develop new approaches to high-quality journalism in the digital age. The Trust is interested in building a broad coalition around this work and in acquiring knowledge and insight from others. We will be undertaking further work on this agenda throughout 2012.

As part of the preparation for this latest publication, *Better Journalism in the Digital Age*, we have held seminars in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Dublin and listened to the ideas and concerns of many journalists, academics and members of the public. We wish to thank all of those who have contributed to our thinking in this area.

Martyn Evans

Chief Executive, Carnegie UK Trust

February 2012

Executive Summary

Journalism is a profession based on trust. People need to know that the news they are viewing, or listening to, or reading is fair and accurate and honest. In the end, journalists have to be proud and protective of their ethical and editorial standards, built on the secure foundations of integrity and experience.

The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the challenges and opportunities facing serious journalism in the UK and to make suggestions about actions and initiatives that will strengthen the supply of high-quality news.

The establishment of the public judicial inquiry under Lord Justice Leveson has triggered a great deal of speculation and reflection on possible or desirable changes to the UK system of press regulation. It is understandable that this should be the focus of public attention in the wake of the phone-hacking scandal, but it is important that the many issues concerning the future of journalism on all platforms should not simply be reduced to a new regulatory imperative for the printed press.

News media accountability is of great importance and the Carnegie UK Trust has proposals in this paper on how it might be strengthened and improved. But news quality and news availability are just as significant. There is more than one priority in this debate.

Stronger or smarter regulation is only one of a number of levers that will have to be applied if we are to secure better journalism in the digital age. The work of regulation is largely that of

eliminating various forms of bad behaviour, whereas the public interest also requires positive actions in support of good journalism. Tougher regulation on its own is not enough.

“The work of regulation is largely that of eliminating various forms of bad behaviour, whereas the public interest also requires positive actions in support of good journalism. Tougher regulation on its own is not enough.”

There is no question that there is a lot of really good journalism around today. In recent years, we have seen some exceptional reporting of challenging stories from difficult parts of the world, stories told with honesty and conviction. This kind of journalism is expensive and proving difficult to sustain. As is now well known inside and outside the industry, the business models of traditional news media have looked increasingly vulnerable in recent years due to the growth of internet content and advertising.

The quality of our national debate and discourse is directly related to the quality of our news media services. Journalism is part of the necessary checks and balances in a healthy society.

The key argument to the effect that there is a strong public interest in high-quality news media is based on the belief that a well-informed society has a better chance of being well-governed. With transparency comes accountability, and with proper accountability come better policy and legislation and, indeed, the consent of the governed. Vigilant media help to prevent the erosion of civil liberties and provide significant benefits for wider society.

There is, therefore, a collective interest in providing good news media and in the public thereby having an informed sense of engagement in society. It is hard to underestimate the importance of this to our democracy. We need to know about the key decisions that are being made – the ones that really do shape our lives, the ones that are sometimes hidden from us. We need to know the facts that underpin the decision-making process.

While all news media are facing budgetary and editorial challenges in the digital age, it is evident that there are particular concerns about how some parts of the press operate in the UK:

- ❖ Newspaper owners and editors are perceived as having too much power and influence, particularly in their dealings and relationships with elected politicians.
- ❖ There have been many examples of unwarranted intrusions into private lives, sometimes by illegal means.
- ❖ Some newspapers breach their own industry code of conduct by blurring – or completely ignoring – the distinction between facts and comment in their news coverage. This is done in order to influence public opinion and shape national debate – and indeed to sell newspapers.

There is a need to restore public trust and confidence in the press. It seems clear that newspapers are going to have to be more prepared and better able to defend their conduct and content in future. It could be said that the same is true of other forms of journalism. But broadcasting is more tightly regulated and there is less concern about lapses in standards. Internet news sites and blogs, while growing in impact, do not yet have the scale or reach of newspapers – although they do raise some of the same concerns.

There is a need to restore public trust and confidence in the press.

The approach of the Carnegie UK Trust is to look for ways of encouraging and supporting better news media in the digital age and we are recommending a number of related actions:

- ❖ The adoption of a new industry-wide code of conduct by all journalists and news organisations to give much clearer guidance on the higher ethical and editorial standards expected – standards which ought to be universal and transferable between all bona fide press, broadcast and online news services.
- ❖ The maintenance or strengthening of public service broadcasting to ensure that not all news ventures are commercially driven, and that the public has access to services with guaranteed impartiality and fairness.
- ❖ Civil society organisations offering help to fund new initiatives in journalism (with an emphasis on technical and editorial innovation) to ensure greater quality and diversity of news sources and more journalism that holds the powerful to account.
- ❖ A renewed emphasis in journalism education and training on professional ethics as well as production skills, including a clear commitment to understanding and upholding the public interest.
- ❖ Extending and completing the availability and take-up of high-speed broadband to enable universal access to a wide range of digital news services and participatory media.
- ❖ The encouragement by industry regulators, universities, civil society organisations and the news media themselves of more public debate around issues to do with media ethics and behaviour and more serious discussion of editorial decisions and challenges.



Much of the public discussion about securing improved news services in the UK has tended to focus on press regulation. This is because there is a wide apprehension that at least some newspapers have paid lip service to the current, self-regulatory framework of the Press Complaints Commission, while in practice feeling at liberty to behave more or less as they pleased – in some cases even choosing to ignore criminal laws on data protection.

It is clear that we need a regulatory solution that is independent of both government and the newspaper industry, to avoid real or perceived interference and conflicts of interest. In the absence of statutory regulation, a new independent press regulator would have to operate a system of voluntary registration by newspapers and digital news services. We think it should be possible to devise incentives which secure unanimous support and participation by all newspapers which wish to be regarded as serious providers of news and information.

One practical and persuasive incentive would be based on the already existing conventions around press accreditation and recognition, a system which gives newspaper journalists privileged access to important venues and

events and people. This access is generally not available to ordinary members of the public. It is not unreasonable for society to ask that in return for the privileges of recognition as serious news providers, news organisations should undertake to deserve that status. This might be done through a voluntary system of certification and labelling recognising adherence to a new regulatory and ethical framework.

The many benefits of accreditation and recognition could be the key incentive that is required to persuade newspapers to sign up for a new voluntary system of independent regulation. If organisations decide not to participate, they are self-identifying as not being serious news sources and therefore not eligible for certification. They are still free to publish what they like, subject to the laws of the land, but they are not given the privileges and access of responsible news media. Registered news organisations can display a recognised standards mark on their various outlets, a label or badge that identifies them as a principled and accredited operator.

The Carnegie UK Trust recommends:

- ✦ A new and more evidently independent press regulator with more substantial (but not statutory) powers to investigate unethical behaviour, as well as the ability to impose significant sanctions including financial penalties.

This paper makes some recommendations on all of the key issues facing serious journalism, but the central argument is that the main changes have to take place within the news industry and its employees. It's not just that the public should be able to have higher expectations of journalists, but that journalists should have higher expectations of themselves.

Our 7 Recommendations

- 1** The adoption of a new industry-wide code of conduct by all journalists and news organisations which gives much clearer guidance on the higher ethical and editorial standards expected – standards which ought to be universal and transferable between all bona fide press, broadcast and online news services.
- 2** The maintenance or strengthening of public service broadcasting to ensure that not all news ventures are commercially driven, and that the public has access to services with guaranteed impartiality and fairness.
- 3** Civil society organisations to help to fund new initiatives in journalism, with an emphasis on technical and editorial innovation, to ensure greater quality and diversity of news sources and more journalism that holds the powerful to account.
- 4** A renewed emphasis in journalism education and training on professional ethics as well as production skills, including a clear commitment to understanding and upholding the public interest.
- 5** Extending and completing the availability and take-up of high-speed broadband to enable universal access to a wide range of digital news services and participatory media.
- 6** The encouragement by industry regulators, universities, civil society organisations and the news media themselves of more public debate around issues to do with media ethics and behaviour and more serious discussion of editorial decisions and challenges.
- 7** A new and more evidently independent press regulator with more substantial powers to investigate unethical behaviour, and the ability to impose significant sanctions including financial penalties.



Chapter 1 – Restoring Trust

Journalism is a profession based on trust. People need to know that the news they are viewing, listening to, or reading is fair and accurate and honest. In the end, journalists have to be proud and protective of their ethical and editorial standards, built on the secure foundations of integrity and experience.

There is no question that there is a lot of really good journalism around today. In recent years we have seen some exceptional reporting of challenging stories from difficult parts of the world, stories told with honesty and conviction. Journalism is now globalised and connected in a way that was previously unimaginable.

