



Tabloid Tales Under The Microscope

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A post Leveson summary

- ▶ “The Leveson Inquiry did a lot to tidy up all the crap that we saw in some of the newspapers. Management who didn’t care if they took shortcuts to get stories. They cooked their own goose. ” Journalist A (national tabloid)

The territory-what and who

- ▶ **Journalism and trust: teaching transparency and integrity with news sources. Embedding good practice in the classroom. Lessons after Leveson. Research-qualitative semi-structured interviews with six national tabloid journalists (mtf)**
- ▶ Claire Wolfe, Principal Lecturer in Journalism teaching specialisms- practice and theory of law and politics & work-based learning.
- ▶ Christine Challand, combines her work as a journalism lecturer with a long standing role as a freelance tabloid reporter.

Lord Justice Leveson

- ▶ *"Transparency... could work in two ways. It can take the form of transparency of action (e.g., requiring all stories to run under the byline of a real person; requiring transparency on the sources of quotes, requiring transparency on the method by which any story has been obtained).*
- ▶ *It can also take the form of transparency of compliance (e.g., requiring visible corrections, publishing accuracy league tables, publishing data on compliance with regulatory standards)."*

Leveson backed O'Neill points

- ▶ *Six principles of transparency offered by Baroness Onora O'Neill (research/Reith Lectures) :*
- ▶ *(a) openness about payments from others*
- ▶ *(b) openness about payments to others*
- ▶ *(c) openness about the interests (financial or otherwise) of owners, editors, programme- makers and journalists*
- ▶ *(d) openness about errors*
- ▶ *(e) openness about (most) sources, with an adequately drawn test of the public interest to allow sources to be kept secret, for specific reasons and in particular situations*
- ▶ *(f) openness about comments from members of the public.*

Literature review (snapshot)

- ▶ Rosentiel, T. and Kovach, B (2007) argued ‘journalists should be as transparent as possible..... so audiences can make their own assessment of the information.’
- ▶ Weinberger, D. (2009) ‘ transparency is the new objectivity’
- ▶ Bennett, P. (2014) argues it is a ‘one-way mirror with journalists being ‘wary’ of being too open.
- ▶ Sambrook, R. (2013) Training is key. UK needs to catch up with US over ‘professionalisation of’ journalism. Adopting a framework of transparency would be a first step in rebuilding trust in the media.

Initiatives-Trust Project



- ▶ A few media organisations worldwide tackling transparency and sources issue to provide readers with reliable news
- ▶ **November 2017 The Trust Project**- consortium of more than 75 news organisations led by award-winning journalist [Sally Lehrman](#) of Santa Clara University's Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, California. Set of standards issued. 'This really does pull back the curtain on all the due diligence that journalists go through in order to put a solid story together'
- ▶ Mainly US-but includes **Financial Times and Trinity Mirror**. Chief Content Ed Gannett (so Newsquest?) Also tech giants Fb, Google, Twitter.

Trust Project's Standards



- ▶ **Best practices:** What are your standards? Who funds the news outlet? What is the outlet's mission? Plus commitments to ethics, diverse voices, accuracy, making corrections and other standards;
- ▶ **Author expertise:** Who reported this? Details about the journalist who wrote the story, including expertise and other stories they have worked on;
- ▶ **Type of work:** What is this? Labels to distinguish opinion, analysis and advertiser (or sponsored) content from news reports;
- ▶ **Citations and references:** For investigative or in-depth stories, greater access to the sources behind the facts and assertions;
- ▶ **Methods:** Also for in-depth stories, information about why reporters chose to pursue a story and how they went about the process;
- ▶ **Locally sourced?** Lets people know when the story has local origin or expertise;
- ▶ **Diverse voices:** A newsroom's efforts to bring in diverse perspectives;
- ▶ **Actionable feedback:** A newsroom's efforts to engage the public's help in setting coverage priorities, contributing to the reporting process, ensuring accuracy and other areas.
- ▶ Each news organisation displays the indicators- on individual article pages and on site-wide pages- according to their design, and they are integrated with a publisher's content management system and site code.