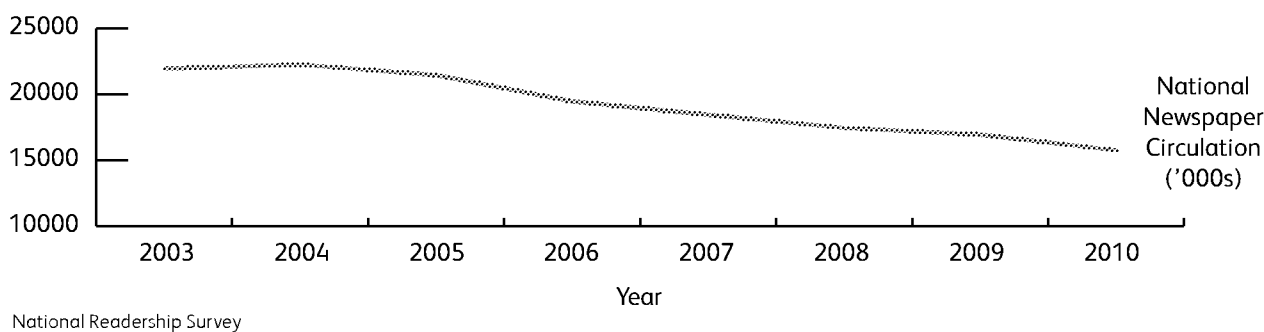
Arguably, taken as a whole, there is not only more choice, but also more depth, a greater range of voices, more convenience, more control, and a greater ability to personalise your news selections. Of course, this is only true if you have access to the internet and to decent broadband

connectivity. If you have that access, there are certainly some good new forms of serious journalism to be found.

But it's not all good news. The growing intensity of the debate about news media provision in the UK stems from a number of distinctive, but connected, concerns. Perhaps the dominant theme in the discourse over the last year has been illegal phone-hacking, but that particular form of criminality in pursuit of journalistic scoops is simply the most extreme example of how increased competition or ethical indifference has been driving extreme behaviour.

The developments in newspaper journalism in recent decades have stemmed in part from the need to compete with broadcasting and, in particular, television. Because broadcasters would usually have the first reports of most major news stories (an inevitable consequence of faster technology), the press has increasingly sought to go where they know the broadcasters will not follow. For the tabloids, that has meant the private lives of the famous and a more stridently partisan coverage of politics. For the quality press, it has meant more focus on depth and context and investigative journalism.

National Newspaper Readership 2003-2010



The current debate over press behaviour has an unprecedented priority and intensity, but that has to be seen as an opportunity to review policy and practice in a more measured way to secure better news media in the digital age.

It also has to be seen as part of a bigger picture. As is now well known inside and outside the industry, the business models of traditional news media have looked increasingly vulnerable in recent years due to the growth of internet content and advertising. Newspapers have, for the most part, seen their circulations and revenues decline. This has resulted in the disappearance of some local titles in particular, and to greatly reduced editorial staffing and budgets in others.

The current debate over press behaviour has an unprecedented priority and intensity, but that has to be seen as an opportunity to review policy and practice in a more measured way to secure better news media in the digital age.

Data from the National Readership Survey shows that national newspaper circulation dropped from nearly 22 million papers a day at the beginning of 2003 to fewer than 16 million by the end of 2010 – a decline of more than 25%. The position for local titles is significantly worse.

By contrast, the decline in television news consumption on the main public service broadcasting channels has been much more gradual and mitigated to some extent by the increased reach of the 24/7 news services of the BBC and Sky.

The economic pressures facing newspapers have led some to worry about the loss of a national narrative, a shared knowledge and understanding of major events. Although there is increasing use of the internet across society for a range of different functions, it is not at all clear as yet that this is extending public access to serious news journalism across all of society.

Digital technology is certainly changing consumption habits. According to Ofcom data, in April 2008, only 3% of mobile internet users reported using this platform to access news and information on a daily basis. This figure went up to 5% in 2009, 10% in 2010 and 23% in 2011. But the position of television as the dominant source of all kinds of news for UK citizens has actually strengthened.

The worries about the existing levels and quality of news provision occur at a time when the importance of reliable news sources has become more and more apparent. Increasingly, it is recognised that almost all of the information and news we receive as a society is mediated. The quality of national debate and discourse is directly related to the quality of our news media services.

Main Source of World News (% of people)

| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| TV | 66 | 79 | 78 | 77 | 72 | 72 | 70 | 76 | 75 | 79 |
| Internet | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 4 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 9 | 8 |
| Any newspaper | 16 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 4 |
| Radio | 14 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 5 |

Ofcom Media Tracker Survey

What we want to instil in our national press is not deference to authority, but rather the habit of integrity.

There are several desirable objectives often stated in media policy, some of which are at least potentially conflicting. We wish to protect the news services that we already have. In the case of newspapers, we would wish to see the adoption of higher ethical and editorial standards – particularly in the behaviour of the tabloid press. But we wish to see this improved behaviour without damaging the freedom of the press and, in particular, its role in scrutinising the actions and responsibilities of those in public office and positions of power in our society. In short, what we want to instil in our national press is not deference to authority, but rather the habit of integrity. There is clearly a need to strike a new balance, and there is a role for wider civil society in helping to get that balance right.

It is evident that there are a number of current concerns about how some parts of the press operate in the UK:

- ✦ Newspaper owners and editors are perceived as having too much power and influence, particularly in their dealings and relationships with elected politicians.

- ✦ There have been many examples of unwarranted intrusions into private lives, sometimes by illegal means.
- ✦ Some newspapers breach their own industry code of conduct by blurring – or completely ignoring – the distinction between facts and comment in their news coverage. This is done in order to influence public opinion and shape national debate – and indeed to sell newspapers.

Much of the recent public discussion of these concerns has concentrated on issues to do with how our news media are regulated. The prevailing sense is that the powers and persuasiveness of the Press Complaints Commission have not kept pace with the concerns of the public over newspaper behaviour. This has led to calls for a move away from self-regulation (which is the PCC model) to something of a more substantial nature, a body more obviously independent of the newspapers it seeks to regulate. What is certainly true is that there is a need to restore public trust and confidence in the press, without adopting statutory controls which would raise genuine concerns about the constraining impact on journalism.

It seems clear that newspapers are going to have to be more prepared and better able to defend their conduct and content in future. The searchlight of disclosure now shines in all directions. Like broadcasters, they will have to be prepared to explain why they have made

Main Source of UK News (% of people)

| | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| TV | 68 | 69 | 68 | 73 | 73 | 74 |
| Internet | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 7 | 7 |
| Any newspaper | 15 | 13 | 13 | 9 | 8 | 6 |
| Radio | 11 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 7 |



Main Source of Local News (% of people)

| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| TV | 28 | 48 | 44 | 46 | 46 | 46 | 47 | 49 | 49 | 52 |
| Internet | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Any newspaper | 46 | 32 | 37 | 36 | 29 | 29 | 27 | 23 | 22 | 16 |
| Radio | 14 | 13 | 12 | 12 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 10 |
| Talking to people | 7 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 8 |

Ofcom Media Tracker Survey

particularly controversial editorial decisions – to justify what has been published and to demonstrate the processes they went through prior to publication. Giving people the unvarnished truth is the first principle of journalism, and newspapers must also apply it in providing information about their own behaviour.

In the UK, too much of the news coverage in the tabloid press – and sometimes also in the broadsheet press – is apparently written with

The searchlight of disclosure now shines in all directions.

the primary purpose of influencing the attitudes and opinions of the readership and persuading them to adopt a particular point of view, rather than representing the real primary purpose of journalism which is to give people all of the facts on any issue and then let them make up their own minds.

The approach of the Carnegie UK Trust is to look for ways of encouraging and supporting better news media in the digital age. The Trust believes there are several forms of intervention and support that are available, and that the debate should not focus solely on regulatory matters, important though those are.

We think there is a need to state the public interest in free and reliable news media more clearly and unequivocally, and to reflect this priority in a manner appropriate for the age of unlimited internet content.

For journalists and those who employ them, there needs to be much clearer guidance on the ethical and editorial standards that the public has a right to expect. That means an industry-wide code of conduct that insists that standards are universal and transferable, something to which practitioners and their employers can refer. This should be written in such a way that the public has a better understanding of what it can – and should – expect from all journalists. It should also inspire and energise great journalism.

For journalists and those who employ them, there needs to be much clearer guidance on the ethical and editorial standards that the public has a right to expect.

Because of the competitive pressures on existing commercial media, there will be a continuing need for other forms of intervention to ensure public interest outcomes. The most obvious and important form of public intervention in the UK market for journalism is in broadcasting. In

particular, the television licence fee is used to fund the news and current affairs services of the BBC on television, radio and online. These guarantee high-quality information that is fair, accurate and impartial and provide something of an insurance policy against any serious or organised attempt to present the public in the UK with inaccurate and distorted information.

The requirement of impartiality and other public service obligations in the news services of all licensed commercial broadcasters in the UK further strengthens this critical mass of reliable information. It is particularly important to preserve the quality and integrity of the news services offered by ITV, Channel 4, Channel 5 and Sky News. This guaranteed core of impartial journalism complements the more opinionated and partisan coverage traditionally published by newspapers and increasingly now supplied by online operators. The freedom of non-broadcast journalism to offer a more biased perspective is an important part of the overall media environment, provided the important distinction between news and commentary is observed.

With the long-term decline of printed newspapers, it seems certain that we will need some new forms of serious journalism which are just as widely available. This will require both technical and editorial innovation. It will also require new sources of funding and collaboration. At least some of these initiatives should be public service in nature (whatever their funding source) and not commercially driven.

Another point of intervention is in journalism education. Journalists nowadays tend to come almost entirely from a university graduate background. There is no doubt, in light of the phone-hacking scandal, that all undergraduate and postgraduate courses will be reviewing their teaching materials on the importance of high ethical and editorial standards. There has been a lot of thought given to journalism education internationally, in particular to the need for greater knowledge in key areas of public policy such as the economy and the environment. While a great

deal of journalism education has focused in recent years on multiplatform and digital production skills – for understandable reasons to do with versatility and employability – it will now be important to make sure that ethical standards are taught just as rigorously, in particular the new code of conduct advocated in this paper.

Trust in the quality of our news journalism will improve greatly with increased involvement by members of the public and civil society organisations in the debate about better standards and improved access. This can take several forms. We are likely to see more public discussion and analysis of how the news media report particular events and issues. Civil society will have an important role to play in this. We require more of a critique of how leading newspapers and other news media cover particular issues and stories – in essence, has it been done well or badly?

News brands will need to have a reputation for reliability in order for people to trust their reporting. The tendency in society towards greater disclosure and transparency will impact on the news media also. They will be held much more firmly to account. There is likely to be less tolerance of deception and other devices where there is not demonstrably a clear public interest.

There is likely to be less tolerance of deception and other devices where there is not demonstrably a clear public interest.

The public judicial inquiry under Lord Justice Leveson is an opportunity to remind ourselves of the importance of good and decent journalism. It is probably inevitable that the mere fact of the inquiry and its subsequent findings will lead to improvements in the culture and practices of news media. For journalists themselves, it is a window of opportunity to restore trust in the profession and it must not be wasted.

STANDARDS

Chapter 2 – A New Code of Conduct

The adoption of a new industry-wide code of conduct by all journalists and news organisations would give much clearer guidance on the higher ethical and editorial standards expected – standards which ought to be universal and transferable between all bona fide press, broadcast and online news services.

Many different news organisations in the UK and elsewhere have editorial guidelines or declared standards to which they expect journalists to adhere. There seems little doubt that this is important. However, getting all journalists to observe a clear and consistent ethical code of conduct would represent perhaps the greatest sustainable improvement that could be made in UK news media. And it is possible to create a credible and realistic code of conduct which would embody very high standards and values.

Editorial decisions made in the absence of such a framework will tend to be opportunistic and determined by short-term and often shallow considerations. In the absence of a clearly-defined set of standards, people will tend to create their own – with some of the depressing consequences we have seen at the News of the World.

If a news outlet – whatever it is – wants to be taken seriously, it has to set out honestly the values it holds and the standards to which it aspires. If it wants to campaign for a particular political perspective, it should make that clear too. That is just being honest. The general loss of trust in the main power centres and institutions of our society is also reflected in distrust of some of our news providers. Part of addressing that problem is letting the public see the standards and the guidelines under which reporters are operating.

The main purpose of news journalism is to provide important information about significant events and issues, and to do so in a manner that is fair and accurate. So every loaded story, every contrived and hyped version of events, every quote taken out of context, every desperate attempt to find an angle that suits the corporate line, is a betrayal of the profession and a betrayal of the public interest. The question for real journalists should always be: 'what is the story here?' It should never be: 'how do I shape this story so as to serve a particular interest or perspective?'

One persuasively well-written set of editorial guidelines is the Code of Ethics published by the Society of Professional Journalists, the main representational body in the USA for journalists from all forms of news media. Their comprehensive and unequivocal guidelines are a model from which we can learn. They can also be printed on a single page, so they have the benefit of brevity as well as clarity.

<http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

The introduction catches the spirit of the SPJ document:

“Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues.”

The four main duties of journalists as specified in this code are:

- ✦ Seek truth and report it
- ✦ Minimize harm
- ✦ Act independently
- ✦ Be accountable

It is worth pointing out that this ethical code is entirely voluntary. Under the First Amendment to the US constitution, it is not possible to have legally binding rules for news media beyond the general provisions of criminal and civil law that apply to society as a whole. There is a definite sense in the SPJ code of journalists themselves actively trying to encourage and advocate high standards of personal professional conduct. It may be precisely because any form of mandatory regulation is constitutionally impossible that journalists have striven to adopt and uphold higher levels of editorial and ethical behaviour.

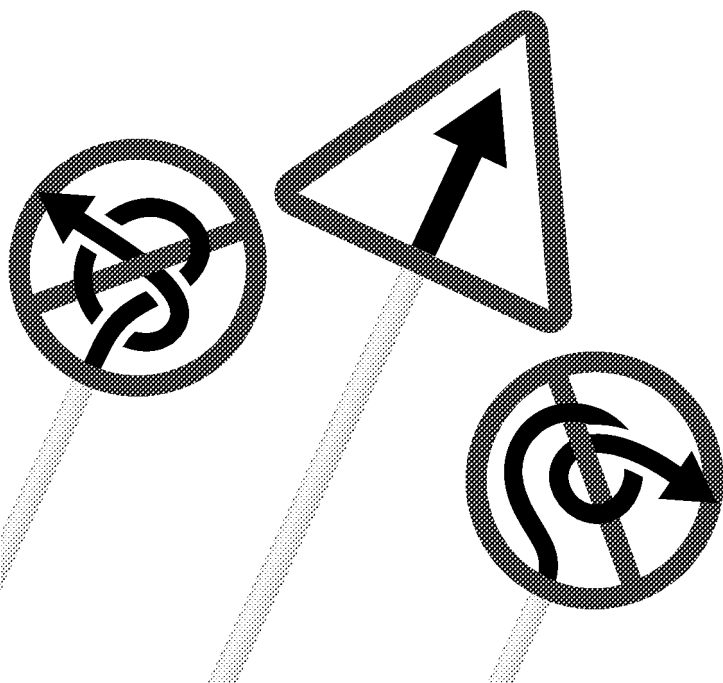
An adaptation of this kind of code and these priorities could pave the way for a more consistently ethical approach by journalists in the UK. However, in order to have authenticity, such a code would have to embody and express the highest aspirations of journalists in the UK.

Editorial leaders have to provide meaningful values – a responsibility which can be even more important than providing adequate resources. And being less bad than others is not good enough.

We need journalists in the UK to start taking themselves and their profession more seriously. There is no reason why genuine journalists working in broadcast, print and online news cannot sign up to the same code of conduct, the same set of professional standards and ethical values. That can be true in spite of the different regulatory requirements of different news platforms.

A successful code needs to be inspiring and authentic to journalists, but also sufficiently clear and reassuring for those who depend upon journalists for reliable news and information. One of the first acts of any new press regulator should be to commission the writing of a new code of conduct – by and for journalists. This would in part consist of rules and regulations – as all codes do to some extent – but would also express positively the best aspirations and ideals of public service journalism.

This is about the encouragement of integrity in journalistic practice, rather than a focus on what you can get away with in your story. Journalists should always feel confident to say when they are being ordered or encouraged to break their code of conduct. We should facilitate and encourage whistle-blowing and defend and protect journalists who are unwilling to engage in unethical conduct.





It is arguable that a new code would motivate newspapers and other news media to disclose a bit more about what they see as their mission, their priorities for the communities on which they report, the values or beliefs that underpin their journalism. Otherwise, readers have to figure this out for themselves. If you declare your principles, people can then hold you accountable for what you do by referring to your mission and values, and checking that you are living up to those declarations. One key concept is that of journalism that acts in the public interest.

The use of the phrase ‘in the public interest’ to validate the activities of journalists and to justify the publication of sensitive or private material is now a familiar part of any debate about news media. But perhaps the very ubiquity of the public interest defence has diluted any widespread understanding of what exactly is being implied and accepted in its use. At a time when so much about our media is under review, it is arguable that a more clear-headed definition of the public interest is required and this would be a valuable element in any new code of conduct.

The basic principle is not all that difficult to understand. There is a public interest case for publishing something when it consists of information which enlightens or protects people in areas where there are legitimate grounds for concern. There is a public interest which might trump other considerations such as the right to privacy when it can honestly be said that the information which is ostensibly private does have a bearing on issues which have wider consequences and implications for sections of the public. The information published therefore has a value which is more than prurient or voyeuristic – it makes open and apparent some facts which genuinely touch on matters of more general concern.

We should facilitate and encourage whistle-blowing and defend and protect journalists who are unwilling to engage in unethical conduct.

The use of deception and techniques such as secret recording to obtain a story must be used very sparingly. It is justified only in the exposure of serious wrongdoing where there is a clear public interest in having the harmful or illegal behaviour exposed. In broadcasting, there are formal processes to go through and journalists are always aware that they might very well have to defend publicly not only the item that is broadcast, but also all the stages of deliberation and approval that preceded transmission.

The Press Complaints Commission puts forward a definition of the public interest that can be used by newspapers to justify disclosures that would otherwise be in breach of its Editors’ code, but a more comprehensive account of a public interest defence against breach of privacy is provided by the BBC in its Editorial Guidelines. Here, the BBC says there are legitimate expectations of privacy, but also a balance to be struck between the right to privacy and the right to broadcast information in the public interest:

The Public Interest

Private behaviour, information, correspondence and conversation should not be brought into the public domain unless there is a public interest that outweighs the expectation of privacy. There is no single definition of public interest. It includes, but is not confined to:

- ✦ exposing or detecting crime
- ✦ exposing significantly anti-social behaviour
- ✦ exposing corruption or injustice
- ✦ disclosing significant incompetence or negligence
- ✦ protecting people's health and safety
- ✦ preventing people from being misled by some statement or action of an individual or organisation
- ✦ disclosing information that assists people to better comprehend or make decisions on matters of public importance.