Journalism Trust Initiative



- ▶ **April 2018** The Journalism Trust Initiative-Reporters Without Borders partners with Agence France Presse, the European Broadcasting Union and the Global Editors Network to combat disinformation online. Drafting trust and transparency standards, designed to act as a benchmark of media self-regulation and good practices for everyone from bloggers to international news organisations.
- ▶ Standards to be agreed by October 2019, leading to a certification process.
- ▶ [Christophe Deloire](#), secretary general, pictured, said they will also reflect the transparency of media ownership and their sources of revenue, as well as the compliance with ethical and independent journalism methods.

Initial findings -benefits after Leveson

- ▶ **No more fishing expeditions.** “If anything, journalists have to be more transparent about their motive or their newspaper’s motive.” Journalist B
- ▶ **Less privacy invasion and intrusion.** “Those who want to go into the industry are realising far more than they used to that journalism is about professionalism and not doing just about anything it takes to get people to talk to you. There are consequences now for reporters who behave in an overbearing or disrespectful way.” Journalist C

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press standards
organisation

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The benefits...

- ▶ **Increased public awareness of rights.** “The public have a greater understanding of their rights because of the publicity that always goes hand in hand with stories about people who feel they have been badly treated. You only have to look at the public outcry over some of the reporting of the Manchester Arena bombing.” Journalist B.
- ▶ **The end of high profile agent deals.** “The slapstick days where agents like Max Clifford were making a fortune are long gone and that had to be a good thing.” Journalist D.
- ▶ **End of fabricated sources.** “You don’t get papers saying they have a source in the published story without really having one, whereas back in the old days I’m sure there were many times when a source was just made up.” **Journalist?**

The benefits...

- ▶ News desks and editors are more tolerant. “In the old days you could expect a bollocking for not standing up a line but now there’s a very much a more considered acceptance that something hasn’t worked even if you’re following a story that’s already been published.” Journalist B



Disadvantages after Leveson

- ▶ **A lot of regular news story sources have fallen away.** “Because the papers got such a kicking, they were more reluctant to go after story tips. Sources fell away because they were more guarded about how they would be treated by the press.” Journalist E “You have a lot less access to people” Journalist A “Police of all ranks don’t want to nurture relationships with journalists anymore, police press officers won’t give off the record guidance on a story like they used to...” Journalist D
- ▶ **The public became more distrustful.** “People are more suspicious about how a story is going to be portrayed because of the poor reputation of the press since Leveson. They want to be able to read what’s written about them before it’s published” Journalist D “People still want publicity but they want to control what’s written about them because it’s on the internet” Journalist G

Disadvantages after Leveson

- ▶ Those with something to hide are getting away with it. “One of my friends is a police officer and she has said the amount of stuff that goes on in that police station about the conduct of police officers that we never hear about that we should hear about is frightening.” Journalist F “The people benefiting are the people who want to hide things they don’t want to talk about” Journalist A



The disadvantages...



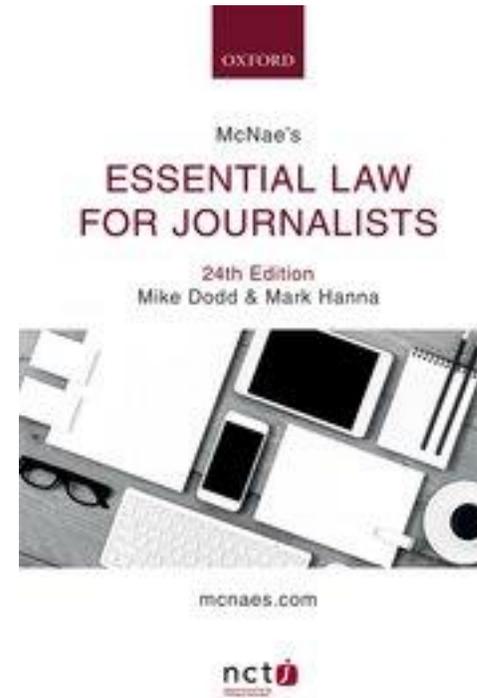
- ▶ **It's harder to get facts and information confirmed.** "We have to track down the source of the source which makes our job harder." Journalist D ... "access to people who can confirm the information can be more difficult."
- ▶ **A general lack of reporting experience and more cheap labour.** "You don't see old-timers on the nationals now. They've either been made redundant because they cost too much or they've put in for redundancy knowing they cost too much and could get the push." Journalist F "People either like the look of you on the doorstep or they don't. It's probably still about your personality and the approach you take that gets you in. Young journalists who aren't getting out to do their stories and meeting people would struggle confidence wise to compete against an experienced reporter." Journalist D