There is also a public interest in freedom of expression itself.

When considering what is in the public interest, we also need to take account of information already in the public domain or about to become available to the public.

When using the public interest to justify an intrusion, consideration should be given to proportionality; the greater the intrusion, the greater the public interest required to justify it.

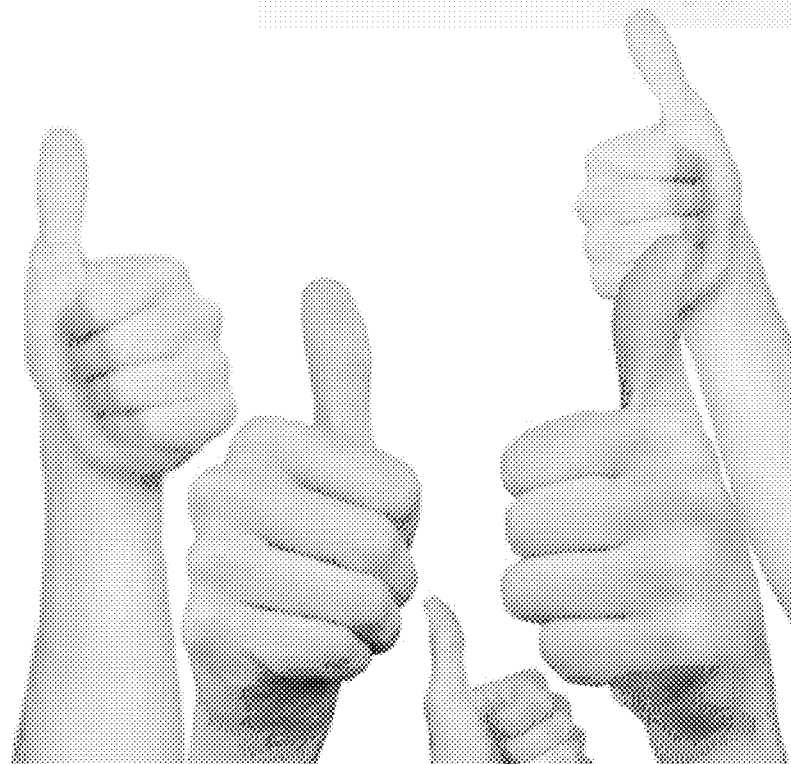
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/page/guidelines-privacy-introduction/#the-public-interest>



The key argument to the effect that there is a strong public interest in high-quality news media is based on the belief that a well-informed society has a better chance of being well-governed. With transparency comes accountability, and with proper accountability come better policy and legislation and, indeed, the consent of the governed. Vigilant media help to prevent the erosion of civil liberties and provide significant benefits for wider society.

There is therefore a collective interest in providing good news media and in the public thereby having an informed sense of engagement in society. It is hard to underestimate the importance of this to our democracy. We need to know about the key decisions that are being made – the ones that really do shape our lives, the ones that are sometimes hidden from us. We need to know the facts that underpin the decision-making process.

“ A distinction between news reporting that sets out to be fair and accurate, and commentary that can be as opinionated and partisan as it likes, is a very important distinction to make.





The raising of standards in a new industry code covers a wide range of possible improvements to our journalism. These would include a commitment to being trusted curators of information on behalf of the public, and providing policy explanation as well as good day-to-day reporting.

If you are insisting on the right to reveal things about others, you must be prepared to stand up to scrutiny yourselves. ””

When it comes to politics, news reporting should not in itself be a player in the game. Honest journalism offers a framework for open and constructive dialogue between opposing points of view. It is important that public policy debates are well-informed and transparent, and that newspapers present more than just one point of view – while being free to make their own position very clear. People with strong political opinions can have difficulty in tolerating, let alone understanding, the views of others and there is no advantage to society in the media encouraging a polarisation of views and a fragmentation of social unity.

A distinction between news reporting that sets out to be fair and accurate, and commentary that can be as opinionated and partisan as it likes, is a very important distinction to make. This should be part of the editorial and ethical code for journalists as well as an important part of journalism education.

Increasingly, it is the news media which set the terms of the relationship between the people and those who govern us. That relationship has become less deferential than it was in previous generations – so that nowadays we take it for

granted that we have a right to know things, that people in public office are fully accountable, and that transparency applies. Journalists are not exempt from this trend and disclosure is a two-way street. If you are insisting on the right to reveal things about others, you must be prepared to stand up to scrutiny yourselves.

The public interest in good journalism is genuine and substantial. Transparency or disclosure gives us a better chance of avoiding corruption in our public offices, of having things such as proper consumer protection and decent health and safety requirements at our places of employment. A culture of disclosure helps to prevent a culture of abuse. Power is held to account: people get the information they need to help them make choices.

Journalism is a profession that depends on honesty and integrity, with well-understood values and principles. And that is what would be clearly set out in a new code of conduct.



Chapter 3 – Industry Regulation

At the time of writing, much of the public discussion about securing improved news services in the UK has tended to focus on industry regulation. This is because there is a wide apprehension that at least some newspapers have paid lip service to their current self-regulatory framework, while in practice feeling at liberty to behave more or less as they pleased – in some cases even choosing to ignore criminal laws on data protection

Regulation is certainly important, but it is necessary rather than sufficient for the delivery of high-quality and principled news media. If effective, it can help to eliminate a lot of the negatives in journalism. But it does not of itself guarantee the positive values we should seek.

The Carnegie UK Trust believes it is possible to create a new model for regulation which is firm and reliable, but not run by government. There is a natural reluctance to introduce a statutory framework for an industry which we require to be wholly independent of state control. It would send an odd message internationally that the UK was intending to become one of the few mature western democracies to introduce mandatory controls on its press. On the other hand, it looks increasingly unlikely that a continuing reliance on self-regulation will be enough to restore public trust and secure higher standards of behaviour. It is clear that Lord Justice Leveson needs to specify a regulatory solution that is independent of both government and industry.

It is not that there is anything inherently difficult in constructing a statutory regulator for the press. Ofcom performs the function very well in respect of broadcast content. There has been no suggestion of any attempt via Ofcom to influence improperly the content or approach of the licensed UK broadcasters. Those broadcasters continue to produce robust and independent journalism.

But there are particular benefits available to public service broadcasters which justify a tighter form of regulation. The broadcasting requirements were drawn up for the analogue age of limited spectrum and limited numbers of services – hence the need to ensure that news and current affairs content was not being used for partisan advocacy purposes. Such editorial impartiality is more important where there is scarcity of supply. And sanctions are necessarily stronger for those entities which are in receipt of publicly-funded benefits and privileged distribution in return for their obligations.

Regulation is certainly important, but it is necessary rather than sufficient for the delivery of high-quality and principled news media.

In the absence of statutory regulation (which we do not support), a new independent press regulator would have to operate a system of voluntary registration by newspapers and digital news services. We think it should be possible to devise incentives which secure unanimous support and participation by all news media which wish to be regarded as serious suppliers of news and information.



One practical and persuasive incentive would be based on the already existing conventions around press accreditation and recognition, a system which gives newspaper journalists privileged access to important venues and events and people. This access is generally not available to ordinary members of the public. It is not unreasonable for society to ask that in return for the privileges of recognition as serious news providers, news organisations should undertake to deserve that status – whether they operate in traditional media or in the digital and online environment.

For example, in the parliamentary press gallery at Westminster, only journalists who are recognised and accredited have the privileges of access. And at many public, political and sporting venues, accreditation is a requirement for journalists who wish to report on events and to have a degree of technical support and special access for that purpose. They have to be nominated by bona fide news media to qualify for acceptance and to be formally registered with the host organisation. It usually requires both the journalist and his or her employer to have some kind of track record in responsible journalism.

The many benefits of accreditation and recognition could be the key incentive that is required to persuade newspapers and online news services to sign up for a new voluntary system of independent regulation. If organisations decide not to participate, they are self-identifying as not being serious news sources and therefore not eligible for certification. They are still free to publish what they like, subject to the laws of the land, but they are not given the privileges and access of responsible news media. Registered news organisations can display a recognised standards mark on their various outlets, a label or badge that identifies them as a principled and accredited operator.

Ethics

Ethics in business
moral principles
rules and regulations
of right conduct
values that guide t

“What is key is the purpose of the media outlet, not the platform or platforms on which it operates.”

It is also obvious that the distinction between printed and digital media is not relevant here. What is key is the purpose of the media outlet, not the platform or platforms on which it operates. Is it seeking to be an accredited news organisation with all the privileges and responsibilities that status confers (including adherence to a clear code of conduct and ethical framework) or is it seeking instead to be an unregulated purveyor of opinion and commentary?

In the UK, the current press guidelines on conduct – set out in the Editors’ Code of Practice, approved by the Press Complaints Commission

[http://www.pcc.org.uk/
cop/practice.html](http://www.pcc.org.uk/cop/practice.html)

– deal mainly with the things you should not do, rather than the things that you should. The PCC code focuses on the actions that are impermissible or inadvisable, rather than conveying any sense of mission which is inspirational.

By comparison, the Irish Code of Practice

<http://www.presscouncil.ie/code-of-practice.150.html>

is a superior document. For one thing, it is a statement of principles rather than just a series of clauses. It is more positive than negative in its guidance – highlighting what you should do, rather than what you should avoid doing. While the UK code reads like a grudging and minimalist contract, the Irish document reads more like a genuine series of commitments, representing a professional manifesto.

Much of the concern over the effectiveness of current UK regulation based on the Editors' Code has focused on the issues of infringement of privacy and the related issue of harassment. There is a blanket ban on material acquired by hidden cameras or clandestine listening devices, or data interception. But section ii of Part 10 on **Clandestine devices and subterfuge** says by way of clarification or modification of this rule that: *'Engaging in misrepresentation or subterfuge . . . can generally be justified only in the public interest and then only when the material cannot be obtained by other means.'*

In fact, there may be exceptions to many of the clauses of the code: *'where they can be demonstrated to be in the public interest'*.

Another main area where concerns have been expressed is over the widespread failure to observe the distinction between facts and comment. Section 1 of the Code on Accuracy says (in part iii): *'The Press, whilst free to be partisan, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact.'*

This is clearly not observed by many national titles and is one of the most important concerns about the role of the press today.

Most tabloid newspapers breach this section of the code on a daily basis, perhaps because it is their prevalent tendency to skew news content to a political agenda that gives the press their power

over politicians. There is a clear public interest in avoiding the position where any commercial media owner seems to have politicians competing for his or her favours. That is damaging to the fabric of democracy and to the integrity of our political system, and it largely arises from the way in which tabloid newspapers conduct their political reporting. This is not to overlook the fact that politicians are also adept at using the press for their own purposes, not least by offering exclusive stories to titles which are willing to present them in a positive light.

“There is a clear public interest in avoiding the position where any commercial media owner seems to have politicians competing for his or her favours.”

Many newspapers ignore their PCC undertaking to distinguish between factual information and comment, adopting a highly partisan or dogmatic interpretation of events in news articles and their headlines. Some examples help to demonstrate the habit. When the BBC announced the details of a major cost-saving exercise in October 2011, the news was reported in The Daily Mail under the headline:

“Bloated BBC finally cuts itself down to size as 2,000 staff face axe”.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2045752/BBC-axe-2-000-jobs-try-cut-20-budgets.html>

This is hardly an interpretation that respects the distinction between comment and fact and it would be more appropriate in an editorial commentary than in a supposed news story.

When the Labour leader Ed Miliband made his keynote speech to the party conference in September 2011, it was reported by The Sun newspaper in less than objective terms:

“Miliband! Labour leader’s speech fails to convince”

<http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/3839579/MILIBLAND-LABOUR-LEADERS-SPEECH-FAILS-TO-CONVINCE.html>

In case any room had been left for doubt, the sub-heading was even more loaded:

“It was such a yawn-fest even TV cameras blanked out”.

An increase in youth unemployment was reported in the Daily Mirror in November 2011 in equally tendentious fashion:

“Young, gifted and scrapped: David Cameron condemns 1 million youngsters to a life on the dole as his vicious cuts start to bite”.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/2011/11/17/young-gifted-and-scrapped-david-cameron-condemns-1million-youngsters-to-a-life-on-the-dole-as-his-vicious-cuts-start-to-bite-115875-23567279/>

Again, the point is not that such an opinionated and partisan interpretation does not belong anywhere in a newspaper. The point is that this is not how any news story should be written if an editor is honouring the pledge made to the PCC to ‘distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact’. Commentary should be labelled as such and kept separate from supposedly factual news reporting.

Respecting the difference between fact and commentary is not about the elimination of honest interpretation in news stories. You can still reach conclusions. But there should not be a single dominant perspective in any genuine news story and what is certainly unfair is to ignore inconvenient facts or deliberately to suppress significant points of view on an important issue.

It’s not that real journalists don’t have views on issues, but they can and should have the professional habit of presenting the facts about a story in a fair and accurate manner, without distorting those facts to fit some other agenda.

If one looks in detail at the broadcasting code Ofcom produces and administers, there is very little in relation to journalistic content that newspapers could not adopt.

<http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/broadcasting/broadcast-codes/broadcast-code/>

The requirements on impartiality are the only substantial elements that would be incompatible with the way serious and responsible newspapers already behave. This is also true of the somewhat longer and more elaborate BBC Editorial Guidelines. Again, if one takes out the passages which refer to entertainment or drama (ie non-factual) programmes, and those which are unique to the television industry (such as the restrictions on live hypnosis), there is nothing except the ‘due impartiality’ requirements which would be beyond the capacity or the integrity of decent newspapers or online news sites.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/editorialguidelines/>

The remit for the Leveson inquiry talks of ‘encouraging’ rather than ‘requiring’ the highest standards, which seems to suggest a predisposition towards a non-statutory solution. It is probably true that the detailed structure of any new regulatory regime is best discussed after the inquiry has finished gathering its evidence and Lord Justice Leveson has published his thinking. We don’t yet know the full extent of the problems that we have. But it is already possible to say in broad terms that we will require a tougher and more independent regulatory system, without pre-empting Leveson on how exactly such a framework should be constructed and empowered.



A new regulator can effectively guarantee adherence to a more substantial and ambitious editorial code, with penalties for breaches. It seems clear that this new regulator will also need stronger powers of investigation and the right to impose a wider range of sanctions on offenders, including financial penalties on those very rare

A new regulator can effectively guarantee adherence to a more substantial and ambitious editorial code, with penalties for breaches. ”

occasions when these are appropriate. It is important the new regulator has teeth: the issue is how fiercely and frequently we wish it to bite. It is particularly important for public confidence that when factual mistakes are made, corrections should be published quickly and prominently.

Lord Justice Leveson will consider carefully the source of funding for the new regulator. Given its enhanced powers and resources, it will need

funding beyond the current scope of the PCC levy on newspapers, some of which are in a financially precarious condition. It looks as though any new funding would have to come from the general public purse, but at a level which would not be significant in terms of overall public expenditure. This could be regarded as a worthwhile investment in the plurality, transparency and honesty of our mediated democracy.

No doubt there are conversations between the political parties behind the scenes to try to ensure there is broad agreement on the way forward. The broader the coalition in favour of the changes Leveson proposes, the more likely it is that we will have enduring and beneficial change. But any over-reaching intervention by Parliament, either to impose a new statutory framework or

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to insist on restrictive controls, will be interpreted as hostile by the press and as oppressive by the media of other countries. The Carnegie UK Trust could not support such an approach. This is why it is important for the public to be involved in the debate, as well as the politicians.

A balanced and measured approach will allay the fears many people have about the consequences of new forms of statutory regulation for the press, while also dealing with the loss of trust in the existing self-regulatory system. The need is for more transparency and to hold newspapers to account publicly for their journalism.



Chapter 4 – Public Funding Interventions

One way in which successive UK governments have recognised the importance of reliable news media is by supporting public service broadcasting to deliver beneficial journalistic outcomes that the market would not have produced if left to its own devices and dynamics. The BBC is the most obvious and substantial example. It has been significant that in most circumstances this approach has been able to command broad support across the political spectrum. In the current environment of partisan news coverage and an adversarial approach by newspapers, it is crucially important that audiences must be able to continue to trust the impartiality of broadcast news.

We need at least some widely available journalism that is not-for-profit and not commercially driven. That's because in a competitive commercial market, the desire to achieve impact and therefore sales is likely, at times, to outweigh the moral imperative of adhering to an ethical code of conduct. There is a degree of tension between media that are commercially funded and privately owned, and the public need for good journalism. Commercial media are primarily focused on profit and have to balance the public interest with financial returns. They are an important part of the overall ecology of news, but they are not sufficient in themselves.

We need reliable news and we also need public space to share, discuss and challenge as a society. And most news is still consumed from broadcast or newspaper sources, either in their traditional form or online.

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The UK is enormously fortunate to have the BBC. But the one public service function we know the BBC definitely cannot supply is that of providing competition for the BBC. That is why it is so important to have ITN as a serious competitor in mass-audience news programmes, and Channel 4 as a serious competitor in high-quality current affairs and investigations.

There is more public funding to support news content in the UK than is generally appreciated. In addition to the sums made available to the BBC via the television licence fee, there is a huge sum directed towards the British press in the form of VAT relief, as a recent report from the Reuters Institute at Oxford makes clear in comparing the funding provided by different countries.

http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/Publications/Working_Papers/Public_support_for_Media.pdf

It is an important point to note in the current debate, therefore, that the newspaper industry in the UK does receive a very substantial measure of public support by means of this indirect subsidy. General VAT exemption for copy sales and subscription sales in 2008 was estimated to be worth about £594 million to the British press. This entitles the public to look for clear public service benefits from the press in return for this indirect subsidy.