What's the same?

- ▶ **Tip fees-** The newsdesks, agencies and freelancers are still paying sources for stories.
- ▶ **Scrutiny of sources, their motives and the information being offered.** “The integrity of the source is key. If the truth or the integrity of the story falls at the first hurdle - when you’re meeting that person for the first time and checking the content of the story they’re offering you, that’s why you start to get a feel about whether it’s worth pursuing.” Journalist G “The nationals are pretty good at not being caught out because of the integrity and fact or source checking ability of their journalists.” Journalist E
- ▶ **Use of unnamed sources.** “Sometimes the source is the very person who the story is about and they don’t want anyone to know this. The idea of someone trying to boost their own public following or reputation sounds pretty sinister when you think about it but that does happen, not necessarily with an agent or PR company but with a close friend or work colleague who is trusted enough to pass on this kind of information.” Journalist E

What's the same?

- ▶ **Understanding of media law.** It's just as important to have a working knowledge of media law as it was when I qualified 13 years ago because your newsdesk expects you to have an opinion on how you see the story working. Journalist B



What's changed?

- ▶ **An increase in leaks.** "So where now a policeman or a politician might not talk to you, they do it by the backdoor now and memos or emails end up on your desk."
.(Journalist 4)
- ▶ **The rise and rise of the whistle blower.** "I think people are more inclined to blow the whistle and contact newspapers directly now than they were before because there just aren't the staffing and financial resources that used to be available for investigations."
(Journalist 3)
- ▶ **The internet/Social Media as sources .** "People put stuff online that they just don't realise is going to get picked up by the media. The Jimmy Savile scandal is an excellent example of that." Journalist G
- ▶ **Lack of experienced staff and financial resources to investigate.** "The public may be up in arms about privacy, human rights and not trusting journalists but they're a lot poorer in information terms." Journalist C
- ▶ **Improved transparency of and increased data available-** including Fols

What can we do?

- ▶ Be aware of the critical, growing importance of journalism degrees in the training process and specifically:
- ▶ **Reiterate the need to interrogate sources** and the information they're offering. "Checking the sources of stories has always been and still is the most fundamental part of working on any story." Journalist G
- ▶ **Teach methods of validating whistle blowers**, including SM history, career and criminal background & being aware of the time-scales and regulations & ethics (including public interest).
- ▶ **Consider the process of accessing the information behind leaked material**-awareness of information firewalls, time-scale, regulations & ethics (including public interest).

What can we do?

- ▶ **Critique stories with unnamed sources** and assess the importance of individuals worthy of protection compared to those involved in self-promotion, who often form part of the media outlet's business model.
- ▶ **Reinforce the danger of online material.** "Online newspapers are taking vast amounts of copy they find on the internet because of the need for content but the people behind these online stories aren't always reliable." Journalist A
- ▶ **Reinforce the need for personal skills in establishing trust with the public.** "People either like the look of you on the doorstep or they don't, it's always been about your personality and the approach you take to get in." Journalist D
- ▶ **Focus more on methods of building and retaining sources** . Also ensure students are aware of internal office politics over the sharing of sources/competition.

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- ▶ **THANK YOU FOR LISTENING**
 - ▶ **QUESTIONS & RESEARCH LEADS
WELCOME**

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