Apart from the existing forms of public service intervention in national news broadcasting, the UK government is currently progressing with proposals for local television services in some parts of the country. The Carnegie UK Trust has argued that any new licences of this kind should contain clear public service obligations and a duty to provide mechanisms to ensure local accountability and engagement. These should be built into the licensing process and regulatory framework to ensure reliable services of genuine editorial quality.

The proposed new services would bring two obvious benefits: first, the creation of an additional and widely-available news source that observes the universal broadcasting requirements for accuracy and impartiality; and second, new sources of local news for at least some communities around the UK.

The enhancement of local and community news media is something the Carnegie UK Trust has strongly advocated.

The enhancement of local and community news media is something the Carnegie UK Trust has strongly advocated. It is part of our wider vision for a thriving democracy and a more active civil society in the UK. People need reliable news and information on which they can base their decisions and choices as citizens, consumers and voters.

Local television services are potentially of great social and democratic value. Communities need new sources of accurate information and a media framework that guarantees the principles of freedom, pluralism and integrity. The Carnegie UK Trust preference is for services that are community-based as much as they are commercially-focused, services that give people a sense of belonging to a particular local area. And it is important that we have licences in rural as well as metropolitan areas, in order to benefit significant communities which are deprived of consistent news media attention.

There are certainly going to be publicly-funded benefits for the new operators, so there must also be public service obligations. The incentives will include prominence on electronic programme guides, a contribution towards start-up costs of up to £25 million from the television licence fee, and also a revenue commitment from the BBC of up to £5 million a year.

Existing media entities are being encouraged to participate in the new local TV services, in part to ensure an appropriate degree of professionalism in the content and some robustness in the business plans. However, all other things being equal, there should normally be a preference in the awarding process for bids which add to plurality and bring in new voices. The process should also allow for models which are more in the nature of a social enterprise or social co-operative, rather than always depending upon a conventional profit-driven private company.

We will need services that have both an editorial and an emotional connection with their communities.

Putting in place a methodology for engagement and involvement with the local communities should be regarded as part of the necessary DNA of local TV, rather than as just another overhead. The level of local accountability that is desirable should not be restrictive of editorial freedom or of the speed and decisiveness of operation of the new services.

Ambitious local programmes – particularly a strong local news service – will present something fresh and valuable to audiences around the UK. We will need services that have both an editorial and an emotional connection with their communities. There is potential within the local TV proposals to empower communities to be producers and not just recipients of interesting, informative and entertaining local content. Success should not be judged in purely commercial terms and any successful bidder should have to produce a community plan as well as a business plan.

It is unlikely that there will be much additional public funding for news media over the next few years, given the domestic and international pressures on the UK economy. Much of commercial media will continue to be market-driven and subject to intense pressures on revenues and costs. It is likely, therefore, that there will be an opportunity for a third source of investment in news media – the charitable foundations and trusts that make up much of civil society in the UK. Not-for-profit support to plug any public interest gaps might be one of the best answers to the need for better news services.



Chapter 5 – New Models for News

With so much of the public debate about journalism being dominated by the problems facing traditional news media, it is possible to overlook just how much innovation and energy there is in the creation and consumption of new forms of serious reporting. At the moment, this is easier to describe in terms of activity rather than any certainty about the impact or durability of some of the fledgling ventures. But the key components look like being collaboration, participation, personalisation and mobility.

There is a clear need – and it is already happening in this country and elsewhere – to test new models for how high-quality journalism might be delivered in the digital age. In America, we have seen the emergence of new online ventures committed to serious accountability reporting. There are different funding and editorial models for these start-up ventures. Some like ProPublica

<http://www.propublica.org/>

and the Center for Public Integrity

<http://www.iwatchnews.org/>

have a national profile and reach. But typically, the new ventures might be small in scale and with initial funding from a charitable foundation. They usually tend to serve particular communities and localities, sometimes cities or towns and sometimes

entire states. Notable examples would include Voice of San Diego

<http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/>

New England Center for Investigative Reporting

<http://necir-bu.org/wp/>

and Wisconsin Watch

<http://www.wisconsinwatch.org/>

In the UK, we have seen the arrival in London of the Bureau for Investigative Journalism

<http://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/>

and The Detail (based in Northern Ireland) on a similar sort of model. Others will surely follow as more charitable funding moves into this space.

<http://www.thedetail.tv/>

The focus should be on things that can be delivered to improve the current media offering around the UK. What can be created that will have impact and significant reach? Additionally, what can be done that may not have much in the way of scale, but will nevertheless add value? It's about strengthening the flow of high-quality news and information – serious journalism – so that people have a firm basis on which to base their actions and decisions.

Much of the new activity is reassuringly based on the core ethics of journalism. In the USA, investigative journalism is increasingly funded via online ventures by not-for-profit organisations. It often happens that mainstream media – local newspapers, radio and television stations – then use this digital journalism in their own outlets. That kind of collaboration in the public interest is likely to become more common both in the US and in this country too.



Expensive investigative stories have to be paid for somehow. So we are going to need funding for both technical and editorial innovation. We need more involvement by civil society, but we also need to safeguard the independence of the media organisations. A mix of different funding models is probably one of the best ways of ensuring diversity of media and diversity of perspectives.

We need more involvement by civil society, but we also need to safeguard the independence of the media organisations.

Some of the innovations in journalism will not necessarily be huge. Some will be small, but significant. They will not be expensive to launch. Their impact will be out of proportion to their size. They will not need to earn huge sums in revenue. The form or platform doesn't really matter from a public perspective so long as the content is good and widely available.

There is a balance to be struck between building the new and protecting the old, but our emphasis should be on encouraging experimentation and collaboration in pursuit of successful innovation. So we need organisations that are willing to invest in good journalism. There should be an emphasis on trying out new things. We have to learn directly from news consumers through experiments.

Our emphasis should be on encouraging experimentation and collaboration in pursuit of successful innovation.

News producers will have to deepen the relationship with users and audiences. Whether or not Facebook and Twitter continue to be so dominant, people will continue to gravitate towards message board systems inhabited by like-minded

individuals so they can find new sources of news and information that are of value to them. Sharing interesting content is, in itself, a form of democratic action – collectively highlighting and valuing something, to indicate a shared set of values.

Reduced budgets mean that many traditional media organisations do not have the resources necessary to allow specialist reporters to investigate complicated stories. And yet the really important issues are usually complex. The best journalism comes from giving good reporters enough time and enough editorial guidance to produce really good material. There has certainly been a substantial decline in this kind of newsgathering capacity and that has to be addressed somehow.

The best journalism comes from giving good reporters enough time and enough editorial guidance to produce really good material.

Most online journalism currently available from the major media brands is just a different way of accessing the same content that is in the linear news broadcast or the printed newspaper. There is not enough adding of value, using the extra capacity and the extra creativity of the internet. There are now tremendous tools at our disposal for communicating information, including how we visualise and present complicated data. More of these data visualisation tools should be being used more of the time for the more complicated issues and for policy explanation.

There is an increasing role for various not-for-profit entities in funding this kind of serious journalism. It is important that this should be done mainly by charities, trusts and foundations rather than by advocacy groups where there is a greater possibility

of undue influence or conflict of interest arising. It is important that every funder as well as every recipient operates to the highest standard of accountability and transparency.

There are now tremendous tools at our disposal for communicating information, including how we visualise and present complicated data.

We have faster and cheaper access points for news, lower barriers to entry and more ways in which you can consume news and information. There are more distribution platforms as telecommunications and broadcasting increasingly converge. But in the midst of all this enhanced choice, in many communities we now have a shortage of local professional journalism that holds power accountable. And where there is little accountability there tends to be a serious risk of waste, corruption, inefficiency and other undetected problems.

It will help to improve accountability and democracy if interested civil society associations find a way to invest in support of honest and high-quality news media. There are standards that recipients should have to meet to justify such support. It is possible to construct a basic check-list of qualities and attributes (or investment criteria) a news provider would have to demonstrate to secure civil society funding of this nature:

- ❖ Adherence to the journalistic code of ethical and editorial standards
- ❖ Evidence of adaptability and innovation
- ❖ Be affordable for the desired duration of the project
- ❖ Help to fulfil an unmet need – especially a democratic or community need
- ❖ Don't eliminate or threaten parts of the current media landscape
- ❖ Combine a strong sense of editorial purpose with a well-organised operating structure

- ❖ Be widely accessible and convenient
- ❖ Have a plan for sustainability beyond the lifespan of the investment

This list could usefully be expanded or refined from detailed case studies of recent successful new ventures in news media – not just looking at the output, but analysing and researching from the inside.

It is clear that the involvement of universities and other institutes of advanced learning is important for some of these new models in serious journalism. There is good work being done around the world by partnerships involving charitable foundations, academic institutions and not-for-profit news producers. A recent study by the University of Dortmund of this kind of funding of journalism in the United States came up with a database of almost 700 projects.

http://www.wissenschaftsjournalismus.org/fileadmin/content_wj/Study_Nonprofit_Funding_of_Journalism_final.pdf

Extending choice and access in this way will help to raise standards in general. Each news initiative will have to decide how to distinguish itself and have a clear profile as well as solid brand values in an increasingly crowded market where the public have an abundance of options to choose from for their news. We are now drowning in data, with digital news streaming in from all over the world, so there is a real need for trusted news brands. People don't have lots of spare time to go news-hunting – they value being able to get the content they need quickly and efficiently. The existing press and any new journalistic ventures need to think about how they espouse their values, explain their decisions and build deeper relationships with consumers.

People will increasingly want their news on demand. And we are no longer prepared as consumers to read or watch what doesn't interest us. So news can't just be fair and accurate, it has to be made compelling if it is to serve the public interest. The new models will have to pass that test.



Chapter 6 – Journalism Education

The future of journalism education is intrinsically linked to the debate about ethical values and standards. We need to nurture professional and high-quality journalism in our higher education institutions. In recent years, there has been an understandable focus on teaching the practical skills of digital production for online news and mastering the various software applications for content management. These skills are now taught intensively alongside more traditional journalistic skills such as reporting and writing.

There seems little doubt that all university journalism courses will now be reviewing their approach to teaching ethical standards and professional integrity as part of their preparation of aspiring journalists for the world of work.

Much of this kind of thinking about journalism education started earlier in the USA than in the UK. One particularly successful initiative is the joint approach by the Carnegie Corporation and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation over the last seven years. They call it a 'pipeline' strategy to affect the next generation of journalists. The change came about because deans at the leading schools of journalism in the US worried that the 'dumbing down' of the news agenda threatened their students' careers.

The resultant strategy has helped transform America's approach to journalism education and create an incubator for new forms of serious reporting. Twelve universities have participated in the scheme, including the journalism schools at Harvard, Columbia and Berkeley.

The Carnegie-Knight initiative began to frame a view of a journalism degree that demanded a higher quotient of intellectual pursuit along with the practical experience of producing news. The initiative recognised that it is a responsibility of trained reporters to challenge the dominant narrative of the moment by dispassionately looking at the facts. Universities can provide the intellectual tools for that process of evaluating and interpreting information. Increasingly, journalists need to be able to understand complex stories and issues and communicate their essence clearly to general audiences.

A survey commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation at the commencement of the initiative emphasised three clear needs in the industry:

- 1 A need for analytical thinkers with a strong ethical sense, as well as journalism skills;
- 2 A need for specialised expertise: insights into medicine, economics, and complex topics, and firsthand knowledge of societies, languages, religions, and cultures; and
- 3 A need for the best writers, the most curious reporters.

http://carnegie.org/fileadmin/Media/Publications/Daedalus_spring10_king.pdf

Increasingly, journalists need to be able to understand complex stories and issues and communicate their essence clearly to general audiences.

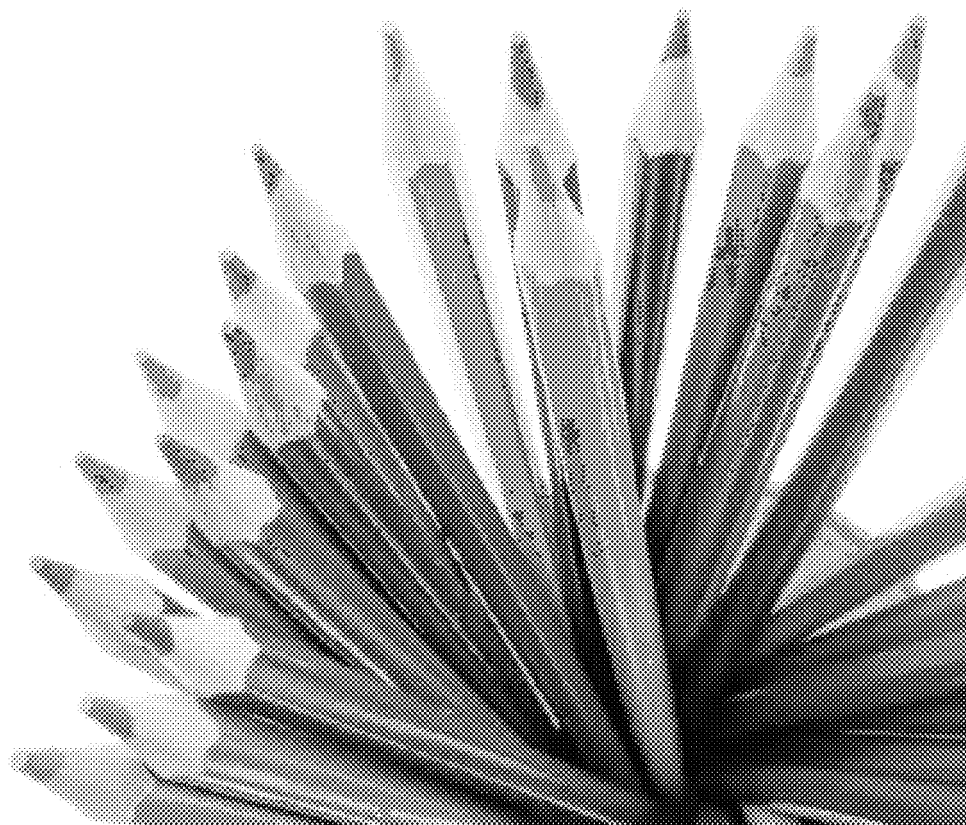
The Carnegie-Knight initiative believes that new journalists have to be smarter, better educated, more nimble and entrepreneurial than their predecessors if they are going to make it in a business in which the future is just being written. It expects news a decade from now to be more informative, more multilayered, and more interactive than it is today. A recent report from the Shorenstein Center at Harvard shows how the initiative has transformed journalism education at each of the participating universities:

http://www.hks.harvard.edu/presspol/publications/reports/c-k_initiative_2011.pdf

This kind of new approach in journalism education would potentially help to address some of the industry's needs in the UK. There would be the prospect of producing a new generation of leaders to help to raise editorial and ethical standards and create new forms and outlets for serious journalism.

Digital technology is changing journalism profoundly. It is important for our education systems to understand that the skills taught need to reflect converged media and cross-platform working. But we also need a more analytical and ethical journalism that helps us to understand an increasingly complicated world.

“Digital technology is changing journalism profoundly.”





Chapter 7 – Extending access

Knowledge has always been unequally distributed, but the gap between haves and have-nots is certainly being stretched. Serious news consumers are getting more news from more sources online about things they are interested in, while people without broadband connections are excluded from most of these options.

Journalistically and socially, we need to prevent the isolation and exclusion of the poorest people in society. The key to some major health issues, for example, is now the information and engagement available via social media. And we need good news providers as the means through which major public policy dilemmas are understood and resolved.

Increasingly, these are likely to be in the form of multimedia digital content on converged platforms. With the mainstream adoption of IPTV (internet protocol television) it will soon be the case that all television becomes ‘connected television’ delivered using internet technology. The widespread adoption of this platform effectively merging broadcasting with broadband will greatly increase the potential availability of news sources. The internet will be more and more the most effective distribution platform for news content, including to mobile devices. This increases the significance of universal broadband access and take-up.

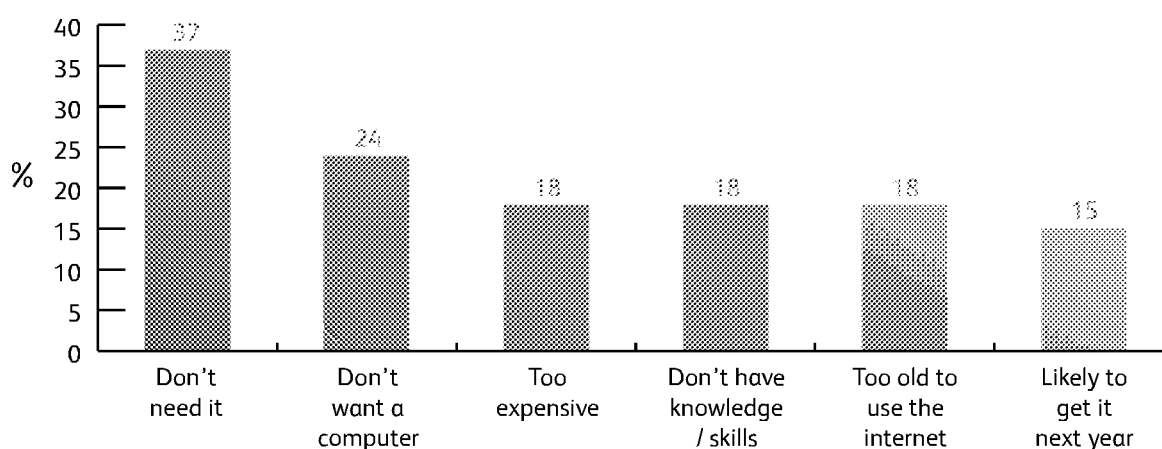
If active citizenship is an important aspiration, then broadband connections are a vital part of the information infrastructure. The main factors in not having access to broadband seem to be age, unemployment, and poverty. So there is evidence of a widening information gap between rich and poor.

Household take-up of broadband in the UK (%)



Communications Market Report; Ofcom; 2011

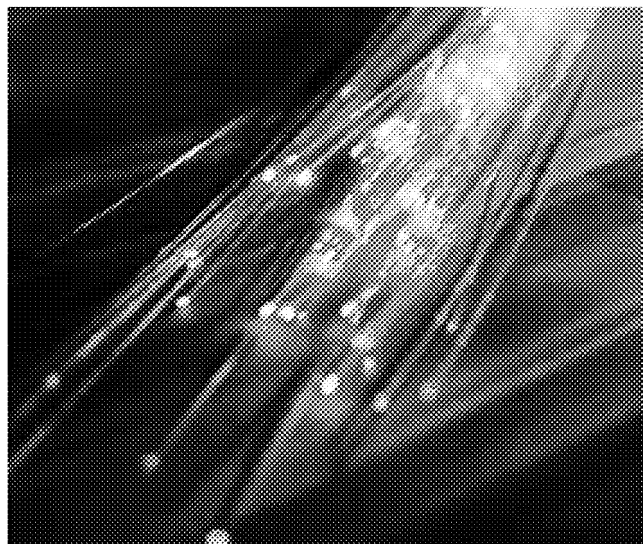
Main reasons for not taking up the internet (% of people without broadband)



Communications Market Report; Ofcom; 2011

It is likely that with IPTV delivering broadcast-type content over the internet directly to television receivers, we will find that video news websites will get decent audiences if they have content that is unique and useful. And we need ways to ensure that everybody can access these broadband news services, which are increasingly where choice and depth is to be found.

Progress in all these areas might help us to provide the better journalism we need to be more widely available in the digital age. And an important part of the ethos should be to produce journalism that works for those currently excluded and marginalised in society.





Chapter 8 – Looking to the Future: A Profession Based on Trust

If there is one positive outcome from the phone-hacking scandal in the UK, it is that a wider public concern about the standards and behaviour of some news media began to be registered and articulated. It is likely that many people will now read newspapers with a greater degree of scepticism and less readiness to assume that what they are being told is true. Provided this scepticism does not decline into outright cynicism, then it may not be a bad thing in the short term.

There is a higher public expectation of fair and reasonable behaviour and accurate reporting. Going forward, the risk for any title engaged in serious misbehaviour is of campaigns through social media for reader and advertiser boycotts. We saw the initial outlines of how this might work in the reaction to the News of the World hacking scandal, in particular the Milly Dowler revelations.

Just as crowd-sourcing has proved an invaluable resource for good and responsible journalism, so crowd-shaming could help to deter the other kinds of journalism.

But the longer term need is for trust to be restored in the profession. Increased public concern should be used as a lever to raise the standards of journalism, especially as practised in sections of the UK press. Internet discussion and campaigns via social media could make a big impact for the better: just as crowd-sourcing has proved an invaluable resource for good and responsible journalism, so crowd-shaming could help to deter the other kinds of journalism.

This is one of the areas where civil society organisations could help to strike the right balance, by getting involved, whenever possible, in discussion and debate about the media and by taking up governance roles in media organisations when these are advertised or offered.

The phone-hacking scandal and the Leveson inquiry could be a turning point. As we have argued, there are a number of different levers or points of intervention that can help in the drive towards stronger and better journalism. But we recommend that further work and action will be required in several areas:

- ❖ The adoption of a new industry-wide code of conduct by all journalists and news organisations to give much clearer guidance on the higher ethical and editorial standards expected – standards which ought to be universal and transferable between all bona fide press, broadcast and online news services.
- ❖ The maintenance or strengthening of public service broadcasting to ensure that not all news ventures are commercially driven, and that the public has access to services with guaranteed impartiality and fairness.



- ❖ Civil society organisations offering help to fund new initiatives in journalism (with an emphasis on technical and editorial innovation) to ensure greater quality and diversity of news sources and more journalism that holds the powerful to account.
- ❖ A renewed emphasis in journalism education and training on professional ethics as well as production skills, including a clear commitment to understanding and upholding the public interest.
- ❖ Extending and completing the availability and take-up of high-speed broadband to enable universal access to a wide range of digital news services and participatory media.
- ❖ The encouragement by industry regulators, universities, civil society organisations and the news media themselves of more public debate around issues to do with media ethics and behaviour and more serious discussion of editorial decisions and challenges.
- ❖ A new and more evidently independent press regulator with more substantial (but not statutory) powers to investigate unethical behaviour, and the ability to impose significant sanctions including financial penalties.

Everyone has an interest in achieving these outcomes. We can't just leave it to the politicians to come up with solutions, not least because their interests might not coincide with the wider public interest. It is up to all of us to be part of the debate. It is also up to individuals to take personal responsibility by not buying dishonest or unprincipled news products.

We need to test this emerging agenda for improving our news media. We also need to demystify the editorial decision-making process through public debate and challenge, producing greater transparency and accountability in our journalism. We will all benefit from people being active rather than passive citizens, and that applies just as much in their news consumption as in other activities.

It is also up to individuals to take personal responsibility by not buying dishonest or unprincipled news products.

This will help us to get the trust back into journalism. The role of the citizen in applying pressure might have more impact on editors and proprietors than anything else. At the Carnegie UK Trust, we hope to encourage and facilitate discussion among UK foundations and wider civil society about how to support high-quality journalism in the digital age. It is a process of renewal and of innovation, because both are required.

The main improvements will come from a change in attitudes and behaviour by the people in the news business. It's not just that the public should be able to have higher expectations of journalists, but that journalists should have higher expectations of themselves.



Notes

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The Carnegie UK Trust is an independent, endowed charitable trust incorporated by a Royal Charter. We seek to improve the lives and wellbeing of people throughout the UK and the Republic of Ireland through influencing public policy and demonstrating innovative practice.

The Trust has a long-standing interest in media, civil society and democracy. In the 1930s, we supported the Commission on Educational and Cultural Films and were involved in the creation of a National Film Institute. In the 1940s, the Trust supported the Bureau of Current Affairs for more than five years, with the aim of providing citizens with access to information, opinion and educational materials.

More recently the Trust published Making Good Society, the final report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society in the UK and Ireland, in March 2010. In this report the Commission argued that the principles for media should be: freedom for civil society to engage with the media and shape content; pluralism to ensure the media is controlled by a wide range of different interests; and integrity to ensure that news media promotes essential values such as honesty and accuracy.

In February 2011 the Trust appointed Blair Jenkins as a Carnegie Fellow, to build upon the work of the Commission of Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society and investigate how better news services can be delivered in the digital age. We will be continuing our work in this important policy area throughout 2012, undertaking a number of related projects.



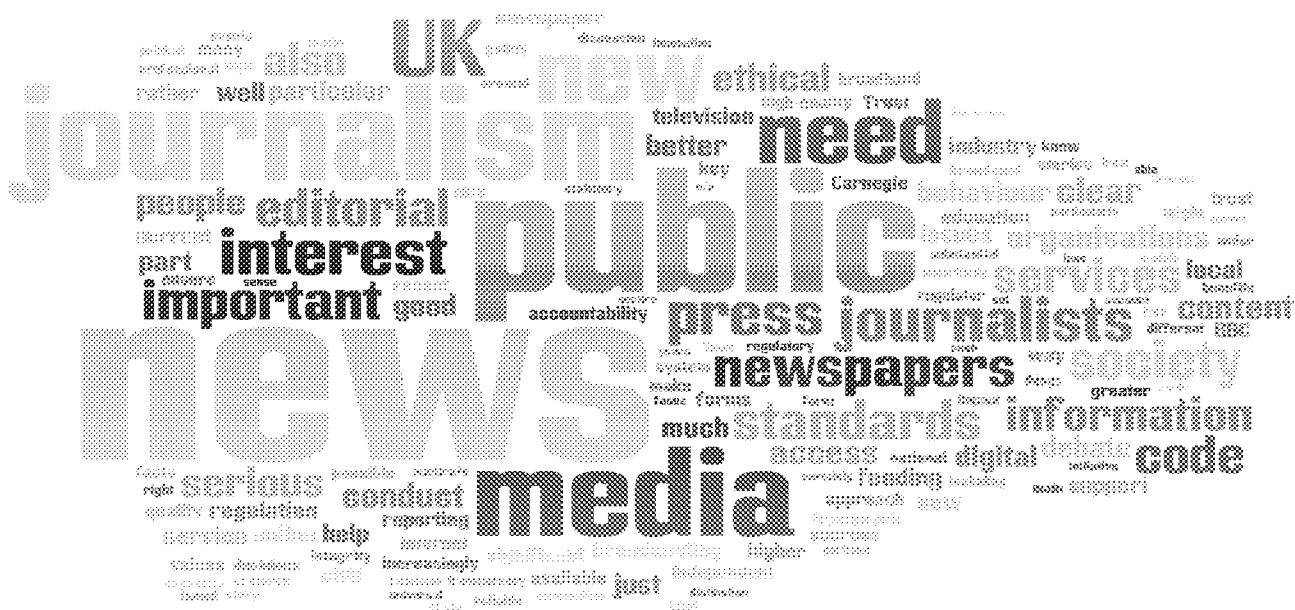
The Carnegie UK Trust seeks to improve the lives of young people through education, employment, and health. The Trust's work is supported by the Carnegie UK Trust and the Carnegie UK Trust. The Carnegie UK Trust was established by the Carnegie Trustees of the United Kingdom in 1913.

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